Delta Woman with Faulkner and Hitchcock

Mi-Jeong Kim

University at Albany, State University of New York, deisie@hanmail.net

The University at Albany community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/legacy-etd

Part of the American Literature Commons, Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons, and the
Women's Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/legacy-etd/372

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the The Graduate School at Scholars Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Legacy Theses & Dissertations (2009 - 2024) by an authorized administrator of Scholars Archive.
Please see Terms of Use. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@albany.edu.
Delta Woman with Faulkner and Hitchcock

By

Mi-Jeong Kim

A Dissertation
Submitted to the University at Albany, State University of New York
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

College of Arts & Sciences
Department of English
2011
Delta Woman with Faulkner and Hitchcock

By

Mi-Jeong Kim

COPYRIGHT 2011
ABSTRACT

Lacan, as a post-structuralist, combined Saussure’s linguistics with Freud’s psychology and linked Derrida’s notion of “the other” to his notion of “objet petit a” as the impossible object of the subject’s phallic desire, in order to re-think the modern consciousness of “the self.” In the Lacanian account, “the other” does not exist as the ‘absolute’ transcendental without involvement, but ex-sists as the traumatic and ‘extimate’ exteriority with-in “the self.” The ex-centric other is epitomized by the iconic (inverted) triangular center (√) of Lacan’s Borromean Knot. As the immanent exteriority of both the subject and the Symbolic, the feminine (w)hole, resembling vaginal entry (♀), is where the subject’s phallic fantasy and the symbolic representation system fail. With regard to the paradox of the non-All, it is associated with Lacan’s notion of woman. In the triangular vacant center, woman dwells as the irreducible excess surpassing the phallus and as the ‘ek-static’ site of the subject’s being; she embodies the central space open to “the other,” in which the feminine ethics to transgress and traverse ego boundaries occurs. In this project, I call her “Delta,” to emphasize its association with overflowing water and its cognate relation with the Hebrew letter “Dalet” which signifies “openness” and “selflessness.”

From this perspective, the aim of the project is to explore how the feminine vacant center (what I call Delta) is depicted in Faulkner’s and Hitchcock’s texts. As high modernists of the twentieth century, these two great chroniclers of the same generation intensively displayed the disruptions or failures of human cognition and representation through various experimental narrative techniques. Their texts challenge any ideas of certainty, suspend any phallic attempts to find a fixed meaning, and require us to re-think what we read and what we see, with regard to what does not appear in them. If that is because of the Delta in the texts, as the “in and beyond” of the text, my aim is at reading the delta woman, to re-think our way of “being” in a different way, in association with “being able to think the other” and “being-together-with-other(s).”

Keyword: Delta, woman, the other, objet petit a, vacant center, Lacan’s Borromean Knot, Faulkner, Hitchcock, (w)hole, non-All, the immanent exteriority, the feminine, overflowing, openness, feminine ethics
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Professor Tom Cohen for his acute, insightful, and open-minded guidance, and his patient and thorough understanding of my difficulties in working on the manuscript. Since my first semester at SUNY / Albany, he has listened to me with attention and welcomed whatever ideas I have. Under his advisement, I have been able to express my ideas and develop my arguments, more freely, in a well organized way. I cannot thank him enough for everything he has done for me as my advisor. I am profoundly grateful to Professor Helen Elam for her extraordinary intellectual and emotional support. She has always been more than ready to help me. She has always encouraged me to say what I want to say. Since I worked with her as a Teaching Assistant in 2008, she has been my role model. As a remarkably passionate and profound scholar, she has always been willing to mentor me with exceptional empathy and understanding. Her warm-hearted mentoring has been crucial for me to survive all the most challenging and anxiety-provoking processes in this dissertation project. I also appreciate Professor Charles Shepherdson’s intellectual advice and support. The discussions with him have been inspiring and insightful. I have learned a lot from his lectures that I audited. In a special category, I want to thank Rebecca Bale, whose great help in refining my English was decisive to the final form of the entire manuscript. Finally, I give my special thanks to my family, my mom, sister and brother for their unconditional love and trust.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*Abstract*  

*Acknowledgments*  

**CHAPTER 1**  
Introduction:  
*Delta Woman* with Faulkner and Hitchcock  

**CHAPTER 2**  
(S)he—woman as overflowing  
in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*  

**CHAPTER 3**  
*Che Vuoi?* Beyond the Cartesian Space  
in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Spellbound*  

**CHAPTER 4**  
Delta (∨), the Ex-centric Place of *Voice* and *Gaze*  
in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*  

**CHAPTER 5**  
Delta (∨), the Ek-static site of the Feminine Love  
in William Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses*  

**WORKS CITED**
Chapter 1.
Introduction: Delta Woman with Faulkner and Hitchcock

The history of Western metaphysics can be perceived as the history of the center, which consists of a series of repeated efforts to seek and establish a solid foundation as the universal standard of truth and rationality. The center has been called arche, telos, logos, idea, and so on. The so-called centrists believed that the center provided the organic balance and coherence within a continuum and thus made logical and metaphysical structures possible. However, the paradox is that the center as the origin of such structures is transcendental and beyond the logic of the structures. Modernists acknowledged that the human cognitive and representative system could not wholly grasp the center and constantly challenged it; Post-modernists refused to reduce the cognition of the limits to another type of representation and addressed the paradoxical characteristics of the center, on the basis of post-structuralism.

In particular, Jacques Derrida forcefully asserted that key structuralist concepts such as “structure” and “sign” are based on the premise that there exists a fixed and unchanging center of meaning which generates symbolic interactions, but the desire and the assurance of the “center,” which had laid the foundation for Western metaphysics, are a mere fantasy. For Derrida, the origin of meaning is not a fixed entity or place but a “non-site” in which emerges not an absolute truth, but only the incessant traces and substitutes of it. From this perspective, Derrida’s deconstruction aimed at undermining the existing “-centrisms,” (especially, the so-called “phallogocentrism”), which had been based on binary hierarchies; that was to oppose the violence of the center, and to re-think all our relations to “the other,” which had been peripheralized and marginalized.
Meanwhile, Jacques Lacan, another post-structuralist, combined Saussure’s linguistics with Freud’s psychology and linked Derrida’s notion of “the other” to his notion of “objet petit a” as the object-cause of the subject’s desire; that was to re-think the modern consciousness of “the self” by addressing “the other with-in the (subject’s) self.” For Lacan, what is at stake is not the ‘absolute’ transcendental, the so-called (big) Other, but the other which is always already within the subject at the core of the subject as the immanent alterity or exteriority. This Lacanian account is not an attempt to “incorporate” the other / the exterior into the structure of the Self (or the Same), but a rejection of the modern idea of the subject as “a uniform or self-consistent whole”; Lacan echoed and extended Freud’s critique of the idea that the subject is centered by a single, fully self-conscious, self-transparent, or self-defining autonomous ego. That is to say, the Self, the unique and fundamentally autonomous entity in Western phallogocentric value systems, is torn open from within by the idea of the immanent exteriority which ex-sists at the core of the subject as a radical otherness. From the Lacanian perspective, the radically ex-centric center of the “self” introduces the scission, the rupture in the middle of the full presence and refers it to a void as an interior obstacle to self-presence. It exceeds the subject’s mastery and thus irremediably splits the subject. Here, it is critical to note that whereas Derrida tried to challenge the existing “-centrism” through his radical project of de-centering or deconstruction, Lacan challenged the phallogocentrism of Western philosophy by situating “the other,” which had been repressed or excluded in the name of unconsciousness or woman, at the center. However, we must note that it was

\[\text{1 See “Multiple Identity - The Critique Of The Subject - Self, Enlightenment, Centered, Critiques, Adorno, and Horkheimer” (http://science.jrank.org/pages/9748/Multiple-Identity-Critique-Subject.html#ixzz1Hnt9MCNJ)}\]

not merely to reverse any given hierarchy by establishing an-other “center.” Crucial here is that “the other” does not exist as the ‘absolute’ transcendental without involvement, but ex-sists as the traumatic and ‘extimate’ exteriority with-in “the self”; what is at stake is that it opens up the self-enclosed sphere of interiority from the innermost point.

This (im) possible vacant center is *neither*-inside-*nor*-outside, and simultaneously, *both*-inside-*and*-outside. This eccentric and ex-centric center goes beyond all the hierarchical and exclusive binary oppositions such as “man and woman,” “inside and outside,” “the I and the other,” “life and death.” In the history of Western, “phallogocentric” philosophies, such binary contrasts had been sorted out according to the distinction between the in-terior and the ex-terior. The interior was considered good, primary, original, pure, and belonging to my (proper) “self”, whereas the exterior was considered bad (or inferior), secondary, derivative, corrupt, and belonging to “the other.” Thus, the exterior had been repressed or excluded to secure and maintain the integral self-identity of the metaphysical structures. However, from the Lacanian perspective, the exterior otherness can never be simply erased or repressed; it is always already within the space of the “I” as the vacant center, i.e., the open hole, the abysmally gaping locus, which makes the wholeness of the I’s being impossible. Thus, in the ex-centric and estimate space as the (w) hole, “the I” and its relation to “the other” are not fixed but are always de-stabilized, re-constituted, and re-positioned. In Lacan’s diagram, the eccentric vacant center is epitomized by the iconic (inverted) triangular center (\(\bigtriangleup\)) of the Lacanian Borromean Knot which illustrates the inter-relations of the three orders (the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary).
In the above diagram, the triangular part signifies the (w)hole as the impossibility of wholeness. In the Lacanian account, it is the locus of *objet petit a* (the small other as a little piece of the unsymbolizable Real) and linked to *woman*, which involves “the paradoxes of the non-All.”[^3] The little object embodies “the very impossibility of attaining auto-affection”[^4] and thus it appears where the subject’s narcissistic fantasy is torn off. Owing to it, the I cannot “be” integer; the I is always a split subject. That is to say, it is the place of *objet a* as the (w)hole which creates the barred subject; *objet a* occupies the empty triangular space as “the open, unpredictable, piercing part of the subject.”[^5] And, at the same time, it is the locus where words fail; as we see, it occurs as the rupture of the Symbolic, in which the small *a* (other), the element of the Real which eludes signification ex-sists as the “cut” in the signifying chain. Here, what I want to emphasize is that this (w)hole for *ex-sistence* (or *ek-stasis*) opposes any suture; according to Jacques-Alain Miller, if we try to suture it, it is merely in order to figure a blank as the indefinable, the

---

[^4]: Slavoj Žižek (ed.), *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, p. 16.
untranslatable, the unrepresentable, to render visible the gap of representation. As both-lack-and-excess of our recognition and representation, the (w)hole occurs as the feminine space like *Khōra* and, simultaneously, as the feminine way of “being.” That is to say, in the feminine locus, woman’s way “to be” is “being the (w)hole as not-whole (or, not-all),” taking the feminine position beyond the pale of the phallic register.

Here, the notion “woman” does not necessarily refer to a biological woman as a sexual being. Instead, *woman* is a trope as “one name” given to the indefinable. Luce Irigaray asserts, “Woman is a common noun for which no identity can be defined. (The/a) woman does not obey the principle of self-identity; however the variable *x* for self is defined. She is identified with every *x* variable, not in any specific way. Presupposed is an excess of all identification to/of self.” Minrose C. Gwin characterizes this woman as an unsettling process of “getting outside,” a movement or force “to traverse the “in-between” spaces,” “the play of *différance* as a continuing act of deferment,” and “the other space in motion” in which a fluctuating location takes place and “out of which women speak.” Hélène Cixous asserts that woman functions “to displace ‘within,’ explode it, overturn it.” To sum up, *woman* is an explosive overflowing force, movement, and process, which displaces “within” into “outside,” as a “disruptive excess.”

Thus, the triangular vacant center, resembling vaginal entry (\(\forall\)), must be the place of *Différance*, which incessantly engenders the deferment of the ultimate

---

fulfillment of desire, which signifies the Death itself as the ultimate Inertia. In the ex-centric place, woman ex-sists in the mode of being the (w)hole; but, she is always already “something more” as explosive excess. She is overflowing as an opening space and opening force, at once; that is to say, she is *spacing* in Derridean terms, as an impossible space open to immense possibilities. Thus, I will argue that what the woman’s ex-orbitant ex-sistence in the place of *objet a*, that is, the triangular vacant center, emblematizes is the irreducible excess which exceeds the phallus and punctures the subject’s phallic fantasy; it is against the idea of the loss or lack of the phallus. That is to say, the vacant center is not the signifier of castration; the feminine ex-centric locus is the place of feminine overflowing in which *woman* is incessantly emptying out her “I,” and giving the emptied space to the other. In the vacant center, thus, woman ex-sists as an inherent hindrance to the subject’s self-identity; there, she ex-sists as “a way out” which breaks open the self-enclosure of the “self.” Therefore, I will insist that the iconic triangular vacant center in the Lacanian Borromean Knot is not a mere missing part, which signifies the lost object of the subject, but the ‘ek-static’ site of the subject’s being, as the central space open to the other, in which the feminine ethics to transgress and traverse ego boundaries occurs.

From this perspective, in this dissertation project, I will call the triangular vacant center *Delta*. In lexical terms, “Delta” signifies: 1. the fourth letter of the Greek alphabet (Δ: Δέλτα [ðelta] Thelta); 2. Something shaped like a capital Greek delta; especially the alluvial deposit, often roughly triangular, at the mouth of a river; 3. A triangular symbol often used to signify “difference” (here, I will use it to designate *différance* along with difference). It is also noteworthy that “Delta” is, of course, cognate with “Dalet” in the
Hebrew alphabet. The *Dalet* symbolizes “an open door” which stands at the opening of the house, and signifies the “selflessness” which is read as “that has nothing [d’leit] of her own”\(^\text{10}\); “the Dalet is considered to be a gateway to the physical and metaphysical worlds that shape our existence.”\(^\text{11}\)

Delta, as the feminine (w)hole, is the “place” in which woman dwells as “‘excess’ that ‘inexorably’ pushes outwardly, until it is *throwing* or *jettisoning* (ejecting, dejecting, objecting, abjecting) the ego’s subjectivity into *exteriority*:”\(^\text{12}\) Delta, the inverted triangle, creates a void like the Heideggerian jug; and owing to the void, the symbolic difference-structure of fullness and emptiness can be possible. However, this void is irreducible to the binary structure of fullness/emptiness. That is to say, Delta goes beyond the binary opposition between fullness and emptiness in the very same way that woman goes beyond the binary opposition between excess and lack. Woman ex-sists “there”, in Delta place, in full, or overflowingly. “She is *not* not at all there. She is there in full (*à plein*). But there is something more (*en plus*).”\(^\text{13}\) She is always overflowing. She is something unfinished as a radical incompleteness. She is always becoming.

She is “opening” itself as an unsettling process of “getting outside” the ego-centered self. “She pierces man with a hole that can never be filled. She explores an unfamiliar zone, oversteps all boundaries. That is, she explores uncharted territory,

---

\(^{10}\) Refer to “The Hebrew Letters—Dalet: Selflessness” (http://www.inner.org/hebletter/dalet.htm).


beyond all limits.” 14 She is “always in a relation of excess or lack vis-à-vis unity. [She] eludes placement and identity.” 15 She, as the locus of Différance, is “always already creating itself by deferring and differing from itself.” 16 In her place, my place and identity cannot be fixed; the place and the identity of the “I” is always in motion, thus, undetermined; there, I, as a split subject, cannot be settled; there, I drift as a “wanderer crossing borders and thresholds in placelessness.” 17 Thus, Delta, the feminine locus for “ek-sistence,” is a way out through which the subject’s “being” outside of himself (that is, the subject’s ekstasis) is possible; through Delta, the subject can face the real truth of his being in a new way (or in a different way). Here, the ekstasis, i.e., standing-outside the self, does not refer to falling into a psychotic state withdrawing the “self” from the real world; on the contrary, it is experiencing “the freedom to be in the world, experiencing limits and the wonder of what exceeds my egotism.” 18

In these contexts, I will explore how the feminine vacant center (what I call Delta), as the object-cause and the locus of the failure of masculine phallic fantasy, which engenders “a subversion of the self and its self-knowledge” 19 and thus appears as an ekstatic passage out of the illusion of total narcissistic enclosure, is depicted in Faulkner’s and Hitchcock’s texts. Like many high modernists of the twentieth century, Faulkner and Hitchcock also agreed on “the death of the author”—which was claimed by Roland

15 Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, Trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke, Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985, p. 117.
Barthes echoing Nietzsche’s famous declaration of the death of God decades earlier—to assert that readers must separate a literary text from its author in order not to limit the text to a single interpretation which seeks the author’s intent and asserts it as the meaning of the text. Along with other contemporary modernists, Faulkner and Hitchcock also investigated the limits of representation and challenged the phallogocentric structure of modern consciousness; they rejected the notion of authoritative truth and abjured the Kantian account of the subject (as a fully self-transparent, self-conscious, and self-consistent ego). Thus, these two great authors of the same generation are usually categorized as high modernists; however, in this project, my aim is not to categorize their texts into modernism or post-modernism. The main reason for taking Faulkner and Hitchcock as the texts to be read in this dissertation project is that even though they acknowledged the limits of representation, they didn’t give up trying to represent what they failed to represent. According to Butler’s account, representation must not only fail, but it must show its failure; it is because reality is not conveyed by what is represented within the image or the word, but through the challenge to representation that reality delivers. From this perspective, I will argue, Faulkner and Hitchcock intensively display the disruptions or failures of the human recognition and representation through the use of various experimental narrative techniques.

Faulkner agreed that the reality of our ordinary life, which was the main subject of his novels, is not a fixed and solid entity, but an ongoing state of flux and instability. His creative imagination is portrayed most intensely through the rejection of banal

---

language, the self-conscious stylization of refractions and distortions of meaning, and the constant caution of self-deceit in pursuing truth for truth’s sake. Hitchcock, with a new mechanism on spectacular display, intensively investigated the inner world of unconscious forces and suggested a new way to address what it is that human reason and representation fail to grasp. Hitchcock invited his audience to see where his cinema fails to represent the unrepresentable. To quote Peter J. Hutchings, "Through his address of their eyes, his hollowing out of a space for their thoughts in his films, Hitchcock became notorious for giving his audience a thinking place in a world of unreliable images." In doing so, Faulkner and Hitchcock challenge the reader’s and the viewer’s expectations that the author will provide closure and resolution or consolation at the end of the narrative. Faulkner lets different narrators speak from different standpoints even within one text, and he never lets the reader easily decide which voice stands for the author’s position as the authoritative voice; it requires the reader to continuously re-read and re-interpret the events being told from different points of view to integrate the fragmented narrative. Hitchcock’s modernist play with the ‘film within a film’ encourages the viewer to keep a skeptical eye on the screen, where what eludes the viewer’s gaze gathers to inspire the viewer’s uneasiness.23 Thus, Faulkner’s novels and Hitchcock’s films are given to us as polyphonic and dialogical texts (in Barthes’ terms), which challenge any comfortable ideas of certainty, suspend any attempts to find a pre-given fixed meaning, and keep requiring us to re-think what we read and what we see, with regard to what does not appear in them.

From this perspective, my reading will focus on the inherent interruptions in Faulkner’s

---

22 Peter J. Hutchings, “Modernity: a film by Alfred Hitchcock.” (This paper was presented at the Alfred Hitchcock conference For the Love of Fear convened by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, held from 31 March to 2 April 2000)

and Hitchcock’s texts which occur as the driving force and the object-cause of the interpretative incompletion: the inherent interruptions cause dis-ease and disturb the reader’s and the viewer’s interpretation, by which the texts can remain open without interpretative closure. In other words, the inherent interruptions in the texts induce the reader (and, the viewer)’s incessantly engendering new meanings for them, as opposed to the phallic reading to find out and “to have” a single meaning. Thus, the inherent interruptions in Faulkner’s and Hitchcock’s texts are where a phallic reading fails. Owing to them, the meaning(s) of Faulkner’s and Hitchcock’s texts is irreducible into the metaphysical question “What is …?”; through them what has been repressed or excluded in/from human cognition and representation by the hierarchical and exclusive binary opposition returns as the undead or the unmurdered. It is what disrupts the integrity of a text but cannot be expelled from the text. It is what is irreducible into an object of the author’s or the reader’s phallic desire “to have.” In line with my argument concerning Delta, I will designate it as Delta Woman in the text. Figuratively, what she signifies is the ec-centric and ex-centered spaces in the text which are opened to “the other” in remembering and mourning what is not told in the text. Thus, the paradoxical spaces ex-sist as the “in and beyond” of the text. What the Delta woman promises us by flooding over its own bounds is not somewhere, but somewhere else. The Delta woman invites or beckons us into “another way of approaching ex-istence,”24 which makes us re-think our way of “being” in a different way. Through her, we can experience the sense of infinite responsibility toward the other. Through her, all attempts to reduce “the other” into “my other” become suspended, and the re-definition of “we” becomes possible. Again, what the Delta woman promises us is that our “being” can be transfigured into “being able to think the other, to feel and not

just to see the other and to have a relation to other(s)”\textsuperscript{25} and thus, ultimately, into “being-together-with-other(s)” in a feminine way.

In these contexts, my aim, in this work, is to attempt to read the feminine locus of Delta Woman in Faulkner’s and Hitchcock’s texts. My reading focuses on the dis-solution of the texts which interrupts the reader’s and the viewer’s attempts to find a single meaning or solution. Therefore, I will examine Faulkner’s and Hitchcock’s texts, mainly focusing on how the leading characters fail, rather than succeed; if I read the texts to find what success is and to suggest it as a solution, it would go against the basic premise of my argument. In particular, I will explore what occurs as the object-cause of such failures with regard to the notion of the vacant center, what I call Delta, and the feminine, in Lacanian terms. It is not to pin it down as an object of knowledge or to fix it into a meaning. Instead, it is an attempt at, to quote Gwin’s words, “the creation and exploration of new space designated as feminine.”\textsuperscript{26} In other words, it is an attempt at the feminine conversation with the text “which generates more questions than it ever answers, which pushes out boundaries and dissolves margins wherever they are, which grafts and regrafts its own renewal.”\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{26} Minrose C. Gwin, The Feminine and Faulkner, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 2.
Chapter 2.
(S)he—woman as overflowing

“… because Caddy was still to me too beautiful and too moving to reduce her to telling what was going on, that it would be more passionate to see her through somebody else’s eyes, I thought.”

—William Faulkner, *Faulkner in the University*

Being in the water (or flying through the fog) implies a willingness to defer, to let go of safety, to encounter loss and disunity, to involve oneself in the play of possibility rather than expecting certain (or even possible) arrival somewhere.

—Minrose C. Gwin, *The Feminine and Faulkner*

*The Sound and the Fury*, often paired with *As I Lay Dying*, has long been cited as one of Faulkner’s exemplary modernist texts in which he deploys a variety of narrative experiments such as multiple perspectives, interior monologues, and the disruptions of temporal sequence. The novel successively retells the same story through four different narrators without an authoritative voice; it is to show fragmented pictures of reality and to problematize the ground of narrative authority and truth. Thus, as Faulkner’s first major novel, *The Sound and the Fury* provides critical grounds to label the author as a high modernist along with James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Virginia Woolf in the early twentieth century. Robert Penn Warren articulates the place of the novel as follows: “*The Sound and the Fury*, which is Faulkner’s *Waste Land*, ends with Easter and the promise of resurrection.”

However, ironically, Faulkner does not provide any practical solution for resurrection at the end of the novel. Instead, he depicts successively and successfully how male characters fail to traverse their phallic fantasy of “Eden” and thus fail to resurrect themselves, and how the four consecutive male narrators (including the author himself) fail to get the story “right.” To put it differently, as Faulkner himself

---

stated, if *The Sound and the Fury* is “the tragedy of two lost women: Caddy and her daughter,” then he indeed shows us how the two women as the object-cause of such phallic failures successfully engender creative disruptions in the four male narrators’ narratives by eluding their phallic desires and narcissistic fantasies. Paradoxically, the fragmentation, contradiction, and ruptures of the novel that the two women generate, enable the novel itself to succeed in engendering “a dis-ease with interpretive closure” and thus readers’ re-reading of it. To quote Bleikasten, “If *The Sound and the Fury* ends superbly, it is because it does not end at all: no dramatic resolution, whether tragic or comic, is provided; none of the novel’s tensions is eventually eased, nor are any of its ambiguities removed. The ending takes us back full circle to the beginning.” In other words, the female characters’ elusiveness or excessiveness that disturbs any interpretive closure and thus makes it “not”-whole / “not”-all, continuously let us rethink our ways of reading and thus render our readings always in motion “in the hope of reaching at last a point that could be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure.”

That is why we can say that, although Faulkner does not suggest any dramatic resolution, he does give a sense of the future, in association with the promise of resurrection.

In these contexts, first of all, I will examine how the male characters of *The Sound and the Fury* fail to communicate with others, figuratively speaking, how they fail to escape their narcissistic self-enclosed monologues that represent their “blind self-

---

centeredness.” Particularly, I will focus on reading how the female characters’ *ex-orbitant ex-sistence* disturbs and truncates the male characters’ phallic and narcissistic fantasies of “total being without lack” and drives “the novel beyond all the temptations of centering, beyond the “reduction” of resolution.” That is to say, I will examine how the female characters’ feminine and fluid ex-sistence goes beyond the male characters’ phallic desire and failures, and thus, can be linked to what I call “Delta,” the feminine empty center, as the locus of *ek-stasis* and, at the same time, of an opening force “that sets the syllable “ex” in motion and keeps it alive.” Thus, figuratively, if the female characters occupy the feminine delta spaces of the novel, I will investigate how they suggest a way out from the male Compsons’ overwhelming self-centeredness and, thus, lead us to a new set of possibilities “out” of the male Compsons’ failures.

Faulkner remarked of *The Sound and the Fury* that it was the one novel that he had felt most tender toward, because it caused him the most anguish and was to him the finest failure; he tried to tell one story four times, but none of them were right, each time he failed. Here, I will insist that the very thing which makes *The Sound and the Fury* Faulkner’s “finest failure” is Caddy Compson, as the most important but hollow focal point of the novel. More precisely speaking, she is a sign of the traumatic (or ex-centric) central lack round which the text, the four individual narratives, revolves. In other words, as the forever missing essence, she *is* the pivot and the vanishing point, simultaneously, of her three brothers’ “stream of consciousness.” As Lawrance Thompson pointed out,

---

35 James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (eds.), *Lion in the Garden*, pp. 146-147.
she appears only through the memories of her three brothers, but she exists only as the already lost or exiled in their minds and lives. Like a ghost, she haunts her three brothers’ narratives as a festering wound which will never heal.

Thus, when I consider the relationship between the lost sister and her three brothers, it reminds me of the Lacanian Borromean Knot in association with “Delta,” the iconic triangular vacant center. Like Delta, she takes place in the vacant center, that is, the ex-centric and ex-centered feminine place of woman among her three brothers. Like Delta that knots the three individual rings together at the very center, she is the central connection of her three brothers’ narratives. Like Delta, she is the innermost outside of the three male narrators’ monologues. Like Delta, she takes the place of objet petit a. She obviously occupies the place of the primary object which her three brothers’ desires and narratives pursue. However, what the three males really desire from Caddy is “something more” than Caddy herself; that means, Caddy herself cannot but signify only a “lack.” In other words, to the three male brothers, Caddy is a sign of something else as “what is not there”; for the pathetic male narrators of three narcissistic monologues, she can be neither an individual subject nor an actual object in and of herself. Thus, Andre Bleikasten asserted that “insofar as she must remain the ambiguous and evasive object of desire and memory, she can be approached and apprehended only in oblique ways. Caddy cannot be described; she can only be circumscribed, conjured up through the suggestive powers of metaphor and metonymy. … We can find out what she represents for Benjy,

Quentin, and Jason; we never discover what she actually is.”

For Benjy, she was the primary caretaker instead of Mother; the fire, the red-yellow cushion, and the smooth satin slipper, which can pacify and quiet Benjy’s bellowing, are only substitutes of Caddy which remind him of her warm and tender love towards him. For Quentin, she is the most serious trauma; she was what should never be owned by anyone except him forever; her betrayal and his own impotence lead him to death. For Jason, she was the only cause of his loss of the job at Herbert’s bank; thus, she is the primary cause of his relentless self-pity; she is the object of his hate and vengeance for his loss of what he actually never has possessed. No matter what Caddy signifies for each brother, what is common to them is that “it” is already lost or impossible at the discourse-moment of their narrations; “it” exists only as the past in their memories. Paradoxically, thus, although the three brothers’ narratives revolve around Caddy to full-fill the lack in their enclosed narcissism, she cannot but be an ex-centric empty center that can/shall never be filled out. To the end, she remains as the very sign of the primal gap which embodies “That is still not “it,”” the tantalizing remoteness; here, “it” refers to the forever elusive element as a being out of reach; the three male narrators’ monologues are all about their failures to have “it”—objet petit a, the object-cause of their desires and narratives.

Thus, again, considering Lacan’s diagram of the Borromean Knot, she is, on the one hand, the traumatic innermost core, and, on the other hand, the eccentric outside, i.e., the absent presence which is being “out there” (to quote Bleikasten, “the presence of what is not there”38) of the three brothers’ narratives. By taking the feminine position of “being the hole and being with nothingness in the void,” she is “overflowing” through her

38 Ibid., p. 59.
Here, thus, Caddy occupies the Delta place and functions as the sign of objet petit a for her three brothers as the traumatic central lack, as the piercing part of each “circle”—which represents the narcissistic enclosure, i.e., narcissism, of each male narrator. Therefore, the three brothers struggle to maintain their self-enclosedness, by “controlling” Caddy. In other words, by incorporating or expelling the outside-already-with-in-his “self,” which is represented by Caddy, each male narrator struggles to keep the (fantasy of) wholeness of his being, and also of his narcissistic monologue. However, if what Caddy embodies is Delta, she can never be incorporated nor be removed; instead, she is incessantly overflowing towards somewhere else “out there” as an explosive excess. From the innermost ex-centric vacant center of the novel, Caddy’s feminine fluidity occurs “to drive the text beyond all the temptations of centering, beyond the “reduction” of resolution.”39 She, thus, plays a paradoxical role as both-lack-and-excess. In this context, if the title “The Sound and the Fury” signifies the repetitive struggling of “trying to say,” as Faulkner himself asserted, The Sound and the Fury is “a succession of narrative “failures.””40 Caddy is the thing which makes any narrative still not enough, that continually causes an-other narrative. She is always already the leftover as a radical disruptive and fluid excess which any narrative cannot wholly capture. To borrow Gwin’s words, “She is something more. She is always still flooding beyond what the text can say. Its language never catches up to its flooding, for its excesses are always slipping away.

40 Ibid., p. 76.
before words can move to speak them. Like the tremendous wave, the force of that excess creates channels which constitute new places for language to speak from." As the object-cause of three brothers’ desires and narratives, she is the (w)hole of *The Sound and the Fury*; she makes it impossible to complete a narrative, but paradoxically, by being the hole (the radical gap), she sustains the successive narrations; she is the thing which leads the text to “plural polylogues” from narcissistic monologues. She is the core of the text, the only positive support of the text, the only point that gives consistency to the text. In a word, she is the (im)possibility of *The Sound and the Fury*. As Bleikasten asserted, “Caddy was elusive to her creator; so she is to her brothers in the novel, and so she must remain to the reader….Her presence/absence at the center and periphery of the novel signals the unfulfillment of the writer’s desire as well as the inescapable incompletion of his work. Caddy’s beauty is the beauty of failure.”

Thus, in this context, if we can say that Caddy *ex-sists* as the Delta incarnate in the novel, as a positive opening force, a possible way out which resists and breaks up the (masculine) egocentricity, “the blind self-centeredness,” of male Compsons, how can we re-read the existing critics’ assertion that Caddy’s sexual fall from innocence caused the collapse of the Compson family? If the first three sections of the novel are narrated by the three Compson sons according to their stream of consciousness, the primal scene (in terms of psychoanalysis) for the three narrators might be of “the muddy seat of Caddy’s drawers” in a pear tree on the night of Dammudy’s funeral. Particularly, in the first section of the novel, Benjy (the narrator)’s memory returns repeatedly to the flashback of that scene. If Benjy (or Benjy’s section) functions as a prologue, as Faulkner insisted,

---

42 André Bleikasten, *The Most Splendid Failure*, p. 66.
“like the grave digger in the Elizabethan dramas,” the scene can be read as the beginning of the whole story—in other words, it is “the initial image from which the book evolved.” Many critics insist that this scene emblematically foreshadows Caddy’s sexual misconduct in the future that will trigger the gradual ruining of “the sterile Compson male line.” Some critics read the pear tree that Caddy climbed up to look into the window to see the forbidden scene of death as the Forbidden Tree in the Garden of Eden with regard to the biblical references—the same tree reappears at the end of the story—the tree that Caddy’s daughter, the seventeen-year-old Quentin climbed down “to escape from the only home she had, where she had never been offered love or affection or understanding,” thus, the pear tree is one of the very crucial repetitive figures that make the novel come full circle.

Indeed, Caddy is often read as Eve who transgressed the patriarchal prohibition on the tree of knowledge (of death and sexuality) and thus caused the male Compsons’ loss of Eden, which is tragically represented by the eldest son’s suicide and the gradual disintegrating of the Compson family. However, I do not agree with the prevalent view that Caddy’s transgression, related to the forbidden tree, presages her sexual “fall” that causes the male Compsons’ downfall. Instead, I will argue that what “Eden” signifies in the novel is the male Compsons’ narcissistic and phallic fantasy of the self-enclosedness (without any lack) of “the self,” in other words, what Faulkner called “the blind self-

---

43 James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (eds.), *Lion in the Garden*, p. 245.
46 James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (eds.), *Lion in the Garden*, p. 245.
centeredness.\textsuperscript{47} Actually, the imagery of the garden of Eden and the “apple tree,” which is associated with the biblical tree of sinful knowledge, occurs only in Quentin’s section in the novel; in his narrative, Quentin truly struggles to designate Caddy as Eve, the source of evil, that causes the loss of his Eden, but, as we see, Quentin’s shattered monologue represents his mental state as schizophrenic. That is to say, Quentin’s association between Caddy and Eve is merely his schizophrenic fantasy to negate his (seeming) loss as a defense mechanism which is triggered by his castrated desire for her. What it shows us is just Quentin’s failure to traverse his phallic fantasy to the end. Thus, I will argue here, what the pear tree that Caddy climbed up symbolizes is “the tree of Edenic innocence,” considering Benjy’s words “she smelled like tree,” rather than the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. The reason why the tree is, figuratively, forbidden to Caddy is only to deprive her of her (or her knowledge of) sexuality. Thus, in a sense, if Caddy is compared to Eve as the cause of the exile/fall from Eden, I agree to the extent that Caddy escapes the seemingly Edenic innocence by violating the tree. That is to say, I will insist that Caddy’s climbing up the tree emblematically signifies the initial moment of her ex-orbitance, “breaking out of the family circle, the dungeon-like egocentricity of Compsons family, to venture into the wider world,”\textsuperscript{48} rather than her sexual falling. That is the reason why some other critics read her climbing up the pear tree as a brave act, in an affirmative way. To quote Lawrance Thompson;

Faulkner admitted that when he first began writing \textit{The Sound and the Fury} he thought he was writing a short story which would center around one image: “the muddy seat of a little girl’s drawers in a pear tree, where she could see through a

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 146.
window where her grandmother’s funeral was taking place and report what was happening to her brothers on the ground below.” At another time, Faulkner added, “… the girl was the only one that was brave enough to climb that tree to look in the forbidden window to see what was going on… and it took the rest of four hundred pages to explain why she was brave enough to climb the tree and look in the window.” (Emphasis mine)49

In the novel, I will argue, what epitomizes the narcissistic fantasy of “Eden (or Edenic innocence)” which is to be traversed is Benjy’s infant-like idiocy. Benjy’s self-centered and self-enclosed world is read as “an Edenic state of innocence.”50 It is noteworthy that John P. Anderson relates the term “Eden” to its anagram “Need.”51 That is to say, when we rearrange the letters of “Eden,” we can get the word “need.” Actually, considering Benjy’s infant-like state (as Bleikasten pointed out, the Latin word “in-fans” means speechless, dumb) unable to enter into the Symbolic, the language system, he could get no further than the stage of Need out of the Need-Demand-Desire triad in Lacanian terms. To quote the encyclopedia of Lacanian psychoanalysis:52

Need is a purely biological instinct, an appetite which emerges according to the requirements of the organism and which abates completely (even if only temporarily) when satisfied. The human subject, being born in a state of helplessness, is unable to satisfy its own needs, and hence depends on the Other to help it satisfy them. In order to get the Other’s help, the infant must express its needs vocally; need must be articulated in demand. The primitive demands of the infant may only be inarticulate screams, but they serve to bring the Other to

minister to the infant’s needs. However, the presence of the Other soon acquires an importance in itself, an importance that goes beyond the satisfaction of need, since this presence symbolizes the Other’s love. Hence demand soon takes on a double function, serving both as an articulation of need and as a demand for love. However, whereas the Other can provide the objects which the subject requires to satisfy his needs, the Other cannot provide that unconditional love which the subject craves. Hence even after the needs which were articulated in demand have been satisfied, the other aspect of demand, the craving for love, remains unsatisfied, and this leftover is desire.

“Desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second.”53

Desire is thus the surplus produced by the articulation of need in demand;

“Desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand becomes separated from need.”54

Unlike a need, which can be satisfied and which then ceases to motivate the subject until another need arises, desire can never be satisfied; it is constant in its pressure, and eternal. The realization of desire does not consist in being “fulfilled,” but in the reproduction of desire as such.

That is to say, when the subject’s language cannot communicate what he needs and thus his needs cannot be satisfied, the gap engenders desire; desire is the successive and repetitive craving for filling-out the gap which can never be satisfied by anything except death. In the Lacanian sense, Benjy is not a subject who follows the father’s law (the so-called “the Name of the Father”), cognizant of the separation from the primal and foremost object—the mother. Benjy is self-centered but ironically self-less because he has no central “I,” no sense of identity due to his ignorance of division, separation;

54 Ibid., p. 311.
moreover, he is a speechless, infant-like (or animal-like) idiot—he is indeed self-less, deaf and dumb, thus, stripped to naked need, devoid of intelligence and memory, deprived of language and robbed even of sex and name; thus, André Bleikasten read his name change from Maury to Benjamin at his mother’s request as a loss of identity, the more so as it is linked to Benjy’s repudiation by Mrs. Compson.\textsuperscript{55}

According to Lacan, language is the substitute for the lost mother’s body. An infant begins to learn language when he comes to acknowledge that the mother (the primal object) is an other existence separate from himself. In other words, language occurs as the infant’s way of coming to terms with his “mother-loss.” However, for Benjy as a deaf and dumb idiot deprived of language, there is no way he can express his needs vocally except by bellowing. Benjy’s idiocy binds him to the world of “need”; no matter how severely he does “try to say,” he cannot even know what he has lost and thus what he needs; even though he keeps bellowing, it is “just sound and fury” signifying nothing;\textsuperscript{56} there is no way he can escape from the state. Therefore, if Benjy’s (paradoxically) self-centered world is to be read as “an Edenic state of innocence,” I will argue here, this “Eden” is obviously different from the Biblical Eden.

In Benjy’s case, “innocence” obviously refers to “ignorance.” Benjy is in blind ignorance of ‘what is good and what is evil,’ ‘what is prohibited,’ and thus, most of all, ‘what he lost.’ Faulkner also commented, “Benjy is incapable of good and evil because he had no knowledge of good and evil.”\textsuperscript{57} Figuratively saying, Benjy has never tasted the

\textsuperscript{55} See André Bleikasten’s \textit{The Most Splendid Failure} (p. 75) and \textit{A Critical Casebook} (xiii).
\textsuperscript{56} Thus, Bleikasten says, “Benjy’s cries fail to say what he failed to preserve; they are the burning language of absence and the blind eloquence of the absurd. They are nothing: “just sound”” (\textit{The Most Splendid Failure}, 189).
\textsuperscript{57} James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (eds.), \textit{Lion in the Garden}, p. 246.
bitter fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thus never has been expelled from Eden. In other words, if he stays in an Edenic state of innocence, it is because he has no idea of loss or separation. Thus, “the Edenic state of innocence” can be translated into “the blind self-centeredness of innocence” totally ignorant of the reality. To use Faulkner’s words, “Benjy was fixed forever in the “self-centeredness of innocence” needing tenderness to shelter him”; “Benjy wasn’t rational enough even to be selfish. He was an animal…. He knew only that something was wrong, which left a vacuum in which he grieved. He tried to fill that vacuum.” Indeed, he does not know what he lost, either his beloved sister Caddy or her virginity, thus he cannot suffer from the loss; he just feels something is wrong instinctively. Although he continues waiting for his sister at the gate, he hardly knows whom he is actually waiting for. In his associational blending of past and present, he constantly regenerates his lost sister in his memory; thus, he has no idea of loss of Caddy in that, as Bleikasten said, “to sense loss takes at the very least a subliminal awareness of difference between was and is.” In Benjy’s self-centered universe of innocence, the only possible distinction is the opposition of presence and absence which brings him pleasure and displeasure to which he responds by crying or silence. To quote Bleikasten, 

Jimson weed, fire, the cushion and Caddy’s slipper are things which Benjy likes. When they “go away,” he starts crying or howling; when they “come back” (another recurrent phrase in his monologue), he “hushes.” … Benjy’s acute and

58 Ibid., p. 146.
59 Elizabeth M. Kerr, William Faulkner’s Gothic Domain (Literary Criticism Series); 1979, p. 63.
60 James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (eds.), Lion in the Garden, p. 246.
61 André Bleikasten, The Most Splendid Failure, p. 76
62 Ibid., p. 76.
63 Ibid., pp. 73-74.
unfailing responsiveness to the disappearance and return of objects brings to mind the symbolic fort/da game described by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. One day Freud watched a little boy playing with a wooden reel: “What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skillfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive ‘o-o-o-o’ [standing for ‘fort’=’gone’]. He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful ‘da’ [‘there’].”  

Freud’s interpretation of the game is that by staging the disappearance and return of the reel the little boy symbolized his “great cultural achievement—the instinctual renunciation… which he had made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting.” This is precisely what Benjy fails to do: he cannot renounce; he can only howl in impotent protest.

That is to say, whereas the little boy who plays with the reel can overcome / master his sense of loss caused by the absence of the mother through the *fort/da* game, Benjy is unable to do so because he cannot even sense the loss. Benjy is kept inside the Garden of Eden with the ignorance (i.e. innocence) of separation from the mother-like Caddy. Thus, if Benjy’s Edenic state comes from his ignorance (innocence) due to his idiocy which symbolizes his total dependency and limitation inside the Garden of Eden, is not his Eden a dungeon to escape rather than a paradise to recover? He is imprisoned in his Eden, that is, “the blind self-centeredness of innocence” by his own limitations. To quote Anderson, “Benjy incarnates the limitations of the innocent and dependent life in the Garden where innocence is based on limitation.” He can never escape from it. Actually, Benjy also plays with spools like Freud’s little boy (Benjy as a physically grown man takes the spools from baby Quentin aggressively), but in Benjy’s case what the spool (its wheel

---

65 Ibid., p. 15.
shape) signifies is “an eternal cyclical return” to his Edenic state of innocence, rather than mastering a loss. Thus, if Benjy is trapped in a process of constantly regenerating Caddy in his memory, it means that he is a prisoner of eternal repetition who shall constantly return to the same state, same place, same memory without any chance to get out of it, and thus who can never fall from his prison-like Eden. That is to say, Benjy is an impotent prisoner unable to escape the cyclical return; for the poor idiot, ex-centering from “the blind self-centeredness of innocence” is impossible; for Benjy, indeed, what he is deprived of is not only his tenderest caretaker, Caddy, but also a way out from the Compson compound which represents the egocentricity (in other words, “the obsessive self-absorption,” “the blind self-centeredness”) of all the Compsons. In the novel, when Benjy goes out through the unlatched gate only once, he is castrated. To quote Bleikasten:

“Gate” is another key word of the first section. It belongs to the same set of symbols as the fence, but contrary to the latter the gate is not only a limit and an obstacle; it can also become an opening and give access to the other world. As a promise of escape, it exercises an irresistible attraction over Benjy. Every day he runs down to the gate and stays there like a sentry on duty or, to use one of Jason’s animal metaphors, like an imprisoned bear clutching at the bars of its cage…. The gate symbolizes Benjy’s blind yearning from freedom, but let us not forget that this yearning is one with his desire for Caddy’s return.68

From this perspective, I will argue here, “the Eden of innocence” represented by Benjy is not a paradise at all; rather, it is what man as Adam must leave to discover his humanity for a new life, for another life, that is to say, to get another chance for freedom.

Thus, to return to the issue of Caddy and her feminine ex-orbitance, if Caddy is compared to Eve who caused the Fall from Eden by climbing up the forbidden tree, here,

67 Ibid., p. 80.
68 André Bleikasten, The Most Splendid Failure, pp. 81-82.
I would like to reinterpret the “fall” as “departure” equated with exodus/exile (Greek: ἔξοδος, eksodos = “departure”) in association with the ex-centricity of Delta, the “ex-,” as a way out from the Compson family’s blind self-centeredness. This is, I have already argued, the reason why Caddy’s climbing up the tree should be considered as a brave act in an affirmative sense. By climbing up the (forbidden) tree, figuratively, she is “climbing out of” the Eden of innocence. That is to say, she acts and embodies a way out from the imaginary Edenic innocence. In The Sound and the Fury, thus, she is not falling but departing; as an ex-centric opening force (like an overwhelming centrifugal force), she is breaking open every enclosure of the narcissistic circle and overflowing elsewhere, as we see in the diagram of Delta. So, if the scene in which, on the night of Dammudy’s funeral, the little Caddy climbs up the pear tree showing her underpants while her three brothers “stay timidly below and are content with staring at the stain on her drawers,” 69 is the seminal scene of the novel which is continuously and successively recreated through the three male narrators’ memories, it is because the imagery of Caddy’s soiled pants is, I will argue, the very emblem of Caddy’s characteristic in association with her courage and capability of “getting outside” rather than her sexual falling. Faulkner clarifies:

It started out as a short story about two children being sent out to play in the yard during their grandmother’s funeral. Only one of the little girls was big enough to climb a tree to look in the window to see what was going on. It was going to be a story of blood gone bad. The story told wasn’t all. The idiot child had started out as a simple prop at first as a bid for extra sympathy. Then I thought what would the story be told like as he saw it. So I had him look at it. When I’d finished I had a quarter of the book written, but is still wasn’t all. It still wasn’t enough. So then Quentin told the story as he saw it and it still wasn’t enough. Then Jason told the story and it still wasn’t enough. Then I tried to tell the story and it still was not

69 Ibid., p. 54.
enough, and so I wrote the appendix and it wasn’t enough. It’s the book I feel
tenderest towards. I couldn’t leave it alone, and I never could tell it right, though
I tried hard and would like to try again though I’d probably fail again. It’s the
tragedy of two lost women: Caddy and her daughter. (Lion in the Garden, 222)

As I have already discussed, thus, if Caddy Compson
occupies the pivotal point at the intersection of four parts of
the novel as the object-cause which engenders the four
different narratives of the novel and, simultaneously, the
common vacuum of her three brothers and the novel itself as
an opening gap of the (four) male narrator’s narcissistic self-enclosed monologues, she
must necessarily ex-sist as the missing figure that her three brothers and the author
himself must lose or can never possess; owing to her ex-centric ex-sistence as the forever
elusive element, the text itself can be continuously transfigured. From this perspective, I
will argue, it is unfair to say, as several critics have asserted, that Caddy’s sexual falling
from innocence which her soiled pants prefigure caused the ruin of Compson family in
the end. Faulkner himself explained that the symbolic meaning of the soiled pants was
not intended from the beginning:

“It began with a mental picture. I didn’t realize at the time it was symbolical. The
picture was of the muddy seat of a little girl’s drawers in a pear tree, where she
could see through a window where her grandmother’s funeral was taking
place….” (Lion in the Garden, 245)

“I just began to write about a brother and a sister splashing one another in the
brook and the sister fell and wet her clothing and the smallest brother cried,
thinking that the sister was conquered or perhaps hurt. …I saw that peaceful
glinting of that branch was to become the dark, harsh flowing of time sweeping
her to where she could not return to comfort him, but that just separation, division, would not be enough, not far enough. It must sweep her into dishonor and shame too. (“Introduction to The Sound and the Fury” in Bleikasten’s *A Critical Casebook*, 12)

That is to say, to create a seminal figure “to be lost” Caddy’s muddy underpants should necessarily be connected to her sexual falling. However, if Caddy ex-sists (or, acts) as disruptive and fluid excess, in the feminine mode of being overflowing, which “resists and explodes every firmly established form, figure, idea or concept,”70 is not the “muddy seat” an enforced stigma for exile which is branded by “rabid patriarch[s] and curator[s] of the values of the solid economy”71 out of their horror of fluids? Here again, I need to insist that the muddy mark should be linked to flooding in terms of “getting outside” or “going elsewhere,” rather than “falling.”

Caddy’s muddy drawers are replaced by her daughter Miss Quentin’s discarded soiled undergarment near the end of the novel. Thus, several critics such as Bleikasten and Kerr take note of the cyclical plot structure. Bleikasten asserts, “The ending takes us back full circle to the beginning.”72 However, if the two lost women function as “ex-” of *The Sound and the Fury* “trying to get outside the boundary” and “risking failure,” I will argue, the repetition does not come full circle; rather, if the inheritor of Eve’s legacy returns in the end, the returning is slightly derailed. If we can say that Quentin follows the same path which her mother had taken, it is to the extent that she is also very eager to “be out” of the Compson family representing the narcissistic self-reflexivity, in other words,

71 Ibid., p. 52.
the melancholic narcissism. Thus, although Caddy’s daughter seems to repeat Caddy’s life, what she actually embodies is not “returning” but “going forward” or “going outside” in that both of the two women’s yearning for being outside, whether exile or escape, signify the desire for new possibilities; in other words, what Miss Quentin (or both of the two lost women) embodies in the novel is a turn of the screw for another departure which makes the story be told again in another way. Faulkner insists:

I don’t have hold to the idea of a return. That once the advancement stops then it dies. It’s got to go forward and we have got to take along with us all the rubbish of our mistakes and our errors. We must cure them; we mustn’t go back to a condition, and idyllic condition, in which the dream [made us think] we were happy, we were free of trouble and sin. We must take the trouble and sin along with us, and we must cure that trouble and sin as we go. We can’t go back to a condition in which…. (Lion in the Garden, 131; Emphasis is mine)

This is the very reason why the author himself affirms the two women by saying that The Sound and the Fury is the tragedy of two lost women—Caddy and her daughter; they do not have any naïve dream to return to a seemingly Edenic state; they focus on “getting outside” their limitation, their boundary, to “go forward” despite any risk to fail. In the same context, thus, John P. Anderson asserts:

Eve’s legacy powers the sexually potent and courageous sister Caddy. Her daughter Quentin follows the same path. They may go wrong, but at least they go. They leave home and experiment. They are doers. They carry on the “restless dynamic” of J’s Yahweh and Eve. They seek new possibilities.

The Compson sons, on the other hand, continue to share the dependent aspects of the traditional eternal return outlook and restrict their possibilities. Lacking vitality, they remain at home in one form or another without the possibility of change or growth. They are prisoners of repetition and strangers to
new possibilities.\textsuperscript{73}

The two Eves leave home; Caddy is exiled and Miss Quentin escapes; both of them are forced out of home and never return. But, here, what is at stake is that in any way, the two women seek progress, willingly taking risks for new chances / possibilities. So, it is noteworthy that Anderson links the key feature of the two women to Caddy’s true name Candace—can dice or dance: willing to roll the dice or to take new chances.\textsuperscript{74} Caddy might fail and Quentin also may fail, but to quote Faulkner’s words, what counts is that they’ve done \textit{something}.\textsuperscript{75} According to Faulkner, the real failure is to stay only inside of the boundary of what we really can do; without risking failure, we cannot get outside our limitation; when we try something we can’t do, we may fail, but we should still try it and fail, then try it again; that is success in the true sense.\textsuperscript{76}

Then, contrary to the two lost women, how do Caddy’s three brothers fail to get outside of their limitation, the autistic self-enclosed narcissism? Most of all, if Caddy occupies the traumatic central lack in their narcissistic universes, all of them fail to cope with the lack. That is to say, all the three male Compsons fail to traverse their narcissistic fantasy in association with the phallic desire to fill out the empty void which represents the loss of their own individual \textit{objet a}; Benjy stays in the Edenic state without recognition of the loss owing to his idiocy; Quentin does not accept the loss, fails to fill out the vacancy, and thus is swallowed up by nothingness that the empty void symbolizes in the end; Jason sacrifices his whole life for nothing—the nothingness is, in his case, the loss of a job opportunity at Herbert’s bank that is seemingly caused by Caddy—which is

\textsuperscript{73} John P. Anderson, \textit{The Sound and the Fury in the Garden of Eden}, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{75} James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (eds.), \textit{Lion in the Garden}, p. 227.
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 88.
to say, just because of what never was, he ruins every chance to live his real life in the present only to get revenge on Caddy and her daughter. In other words, all of them fail to escape their traumatic memory and their self-enclosed universe, i.e., pathological self-absorption because all their efforts to get over the loss are fundamentally based on Narcissism; thus, even when they are alive, they are like the living dead; what they are living is a dead life, the life of eternal loss. Indeed, Quentin’s section is narrated in the past tense; which is to say, Quentin is already dead, “when his memory begins to unravel its recollections”77; thus, Blikasten said, “Quentin does not have a memory; to a large extent, he is his memory.”78

Quentin is obviously pathologically a melancholic Narcissus. For Quentin who says “If I’d just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother” (109),79 Caddy is the mother-like or twin-like, the essential existence inseparable from him. In the suffocating mood of the Compson family that is caused by parental failure—a detached mother (who is fully absorbed in self-pity, calling her own children “strangers nothing of mine whom I am afraid of” (66)) and an indifferent and impotent father (who is an alcoholic nihilist) made their home a dungeon—, Caddy is the only one who can make Quentin breathe—we can see Caddy’s characteristic as an opening force in her saying, “You know what I’d do if I were King? … I’d break that place open and drag them out…” (109). Caddy is the only one who can appease Quentin’s hunger for love instead of the mother or any other girl; only she is able to love, to give her love to others, in his cold family, as a warm and comforting force like the fire for Benjy.

78 André Bleikasten, The Most Splendid Failure, p 129.
Quentin desires Caddy to be the very thing that makes up for his vacancy and thus completes the wholeness/fullness of his being as the exact missing part of him; thus, for him, Caddy is the absolute thing which should never be lost, nor be deprived of. So, I will insist here that if he struggles to keep her forever in the prison of (sexual) innocence, it is indeed for his own desire for exclusive possession of Caddy rather than for the preservation of his own traditional ideas on virginity and family honor. If Quentin’s first apparent violence to Caddy had occurred on the day of Damuddy’s funeral—when the seven-year-old Caddy took her wet dress off, the nine-year-old Quentin slapped her so that “she slipped and fell down in the water” (12), it was due to his instinctive fear: fear of losing her. What he almost instinctively tried to impede, even by force, is Caddy’s cognition of her own sexuality; for Quentin, if Caddy comes to have the knowledge of sexuality, it means that she will inevitably follow her predecessor (that is, Eve)’s pattern. In Quentin’s obsession with Caddy, if the Eden of innocence is the paradise in which only he and Caddy as Adam and Eve can be together, it should never be lost. In other words, the central aim of his struggle is to keep her from being possessed by anyone except him, rather than to fit her to the traditional Southern ideal of a woman. That is to say, even though Caddy is the only open space through which Quentin can breathe in the suffocating dungeon-like Compson family, he stifles Caddy with his frantically narcissistic attachment; he keeps on struggling to tie up and imprison Caddy who pursues desperately “outward” from inside his universe.

It is important to note that whereas in Benjy’s memory “she smelled like tree”
which indicates Caddy’s sexual innocence, in Quentin’s section, what is associated with Caddy is the imagery (either with color or with odor) of honeysuckle and water. Bleikasten asserts:

[T]he meaning of honeysuckle in Quentin’s monologue changes as Caddy changes, and its scent is irremediably corrupted when it comes to reek in his nostrils as the smell of her sex and sin. It is noteworthy that “honeysuckle,” which occurs about thirty times in section 2, is nowhere as frequent as in the scene immediately following Quentin’s discovery of his sister’s loss of virginity: the scent of honeysuckle then becomes the pivot in a shifting complex of sense impressions.  

The odor of honeysuckle which Quentin “used to like” (97) provokes his own unquenchable desire to be one with Caddy and at the same time causes him extreme anxiety considering Caddy’s running away from his grasp and the Eden (actually, the prison) of innocence evoking for him estrous odors of females. Thus, it becomes “the very emblem of his anguish and torment.” In his fragmented memories, when he was a little boy, being alienated from their parents, especially from Mother, he could feel lost and alone with Caddy in silent darkness “without even a ray of light” (110) and then always “the honeysuckle got into it” (110); that is to say, when he was left alone in his dark room and tried to go to sleep, the smell of honeysuckle began to come into his room and choked him. Then, at first, the smell of honeysuckle has not been associated with Caddy’s sexuality; rather, it might be the smell of his desperate craving to be loved, to fill his vacancy, by and with Caddy.

Like the honeysuckle which climbs by twining, he might desire to “climb out of”

---

81 André Bleikasten, *The Most Splendid Failure*, p 64.
the dungeon-like empty home by encircling or enfolding Caddy. As honeysuckle symbolizes bonds of love, generous and devoted affection, and fidelity in the floral meaning, paradoxically, the smell of it might unbearably evoke his maternal lack; thus, his desire to fill the lack with Caddy instead of Mother might choke him. Like the honeysuckle which has two different color flowers (white and yellow) on a stalk, for Quentin, he and Caddy must be the inseparable part to each other like twins or doubles. Thus, Caddy is everything for him; Quentin demands “Give me love! Give me happiness! Give me future! Fill me up and make me tranquil!”; Caddy is the only one who can give him all he needs. However, it is his illusion based on fundamental narcissism in terms of psychoanalysis. Although what he desires is the sense of belonging and of wholeness, ironically, what his narcissistic desire brings about is the alienation of his being (and, her being also). In terms of psychoanalysis, the formula of narcissistic love becomes “You = I”; the narcissistic one cannot admit the distance between “You and I.” In this narcissism, what I desire to see is not you but my-self via you; what I love is not you just the way you are but my ideal ego as my mirror-image; it is not object-libido but ego-libido.82

Thus, in Quentin’s narcissistic world, that is, “the blind self-centeredness,” there is no place in which Caddy can breathe and exist. What Quentin demands of Caddy is not to be herself but to be “something more” for him. So, in Quentin’s narcissism, Caddy’s being must be denied and alienated. In Lacanian terms, Quentin is apparently stranded at the mirror stage; thus, Bleikasten asserted, “Quentin certainly remains an innocent inasmuch as innocence may be equated with “blind self-centeredness.””83

83 André Bleikasten, The Most Splendid Failure, p. 91.
Quentin, sexual-libido as object-libido is impossible; that is to say, Quentin is sexually impotent. I will argue that that is the very reason why Quentin struggles to deprive Caddy of sexuality (or, the knowledge of her own sexuality).

To return to the primary scene of the muddy seat of Caddy’s drawers, which several critics read as the presage of Caddy’s sexual falling that contributes to the downfall of the Compson family, the irony is that it was Quentin himself who made Caddy fall and get the muddy seat on her drawers. In Benjy’s memory, on the night of Dammudy’s funeral, when Caddy got her dress wet playing in the branch, she wanted to take off her dress. Caddy asked Versh to help her unbutton her dress, but Quentin warned him not to. Caddy took her dress off and threw it on the bank, and Quentin slapped her so that she fell down in the water and got the muddy seat on her underpants. That is to say, I will argue here, Quentin had almost instinctively endeavored to stigmatize, and thus implant in Caddy’s mind, her sexuality as “falling” in association with the impurity of sin to be punished, even before she got to recognize her own sexuality. Caddy’s sexuality was a threat to his narcissistic Eden of innocence; thus it should be rejected as a dreaded sin. If the loss of Caddy’s virginity caused his unbearable suffering, I will insist, it was because it had shattered his narcissistic “Eden of innocence” which he had imagined as the paradise, the only place where just the two of them could be alone together without any intervention rather than because she betrayed the traditional ideal of Southern womanhood.

What is interesting is that, right after she had fallen, Caddy retaliated. When Caddy got up in the water she began to splash water on Quentin, and Quentin splashed water on her until both of them became fully wet. And, Quentin said, “Now I guess
you’re satisfied. We’ll both get whipped now.” The irony is that the same association of sexuality, mud, and water is echoed, but reversely, when Quentin smears mud from his body on hers right after his childhood sex play with Natalie. After having his sexual experimentation witnessed by Caddy, Quentin jumps into the stinking hog wallow, and compels Caddy to share his mudbath—just as Caddy made him drenched along with her in the branch. Obviously, in Quentin’s consciousness, mud is associated with sexual impurity, and is thus the symbol of guilt and sin. Therefore, I will argue, the reason why Quentin smears the “mud” of his own shame on Caddy’s body is, on the one hand, to share guilt and punishment, and, on the other hand, to engrave sexual coupling as a filthy and stinking sin in association with the stinky mud from the hog wallow on her consciousness, and thus to make her “damn it”—“You dont you dont I’ll make you give a damn” (86)—in the same line as he linked her sexuality to “falling” and the “muddy” seat of her underpants in the branch. Thus, it is critical to note Thompson’s words, “Quentin had smeared mud on Caddy at more than one time and in more than one sense.”84 Another irony is that it is in the same branch that Quentin and Caddy wash off the stinking mud after the Natalie incident. As we can see, the water has, indeed, a unique place in Quentin’s section; it is in the branch near the Compson house that Caddy and Quentin play together and she wets her dress and gets the muddy seat on her drawers on the day of their grandmother’s death; it is in the same branch they purify themselves by washing off the stinky mud of the hog wallow; it is there again that Quentin lays his body in company with Caddy who is sitting in the water to cleanse her body after her first sex; lastly, it is also in the water that Quentin kills himself.85 Therefore, I will argue here, what

84 Lawrance Thompson, *William Faulkner: An Introduction and Interpretation*, p. 43.
85 André Bleikasten, *The Most Splendid Failure*, p. 60.
the water signifies for Quentin is that it is the crucial medium through or in which
Quentin could be always with Caddy.

Meanwhile, with regard to the relationship between Caddy and Quentin, the water
is also apparently portrayed as Caddy’s element, throughout the novel. From this
perspective, it is critical to note Quentin’s conversation with Caddy right after they got
fully wet in the water. When Quentin said “We’ll both get whipped now,” Caddy replied,
“I don’t care. I’ll run away. I’ll run away and never come back” (12). Here, I will insist,
this dialogue is the very emblematic presage of the whole story between Quentin and
Caddy in the novel, more precisely speaking, in Quentin’s distorted, broken
consciousness. Most of all, this conversation shows us the characteristic of Caddy;
throughout the whole narratives, she desires to run away, to go out; she repeatedly says,
“I’ll run away,” “I hate this house. I’m going to run away” (45). Thus, if the odor of
honeysuckle all mixed up with the smell of water, rain, and dusk keeps choking Quentin,
it is because those smells evoke Caddy’s fluidity that slips and runs away from his grasp
like running water. That is to say, in the odor of honeysuckle, his greedy thirst for Caddy
comes to explode due to his anxiety about losing her. So, he keeps fretting “I wish it
wouldn’t rain…” (43), cursing “damn that honeysuckle I wish it would stop” (97).

The odor of honeysuckle becomes Quentin’s private symbol of sex after he
witnesses Caddy’s sexual love with Dalton Ames. Upon discovering Caddy’s loss of
virginity, for Quentin, the problem is not Caddy’s sexual misconduct. Actually, in his
conversation with Caddy in the famous branch scene, Quentin shows no concern with
family’s honor or the morality of Caddy’s conduct. What he asks her is only whether she
loves Dalton Ames. For Quentin, the real problem is that whereas Caddy has reached
sexual maturity and acquired the knowledge of sexuality, which he has struggled to prohibit her from, Quentin himself is sexually impotent—as already noted, Quentin is fettered by narcissistic ego-libido, not sexual-libido as object-libido—so that he cannot be compatible with her anymore.

When Caddy is lying in the water to cleanse Ames’s sperm left in her body after her first sex, Quentin walks into the filthy water of sin to join in her falling. Now Caddy seems to emit her sexuality through her whole body. In his monologue, more precisely speaking, in his consciousness, Quentin refers to the smell of honeysuckle as though it were a carnal secretion on the surface of her skin, a substance exuded from her flesh. 86 Quentin lays his body on top of Caddy’s. And the odor of honeysuckle is all around them. All mixed up in the water. He feels suffocated by the smell of his own lust (or, maybe her lust). Quentin cannot accept that Caddy loves another person not him; he insists, “he made you do it let him he was stronger than you and he tomorrow Ill kill him I swear …. Caddy you hate him don’t you don’t you” (95), but Caddy makes reply with pity, “poor Quentin” (95).

As we see, in this scene, the smell and color of honeysuckle turn gray in the water, in association with death. Quentin used to like the odor of honeysuckle in his childhood because he could soothe himself by associating it with Caddy whenever he felt lonely and

86 André Bleikasten, The Most Splendid Failure, p. 64.
discarded. But now the odor of honeysuckle suffocates Quentin because it provokes his extreme anxiety over losing Caddy. For Quentin, what it signifies now is that his desire to engross Caddy’s love is betrayed and foiled irremediably. Thus, in his desperation, it is now the scent of Caddy’s betrayal and corruption; it stinks like dead water and makes Quentin gasp for breath evoking pain from the bitter awareness that he has lost the only space (that is, Caddy or her love for him) through which he has been able to breathe.

Yes I hate him I would die for him I've already died for him I die for him over and over again everytime this goes

....
you've never done that have you
what done what
that what I have what I did (95).

As Harold Bloom pointed out, in her answer, Caddy’s choice of words suggests that orgasm, which allows one to transcend the self, has provided brief escapes from her oppression.⁸⁷ Quentin and Caddy used to compete with each other in their childhood; thus, here, Caddy’s question “You’ve never done that, have you?” seems to signify that she taunts Quentin to incite him to emulate her. However, as already noted, Quentin is a character who is fully absorbed in his ‘self’ like Narcissus incarnate; it is impossible for him “to transcend the self.” Thus, Caddy’s traumatic question, “Have you ever done that” (93) and “Poor Quentin you've never done that have you” (94), echoes in Quentin’s broken consciousness even until shortly before his death.

Meanwhile, some critics read this scene as Caddy offering to commit incest. However, Quentin never wants any change to their childhood innocent relationship;

moreover, he is sexually impotent; thus, Quentin cannot ‘do’ commit incest although he will need to ‘say’ as if he did it.

I opened my knife do you remember the day damuddy died when you sat down in the water in your drawers
yes
I held the point of the knife at her throat
it wont take but a second just a second then I can do mine I can do mine then (96).

Here, it is remarkable that Quentin puts his knife (as a phallic symbol) to Caddy’s throat which seems to effuse the odor of thick gray honeysuckle, in his perception, like the female vagina emitting the estrus odor. In suffering and impotence, Quentin threatens to kill her, but he drops his knife into the water. He curses the smell of honeysuckle, “damn that honeysuckle I wish it would stop,” then Caddy says, “you used to like it” (97). But now it makes Quentin feel castrated. What it means now is that he cannot escape the loss of his exclusive childhood relationship with Caddy which was like the bond between mother and son, just as he cannot escape from the pervasive odor. Thus, Bleikasten asserts that the sweet “honey” of sisterhood, which Quentin so avidly “suckled” in his childish greed, has thickened into a suffocating substance, and now has the bitter taste of loss.88 For Quentin, “Honeysuckle [becomes] the saddest odor of all” (107).

After Caddy disappeared with Dalton Ames through the woods leaving Quentin behind, at the branch, what he feels is the very smell of honeysuckle getting stronger and stronger in the gray darkness; here, what the smell of honeysuckle evokes is not mere a sexuality but the death itself.

… as soon as I got there I began to smell honeysuckle again… the honeysuckle

---

88 André Bleikasten, *The Ink of Melancholy*, p. 54.
getting stronger and stronger and the smell of water then I could see the water the
color of gray honeysuckle I lay down on the bank with my face close to the
ground so I couldn't smell the honeysuckle I couldn't smell it then and I lay there
feeling the earth going through my clothes listening to the water and after a while
I wasn't breathing so hard and I lay there thinking that if I didn't move my face I
wouldn't have to breathe hard and smell it and then I wasn't thinking about
anything at all…. (98-99; Emphasis mine)

Quentin has believed that only Caddy as his missing part can and will fill up the vacancy
of his being, but now he must face the fact that she betrayed his desire; thus, the empty
space which was supposed to be filled out by Caddy became “the place where nothing
takes place but the place.”^89 Now what the empty space signifies is the very loss of Caddy,
and thus the void of Quentin’s being is filled by gray emptiness. It is noteworthy that in
Quentin’s section, that is, in his shattered monologue, “the gray darkness” occurs
repeatedly in association with the odor and color of honeysuckle and water since
Quentin’s recognition of Caddy’s loss of virginity. Figuratively speaking, from the
moment he learns that he lost his Caddy, Quentin’s being becomes encroached by the
gray part which represents the emptiness more and more until he is devoured completely
by the gray darkness which signifies death itself.

\[^89\] Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular
Whereas Benjy stays in the Edenic state of innocence in blind ignorance of separation / loss, Quentin’s universe becomes hell after realizing that he is deprived of Caddy’s love; he cannot bear any intruder—whoever he is—into his imaginary exclusive relationship with Caddy; he cannot accept the fact that he lost her; so he becomes schizophrenic in struggling to negate the loss. Thus, if language is the substitute for the lost mother’s body, in other words, if a child begins to learn language to fill the vacuum caused by the loss of mother, whereas language is not allowed Benjy from the beginning, Quentin’s language becomes shattered in his self-division; his dead language becomes the sound and the fury more and more signifying nothing but his failure, impotence, and death at the end.

In his fragmented language, Quentin repeatedly recalls his confession—either in fact or in his imagination—to his father that he has committed incest with Caddy. Father diagnoses, “you wanted to sublime a piece of natural human folly into a horror and then exorcise it with truth (112); but Quentin answers, “it was to isolate her out of the loud world so that it would have to flee us of necessity and then the sound of it would be as though it had never been…” (112). In other words, by confessing that he committed incest with Caddy, what Quentin really wants is to isolate Caddy somehow from the rest of the world just to be alone with her as he was in his childhood. To isolate her, he should brand her as the source of evil to be exiled. He says, “all of a sudden I knew he wasn’t thinking of me at all as a potential source of harm but was thinking of her when he looked at me was looking at me through her like through a piece of colored glass” (111). That is to say, in Quentin’s mind, Caddy is already Eve herself who is branded as the beginning of evil by the (God) Father. So, if she can not escape the necessity of being fallen from Eden, the only one who can be with her forever should be none other than himself. If the
Eden of “only I and You” is now impossible for him, he would rather be with her in the innermost recesses of Hell than let her go, let her be accessible to anyone else in this loud world.

Because if it were just to hell; if that were all of it. Finished. If things just finished themselves. Nobody else there but her and me. If we could just have done something so dreadful that they would have fled hell except us. I have committed incest I said Father it was I it was not Dalton Ames.... (50-51)

He can neither accept that Dalton Ames is the one who Caddy loves and gave her virginity to; only he himself must be the sole possessor of her love and body. Although he tried to expel Dalton Ames, he failed, due to his impotence and feebleness “like a girl” (103). Then, to separate Caddy from Dalton Ames, she must be exiled. In Quentin’s mind, Caddy must be Eve to be exiled with him. Thus, throughout his fragmented memories, Caddy is often associated with the imagery of the Garden of Eden and the odor of the apple tree; especially it is the memory of the night before Caddy’s wedding which most troubles him (67, 72). If he cannot but depart from Eden due to Caddy’s sinful knowledge of sexuality, the person to share the punishment with her shall be neither Dalton Ames nor Herbert Head—actually, never anybody else—but he himself as Adam, the true partner of Eve. Just as he would let himself get all wet with Caddy right after she had fallen and got the seat of her drawers muddy on the night of Dammudy’s funeral, Quentin decides that he will be with Caddy; even if they have already lost Eden, they shall be alone together all the time, at any cost, even by falling into Hell. Thus, when he recalls their mudbath after the Natalie incident, Quentin confesses “mud was warmer than the rain it smelled awful” (86). However, it seems that Caddy would rather fly away in the “kimono-winged” (67). Caddy’s tantalizingness is frustrating, tormenting, and killing him.
In the midst of schizophrenia, he obsessively repeats;

*If it could just be a hell beyond that: the clean flame the two of us more than dead. Then you will have only me then only me then the two of us amid the pointing and the horror beyond the clean flame ... Only you and me then amid the pointing and the horror walled by the clean flame.* (74)

Only if he can be alone with her in the darkness of Hell, then the clean purifying flame of hell would wall them off from the rest of the world forever. Thus, Quentin forces Caddy to say they committed incest, “well have to go away amid the pointing and the horror the clean flame Ill make you say we did Im stronger than you Ill make you know we did you thought it was them but it was me…” (94). But she answers, “Poor Quentin you’ve never done…” (94).

Quentin breaks down. He is disheartened by the fact that there remains nothing to do to recover his Caddy. His frustrated desire makes him feel “the shadows of things like dead things in stagnant water” (100). Thus, the odor of honeysuckle as the smell of his unmitigated desire which was once “sweet” has become as stinky as the smell of death. He says, “I wish you were dead … Ill kill you do you hear” (100); it shows his desperate desire to keep her even by killing her. He cries, “whore whore” (101), and recalls his memory of honeysuckle;

*Honeysuckle was the saddest odor of all, I think I remember lots of them. … I could feel water beyond the twilight, smell. When it bloomed in the spring and it rained the smell was everywhere you didn’t notice it so much at other times but when it rained the smell began to come into the house at twilight either it would rain more at twilight or there was something in the light itself but it always smelled strongest then until I would lie in bed thinking when will it stop when will it stop. The draft in the door smelled of water, a damp steady breath. Sometimes I could put myself to sleep saying that over and over until after the*
honeysuckle got all mixed up in it the whole thing came to symbolise night and unrest I seemed to be lying neither asleep nor awake looking down a long corridor of gray halflight where all stable things had become shadowy paradoxical all I had done shadows all I had felt suffered taking visible form antic and perverse mocking without relevance inherent themselves with the denial of the significance they should have affirmed thinking I was I was not who was not was not who. (107-108; Emphasis mine)

His desire is castrated, and now the smell of honeysuckle is the saddest odor. His ego comes to be split between the life wish and the death wish. He can feel and smell water beyond twilight “looking down a long corridor of gray halflight where all stable things had become shadowy”—in his memory and also present through the memory—with the desire to turn back to mother’s womb, the maternal water. His narcissistic self cannot know how to mourn; as a melancholic, he cannot escape his perverted narcissism, the destructive libido to be “one” with the beloved object by all means; thus his object-loss leads him to the death-drive, the desire to erase his own existence. The shadow as a part of his divided self, which embodies his death-drive, denies the significance of his life instead of affirming it, leading him to question his very existence. Thus, he is thinking “I was I was not who was not was not who” (108). “His words echo Hamlet’s as well as Macbeth’s, though Quentin thinks only in the past, not the future, wondering not whether he wants “to be or not to be,” but whether he “was” or “was not.” For Quentin, the last way to lay his unmitigated desire and anguish rest is to return to the water before birth;

92 Ibid., pp. 138-39.
“to the one and to zero; to the all and to nothingness; blotting out all otherness and erasing all difference.”

Although his father advises him, “no man ever does that under the first fury of despair or remorse or bereavement he does it only when he has realised that even the despair or remorse or bereavement is not particularly important… you will not do that (that is, kill yourself) until you come to believe that even she was not quite worth despair perhaps” (112-113), what Mr. Compson overlooks is Quentin is a patient of Melancholia overly devoted to narcissism (the self-destructive libido). The subject of melancholy who cannot accept the loss would regress to the Imaginary (in other words, the mirror stage in Lacanian terms), that is, the imaginary fantasy where he can be in ignorance of the loss/separation like Benjy. But in the case of Quentin, his mirror is already broken; thus, in front of “pieces of broken mirror” (108), when he has to face the fact that the reality of his objet a is “nothing,” he goes toward the end straightforwardly without any detour; he himself becomes nothing itself.

That is to say, if Caddy represents “what is not there” as the traumatic lack, the empty void of his being, now, the only way to reunite with her is that he himself must be “not.” Thus, he declares, “… then I’ll not be. The peacefullest words. Peacefullest words” (110;

93 André Bleikasten, *The Most Splendid Failure*, p. 120; 141.
Emphasis mine). Although Quentin has struggled to fill his vacuum by Caddy, that is, to complete the imaginary wholeness of his narcissistic universe by incorporating Caddy, he has failed due to the characteristic of Caddy as “opening space overflowing outward”; thus he will now be devoured by the emptiness, the nothingness, in the end. Or, in a sense, he might decide to accept Caddy’s challenge which had been made in the previous branch scene by these words: “I would die for him I’ve already died for him I die for him over and over again … you’ve never done that have you” (95); “ever do that Have you ever done that” (93). It was the question whether he ever experienced such sexual orgasm, but, consciously or unconsciously, Quentin takes up the challenge in the literal sense of the word. The irony is that whereas Caddy could “transcend the self” through her orgasm, Quentin fails to “transcend the self” even through death.

Thus, if we can say that Quentin’s section is the story of his meandering until he enters into the water of death, what he comes to get, at last, by drowning himself is not “apotheosis in which a temporary state of mind will become symmetrical above the flesh and aware both of itself and of the flesh” (112), but a mere failure of ek-stasis; that is to say, Quentin remains as Narcissus entrapped in his imaginary world, in the self-enclosedness of his narcissistic monologue, to the end. To the last, he fails to escape his “life-denying egocentricity.”94 Bleikasten says:

Surviving his own death as a disembodied I/eye, Quentin projects himself into afterdeath to be witness to his own dissolution; seeing himself dead, he will not be dead altogether. So what Quentin actually expects from his suicide is not at all a state of not-being but rather an ek-stasis, that is, literally, a standing outside and beyond his self—without any self-loss.95

---

However, I will argue, for Quentin who is deeply sinking into the thingified life like “flat-irons” in his self-division throughout his whole section, how can it be possible to stand outside his self? If, as Bleikasten asserts, “What Quentin’s “monologue” actually records is the process through which the entire fabric of a self is unraveled and comes apart,” what he comes to accomplish in the end is self-loss or self-destruction in the nothingness, not *ek-stasis*. To the end, he tenaciously clings to his narcissism, the violent and obsessive self-destruction and object-destruction simultaneously; from the beginning to the end he might have no idea of “standing outside” his self. This is the reason why he chooses the regressive path to death, after all. To vary Bleikasten’s words, Quentin is so irretrievably lost in the nothingness, the fatal lack of his being as the hole, so racked by his desire to be “not” that he no longer knows whether he *was* and *is* or not. “*Non fui. Sum, Fui. Nom (sic) sum*” (110): coming almost at the close of his monologue, these Latin words epitomize his total failure to be outside of his fatal narcissism, the blindly narcissistic universe.97 Just as Narcissus walked into the water to be one with the uncapturable lover, i.e., his own image reflected in the water, Quentin also walks into the water repeating compulsively, “*Non fui. Fui. Non sum* (I was not. I am. I was. I am not) … I was. I am not. … I am. I was not…” (110); which is to say, I will insist, to the end he serves and submits to his own desire to be with Caddy, here, symbolized by “*not,*” even by negating his very existence.

Jason is also imprisoned in his self-centered narcissistic world; just as the deaf and dumb Benjy’s “trying to say” in the associational blending of past and present and as the self-absorbed Quentin’s shattered monologue, Jason’s repetitively continuing

---

parenthetic claims—“I say(s),” “like I say,” “What I say”—shows his inability to listen to you. Noel Polk insists, “If Benjy is nonverbal and trying to say, and if Quentin is extremely verbal and trying not to say, trying to maintain order by keeping his words inside his head, Jason is intensely, loudly, desperately, gloriously oral. He keeps himself talking loudly so that he won’t have to listen to the voices that threaten him.”98 Jason is usually remarked on as the most rational character among Caddy’s three brothers, but he is not that much “saner” than his brothers in that he is just as obsessed with Caddy as they are; he cannot escape the rankling memory of Caddy, more precisely speaking, the memory that Caddy ruined his opportunity to get the promised job at Herbert’s bank by her misconduct, so he dedicates his later life to getting Caddy and her daughter, “the very symbol of the lost job itself” (191), in trouble. Contrary to Benjy and Quentin who desired to be with Caddy but lost her, Jason has barricaded himself away and blocked Caddy from returning home. But, he has also struggled to preserve his narcissistic world in the same way as his brothers, that is, by controlling Caddy. His section begins “Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say” (113), showing his irrational anger toward Caddy and her daughter Miss Quentin. He is blindly compensating for his wounded narcissism by tormenting them. Like his mother, he is fully absorbed in his relentless self-pity. Like his brothers, he is lost in his overwhelming self-centeredness; however, paradoxically, what he could get ultimately is only the loss of the self like Quentin, through the loss of the object—the job at the bank, the education at Harvard, Miss Quentin as the addressee of his revenge, or the purloined money; whatever it is. In other words, although he craves to fill his vacuum, what he gets is only self-estrangement and Miss Quentin’s running away

due to his blind self-centeredness.

Under Jason’s tyrannical control, his niece Miss Quentin is deprived of “being feminine.” If “a feminine mode of being” can be described by the characteristic of “being outside / going outside” as “ex-,” as I have already discussed, for Caddy’s daughter it has always been prohibited. Thus, after Miss Quentin’s escape from Jason’s domination and the dungeon-like house by “climbing down” the very pear tree that Caddy had climbed up to look into the window to see the forbidden scene of Death showing “the muddy seat of her drawers”—which comes to be replaced, in the end, by Miss Quentin’s “soiled undergarment of cheap silk a little too pink” (176)—when Jason opens up the locked door of Quentin’s room with the key from Mrs. Compson’s “huge bunch of rusted keys on an iron ring like a mediaeval jailer’s” (175), we come to see how violently and miserably Jason’s narcissism has devastated a poor little girl’s life.

It was not a girl’s room. It was not anybody’s room, and the faint scent of cheap cosmetics and the few feminine objects and the other evidences of crude and hopeless efforts to feminize it but added to its anonymity, giving it that dead and stereotyped transience of rooms in assignation houses. (176)

At last, “Not only has Miss Quentin herself escaped the dungeon; she has also freed her mother from Jason’s hell.”99 Then, if Caddy’s daughter makes a full circle by reenacting what Caddy had done in the family, it is noteworthy that Miss Quentin finally succeeds in escaping the Compson family on the night of the seventh day of April, 1928; between Jason’s section (April sixth, 1928) and Dilsey’s section (April eighth, 1928). On April 7, 1928, the first section of the novel, that is, Benjy’s section, begins; it is Benjy’s thirty-third birthday and at the same time the very day Miss Quentin succeeds in running away

---

from Jason’s grasp, and it is the Saturday before Easter. Thus, as John P. Anderson asserted,\textsuperscript{100} if the number 6 is symbolic of any closed construction, 7 is for a complete cycle, and 8 is for regeneration, I will insist that through the little Caddy (that is, Miss Quentin; Bleikasten calls her “Caddy’s debased copy”\textsuperscript{101})’s running away from the hell of Compson family, the desolate narcissistic enclosure, which signifies “the blind self-centeredness,” we come to Easter Sunday thinking of a new life and new possibilities.

Then, if the novel is the tragedy of two lost women, that is, Caddy and her daughter who were sacrificed by the destructive self-centeredness of the Compson family, where and how can we read any possible hope for resurrection, from the downfall of the Compson family, considering that the novel ends on Easter Sunday? Why does the last section of the novel fall on Easter Sunday?

If Benjy’s monologue in the opening section functions as a prologue to the novel, it is noteworthy too that he repeats what he did on the previous day (April Seventh, 1928; this is the title of the first section) in the last section (April Eighth, 1928). Particularly we can visit his private “graveyard,” which is briefly introduced in the opening section (35) and once more in the ending part of the novel (196-97). Thus, in terms of plot, as Bleikasten reads, “coming full circle, the final pages carry us back to the beginning.”\textsuperscript{102}

On April 8, 1928, the day seems just the same as the previous day; the only difference between the two days is the presence or absence of Miss Quentin (the second Caddy); she escaped from home yesterday. Then, why again, should we go to the graveyards, (Benjy’s private “graveyard” and Compson family cemetery) on Easter Sunday? Why does the novel begin and end with the scene of a “graveyard”? Bleikasten says:

\textsuperscript{100} John P. Anderson, \textit{The Sound and the Fury in the Garden of Eden}, p. 90; 199.
\textsuperscript{101} André Bleikasten, \textit{The Ink of Melancholy}, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{102} André Bleikasten, \textit{The Most Splendid Failure}, p. 184.
Lastly, there is Benjy’s curious penchant for graveyards. The visit to the family cemetery is one of the first scenes recalled in his monologue (9-13), and it is on another of these funeral trips that the novel ends. The cemetery is invariably the goal of the only outings allowed Benjy; ironically, his contacts with the external world are restricted to the immutable Sunday ritual of the pilgrimage to the family dead. The special significance that the place has for him is further emphasized by the fact that one of his favorite games is playing with what Dilsey and Luster call his “graveyard” (67-68)—a blue bottle, perched on a little mound, into which he sticks stalks of jimson weed. As Edmond Volpe notes, Benjy’s private graveyard may be taken as a derisory symbol of all his losses. The nasty smell of jimson weed has come to replace the clean smell of trees associated with Caddy. Considering that the weed was used by Southern Negroes in contraception and abortion, and that it was given obscene names by the hill people of Mississippi because of its phallic form, it is tempting to regard it also as an ironic symbol of lost manhood. Benjy’s game is mourning rite, a primitive commemoration of loss and death. The miniature graveyard and its fetid flowers condense all the ambiguities of his crippled and shrunk world—a world as close to its beginnings as to its end, forever arrested in its blind innocence, no sooner born than dead.\(^{103}\)

At either end of Benjy’s private graveyard, two empty blue bottles that once contained poison are fixed in the ground like tombstones; one contains “a withered stalk of jimson weed” (196) and in the other bottle Benjy puts a twig. John P. Anderson interprets the twig as the symbol of the cross, the sacred tree in the context of Easter.\(^{104}\) Thus, “considering that jimson weed was used by Southern Negroes in contraception and abortion,”\(^{105}\) we can say that in Benjy’s graveyard, paradoxically, the two contrary images coexist—Death/Loss and the promise of re-birth. If the jimson weed is a


\(^{105}\) André Bleikasten, *The Most Splendid Failure*, p. 85.
poisonous plant which is popularly called “angel’s trumpet,” what does it “trumpet (proclaim)” silently in the graveyard? Elizabeth M. Kerr reads it as “Angel strumpet,” that may be intended as “a punning reference to Caddy, an angel to Benjy and a strumpet to Jason and Quentin.” Therefore, the “withered jimson weed” might signify the loss of Caddy, above all; and at the same time, represent the impotence of the Compson males including Benjy’s loss of manhood, considering “that the weed was given obscene names by the hill people of Mississippi because of its phallic form.” Thus, John P. Anderson articulates:

The three sons Quentin, Jason and Benjy have no children. They are the end of the Compson line. The daughters Caddy and Quentin are to have children, but not from the sterile Compson male line. (Anderson, 64)

The impotent Compson males... struck in sterility and repetition, they are incapable of creating a new future. They do not have the blessing and cannot create new possibilities. (Anderson, 232)

Thus, if the twig in Benjy’s other blue bottle symbolizes the Cross, I will insist, what Benjy represents at the end of the novel is the poor, disabled, impotent Christ. It is notable that the first section of the novel takes place on Benjy’s thirty-third birthday (April 7, 1928); significantly, it is also Holy Saturday the day before Easter Sunday; thus, many critics assert that it alludes to the age of Jesus Christ at the time of his death. Indeed, near the end of the novel, when Caddy’s ghost is summoned by Luster’s whispering of her name, Benjy starts bellowing “the grave hopeless sound of all voiceless misery under the sun” (197) into maternal Dilsey’s breast, and this scene recalls the image of the dead

---

Christ in Mary’s arms, The Pietà by Michelangelo. The paradox is that Benjy is too impotent to assume the role of the risen Christ for the Resurrection and Redemption. Although some critics read Benjy as being sacrificed by the curse upon the Compsons’ sins, in a sense, he can neither assume the role of a scapegoat to carry the sins of his family; whether for a burnt offering or a sin offering to make atonement, while a scapegoat should be without blemish, Benjy had been castrated as the punishment for his attempt to step outside the family gate. Thus, we need to note Faulkner’s words as follows: “The only emotion I can have for Benjy is grief and pity for all mankind. You can’t feel anything for Benjy because he doesn’t feel anything…. He was a prologue like the gravedigger in the Elizabethan dramas. He serves his purpose and is gone.” 108 From this perspective, I will argue, Benjy’s thirty-third birthday is a foil to show us Quentin’s death-day and the downfall of the Compson family; although he embodies the crucified Christ, we cannot expect any possibility of resurrection from the disabled impotent Christ.

Indeed, Benjy’s impotence (or, impossibility) to show us a hope for “getting out” of the overwhelming self-enclosed world—whether his own Edenic innocence (or, maybe, impotence) or the disintegrating dungeon-like Compson family—and to suggest new possibilities is, I will insist, epitomized in the final scene of the novel. In the last pages of the novel, when Luster deviates the surrey from the routine route to the cemetery, Benjy becomes horrified and starts bellowing again; “There was more than astonishment in it, it was horror; shock; agony eyeless, tongueless; just sound” (199). It is not until the surrey redirected by Jason goes around the back of the statue of General Compson, thus, Benjy’s familiar route is restored and each familiar object is “in its ordered place” (199) that Benjy becomes finally serene with his broken narcissus. “The rear end of the statue and

108 James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (eds.), Lion in the Garden, p. 245.
the repetitive trip route to the cemetery represent the lethal conservative forces of repetition,” says John P. Anderson; which is to say that “There is to be no Compson future.”

Then, how can we read the significance of “the broken narcissus”? It was given to Benjy by Luster before starting the surrey to the cemetery in order to keep Benjy silent during the trip, but it comes to be broken once more by Jason in the last page of the novel when he struggled to redirect the surrey and stop Benjy’s bellowing; “He reached back and struck Ben, breaking the flower stalk again” (199). Relating the flower to the mythological figure Narcissus, several critics regard it as a symbol of the egocentricity of all the Compsons. What counts is that the flower has been broken twice. Whereas Dilsey and Luster splint the broken-stemmed narcissus with a twig and string (197-98), Jason breaks it once more. Thus, Bleikasten says, “…with Benjy’s wild howling—“just sound,” as the author puts it—and Jason’s unleashed rage, there is indeed nothing left of the Compson world but “sound and fury.” Therefore, the twice broken narcissus symbolizes not only the downfall of the Compson family but also the ultimate failure of their egocentric narcissism. That is to say, the real curse on the Compson family, especially the three sons of Compsons, i.e., Caddy’s three brothers, is epitomized neither by Caddy’s sexual falling (usually associated with her muddy underpants) nor by Benjy’s idiocy nor by Quentin’s suicide, but by their impotence to escape their self-centered, self-enclosed world. Thus, the broken narcissus, along with the withered jimson weed, signifies that there is no future to the Compson males any more; if Caddy represents “a way out” as a bursting overflowing from the enclosure of the three Compson sons’

narcissistic circles, they have already lost her (as *Delta*—through which they could “stand outside (i.e., *ek-stasis*)” their self-enclosedness to seek a new life, new possibilities). Thus, the whole story of the novel ends with this final scene:

The broken flower drooped over Ben’s fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right; post and tree, window and doorway, and signboard, each in its ordered place.

(199)

This ending scene looks so grim and thus there seems no hope anymore. Nonetheless, given the significance of the Easter motif, as “Benjy’s private graveyard” shows us the coexistence (or cycle) of Life and Death marking the beginning and the end of the novel, we come to expect somebody to show us hope or a hopeful message for resurrection, for new possibilities. When the place of Death is transformed into the place for a new life, it can truly be the place of re-birth; then, in association with Easter Sunday, where and how can we read the promise of resurrection?

To answer these questions, we need to note Faulkner’s words, “[P]eople are the toughest things in creation. Man even survives his own disasters; … I am still convinced that man is tougher than any darkness. That man’s hope is the capacity to believe in man, his hope, his aspiration toward a better human condition. The fact that man always hopes toward a better human condition, I think that the purpose of writing, of art, is a record.”¹¹² In his Nobel Prize speech, he also articulated that he believes in the immortality of man not only because man will endure but also because man will prevail.¹¹³ Thus, it might be that what Faulkner tried to articulate through *The Sound and the Fury* is his faith that “man will prevail,” neither cynicism nor nihilism. Faulkner says:

---

¹¹² James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (eds.), *Lion in the Garden*, p. 176-77.
And I think now that I am not likely in my lifetime to find anything that would make me doubt that man will prevail. I expect to see instances in which he has failed, yes, but they’re temporary failures. I think that given time he will solve most of his problems, except the problems which he is doomed forever to, simply because he is flesh and blood. (Lion in the Garden, 102)

Thus, here, I want to take note of Dilsey remaining despite the downfall of the Compson family and greatly serving her role, as always, with her labor and loyalty that have served to keep the Compson family together and prop it up. Although The Sound and the Fury is the novel of failures (especially, with regard to the sinful ego-centricity of the Compson family), the reason why Dilsey is read in the affirmative in the last section of the novel is that she survives the disaster that has befallen the family. She always endures; and the very fact that she endured today will be the promise that tomorrow can be bettered;

That that is one thing in which [s]he can show tomorrow that yesterday [s]he endured. [She] knows that since [her] own yesterday showed [her] today that [s]he endured, was capable of hope, was capable of believing that man’s condition can be bettered, is [her] assurance that after [s]he is gone someone will read what [s]he has done and can see what man yesterday was capable of believing and of hope that man’s condition can be changed; and man’s condition does change. There are evils of yesterday that don’t exist any more, the evils of today will be gone tomorrow by the advancement… (Lion in the Garden, 178)

Thus, Faulkner articulates, “There [is] Dilsey to be the future, to stand above the fallen ruins of the family like a ruined chimney, gaunt, patient and indomitable: and Benjy to be the past.”114 He clarifies his tender love toward Dilsey in these words;

“I like to think of some of the characters I invented or wrote which to me are

---

some of the best. One was the Negro woman, Dilsey, in *The Sound and the Fury*, who had taken care of a family who were decaying, going to pieces before her eyes. She held the whole thing together with no hope of reward, except she was doing the best she could because she loved that poor, otherwise helpless, idiot child.” (*Lion in the Garden*, 126)

“Dilsey is one of my own favorite characters because she is brave, courageous, generous, gentle and honest. She’s much more brave and honest and generous than me.” (*Lion in the Garden*, 244-45)

Dilsey is the person who splints Benjy’s broken-stemmed narcissus with a twig and strings; symbolically, I will insist, she is the person who gives “the ultimate cure” for “the blind self-centeredness” of the Compsons. Contrary to the self-absorption of the Compson family, Dilsey is an emblem of “selflessness.” Elizabeth M. Kerr says, “[T]he chaos and disorder of [the Compsons’] lives and the frailty of their hope without a sustaining faith are embodied in the idiot who in his dumb and selfish way loved Caddy and beauty and order. Dilsey is the only one who brings beauty and order into their lives.”

115 To borrow Faulkner’s words, “[S]he does endure, [s]he is capable of hope, even in darkness, [s]he does move, [s]he doesn’t give up, and … [s]he shows us] a promise of the validity of that hope.”

116 Thus, if “All of Dilsey’s actions provide the ultimate synthesis,” it is because all her actions are based on love, not self-love but self-sacrificial love. Dilsey’s love is “here represented as the force which did, still does, [and will do] transform and re-order” the Compsons’ lives from fallen to risen, giving support to the decaying Compson family just like the splint propping up Benjy’s broken narcissus.


narcissus.

More than anything else, Dilsey Gibson, the long-suffering servant in the Compson household, is capable of standing outside herself and her own needs. Contrary to the Compsons’ self-centeredness, Dilsey is “content not to be the center of the universe.” 119 That is to say, she is capable of ex-centering; her self-less love is overflowing upward and outward resisting “the lethally blind self-centeredness,” i.e., the destructive self-love of the Compson family. Thus, I will insist, in the last part of the novel, Dilsey is in place of the two lost women, that is, Caddy and her daughter. Instead of the two tragic Eves, Dilsey (or her self-less love) is expected to serve as an “ex-centering” deflection, which will make “a way out,” from the hopelessly enclosing repetition of Benjy in the last page. Through her, we can see a hope; a hope for a new spring and a new start. Thus, I will insist that the novel’s choice of spring for its temporal background (except Quentin’s section; when his whole section is narrated in the past tense in his memory, he is already dead) is noteworthy. It is significant that when *The Sound and the Fury*, which begins and ends with the scenes and images of Death (Dammudy’s funeral and Benjy’s graveyard in the first section and the Compson family cemetery and Benjy’s private graveyard again in the last section) concludes, it is still spring.

Even in our darkest days, we should find meanings in our lives and articulate them to continue to live in the world; our lives cannot be sustained only by the sound and the fury. Thus, I will insist, Faulkner puts us in the position of seeking the meaning(s) of resurrection of Easter Sunday, at the end of the novel. To borrow Anderson’s words, it is “to attempt to give meaning within a new outlook and to attempt to give broader

significance to the sense of self in each and every person, a significance that increases rather than restricts human possibilities.”

Thus, if *The Sound and the Fury* is open-ended and has a cyclical plot structure, on the last page, we return to the first page and attempt to re-start another reading of it. In *The Sound and the Fury*, although Faulkner and his four respective and successive narratives fail to “tell it right,” we, the readers, retry to read the book, with the hope of reading new meanings and new possibilities from a place of “the most splendid failure.”

---

Chapter 3.
Che Vuoi? Beyond the Cartesian Space

If what we are talking about are the limits of a signifying system, it is clear that those limits cannot themselves be signified, but have to show themselves as the interruption or breakdown of the process of signification.

— Ernesto Laclau, Emancipation(s)

To resist the fantasy of wholeness of the human cognitive and representative system, William Faulkner deploys experimental narrative techniques, such as multiple perspectives, stream of consciousness, and the rejection of chronological order, to show us that truth can be relative or changeable, and that time is also perceived differently depending on the subject of cognition. Similarly, through his cinematic devices, such as suspense, the viewer as voyeur, and his well-known ‘McGuffin,’ disturbing the viewer’s absorption into the film’s story-world, Hitchcock leads the viewer to re-think the idea of subjectivity and representation, with regard to what is seen. Thus, to quote Žižek’s words, Hitchcock’s cinema “points toward a gap in the field of the visible, toward the dimension of what eludes our gaze.”¹²¹ Dissolving the traditional author concept and the traditional narrative structure, Hitchcock makes “the audience produce the affect which does not appear on the screen.”¹²² This is how Hitchcock’s suspense works; “Suspense is the principle by which Hitchcock embodies vision, engaging his audience in a synaesthetic cinematic experience.”¹²³

From this perspective, what I will argue in this chapter is that Hitchcock’s

---

¹²² Peter J. Hutchings, “Modernity: a film by Alfred Hitchcock.” (This paper was presented at the Alfred Hitchcock conference For the Love of Fear convened by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, held from 31 March to 2 April 2000)
¹²³ Ibid.
cinematic modernism goes alongside Lacan’s work dedicated to explore the traumatic gap immanent in the subject and the symbolic system. In Lacanian terms, the gap as both-lack-and-excess disrupts the subject’s self-consciousness and resists signification, and thus it is marked by the ex-centric triangle in the core of the Lacanian triad (the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real). In association with what I continue to call “Delta,” what it signifies is the immanent exteriority as uncanny extimacy of both the subject and the Symbolic. It is beyond representation, but paradoxically keeps generating narrative desire: Hitchcock called it McGuffin, and Lacan called it objet a. Owing to it, every interpretation is displaced by an-other interpretation metonymically. Slavoj Žižek called it the surplus of the Real; “a surplus of the Real always eludes the symbolic grasp and persists as a non-symbolized stain, a hole in reality which designates the ultimate limit where ‘the word fails.’”124 Then, we might say that to show us the uncanny surplus of the Real which takes place where the word fails is “one of the most obvious aspects of Hitchcock’s cinematic modernism.”125 The surplus, as a little piece of the Real that eludes signifying chains and, thus, occurs as the breakdown of language system, can not be signified, but only show itself. According to Žižek,126 it is not because it is outside, external to the symbolic order, but precisely because it is inherent to it, as its internal limit. Because of its absolute immanence to the symbolic, the surplus of the Real can not be positively signified, but only be shown, in a negative gesture, as the inherent failure of symbolization. This is the very reason why I pay attention to Hitchcock’s cinema. “Cinema” was supposed to guard representation, assure the eye’s domain and its

124 Slavoj Žižek, Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock), Verso, 1992, p. 239.
125 Peter J. Hutchings, “Modernity: a film by Alfred Hitchcock.”
126 Refer to Slavoj Žižek’s The Plague of Fantasies (Wo Es War), Verso, 1997, p. 217.
mimetic transparency, be “coded as the real, the locus of truthful representation” (Rodwick),¹²⁷ but, crucial here is that Hitchcock’s cinema is on the opposite side of such a supposition. Problematizing and thus traversing “the eye’s domain and its mimetic transparency” Hitchcock’s cinema exerts itself to show the ruptures and fissures of representation. Paradoxically, Hitchcock’s camera enables us to encounter the surplus of the lethally traumatic Real, which is beyond and thus mars the eye’s domain, even for a brief moment. In other words, through Hitchcock’s films, we can see a glimpse of the little piece of the Real. Thus, Hitchcock’s cinema shifts our focus from \textit{signifying} to \textit{showing}.

In Lacanian terms, what I want to stress here is that the surplus of the Real that \textit{ex-sists} as the radically emptied site in the Symbolic exactly coincides with the radical exteriority of the subject’s “self.” The radically emptied site is where the Cartesian cogito fails to acknowledge. Thus, “it” is beyond and mars the Cartesian space. According to Lacan, the subject is irremediably split in and by “it.” It is the very site (or non-site) where the subject’s narcissistic illusion of autonomy and self-awareness, the notion of the self-sufficiency and self-transparency of consciousness, and western traditional ocularcentrism are traversed. The subject fails to master himself and comes to be subverted because of the radical exteriority. The most radical truth is that “it” is not absolute outside the subject’s self; the non-symbolizable object-cause which occurs as the traumatic rupture in the Symbolic ex-sists as the subject’s innermost core as something “in the subject more than the subject itself.” It is beyond identification and subjectivization. As “the in and beyond,” it is where “the I” fail to think of it. Thus, it

appears as a threat to the Cartesian cogito. From this perspective, I will argue, for Hitchcock’s work which is obviously the opposite of the Cartesian cogita, the radical alterity and exteriority within the subject is demonstrably of the Lacanian question “Che vuoi?”—“You are telling me that, but what do you want with it, what are you aiming at?”128 and the notion of the gaze (in Lacanian terms) which subverts the narcissistic perspective of the I and the Eye, the so-called western consciousness of Self. Perhaps, I will argue, these issues are best illustrated by Hitchcock’s *Spellbound* (1945).

In the film, the unbearable question “Che vuoi?” is linked to the male character’s hysteric questions “Who am I?” and “What does (the) woman want?” John Ballantine (Gregory Peck) is a hysteric subject who lost his real identity through amnesia and comes to be accused of murder. As his eager caretaker and lover, Dr. Constance Petersen (Ingrid Bergman) believes that if they can recover J. B.’s repressed memory by the psychoanalytic interpretation of his dream content, J. B. will regain his true identity. However, the irony is that the only traumatic truth is J. B.’s (seemingly recovered) identity is a mere outcome of inter-subjective discourse in relation to the question “Che vuoi?” In other words, what J. B.’s consciousness indeed conceals is the traumatic blankness which takes its place at the innermost core of his being. Although they believe that there is a hidden truth to be revealed in J. B.’s unconscious, the real hidden truth which his consciousness fears to reveal is the fact that there is nothing to be revealed but only emptiness. Thus, confronted with the fearful and unanswerable question “Che vuoi?” what his unconscious is saying is “What am I to you? Because I don’t know what you want from me, I know neither what my own desire is. The most dreadful truth is that indeed I do not have what you want from me.”

---

In these contexts, I will read *Spellbound* mainly focusing on how the woman Constance (in terms of Freud’s famous question “What does woman want?”) unmasksthe hidden truth of J. B. and leads him to the rupture, the empty void, of his being for confronting the traumatic truth; how it can be linked to the notion of the gaze which cuts through the Eye (the I) and thus opens up the narcissistic enclosure of the Cartesian cogito; and, thus, how it leads J. B. to Delta as the feminine space of *ek-stasis / ek sistence*. To read the ex-centric empty site beyond representation, I will explore the famous dream sequence designed by Salvador Dalí (including the missing scenes cut from the finished film by Hitchcock’s edits), in relation to the notions of woman, gaze, and the question “Che vuoi?” in psychoanalytic terms.

Although Hitchcock’s *Spellbound* (1945) was the first Hollywood film to take psychoanalysis seriously as its subject, Hitchcock himself personally mistrusted psychoanalysis. Hitchcock wasn’t unfamiliar with Freud’s writings, having first browsed them in the 1920s, when Freud cast a shadow over all art and literature; but the director was really more like Edwardes, who in the film declares, “I don’t believe in dreams. That Freud stuff is a lot of hooey.” Hitchcock just wanted to explore the dark side of the mind by using Dalí’s imagery. Hitchcock commented on *Spellbound* assuring Truffaut that it is “just another manhunt story wrapped up in pseudo-psychoanalysis.” Nonetheless, we cannot overlook the fact that *Spellbound* is full of psychoanalytic symbols and imagery. Moreover, the film opens with a proclamation on the screen announcing that its purpose is to highlight the virtues of psychoanalysis:


Our story deals with psychoanalysis, the method by which modern science treats the emotional problems of the sane. The analyst seeks only to induce the patient to talk about his hidden problems, to open the locked door of his mind. Once the complexes that have been disturbing the patient are uncovered and interpreted, the illness and confusion disappear. … and the devils of unreason are driven from the human soul.

Dr. Constance Peterson (Ingrid Bergman) is a psychoanalyst at Green Manors, a mental hospital in Vermont. The head of Green Manors, Dr. Murchison (Leo G. Carroll), is retiring to be replaced by Dr. Anthony Edwardes. When Dr. Edwardes (Gregory Peck) arrives to take over as the new head, Constance falls in love with him. But, unfortunately, Constance notices that Dr. Edwardes has some psychological problems; he has a curious panic over parallel lines and the color white. These problems are first displayed in a paranoiac reaction to seeing an anamorphic diagram of parallel lines which is drawn by Constance with her fork on the dinner tablecloth. Constance soon discovers, by comparing handwriting, that this mysterious man she is fallen for is not the real Dr. Edwardes, but an impostor. Suffering from massive amnesia, he does not know who he is. To save him from being accused of murder, Constance needs to use psychoanalytic skills, and thus visits her beloved mentor, Dr. Alex Brulov (Michael Chekhov) to receive professional help. Constance and Dr. Brulov analyze J. B.’s dream and J. B. comes to remember his real name, John Ballantyne, and his childhood trauma related to his brother’s death. Putting together the pieces of the dream, Constance deduces that Dr. Murchison is the real murderer of Dr. Edwardes. Constance confronts Dr. Murchison in his office, and he admits his guilt. Dr. Murchison threatens her with a gun. But after Constance escapes from his room, Dr. Murchison turns the gun on himself. Constance is
then reunited with J. B. and they board a train for a wonderful honeymoon.

Actually, it may be that, concurrently with Constance’s psychoanalytic approach, we (the viewer) also take John Ballanstine’s dream content, which is represented by the famous dream sequence designed by Salvador Dalí in the film, as the focal point at which the search for meaning begins. Thus, if the dream sequence represents J. B.’s locked unconscious, not only Constance’s but also the viewer’s interpretations revolve around it on the assumption that the right interpretation of it would be the key to answering every question. However, considering Hitchcock’s cinematic modernism, I will insist, rather than cling to searching out a seemingly hidden truth or a fixed meaning, we should note how various different narratives and interpretations can unfold through it. That is to say, the dream sequence is where Hitchcock’s McGuffin occurs, in association with the Lacanian objet a. It lures the viewer to interpret it and, at the same time, hinders or defers interpretative closure. Thus, owing to “it,” the text can remain open and the process of interpretation can still be continued. To quote Murray Pomerance’s words, J. B.’s dream cannot simply be recounted for the viewer, or set out to be experienced; but need to be quoted, entered, and departed, approached and avoided. From this perspective, now I will examine how the seemingly “happy ending” love story can be traversed by an-other narrative of the dream sequence, and thus be read in a different way. Specifically, I will re-read Constance’s interpretation of J. B.’s dream, mainly focusing on “the radical exteriority” of the self which is beyond identification and subjectivization in psychoanalytic (more precisely speaking, Lacanian and Žižekian) terms.

Pomerance depicts Constance’s progress toward the innermost and deepest locus

---

of John Ballantine’s unconscious (for the dream analysis, in the end) as the passage inward, toward a flooding radiance of pure light.

In *Spellbound*, Constance Peterson wakes in the dark of night, robes herself, steps out of her room, climbs the stairs, enters the library, retrieves Edwardes’s book, and stands outside his door, this entire long sequence being rampant with shadow and signal illumination. Her room has a glowing door as she proceeds to leave on a course of investigation and discovery. … The stairwell is cut with compromising bars of darkness, as is the upstairs landing. There is forbidding darkness on Edwardes’s face and in his hair, yet a radiant invitation in his eyes. … Constance, striving toward understanding there, travels in and toward the light (Pomerance, 2004: 79).

In traditional western thought, “light” has been usually linked to the divine origin or the truth in association with the sun; it is believed that light would reveal / illuminate any hidden truth. However, the point of that scene which I want to emphasize is that light can bring us blindness as much as darkness can. Tom Cohen points out, “‘Hitchcock’ would be demonstrably the opposite of ocularcentric: he does not believe in “light” and does not assume the existence of what is called the “eye,” since that is itself a mnemonic effect.” 132 Overwhelming illumination can paradoxically make us blind because, figuratively speaking, a ‘knowing too much’ by light may mar (or slash) what is called the “eye.” Cohen articulates; 133

In the so-called West, of course, knowing has always been linked to light, to the sun (or sun-worship) and the sight—the *eidos* being that which would be visible, the ‘idea.’ … [However,] a ‘knowing too much’ … is a knowledge of excess and the undoing of a (political) model of the senses, of knowing, of sight.

In this context, I will argue, the overwhelming light (or illumination) representing the “knowing too much” is depicted emblematically in the overture of *Spellbound*. In the overture of the film what we see is radiant light over Gregory Peck’s head. We can see the same shot again in the scene where the two psychiatric doctors (Constance and Dr. Brulov) start the analysis of his dream: when John Ballantine lies on a psychoanalytic couch and tries to recall the dream he had the night before, brilliant lights arise around his head as if the lights are dominating John Ballantine, or as if the closer we get into the innermost interior space of his unconscious, the more blinding the illumination is.

As Pomerance depicts, Constance’s striving to solve J. B.’s mysteries by using psychological techniques is epitomized by the long sequence in which she climbs the stairs and proceeds slowly toward J. B.’s room which emits a glowing light in the darkness. She enters his room and the camera moves toward the innermost place where J. B. is. Standing in the midst of his private place, their eyes meet and they kiss; at this moment, the scene dissolves into a whole succession of doors opening, one after another, as though down a long corridor. Pomerance interprets this imagery as Constance’s passage inward; all the doors of the mind swing open and the two lovers’ barriers seem to
progressively dissolve.\textsuperscript{134} However, at the end of the series of doors, what we come to see at last is a very radiant white wall. Then, how can we explain this “white” wall which is in the innermost interior space?

After the kiss, when J. B. looks down at Constance’s shoulder, he becomes suddenly hysterical and falls into a panic: “His face fills with the same curious look for fear that came to it when he looked at the fork lines drawn on the tablecloth. He struggles to remove his eyes from her shoulder, but his gaze is held. His alarm and tension increase. He pushes her away. Constance looks up and sees the expression of terror in his face.”\textsuperscript{135} Being very confused, Constance asks, “What is it?” And, J. B. answers, “Something struck me. … Your robe— I mean, the dark lines” (Hecht, \textit{Screenplay}: 32). In the next scene, J. B. enters the operating room, and Constance hurriedly follows him. When Constance stands just behind J. B., the high pitched-sound which signifies J. B.’s hysteria comes again and a wild expression is growing on his face. In a moment of panic, gasping, J. B. exclaims, “Why are the lights out in the corridor? It’s dark. That’s why he did it. Because the lights are out. Put them on! And the doors! Unlock them! You can’t keep people in cells. … You fools! Babbling about guilt complexes! What do you know about them! He did it. He told me. He killed his father. Put on the lights-quick. It’s dark. It’s dark.”\textsuperscript{136} Then he passes out. If J. B. is here speaking of a guilt complex in relation to Oedipus complex,\textsuperscript{137} in a sense, we may say that his ramblings reveal his unconscious

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{134} Murray Pomerance, \textit{An Eye for Hitchcock}, p 72.
\textsuperscript{135} Ben Hecht, \textit{Spellbound: screenplay}, 1945, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{137} Actually, in the film, Mr. Garmes (Norman Lloyd) is portrayed as a patient suffering from a guilt complex who believes that he has killed his father—he is one of Constance’s patient at Green Manors; and the real Dr. Edwardes is the author of \textit{The Labyrinth of the Guilt Complex}, which Constance picked up in the library before she entered J. B.’s room that night in the previous scene.
\end{flushleft}
desire for patricide in psychoanalytic terms. However, I will argue, in his case, the ‘patri-
(father)’ of patricide refers not to an actual physical father, but to the so-called ‘Name of
the Father’ in Lacanian terms. In other words, in this scene, if J. B. is unconsciously
exhibiting a hysterical exasperation and defiance toward a certain paternal figure, the
addressee is none other than the Name-of-the-Father.

In Lacanian terms, the Name-of-the-Father is inevitably linked to the Symbolic
Order, and it is usually called the big Other. The Symbolic order is the structure of
language itself. According to Lacan, a child has to enter into the Symbolic in order to
become a speaking subject, and to designate itself by “I.” Only when the child enters into
language system and accepts laws and restrictions of society (that is, the Name-of-the-
Father), the child as the speaking subject uttering “I am” is able to enter into a
community of others. In Lacanian terms, to be subject to the Name-of-the-Father means
to accept the “no” of the symbolic father; thus, Lacan often plays with the homophony of
le nom du père (the name of the father) and le non du père (the no of the father); most of
all, this “no” relates to the prohibition on the child’s attempt to equate himself with the
object (in other words, the phallus) of the mother’s desire. Thus, the Name-of-the-Father
not only confers identity on the subject, naming and positioning the subject within the
Symbolic Order, but also signifies the oedipal prohibition (the “no” of the incest taboo).
However, to substitute “the desire of the mother” with “the name of the father,” the
problem is that the subject has to be confronted with an enigmatic question of his own
desire and identity, “Che vuoi?”

This question arises from the arbitrary character of the subject’s role in the
Symbolic Order. According to Slavoj Žižek, “The subject is always fastened, pinned, to a
signifier which represents him for the other, and through this pinning he is loaded with a symbolic mandate, he is given a place in the intersubjective network of symbolic relations. The point is that this mandate is ultimately always arbitrary: since its nature is performative, it cannot be accounted for by reference to the “real” properties and capacities of the subject.” Thus, if the subject’s identity is what is conferred upon him by his position in the Symbolic Order, “confronted with the ‘interpellation prior to identification,’ that is, a non-transparent call emanating from the Other (‘Hey, you there!’), a call where it is not clear to the subject what the Other actually wants from him,” the subject cannot but ask, “Che Vuoi? (What do you want from me?).” It is the question the subject addresses to the big Other. However, the Other does not answer the question. The Other’s enigmatic (non-)reply provokes an unbearable anxiety. A more critical problem is that the Other returns the “Che vuoi?” to the subject. Žižek says:

The Other is addressing him as if he himself possesses the answer to the question of why he is loaded with this symbolic mandate, but the question is, of course, unanswerable. The subject does not know why he is occupying this place in the symbolic network. His own answer to this ‘Che vuoi?’ of the Other can only be the hysterical question ‘Why am I what I’m supposed to be, why have I this mandate? Why am I… [a teacher, a master, a king… or George Kaplan]?’ Briefly: ‘Why am I what you [the big Other] are saying that I am?’ (Žižek, 1989: 113).

In the case of John Ballantine, I will argue, this “Che vuoi?” is apparently depicted by the question of his identity, “Who am I?” Thus, it is critical to stress that, in the film, his hysterical anxiety points beyond identity. If someone interpellates John Ballantine as Dr.

Edwardes (Hey, you! Dr. Edwardes!), how can he convince himself that he is not Dr. Edwardes but John Ballantine, or vice versa? Is the name given to him truly representative of his identity? Or, we may ask, is he really able to possess a true identity? If he is, what does the ‘true identity’ refer to? Thus, here, I will read J. B.’s rambling exclamation and fainting as his hysterical reaction to the Other (the Name of the Father)’s enigmatic question “Che vuoi?” From this perspective, his peculiar phobia about seeing sets of parallel lines is, I will argue, his hysteria in relation to his irrepressibly ambivalent, fearful, but strong desire to escape the prison of identity. In other words, the ‘sets of parallel lines against a white background,’ which resembles the bar-series which William Rothman calls Hitchcock’s “signature,” signifies the confinement of John Ballantine within the symbolic fixation of his identity.140 Thus, in the operating room, violently taking off his mask and gasping, J. B. seems to exclaim, “Why am I what you [the Name-of-the-Father as the big Other] are saying that I am? I am suffocating… please, let me out!”

At this moment, Constance professes to be a savior. In the next scene, the first person who doubts J. B.’s identity is Constance. At his bedside, Constance is looking down at J. B. who is lying unconscious in his bed. In her hands, Constance is holding her glasses and The Labyrinth of the Guilt Complex written by the real Dr. Edwardes. When

140 See Tom Cohen’s Anti-mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock (p. 249). He says: “I allude to what William Rothman, in a unique insight developed nowhere else, identifies as a bar-series which he calls Hitchcock’s “signature.” Rothman struggles to interpret this non-figure, which recurs in each film, psychologically or as a symbol suggesting containment (the character feels trapped, and so on): “I call this pattern of parallel vertical lines Hitchcock’s /// sign. It recurs at significant junctures in every one of his films. At one level, the /// serves as Hitchcock’s signature; it is a mark on the frame, akin to a ritual cameo appearance. At another level, it signifies the confinement of the camera’s subject within the frame and within the world of the film… It is also associated with sexual fear and the specific threat of loss of control or breakdown” (MG, 33).”
the camera zooms in, we are able to read what is on the slip of paper which Constance holds to check J. B.’s identity by comparing his signature with the autograph in the book. It reads: “Your patient, Mr. Garmes, is here. Please come immediately.” Without considering who wrote it, if we follow the message to the letter, in this scene, we may say, J. B. is assuming the role of Mr. Garmes. In other words, J. B. is another Mr. Garmes, who is resisting the mandate given to him by the Name-of-the-Father and thus suffering from a guilt complex, and Constance is ready to be a redeemer as a maternal figure. When he wakes up, Constance asks, “Who are you?”

However, I will argue, the actual role which Constance assumes here is, paradoxically, to be the big Other, instead of the Name-of-the-Father, rather than to be a redeemer. That is to say, her question “Who are you?” is to be read in terms of the “Che vuoi?” It means “Why are you here as Dr. Edwardes? Why are you loaded with the name? What do you want?” Thus, in the previous scene, if Constance entered into J. B.’s room, figuratively, to open the door of his locked unconscious, it is critical to note that what she brought to him was the real Dr. Edwardes’s autograph in *The Labyrinth of the Guilt Complex*. When she entered into his private space with the book, J. B. was sleeping motionless in a chair, as if he was dead. Due to her intrusion, J. B. opened his eyes. Figuratively speaking, we may say, he was woken up by Constance’s interpellation. Thus, the first identity which she wished to confer on him might be as the name of Dr. Edwardes. The problem is that he is not Dr. Edwardes. Then, who is he? It is also remarkable that Constance wears her glasses before she compares the two signatures to check J. B.’s identity. In a sense, through her own lenses she has designated him as “not” Dr. Edwardes.
When J. B. confesses that he has no memory, Constance says, “Yes, I know—amnesia… A trick of the mind for remaining sane. You remain sane—by forgetting something too horrible to remember. You put the horrible thing—behind a closed door. We have to open the door.” And, showing the initials ‘J. B.’ which are imprinted upon his cigarette case, Constance suggests them as his identity.141 Struggling to remember his real identity, J. B. looks into a mirror and repeats: “J. B. … J. B.”—the words suggested by Constance. “Through the mirror we can see Constance rising and coming toward him. She enters the picture and stands beside him” (Hecht, Screenplay: 40). Thus, we may say that as the big Other, more precisely speaking, in the place of the Other, Constance keeps designating his identity; that is to say, she keeps trying to fasten, pin, him to a signifier (a name) which will represent him for others. However, I will argue, the actual one who will enable J. B. to see the truth of his identity is not this Constance, but what embodies her in J. B.’s dream, more precisely speaking, in Dalí’s dream sequence; we will return to this point later.

This is the very reason why J. B. still goes into hysterics when he sees the grille of the ticket window at the train station. To visit Dr. Alex Brulov (Michael Chekhov, who was cast because he was a Sigmund Freud lookalike complete with Freud-like glasses, beard, and a faux Viennese accent) to get some professional help to recover J. B.’s memory and real identity, Constance and J. B. go to the train station. But, when J. B. has arrived at the ticket window, he has an attack of nerves. The high pitched-sound for

141 In a sense, it is also paradoxical that the initials which suggests a clue to recover his identity are imprinted upon the cigarette case considering that in Hitchcock’s cinema ‘cigarette’ is often used in terms of ‘self-cancellation.’ Tom Cohen, in Anti-mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock, comments on it: “Putting a cigarette out into a sunny-side up egg: the image of production as itself a process of self-cancellation in which the egg of generation, like the eye or sun itself, is put out” (258).
paranoia comes again. Staring through the grille at the clerk, he makes no sound and doesn’t move. As I have already discussed, if the ‘sets of parallel lines against a white background’ represents a confinement, the grille of the ticket window might remind him of the parallel lines; from his perspective, it might look like a prison grille. That is to say, in some respects, he is still suffering in the prison of identity. Moreover, beyond the grille, the clerk asks, “What is it? What do you want?”: it looks exactly like the question “Che vuoi?”—“What do you want (from me)?”

Meanwhile, if the phobia which J. B. has is about seeing ‘sets of parallel lines against a white background,’ I will argue, the “Che vuoi?” is, definitely, related to the whiteness. Actually, in the film, the color white is repeatedly suggested as a critical clue to solve J. B.’s mystery. At Dr. Brulov’s home, when J. B. and Constance, who has told Dr. Brulov that J. B. is her new husband, retire to the upstairs guest room, J. B.’s hysteria erupts most violently due to the shadowy dark lines visible on Constance’s white bedspread. Then, Constance forces him to remember what is in his mind and deduces the reason for his hysterics.

Constance (sharply) : You are resisting a memory. What is in your mind?
He turns angrily to her.
J. B. : I don’t know.
Constance (sharply) : Yes, you do. You’re resisting it.
J. B. (with suppressed violence) : Don’t start that again. Don’t stand there with that wiseacre look! I’m sick of your double talk.
Constance : You are looking at the bed. What frightens you? White… lines…
(She comes nearer to him; he is shaking)
When I made fork marks on the tablecloth they agitated you. Then—that night you—you kissed me—you pushed me away. Because of my robe. It was white—it had dark lines on it. (her voice becomes tense and commanding) Try to think.

His eyes glare at the coverlet.

J. B. (hoarsely) : Yes. It frightens me. I can’t look. (he wrenches his eyes away)

Constance (intensely) : Don’t run away. Stand still. Look at the white spread. Look at it! Remember! (Hecht, *Screenplay*: 82-83).

However, when J. B. turns his face toward the white spread again, he pitches onto the bed. Then, Constance embraces and coaxes him like a mother holding and caring for her baby. She whispers to him: “Darling—darling—you mustn’t be frightened. We are making progress. We have the word white—on your side” (Hecht, *Screenplay*: 84). In the middle of that night, J. B. gets up to shave, but soon becomes transfixed by his white shaving cream. Grabbing his razor, in a daze, J. B. walks downstairs. Still awake, Dr. Brulov greets him with a seemingly cheerful face and, at the critical moment, offers him a glass of milk. In that scene, the camera takes a close-up of the razor which J. B. is holding in his hand. The high-pitched peculiar, dreamy sound which represents J. B.’s hysteric state keeps playing in the background. When Dr. Brulov moves toward J. B. with a glass of milk, the camera follows the white milk for a close-up. And, when Dr. Brulov hands it to J. B., a close shot which catches both the white milk and J. B.’s razor fills the screen. J. B. is grabbing the white milk in one hand and his razor in the other. “J. B. raises his glass and drinks slowly, his eyes looking into the glass. The milk in the glass, coming toward the camera, fills the screen and turns the screen white” (Hecht, *Screenplay*: 88). Here, it is critical to stress that when J. B. drinks the glass of milk, the screen is horizontally split; the upper half is occupied by Dr. Brulov who is embodying Sigmund Freud and the lower half is filled with the white milk. More and more, the whiteness of milk fills up the screen,
until a gradual white-out removes the upper side of Dr. Brulov and suffuses the full screen. Then, how can we interpret this white-out in association with the whiteness of the milk and the razor that J. B. is grabbing?—significantly, J. B.’s razor looks like (too close for coincidence) the razor with which a woman’s eye is sliced in two in the opening scene of Bunuel’s Dali-designed *Un Chien Andalou* (1929).

Constance keeps asking J. B. to unlock his mind to read his unconsciousness and to define his identity. Actually, not only Constance but also we (the viewer) believe that there is a hidden or repressed truth in the innermost interior of J. B.’s unconscious. However, the only truth which we are able to realize is that there is nothing behind the curtain: more precisely speaking, when we try to lift the curtain which is supposed to veil some of J. B.’s mysteries, what we come to “see” is only the truth that the curtain itself is a *trompe-l’oeil.*\(^{142}\) Thus, Žižek asserts, “The ultimate secret is that this Beyond is in itself hollow, devoid of any positive content.”\(^{143}\)

According to Žižek, in the psychoanalytic process, ‘truth’ emerges as the result of


intersubjective dialectic where the recognition of desire is inextricably linked to the desire for recognition.\textsuperscript{144} That is to say, in psychoanalysis there is no fixed/hidden meaning, but only the dissemination of interpretation which is floating over the blank screen in-between desires of analysand and analyst. Due to the transference of desire which occurs in the process of psychoanalysis, the analysand desires to be the object of the analyst’s desire. In other words, the analysand desires to make the analyst love him by pretending as if he has the meaning, the truth, which the analyst is seeking. Thus, here, emerges the question “What do you want from me?” What is at stake is that the analysand is impotent to interpret what the analyst (as the big Other) desires. Žižek says,

The title of Lacan’s seminar from 1958-59, “Desire and Its Interpretation,” is to be taken as a direct assertion of their ultimate identity: desire coincides with its own interpretation. That is, when the subject endeavors to interpret (its or, originally, the Other’s) desire and never finds the ultimate point of reference, when it forever slides from one to another reading, this very desperate attempt to arrive at ‘what one really wants’ is desire itself. (Or, to put it in a more elaborate way: insofar as the coordinates of desire are provided by the “fundamental fantasy,” and insofar as this fantasy emerges as an attempt to provide an answer to the enigma of Che vuoi?, of the Other’s desire—in short: as the interpretation of this desire, of what the Other “effectively wants from me”—desire as such is sustained by interpretation.)\textsuperscript{145}

This illustrates very well the relationship between J. B. and Constance in \textit{Spellbound}. Regarding the question “Che vuoi?” if the role of the big Other shifts from the Name-of-the-Father to Constance, what is now at stake for J. B. is not what his real identity is, but, instead, “What does she want (from me)?”—exactly the same with the Freud’s question

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., p. 258.
“Was will das Weib? (What does woman want?)” In other words, the question “Who am I?” of J. B. is necessarily switched to the Lacanian question, “Che vuoi?” Thus, J. B.’s unconscious asks Constance “What do you want (read) from me? What kind of an object am I for you?”—it exactly mirrors the very question we address to the big Other, “Why am I what you say I am?” This question can be asked in this manner: “Do you love me for my role in your analysis (that is, the role requested by you in the relationship between you and me) or for who I really am?”

In the film, Constance is playing the part of a (seemingly) devoted lover and maternal caregiver to J. B., who would willingly take any kind of risk in order to save him from his mental illness and the false accusation. However, actually, from his own point of view, Constance is a fearful enigma who keeps provoking his hysterical anxiety. For J. B., Constance is, on the one hand, an angel-like savior who will find out his real identity and release him from the riddle, amnesia, the suspicion of murder; on the other hand, a Medusa-like or praying mantis-like figure, with a piercing eye, who will snatch him, open his unconscious, and reveal what he really does not want to see. Thus, what J. B. feels toward Constance is “desire for help and mistrust of helpers, and the fear of discovery.”

Then, what secret does he fear to be discovered? Here I will argue, what he really fears to see is, fundamentally, the fact that he has nothing, or he himself is nothing. Although Constance assumes a maternal figure for J. B., can we say she gives him unconditional love as a mother does? Constance declares, “No. You said you loved me. Look at me then. Why am I fighting for you? Because I love you. Because I need you”;

and J. B. mutters under his breath, “I’m nothing” (Hecht, *Screenplay*; 110). To say it simply, what John Ballantine really fears and thus wants to hide is his own impotence regarding “Che vuoi?”—which is to say, he fears he cannot give what Constance wants from him because he has no idea of ‘What does she want?’ and, in this respect, he *is* nothing (for her). Thus, here, it is critical to note Dr. Brulov’s words, “The secrets of who you are and what had made you run away from yourself—all these secrets are buried in your brain, but you don’t want to look at them. The human being very often does not want to know the truth about himself. Because he thinks it will make him sick” (Hecht, *Screenplay*; 98).

In his hysterics, he seems to cry out, “Why do you love me? What makes you love me? What is it? What is ‘in me more than myself’? I must know to be loved (or, not to be devoured) by you! Only if I can know what it is, I will be it! What do you want from me?” To quote Renata Salecl;

> Why is desire of the [m]Other such a problem for the subject? For Lacan, this dilemma concerns the subject’s very being; this dilemma is first formulated as the question of what was the subject’s place in the desire of his or her [mother]…. The desire of the [m]Other incites horror on the side of the subject (i.e., it produces anxiety). This anxiety arises because the [m]Other’s desire remains an enigma to the subject—which also means that the subject can never really know what kind of an object he or she is for the [m]Other. Lacan exemplifies this anxiety by asking us to imagine that one day we encounter a giant female praying mantis; as it happens we are wearing a mask, but we do not know what kind of a mask it is; we do not know if it is a male or female mask. If it is a male mask, we can, of course, expect to be devoured by the female praying mantis. Lacan’s example of the female praying mantis returns us to the subject’s encounter with deadly feminine creatures, such as the Medusa or the Sirens. In this encounter, the subject’s urgent question is: What kind of mask am I wearing? In other words, what kind of an object am I for
her? Am I a man or a woman? This would be the question for the male hysteric.\textsuperscript{147}

Thus, J. B.’s hysteria epitomizes the famous Lacanian words, “Man’s desire is the desire of the Other.”\textsuperscript{148} When Constance (as the big Other) addresses “Che vuoi?” to J. B., what he desires is to be the object of her desire; the problem is that he cannot interpret what she desires so that he cannot answer her “Che vuoi?” and thus he becomes a hysteric subject. Regarding the testimony of a failed interpellation, Žižek articulates,

Lacan formulates the hysterical question as a certain ‘Why am I what you’re telling me that I am?’—that is, which is that surplus-object in me that caused the Other to interpellate me, to ‘hail’ me as … [king, master, wife…]?’ (Lacan, 1981, p. 315) The hysterical question opens the gap of what is ‘in the subject more than the subject’, of the object in subject which resists interpellation—subordination of the subject, … (Žižek, 1989: 113).

To borrow William Robert’s words, what is ‘in the subject more than the subject’ can be neither circumscribed nor contained. It remains constitutively lacking, and it cannot be captured.\textsuperscript{149} Then, we may say that, in the film, confronted with the “Che vuoi?” of Constance, J. B.’s anxiety is that he can never really know what he lacks in his-self and this is exhibited by his own hysteric question “Che vuoi?” Thus, the gap of what is ‘in the subject more than the subject’ is, at the level of the point of a hyperbolic lack-and-excess of cognition, where the Cartesian cogito fails to recognize what the Other wants from him and, at the same time, comes to “know too much” of that radical exteriority of his

“self”—which occupies the very core of his being as a traumatic void, and hinders his self-knowledge and identification.

Thus, in these contexts, the radiant light over John Ballantine’s head that we have seen in the overture of the film is, I will argue, a representation of blinding illumination. In other words, the blinding flash of light is, on the one hand, a luminosity of the emptiness in the core of his very being and, on the other hand, from our (the viewer’s) point of view, a white-out by facing the truth that the place in which we believe “there is something” is actually empty—which is to say, realizing the fact that the light which was expected to illuminate a certain hidden truth is actually a mere “whiteness” from the innermost blankness, we come to experience a white-out—which is epitomized by the radiantly white wall that we have seen at the end of the series of doors, in the previous scene.

Obviously, it is Constance who is trying to unmask the blankness in the film. Actually, Constance repeatedly forces J. B. to open the door of his locked unconscious and to think of and look straight at the whiteness. Thus, I will insist, the anamorphic diagram of parallel lines which Constance draws as a swimming pool when she meets J. B. first is emblematically representing the blank space, the traumatic rupture of J. B.’s “self.” Her drawing causes J. B.’s hysterical anxiety, perhaps because he has sensed that Constance might unmask what he doesn’t want to reveal. In that scene, in hysterical gesture, his unconscious seems to say, “Only if I can know what the object of your desire is, I will willingly offer myself to be the object, the phallus of your desire. But, I cannot know what it is so that I am not able to be the phallus. Maybe, I do not and cannot have it, whatever it is. I don’t want and fear you to acknowledge the truth.” It is significant that
the oval shape of parallel lines looks like the vaginal opening which signifies the very opposite of the phallus. Thus, significantly, J. B. hysterically rubs the oval shape to efface it with his mock-phallic knife perhaps because of a castration fear.

Here, I will insist, what the anamorphic diagram resembling the vaginal opening signifies is, metaphorically, the cave of the cruel goddess Diana, in the Lacanian account. It represents a space which she (as the Other) is gazing at with her desire, which is “with” my-self in me but eludes my “eye,” or “I,” and thus which makes me unable to say “I get it.” In Lacanian terms, it is extimacy, the outside in my innermost interior, which can be represented only by (and as) an empty signifier. It is not a mere “exteriority,” but an “eccentric” empty space which cuts any closure open from the very core of interiority. It is the place in which the “whiteness” representing blankness or white-out is overflowing—I will argue, that is epitomized in Spellbound by the white milk which fills the screen gradually in the previous scene. If, in a sense, Dr. Brulov as a paternal figure represents the Name of the Father which is usually identified with the Symbolic order, in the uncanny feminine space which resembles the cave of goddess Diana, white milk, one of

the maternal elements, is flooding over him. There, a flooding radiance of whiteness generates (or, sweeps us to) a different way of fluid which resists the father’s symbolic words (in the film, Dr. Brulov’s interpretation of J. B.’s unconscious). Thus, I will argue, the fluidity and the whiteness of milk is, as an “act” resisting suture in opposition to totalizing forces, the answer of the (feminine) Real to the (male) compulsion to symbolize, “to have” any meaning.

The khōra-like space, in which the maternal fluidity castrates the symbolic order, exactly resembles the Delta place. The iconic triangular empty place, the ex-centered place of Lacanian Borromean Knot is the Derridian non-site, a uncannily ex-centric space just like Heidegger’s jug, from which the fluidity transgresses and dissolves boundaries between inside and outside by overflowing through the “in-between.” In this context, through the bottom of the glass of milk—which reminds me of the cave of Diana—at which the whiteness of milk fills up the screen, what we come to see is that the Hitchcock’s film Spellbound becomes fluid “by producing itself over and over within a space which is itself in constant flux (flowing; series of changes), a space whose boundaries are always being eroded and reformed by the sloshing of its own fluid movements.”

Here, crucial is that, in the ‘in-between’ space, the fluidity unhinges our notions of what subjectivity is. Thus, it is critical to note that in the scene where the white milk fills the screen and makes a white-out, what it signifies is that the screen too blanks, so that the Cartesian cogito not only of J. B. but also of the viewer falls into the alterity of space that is invisible to the eye of space, that is, the uncanny ‘in-between’ space which eludes

placement and identity. To quote Cohen’s words, it emblematizes “the suspension of the “I” between undecidable sites.”¹⁵² There, the maternal fluidity seeps between the conscious and the unconscious, between the interpretable and the uninterpretable (or the unrepresentable), between interiority and exteriority, and thus between the “I” and the other, traversing or crossing over the Cartesian ego boundaries. Owing to it, our cogito space becomes split, just like the screen is split into two parts, Dr. Brulov and white milk. Owing to it, the film can insist “repeatedly on its own displacement and deferral, and so prevents our settling into any kind of logocentric reading of it.”¹⁵³ Thus, here I again link the ex-centric space in which “the suspension of the I” occurs to the Delta place.

Here, “the traumatic real kernel” of the subject takes its place as a real object-cause of the subject’s desire (that is, objet a) and the lack (or cut) of both the subject and the Symbolic (the signifying system), as discontinuity in the Real, simultaneously.

As we see, this little piece of the Real as the (w)hole of both the Symbolic and the subject is not the (primordial) Thing which is absolute-outside as Impossible, but the outside that is always-already inside, the uncanny place as the extimacy in which the boundary between inside and outside is dismantled. It is an opening which makes impossible the ultimate, radical closure not only of the Symbolic but also of the subject. Then, when we accidently enter into the Delta place which is beyond the Cartesian space—figuratively, the cave of Diana (just like Actaeon does), what do we come to see? The answer is, I will

¹⁵³ Minrose C. Gwin, The Feminine and Faulkner, p. 137.
argue, a white bone-like (or, stone-like) materiality; it is, to quote Zizek’s words, “the hard kernel of the Cartesian cogito, the bone that stuck in the throat of the contemporary critics of ‘Cartesian metaphysics of subjectivity’” (Žižek, 1992: 257). Žižek articulates,

To come to terms with the unbearable kernel of the real, a subject must then not only renounce all imaginary ideals and symbolic mandates, but also assume the essential inconsistency of the symbolic order itself. The end of analysis, in other words, lies not just in accepting the divided and alienated nature of the subject as one’s positive condition, but in acknowledging that what divides the subject is nothing but the lack that keeps the symbolic order from ever achieving any meaningful closure. The event, in this case, would be like a symptomatic slippage which exposes the fact that the symbolic order itself is incomplete—unable as much as the subject is to offer any answer to the abysmal question of the other’s desire; Che vuoi? The subject ‘is’ nothing but the empty place opened up in the structure by the very failure to answer this founding question. Recognition of this ineradicable void in the midst of the structure would then already coincide with the traumatic truth itself—if, that is, there exists such a thing as a truth of the real in psychoanalysis, which is any case would have to be more than its passing acknowledgement.154

To discuss, in more detail, the materiality as the hard kernel of the Cartesian cogito, here, I analyze Titian’s painting *Diana and Actaeon* (1559). In that painting, Actaeon gazes at both the naked goddess and the stag’s skull. Metaphorically, the white naked body of goddess Diana stands for the truth laid bare without any veil of symbolic representation. The symbolic system can never represent it wholly. Truth-Diana is accessible only in emblematic (or symbolic) meanings. However, at the moment she is spoken, the symbolic representation of her is always already something other than what she is. At the very moment when Truth-Diana is said, she hides herself. Thus, according to Lacan,

---


Meanwhile, as Derrida points out, the goal of Lacanian analysis is to draw out and establish the “truth” of the subject.\footnote{Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, JHU Press, 1998, p. lxiii.} Thus, to quote Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen’s words, in the fable of Diana, it is truly himself (the secret of his desire) that Actaeon seeks in the Goddess, just as it is the Freudian thing that (un)veils itself in the truth-who-speaks “in Freud’s mouth.”\footnote{Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, Lacan: the Absolute Master, Stanford University Press, 1991 p. 110.} In terms of hunting ‘truth/meaning,’ Actaeon-Freud (played by Dr. Brulov or Constance in Spellbound)’s analytic chase “leads him on so far that he cannot stop until he reaches the grottoes in which the chthonian Diana in the damp shade, which makes them appear as the emblematic seat of truth, offers to his thirst, with the smooth surface of death, the quasi-mystical limit of the most rational discourse in the world, so that we might recognize the place in which the symbol is substituted for death in order to take possession of the first swelling of life.”\footnote{Jacques Lacan, “The Freudian thing,” in Écrits: A Selection, p. 124.}

Paradoxically, in the hidden cave beyond human reach, what he comes to encounter is the white skull which is placed in the center of the holy space alongside the naked goddess. The white stag’s skull embodies ‘the Thing (that is, \textit{das Ding})’ which remains unmurdered within language. It is the most radical materiality irreducible into the symbolic signification. Then, both the white naked body of the goddess Diana and the white stag’s skull epitomize what Lacan called ‘the Freudian thing’ which exceeds symbolic representation and renders the symbolic order
itself (im)possible. In the place where the symbol is substituted for death, the two ‘Freudian’ things declare the death of the symbol: in the cave of Diana, Truth-Diana speaks of itself and the white bone as the irreducible materiality of language remains unmurdered. In other words, Truth-Diana’s splendid untellable revelation always comes along with the white skull. Thus, Žižek asserts, “With respect to truth: the Real qua trauma is not the ultimate ‘unspeakable’ truth which the subject can approach only asymptotically, but that which makes every articulated symbolic truth forever ‘not-all’, failed, a bone stuck in the throat of the speaking being which makes it impossible to ‘tell everything’” (Žižek, 1997: 216). “I” am always-already “with” the materiality which surpasses myself with-in me; “I” try to swallow “it” to preserve the integrity of my-self, that is, my identity, but it is stuck in my throat so that it makes me unable to say “I”; this is the very fate of Actaeon, Freud, the subject, and the psychoanalysis.

The cave of Diana in/from which the white milk overflows emasculating the father (Hitchcock)’s symbolic signification is, I want to stress here, epitomized by Salvador Dali’s dream sequence in Spellbound. Indeed, when we get into the dream sequence, we are exposed to successive white feminine imageries. There, what we see at the end of the dream sequence is a huge white stone statue as a feminine bone standing in the most Delta-like space. Thus, I will say, Dali’s dream sequence in which Goddess Truth-Diana unveils herself is the ex-centric Delta space of the film in line with my argument concerning Delta. The white stone statue, which appears as the white bone or the naked body of Diana, is obviously associated with Constance in J. B.’s dream. Paradoxically, the Constance as das Ding, the bone stuck in the real Constance’s throat, makes the real Constance’s interpretation/discourse disintegrate in her mouth or in the
film itself. There, the radiant whiteness of the bone blinds us, making a white-out as if the razor which J. B. was grabbing in the previous scene slashes our eyes; this is the ‘dark’ side of whiteness. In other words, from within the Delta-like space, emerges the gaze (in Lacanian terms) as “the inner disruption of narcissism,”\(^{159}\) on the side of woman, which traverses my “Eye (or, I)” and undermines my narcissistic fantasy of \textit{ego cogito}, in the manner of a unique interpellation (or, appellation) of my ‘being’ from the innermost. That is to say, in the ex-centric feminine space, the Beyond which subverts the Cartesian space coincides with the gaze itself. This may be the most central issue for my reading of Dalí’s dream sequence, and thus that which I want to draw nearer to, but here only mention in passing.

Just like the white stone, Dalí’s dream sequence functions as the materiality of Hitchcock’s \textit{Spellbound}. As an inherent hindrance, to quote Cohen’s words, as “a negative eye and anti-body that destroys yet also engenders narrative as its pursuit”\(^{160}\) Dalí’s dream sequence traverses the eye and the identity of Hitchcock’s text with a slash through it. As a subversive core of the film, occupying the radically ex-centric site through which the film surface is transfigured, Dalí’s narrative and imagery traverse and make possible the film surface.

For Hitchcock who wanted the “sharpness” of De Chirico “to break with the traditional way of handling dream sequences through a blurred and hazy screen”\(^{161}\) by putting Vaseline around the lens, Dalí was the ideal artist to convey his thoughts. As Donald Spoto points out, “We’re just bundles of inhibitions” was a line Hitchcock had

\(^{160}\) Tom Cohen, \textit{Anti-mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock}, p. 254.
written for Ingrid Bergman in *Spellbound.* If what we inhibit is exploded through the unconscious, Hitchcock wanted to show us the unconscious world of the dream “with great visual sharpness and clarity, sharper than the film itself.” In other words, what he wanted to show us was the innermost / deepest locus of mental processes in real sunshine, and it fitted really well with Dali’s artistic vision, for he had systematically sought “the interface between internal and external realities, illusion and vision, perception and thought.” For Dali, the purpose of painting was to erase the boundary between interior and exterior, to create sur-realism reuniting conscious and unconscious. So, in *Spellbound,* “the director sought to explore the human psyche from outside in and inside out” expecting that Dali would strongly exhibit ‘what we inhibit’ in his dream sequence. However, Dali’s bizarre surrealist ideas (some of which had derived from *Un Chien Andalou* and *L’Age d’Or,* that he had designed in Paris with Luis Buñuel in the late 1920s) went to extremes, and Hitchcock had to bracket out the dream sequence from the main action of the film to dilute Dali’s excessiveness which could hardly be incorporated even by Hitchcock’s artistic imagination and experiments in film.

Nonetheless, I will argue that considering the prefix “sur-” of sur-realism which means “a certain tendency not to transcend but to penetrate,” Dali, the sur-realistic artist, had successively inserted his own narrative into Hitchcock’s film contaminating

---

and subverting Hitchcock’s voice from the innermost locus of the film. In other words, Dalí had *excribed* his own voice onto the film surface through Hitchcock’s camera. Although Hitchcock wanted to use Dali’s creative imagination for his film, it would never be inscribed / incorporated by Hitchcock; instead, it penetrates and overflows Hitchcock’s film, in the manner of *excorporation*. Although Hitchcock tried to control and ingest Dalínian elements in *Spellbound*, Dali’s surrealist ideas and imagery would never be smoothly absorbed into Hitchcock’s narrative and remain as an eccentric excessive “outside” within the film. Thus, I will say, Dali’s dream sequence is a bone which remains stuck in the throat of Hitchcock’s *Spellbound* which makes the film neither able to swallow it nor to spit it out. In Dali’s dream sequence, although we can see only several scenes which were selected by Hitchcock’s editing for the coherence of his narrative, we cannot, nonetheless, escape Dalinian elements so that we cannot not hear/see Dali’s voice and narrative. Thus, Cohen says, “the “Cartesian” space Hitchcock treats is always in advance displaced by a more radical exteriority located in the interstices of endless semiosis.”

In this respect, I want to insist that Dali’s dream sequence designates the limit and the opening, at the same time, of interpretation of the film, and thus that it is the *sinthome* of the film. We (the viewer, along with Constance) believe that only if we can interpret it right, the mystery (as symptom) of J. B. (or the film itself) will dissolve; but it generates a leftover which makes any interpretation impossible to “tell everything” and thus engenders other interpretations incessantly. Even at the moment when Constance professes to finish the interpretation of J. B.’s symptoms, the sinthome remains and

---

169 “The *sinthome*” is a concept introduced by Jacques Lacan in his seminar *Le sinthome* (1975-76).
causes new interpretations. As what Hitchcock called “McGuffin,” it is always already something other than the very thing that Hitchcock seems to call it in his film. 170 Cohen asserts, “It is not the sinthomes’ resistance to interpretation that is the problem, but the excess they can produce—the threat of emptying interpretation by generating immeasurable relays and chains of associations.” 171 Thus, if Dalí’s dream sequence persists as the sinthome of the film, paradoxically, we may say that the sinthome is “the only positive support of the film, the only point that gives consistency to Hitchcock’s text”172; for if it dissolves, the film disintegrates. In other words, the sinthome is the way J. B. avoids madness, the way we (along with Constance) choose something instead of nothing. 173 Moreover, Dalí’s imagery transfigures and gives consistency to Hitchcock’s film by showing, with intensively splendid and sharp vision, what J. B.’s spoken words fail to grasp in the dream sequence. Thus, although the dream sequence does ex-sist in the film as a critical “outside” which had to be bracketed out by Hitchcock, I will argue that in the ex-centric “in-between” space, Dalí’s surrealism and Hitchcock’s modernism interface/interlock/interact with each other in terms of the “most delicate and constant osmoses between reality and surreality.” 174 In Lacanian terms, Dalí’s dream sequence is the so-called Stigma which makes the film (im)possible. Although it disturbs Hitchcock’s narrative, if it is effaced, it dismantles the film itself, just as when Aylmer succeeds in removing Georgiana’s birthmark to perfect her beauty, it causes her death in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “The Birth-Mark.”

Now I will examine how Constance’s interpretation of John Ballantine’s dream

170 Tom Cohen, Anti-mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock, p. 240.
171 Ibid., p. 236.
172 Slavoj Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, p. 75.
173 Ibid.
can be read in different ways considering Dali’s sur-realistic and paranoiac logic. If we track out the missing scenes cut from the finished film by Hitchcock’s edit, we can get more clues to interpret Dali’s narrative. The dream sequence starts with Dr. Brulov’s words guiding John Ballantine into the psychoanalysis of his dream.

Brulov: Now here is where dreams come in… They tell you what you are trying to hide. But they tell it to you all mixed up like pieces of a puzzle that don’t fit. The problem of the analyst is to examine this puzzle and put the places together in the right place—and find out what the devil you are trying to say to yourself.

J. B.: I kept thinking while I was dreaming that all this meant something. There was some other meaning in it that I ought to find out.

Constance: We’ll find out.

…

J. B.: I can’t make out just what sort of a place it was. It seemed to be a gambling house, but there weren’t any walls, just a lot of curtains with eyes painted on them. A man was walking around with a large pair of scissors cutting all the drapes in half. And then a girl came in with hardly anything on and started walking around the gambling room kissing everybody. She came to my table first. [...] I was sitting there playing cards with a man who had a beard. I was dealing to him and turned up the seven of clubs. He said, ‘That makes 21. I win!’ When he turned up his cards they were blank. Just then the proprietor came in and accused him of cheating. The proprietor yelled, ‘This is my place and if I catch you cheating again I’ll fix you!’ [...] He was standing on the sloping roof of a high building. It was the man with the beard. He was leaning over the edge of the roof. I - I yelled at him to watch out. I knew he was going to fall, but I couldn’t do anything about it. Then he went over - slowly - with his feet in the air. And then I saw the proprietor again - the man in the mask. He was hiding behind a tall chimney and he had a small wheel in his hand. I saw him drop the wheel on the roof. And then suddenly I was running. And then there was Constance sitting in a
weird deserted place. I ran toward her but she disappeared. Then I heard something beating over my head. It was a great pair of wings. The wings chased me and almost caught up with me when I came to the bottom of the hill. I must have escaped. I don’t remember. That’s all there was. I woke up and saw Dr. Brulov. (Hecht, Screenplay: 99-103)

Listening to his narration, Constance interprets the content to find out any hidden meaning. “From J. B.’s extraordinary fear of dark lines on white and his description of running down a hill, Constance deduces that Dr. Edwardes and J. B. were skiing together at the time of the accident. The wings, [Dr. Brulov says], allude to Constance’s role as his ‘angel’ and signify the name of the resort, Gabriel Valley. Eventually Constance realises that the 7 of clubs making 21 is a reference to a certain ‘21 Club,’ where J. B. overhead the real murderer (‘the proprietor’) threaten the bearded man (Dr Edwardes), and that the ‘wheel’ the proprietor drops in the dream is the revolver that was used to shoot Edwardes during the skiing outing.”

To reenact the event and unlock his repressed memories, Constance and J. B. go to Gabriel Valley. As they are skiing down a long slope, near the bottom of the hill, J. B.’s memory of his childhood trauma suddenly returns. In flashback, J. B. as a little boy slides down the balustrade towards another boy and hits him. It causes the boy (J. B.’s older brother) to be accidentally impaled on the spiked railings. J. B.’s confrontation with this painful trauma jars his memory; he remembers his real name, John Ballantine, and some details about his encounter with Dr. Edwardes. Thus, at this moment, it seems that Constance finally succeeds in solving all J. B.’s mysteries. However, as the cards which the bearded man turned up saying “That makes 21. I win!” were blank in his dream, Constance’s interpretation is, I will insist, just one of other

---

numerous possible interpretations that can be given to the blank card, that is, the empty signifier. Here, I want to note that in the ballroom scene, one of the deleted scenes of the dream sequence, Constance was draped in a Grecian gown like a Goddess and an arrow positioned on her neck.

Dali said, “This arrow necklace symbolized the obstacle between the two lovers.” But, what I want to emphasize here is that Constance’s neck seems to be pierced by an arrow—as if a white bone is stuck in her throat—represents the disablement of her language. That means her interpretation is not-all (or not-whole). There remain some leftovers that cannot be signified by her words; thus, here, I want to remark how Dali shows us the leftovers with his eccentric imageries through his dream sequence in *Spellbound*. In other words, I want to read Constance’s interpretation of J. B.’s dream in a different way considering Dali’s codes of imagery. To interpret what Dali tried to show us but which was repressed and even erased in *Spellbound*, first of all, we may have to be equipped with a basic understanding of Salvador Dali and his work. For it, here, I quote Dawn Ades’s expatiation of one of Dali’s oils, *Portrait of my Dead Brother* (1963).

The idea of doubles and doubling is present at every level in this brilliant composite portrait of Dali and his dead brother. Another Salvador had died at the age of 22 months, in August 1903, just nine months before the second Salvador’s birth (not three years, as Dali said). Naming a child after a deceased sibling was not uncommon; but combined with the fact that he and his brother resembled each other like “two drops of water” the absent double was a cause of confusion and morbid anxiety for Dali. However much loved, he felt always a substitute for
another, “When my father looked at me, he was seeing my double as much as myself… My soul twisted in rage and pain beneath the laser that constantly scrutinized it and then through it, tried to reach the other how was no more.” Dalí links his constant and conscious construction and reconstruction of his persona to the double who shared his identity and prevented coherent formation of a bodily self to be projected into the world. “For my schema, my corporeal image, my double started by being a dead boy. I had no corporeal image, fate having willed for me to be born without a body, or in an angelic one, with putrefaction images to boot.” (…) 

Embedded in the head and doubling as hair is a vulture, resembling that which Freud saw in the robe of Leonardo’s Virgin in *The Virgin and Saint Anne*, and interpreted as the unconscious sign of the artist’s repressed fantasies. Freud’s analysis of the Leonardo was one of the models for Dalí’s extended psychoanalytical study of Millet’s *Angelus*. Uncovering the cause of the obsession this banal devotional image exercised on him was also to reveal the picture’s hidden erotic and threatening meaning. The little group of distant sepia figures on the plain are an animated composite of Millet’s *Angelus* and his *Le Vanneur*, which Dalí reproduced together with Leonardo’s *Virgin and Saint Anne* in his “Interpretation Paranoiaque-critique de l’image obsedante de ‘L’Angelus’ de Millet.” 176

Salvador Dalí had a personality disorder and his mental instability surely affected his bizarre surrealist thoughts; he produced art from an agitated psychological state of self-induced paranoia, a process he called a “paranoiac-critical activity.” Dalí’s hysteria, tense nerves and paranoiac eccentricities were caused, most of all, by the confusion over his identity. Dalí’s family, especially his father, who had adored Dalí’s dead older brother and thus named Dalí after him, forced Dalí to behave like his dead brother and to do the same things the first Salvador Dalí had done before; if the little Dalí could not get it over with,

---

his father grew angry comparing him with the dead one. In other words, Dalí must have been always under the shadow of his dead brother since birth, and the father’s absurd coercion made the little Dali become absorbed into his own world of eccentric imagination. Prohibition on anything different from his dead brother and the nightmarish anxiety of living as a secondhand copy of the dead one made Dalí have multiple personalities and become slightly autistic. Dalí believed that all his problems and, indeed, his triumphs, stemmed from this prenatal tragedy: “All the eccentricities which I commit, all the incoherent displays are the tragic fixity of my life. I wish to prove to myself that I am not the dead brother, but the living one. As in the myth of Castor and Pollux, in killing my brother, I have gained immortality for myself.” 177 From this confession, we can guess how Dalí had suffered under the shadow of the dead, throughout his life. Thus, it was not accidental that when Dalí read *The Interpretation of Dreams* written by Sigmund Freud, at the age of 21, while a student at the School of Fine Arts in Madrid, he was mesmerized by Freud and his psychoanalytic theories and became a huge admirer of Freud’s genius. Actually, through his paintings, we can easily figure out how strongly and largely Dalí was influenced by Freud and psychoanalysis.

Apparently, Dalí’s trauma seems to be imbued into John Ballantine’s character in *Spellbound*. In the film, J. B. comes up as the substitute of Dr. Edwardes who is already dead. Suffering from amnesia, J. B. cannot even remember his real name. Just as Salvador Dalí always felt like a substitute, J. B. should impersonate the dead double, without his real identity. What this signifies, I will argue, is that J. B.’s suffering in relation to the question “Che vuoi?” is very similar to Dalí’s lifelong suffering from

confusion and morbid anxiety caused by the absurdity of his given identity, the absurd interpellation; he must accept it as the only way to be loved by his family. This kind of anxiety is actually endemic in Dalí’s imagery. In particular, Dalí painted up to ten variations on the theme of Millet’s *Angelus*, over a four-year period, reading it with his own invention, the Paranoiac-Critical Method. In those oils, we can see how his paranoid vision of women (or mother) and the influence of Sigmund Freud dominate him. Indeed, he displays such elements throughout the dream sequence of *Spellbound*. The reason why I want to especially focus on the deleted scenes of the dream sequence is that they are Dalí’s ideas, not Hitchcock’s. We can read Dalí’s voice more clearly through the deleted scenes. In *Spellbound*, it is an irrefutable fact that J. B.’s hysterical anxiety is connected with Constance and thus feminine imageries evidently dominate his subconscious, through his dream, as we can see in the central dream sequence. In the original dream sequence, Constance was portrayed as a huge white statue that signifies, considering Dalí’s elements, both a mother-goddess figure and a praying mantis as the devouring, voracious mother (unfortunately, the scenes were deleted by the producer and the director). That is to say, for John Ballantine, Constance is the object of his ambivalent feelings, i.e., love and fear. Then let’s go into J. B.’s dream, the cave of Diana, shown to us through the screen, not with words.

Watching the dream sequence designed by Dalí, we feel as if we are peeking into someone’s nightmare. When the dream sequence starts, and we enter into J. B.’s dream content following the camera’s eye, what we see at first is numerous “single” large eyes. The eyes change into those printed on giant draperies. John Ballantine narrates, “I can’t make out just what sort of a place it was. … A man was walking around with a large pair
of scissors cutting all the drapes in half.” Admittedly, the best-known image in the dream sequence is that of a man cutting through a huge eye painted on a drapery in half with a pair of giant scissors. This image is obviously inspired by Buñuel’s Dali-designed surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou* (1929); the film opens with a scene in which a guy slits a woman’s eyeball with a razor—Buñuel recounted in his autobiography how the idea occurred to him in a dream: “When I arrived to spend a few days at Dali’s house in Figueras, I told him about a dream I’d had in which a long tapering cloud sliced the moon in half, like a razor blade slices through an eye” (Buñuel, *My Last Sight*: 125).

As one of the great Surrealists who challenged ocularcentrism, “the idea of the eye as a perfect representation of intuitive presence from a fixed singular and privileged point of view,”178 Salvador Dalí “rejected the idea that painting should address itself only to the eye.”179 In traditional western thought, “seeing,” “thinking,” and “knowing” had been a kind of triad in terms of the subject’s self-constitution in terms of visual cognition. However, the problem is that such a limited way of cognition brings a blind thought about “the other.” With only visual cognition, the subject cannot perceive the invisible, and thus comes to consider merely visible parts as the whole; it breeds the subject’s

---

179 Dawn Ades (ed.), *Dalí’s Optical Illusions*, p.11.
narcissistic fantasy of “a uniform or self-consistent whole,” that is, the so-called Gestalt (as we see in the Lacanian mirror stage); it can bring about the violence of “Eye.” The characteristic of the speculative / narcissistic “I” (or, “Eye”) is that the subject can never recognize the other’s gaze (as the invisible or the unseen)—that is epitomized in the myth of Narcissus. “The invisible” which deflects off the subject’s narcissistic eye and thus is excluded from his cognition is called “the gaze” in Sartrean or Lacanian terms. For Sartre, the emergence of the other is based on the gaze which deprives the “I” of its solipsistic fantasy, that is, solipsism (solipsisme) in which the “I” is the center of the world. Owing to “it,” my solipsistic world has a hole, and through the hole everything that has constituted my seemingly integral world drains away. So, it undermines and collapses “my” world. Sartre called this internal haemorrhage “the flow of my world toward the Other-as-object.”\textsuperscript{180} He defined the emergence of the other as “a little particular crack in my universe (une petite lézardé particulière de mon univers).” For Lacan, the gaze is something impossible to fix / capture because as soon as it meets my eye, it disappears. It always eludes my eye’s grasp and thus interrupts my self-consciousness. Thus, it opens a gap in my recognition and due to the fissure, I come to realize the lack of my being. The paradox is, according to Lacan, the gaze pre-exists the eye / the I; that is to say, the gaze “always-already” exists even before my being thrown into the world. In this respect, I will insist that the gaze coincides with the question “Che vuoi?” which is evoked by what Žižek called “the interpellation prior to identification,”\textsuperscript{181} and thus that it is emblematically portrayed in Salvador Dalí’s dream sequence.

\textsuperscript{181} Slavoj Žižek, \textit{The Metastases of Enjoyment: six essays on women and causality}, Verso, 2005, p. 60.
In the first scene of the dream sequence we see numerous “single” large eyes which are approaching our eyes as if to intepellate. However, when the eyes change into those of giant draperies, as J. B. narrates, a man starts to walk around cutting all the draperies, on which a huge single eye is painted, in half, one by one with a pair of giant scissors. It is noteworthy that every drape falls revealing another eye, just as the series of doors open to another door, one after another, in the previous scene. Just as we have seen a radiantly white wall at the end of the series of doors, what we come to see in the innermost and furthest space, behind the last curtain, is *The Eye* (1945), the famous set design painted by Salvador Dalí, a single huge eye floating over De Chiricoian long parallel lines converging on a vanishing point. If Hitchcock does not believe in either “light” or “eye,” what did he want to say or show to the viewer through the radiantly white wall and the single huge eye that are behind the last door and the last curtain?

To answer it in Lacanian terms, although the subject (consciousness) wants to penetrate the secret behind the curtain, his effort fails because there is nothing behind the curtain except the subject himself who has been lured to it.\(^\text{182}\) Thus, as I have already discussed, if the white wall signifies the radiant blankness making a white-out, what *The Eye* signifies here is the gaze; to put it differently, in association with the question “Che

vuoi?”, when the subject desires to penetrate others’ gazes, what he comes to encounter is his own gaze, which is the very thing that The Eye represents in the film. What both of them signify is the Beyond that is out of my cognizance and thus subverts my Cartesian space; in line with my argument in this chapter, the gaze as the Beyond is inevitably linked to the Freudian “das Ding,” the outside / the materiality with-in me. Here, it is critical to stress Žižek’s words; “This gaze which reveals the true nature of the Beyond is the hard kernel of the Cartesian cogito” (Žižek, 1992: 257). For this reason, in traditional Western thought, the gaze deflecting away my eyes and occurring outside the “I” is considered a threat to Cartesian cogito in association with the castration fear. In this context, the best-known image in Dalí’s dream sequence, that is, the scene in which a man is cutting through a huge eye with a pair of giant scissors, should be read in terms of the gaze slashing the eye of the “I.” From this perspective, I will insist, “a pair of giant scissors” is a metaphor of the gaze. In Hitchcock’s films, “it” is usually portrayed as birds, a single feminine eye, or Delta (△)-like iconic triangle which symbolizes feminine vaginal entry (▽). In the dream sequence of Spellbound designed by Salvador Dali, “it” is successively linked to the huge single eye floating over the De Chiricoian long parallel lines, the white distorted Daliesque wheel representing the vagina, a great pair of wings signifying a maternal vulture, and a huge angel or praying mantis-like white statue standing at the bottom of the hill.
According to James Bigwood, in Dalí’s sketches and notes he had a plan to have a “cockroach with an eye glued onto its back moving across the blank cards,” but it was politely rejected as was his suggestion that “the eye could reappear and serve as a dissolve into the wheel in the chimney scene.”¹⁸³ Then, what does the single eye moving across the blank cards signify? If the blank cards represent the screen on which not only the director’s but also the interpreter’s desires and narratives will/can be projected, I will insist that the screen as an empty signifier is the place in which the single eye as the gaze takes place and traverses the surface of the film and the viewer’s narcissistic visual fantasy. Considering Murray Pomerance’s words, “The screen was a kind of consciousness for [Hitchcock], and what was unsatisfactory and unclear in experience (because of pain, guilt, or social impossibility) had to be brought clearly into its space,”¹⁸⁴ we may say that the single eye as the gaze is slashing or ripping the surface of our conscious, “as if tearing at the very film, ripping the screen,” to quote Hitchcock’s own words. As Brigitte Peucker asserted, the cut / slash is “opening up a space for us that

¹⁸⁴ Murray Pomerance, An Eye for Hitchcock, p. 77.
resembles the eye-shaped peephole that Norman has carved into the wall." In short, the single eye glued on the back of a cockroach moving across the blank cards (or blank screen) signifies “the gaze” engendering the suspension of our “I” as if a scissor or razor is slashing our eyes. This eye mimics the eye but would not be the same as the eye. Like Homi Bhabha’s evil eye, this gazing/piercing eye is “an eye for an I” that is mimicry of “an eye for an eye”; that is to say, it is an eye, threatening and subverting the Cartesian cogito’s narcissistic illusion of the I and the Eye along with so-called Western traditional ocularcentrism. We can see this ex-centric eye in the innermost and furthest space, behind the last curtain, in the dream sequence of Spellbound and again in the opening credit of Vertigo (1958).

Then, why, in Dalí’s conception, should this eye reappear as a dissolve into the

---

**185** Brigitte Peucker, *The Material Image: Art and the Real in Film*, p. 98.
wheel in the chimney scene? What did he want to show us? In Constance’s interpretation, the wheel that the proprietor drops in the dream signifies the revolver that was used to shoot Edwardes during the skiing outing. However, here, I will link this white wheel to the revolver that is firing into the screen (that is, the camera’s eye, or the viewers’ eyes) with a red explosion near the end of the film.

As a gigantic pair of scissors cuts huge eyes that are painted on huge draperies, as Norman’s knife tears Marion’s shower curtain, or as a razor slashes a woman’s eyeball, this revolver rips the screen and opens a space towards us, as if asking directly, “What do you want from me? What do you want to read from me (the film itself)?” just as Thorwald shouted to Jeff “What do you want from me?” in Rear Window (1954). That is to say, this bleeding red explosion of the revolver suddenly removes the distance, or collapses the distinction, between two levels of reality (that is, representation and reality) and includes us (as the spectators) in the cinema. Thus, in association with the question “Che vuoi?” I will argue, this scene is another emblematic example of Hitchcock’s suspense.

On the other hand, I want to also stress that the shape of the wheel is associated with the female genital organ in Dalí’s imagery and motifs that are derived from his reading of Millet’s The Angelus (1857). For Dalí, The Angelus was the inner dynamic of

---

186 Elliott H. King, Dalí, Surrealism and Cinema, p. 77.
his creativity and his lifelong theme in which he had been obsessively immersed. It is apparent, I will argue, that Dali exhibits his main motifs from *The Angelus* in his dream sequence in *Spellbound* including the deleted scenes.

According to Sara Cochran, the wheel was round in the original drawings, “but in the final film it is distorted into an uneven oval shape that resembles the melting watches in *The Persistence of Memory* 1931.”\(^{187}\) As Cochran asserted, it suggests that Hollywood was entirely familiar with Dalí’s imagery considering that this allusion did not come from Dalí.\(^{188}\) One of Dalí’s well-known paranoiac motifs is of softly melting objects. In Dalí’s art, such soft things make a unique contrast to solid things; the melting-down objects signify inter-permeability and inter-changeability occurring in the in-between space in

---


According to John Ballantine’s narration, when he saw the small wheel that a man in the mask dropped on the roof, he suddenly started to run and heard a great pair of wings beating over his head. The wings chased him, so he ran down a huge slope desperately trying to escape from the beating wings. When he arrived at the bottom of the hill, he came to see a huge, white, scissor-like, stone statue standing between two huge pyramids, which looked like an angel (goddess-mother figure) or a praying mantis. Here, I will insist, it is critical to note the series of feminine symbols—a single eye, a small white wheel, a great pair of wings, the bottom of the hill and a huge white statue—as an effective ensemble. As I already remarked, the small white wheel signifies the female genital organ—which is to say the gaping hole of the vagina is changed into a great pair of wings chasing John Ballantine. In Dalí’s conception, as we see in *Portrait of my Dead Brother* (1963), what the beating wings signify is Freud’s maternal vulture “which Freud saw in the robe of Leonardo’s Virgin in *The Virgin and Saint Anne*.”\(^{189}\) In Freud’s analysis of the Leonardo, the vulture is a snatcher, a rapacious and carnivorous bird. It is also noteworthy that the word “snatch” is an obscene term for the female genitals. Therefore, “a great pair of wings” signifying a (maternal) vulture is a transformation of the feminine white wheel. It is chasing and threatening J. B. as if it will snatch and devour him. In the end, it is linked to the huge white statue that is standing between the two huge slopes at the bottom of the hill.

\(^{189}\) Dawn Ades (ed.), *Dalí’s Optical Illusions*, p. 174.
In Dalí’s sketches, the huge white statue looks like a pair of gigantic scissors or pliers like those we have seen in the best-known image of Dalí’s dream sequence in which a man cuts through a huge eye painted on the curtain in half. At the same time, it looks like the huge white stone in another Dalí’s oil painting, *The Architectonic Angelus of Millet* (1933), which represents the woman of Millet’s *The Angelus* (1857).

Considering Dalí’s series of paintings exploring Millet’s *The Angelus*, what the feminine white statue signifies in Dalí’s dream sequence is a praying mantis or maternal vulture and its white bone-like shape reminds us of Žižek’s (white) bone stuck in the subject’s throat that represents the Freudian “das Ding,” the hard kernel of the Cartesian cogito. Thus, as I have discussed so far, if the series of Daliesque feminine symbols, all of which are linked to the (Lacanian) gaze, converge into this white huge scissor-like or bone-like

![Salvador Dalí, *The Eye of Angelus*, 1978](image1)  
![Salvador Dalí, *Atavism at Twilight*, 1933](image2)  
![Salvador Dalí, *The Architectonic Angelus of Millet*, 1933](image3)
statue, I will insist, it (as the (feminine) Thing) incarnates the (feminine) gaze at the end of Dalí’s dream sequence. Obviously, this huge white statue represents Constance in J. B.’s dream, as he himself alludes to in his narration. In one of the scenes of the dream sequence deleted by Hitchcock’s editing, Constance was supposed to turn into a white statue.

But there is also a “Ballroom sequence,” of which Spellbound now contains no trace. In the shooting script, the missing sequence occurs after the man in the mask drops the small wheel on the roof. J. B. describes this portion of his dream as follows: “I don’t know how I got there, but I was in a ballroom. The dancers were all dressed in white suites and pretending to dance, but not moving. There was an orchestra dressed in white fur hats. And Dr. Brulov was leading it. I was dancing with Constance, and she had a dance card and asked me to write my name in it. I refused, then grabbed her and we started dancing—rather wildly. We danced out of the ballroom, and I kissed her. The dance card kept getting bigger. It was full of names and addresses. And Constance turned into a statue. I started running…” 190

That is to say, while in the finished film, the time that John Ballantine started running to escape the huge winged shadow was after “the man in the mask drops the small wheel on the roof,” in the original script it was just after Constance turned into a white statue. Moreover, when Dalí produced sketches for Ingrid Bergman’s costume, “one of his designs—which in the end was never used—was a pair of “folding wings” with a “mechanism for opening and closing” that would be deployed when the actress turned into the statue.” 191 Then, we may say that the object from which J. B. struggles to run away is Constance herself represented by the beating wings and the huge white stone

---

statue resembling a great pair of scissors in the dream sequence. Thus, if the relay of Daliesque feminine symbols starts from *The Eye* behind the last curtain and ends consequentially by the white statue representing Constance in the dream sequence, here I will insist that, considering Lacan’s words “Man’s desire is the desire of the Other,”¹⁹² what *The Eye* represents is the gaze as the question “Che vuoi?” which makes J. B. face the reality of his own desire. Although J. B. struggles to run away from it, what he encounters at the end of the dream sequence is still another “Che vuoi?” that is represented by the feminine scissor-like or bone-like white statue. That is to say, J. B. cannot escape the “Che vuoi?” that exists as the (immanent) other or as the materiality with-in him, that is, the Beyond ripping the surface of his consciousness and rationality. Thus, in this context, I will read the so-called “Ballroom sequence” as another emblematic example of the enigmatic question “Che vuoi?” In the missing sequence, Constance asks J. B. to write his name on her dance card in order to dance with her; what it means is, I will insist, that she is asking J. B. to define his identity in terms of the question “Che vuoi?” The problem is that J. B. cannot know what name will please her and thus allow him to dance with her. Thus, here, the question “Che vuoi?” of the other (or the Other, that is, Constance) for interpellation is echoed by his own “Che vuoi?” and he starts to desperately run away from the enigmatic “Che vuoi?”

Thus, if all the feminine symbols in Dali’s conception for the dream sequence—the enormous pair of scissors, the single eye, the small white wheel, the beating wings, and the huge white stone statue—lead to Constance, we may ask, “Why do they converge into Constance in the end?” In the last scene of the dream sequence, significantly, the huge white scissors/pliers-like statue standing at the bottom of the hill between two

slopes shapes an image of female genitalia (\( \sqrt{V} \)). It reminds us of the white female architecture, which symbolizes the mother-mantis, in Dalí’s oil *Atavistic Vestiges After the Rain* (1934). Significantly, the image of two abutting pyramids looks like the alphabet “M” or “W” as the name of feminine space, as if it signifies “Mother” or “Woman.”

Salvador Dalí, *Study for the dream sequence in Spellbound*, 1944

In Hitchcock’s cinema, as Tom Cohen says, “the M and W (sometimes coming together like *The Man Who Knew Too Much* or *The Wrong Man*), the one an inversion of the other, hence the same, suggests the space of a female performer—a site where “gender” is displayed as a performative, sometimes faked, effect viewed from within an imaginary in which the male, who identifies with or is given identity by that program, is also a site generated in turn by that performative.”

Cohen defines the letter “M” as follows:

M: Thirteenth letter of the alphabet, it traverses every “Mar-” name, which reinscribes any anthropomorphism of “mother” into a mnemographics of the metrical, or *khora*-like order. Central letter cipher, returning to the name of Hitchcock’s mother, Emma (evinced in *Rich and Strange’s “Emmy”* and *Shadow of a Doubt*). Series: music, murder, machine, memory, mountain, mother… three triads (like three interlocking Vs or triads); may be juxtaposed graphically to W (*The Man Who…, The Wrong Man, “Mae West,” Montreal, and Winnipeg*).

According to Cohen, the letter *M* (the thirteenth letter of the alphabet) coincides with the

---

number 13 as the combination of the number 1 (A of Alfred Hitchcock: the first letter resembling a pyramid (or a tomb) and representing the inverted V) and the number 3 (C of Cinema, Camera or Cameo). “It” (the M) is tied to a murder or erasure of origin, the “I,” and seriality sharing “the self-cancelling triangular logic” (Cohen, 52; 63). That is to say, for Hitchcock, the letter M as the three triads (like three interlocking Vs), juxtaposed graphically with W, is a sign of the place in which its avenging force against the violence of “1” and, thus, the cancellation of the number “1” take place (Cohen, 34; 57; 59). Here, the number “1” is, of course, associated with the “I” as the first personification and the ocularcentric “Eye.” Thus, “it” (the M) is the placeholder of a zero that lodges and undermines the ocularcentric program and aesthetic ideology as such (Cohen, 43). In this respect, the M (with W) as the three interlocking Vs is linked to the enigma of the triangle (Δ or △) signifying the womb or vaginal space. The triangle marks the (a)material site of an outside, an (a)material trace disrupting all interiority, the fable of the subject (Cohen, 35-36). The triangle as the number 3, as a signature for the cinematic, is beyond all of the assumptions the 1 brings (identity, character, subject) and guarantees a permanent rupture, hyperbolic, a nonanthropomorphic site, exteriority to any metaphoric enclosure (Cohen, 38).

In these contexts, thus, I will connect the M (as the number 13) with Delta, the iconic central triangle of the Lacanian triad (the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real).
As the McGuffinesque core, Delta is the overlap and, at the same time, the triple lack among the three Lacanian orders. It is neither-inside-nor-outside of the triad, and thus a womb-like (or tomb-like), more precisely speaking, Khōra-like place. Resembling an inverted triangle or female genital organ, it is the place in which the gaze as objet a takes place slashing the “Eye” or the “I” in Lacanian terms; thus, I will argue, as the ex-centric (uncanny) and ex-centered feminine place of woman, Delta exactly coincides with the M (of mother or mère) or the W (of woman or water) with regard to “the self-cancelling triangular logic” of the letter M (or W as the three interlocking Vs). Delta is, thus, figuratively speaking, the cave of the goddess Diana in which Truth-Diana or the white skull takes its place as “the Freudian thing” and from which the white milk as one of maternal elements is overflowing.

“It” is a tomb-like pyramid that embalms the reflexive circuit that is circularity of ocularcentric “Eye” and thus abrogates the self-enclosed narcissism of the “I,” and, at the same time, a womb-like ocean (mère) as the place of inexhaustible reproduction. “It” is the place of woman who is “being” a hole by emptying out her “I,” and the place of water that is incessantly and explosively overflowing, turning inside out. Thus, Delta along with the M or the W signifies the feminine space of ex-sistence or ek-stasis; there exists
woman as not-whole and not-all; there, she takes the feminine position of “being” a hole, a passage towards elsewhere, towards ek-stasis “creating a void within herself by hollowing out an interior space.” There, (S)he turns herself inside-out, exposing her most interior space to the other whom she welcomes. In doing so, she crisscrosses all boundaries, opening herself to alterity and exteriority and allowing them to penetrate her. There, her body functions as “a threshold, a space of exchange and interaction, in which its borders “are wed in an embrace that transcends all limits.” Thus, the Delta (identical with the M or the W) is a space of in-between and also beyond. There, exists khora as a consuming and inexhaustible “flood that sweeps over the “I” in an excess of excess.” This excess engulfs and flows through the hole of “I.” There, this incessantly overflowing water creates channels which constitute new directions, new places. There, unfathomable, abyssal deep, deep, blue, almost black-like, waters abruptly deflect, cut off, join, reel, cease, explode, seep slowly and evaporate. There, life and death, man and woman, you and I, Eum and Yang, every binary material interpenetrates, intermingles, interlaces and interpermeates with/to one another.

To return to the dream sequence of Spellbound, it is Constance who guides John Ballantine into the place of M / W, the feminine space of ex-sistence and ek-stasis. She leads John Ballantine (and also us the viewer) to Delta, the McGuffinesque core, by saying “I want you to come with me to Gabriel Valley” (Hecht, Screenplay: 110) and “I’m going to fight, and fight and get you free” (Hecht, Screenplay: 119). When we arrive at the bottom of the hill, that is, Gabriel Valley, represented by two abutting pyramids that

196 Ibid., p. 81.
197 Ibid., p. 76.
form into the shape of “V,” “W,” or “M,” Constance is waiting for us in the form of a huge white scissor-like statue, transfiguring the place into a Delta-like female genital place (\(\bigtriangledown\)) with her bone-like naked body. There, the series of feminine symbols—a single eye, a small white wheel, a great pair of wings—converges into Constance standing between two huge pyramids at the bottom of the hill. There she is as an enormous white stone. She is white. She is the whiteness; there, she takes place as the whiteness, the severe brilliance that pierces, slashes, and thus blinds our eyes. There, we become spellbound by her whiteness.

Therefore, in this context, I will argue, what we come to see at the end of the dream sequence, i.e., the white huge scissor-like stone statue, which incarnates both Truth-Diana and the white bone as *das Ding*, which is usually portrayed as the female figure in Dalí’s ten variations on the theme of Millet’s *Angelus*, signifies “the call” to the severance from the old, past, and dead ego. When our ‘I’ or ‘Eye’ is totally exposed to her, it will crack the narcissistic shell of our *ego cogito*. There, “It-She” saves us (John Ballantine, Dalí, and us the viewer) from our self-absorption, the prison-like narcissism, and invites us into a new place, “elsewhere.” At this moment, that is, when our “narcissistic ego” is totally annihilated by the encounter with her, the question “Che vuoi?—“What do you want from me?” does not stem from fear or anxiety anymore; this is the point of resurrection through death for a new life, in other words, re-subjectivization of the subject in Lacanian terms. When “I” am reborn by getting out of the dead “I,” that is, the self-centered and self-enclosed narcissism, the sterile and desolate place of “the I” like a tomb is watered and transfigured into a new place for a new life in which fresh water keeps overflowing.
The point is that “getting outside” or “standing outside” the narcissistic boundary of the “I” (the so-called “ek-stasis”) depends not on the Other as the cause-object of the “Che vuoi?”, but on our own choice and decision. We are given the responsibility to autonomously respond to the question “Che vuoi?” of the other (whether the (external) others or the (internal) other with-in our “self”), not merely defend our “self” against it. In Spellbound, Hitchcock seems not to show us clearly whether J. B. has finally accomplished this responsibility at the end. In the seemingly happy end of the film, Constance and J. B. kiss and exit to go on a wonderful honeymoon with Dr. Brulov’s seeing off them at Grand Central Station, but a station employee keeps a suspicious eye on them until they completely disappear from the screen and turns his gaze to Dr. Brulov who has already disappeared from the screen, and then looks straight into the camera’s eye as if asking us, “Do you agree (with this end)?” or “What do you want (from me)?”
Chapter 4.
Delta (√), the Ex-centric Place of Voice and Gaze

Madeleine: I’m walking down a long corridor that once was mirrored and fragments of the mirror still hang there. And when I come to the end of the corridor there is nothing but darkness, and I know when I walk into the darkness, I’ll die… I’ve never come to the end. I’ve always come back, before then. Except once.

― Alfred Hitchcock’s Vertigo (1958)

In the myth of Narcissus, we can see how a narcissistic love can bring about a tragic outcome. Actually, the story of Narcissus has been used as a universal motif in many love stories. With regard to Freud’s “On Narcissism”—the word “Narcissism” is obviously derived from Narcissus—, what many psychoanalytic readings focus on is; first, the object with which Narcissus is fully fascinated is none other than his own mirror image reflected in the water; second, he is so captured by this object that he can never hear the voice of Echo, who calls to him. To put it differently, Narcissus fails to see the real truth of his phallic desire “to have” the fantasy object and, metaphorically, fails to listen to the awakening call, which would break his fascination with the mirrored reflection of his “self” and thus enable him to detach himself from the impossible object. Thus, we may say that it is his failure to traverse his phallic fantasy which brings about his death.

Meanwhile, Žižek asserts that the goal of psychoanalysis is to “traverse” the fantasy; at the end of the analysis, the subject must face the truth, in its absolute nakedness, of his fantasy desire, in which he sees himself as “the phallicized object of the Other’s desire,”200 and accept the irreducible gap by which he cannot coincide with an imaginary or symbolic identity. When it is applied to the subject’s relationship with others, the irreducible gap occurs as the “in-between” space in the intersubjective relation.

As we see in the above diagram, what the gap “in-between” signifies is the void in the subject which he cannot see, as the inherent hindrance of the subject’s self-consciousness, and, at the same time, the subjective surplus which occurs as an inner split in the other, or vice versa. Here, what is at stake is the gap in-between which makes both of the two parts “not”-whole. The subject perceives this gap as his lack which represents the missing part of himself. Thus, his phallic fantasy of fullness and integration with the lost object arises precisely when his desire for filling in, or covering over lack arises.

When this occurs particularly in a love relationship, as Lacan asserted that man’s desire is the desire of the Other, the subject’s desire points toward the gap in-between himself and his beloved. The subject perceives this gap as the double-lack which hinders his union with his beloved and thus desires to fill it in. For this reason, it is at the gap “in between” that objet a takes place, in the Lacanian formula of desire. In this context, here, it is crucial to stress Žižek’s words; “the term ‘love’ is to be conceived here in its dimension of fundamental deception. The operation of love is therefore double: the subject fills in his own lack by offering himself to the other as the object filling out the lack in the Other—love’s deception is that this overlapping of two lacks annuls lack as

---

such in a mutual completion.” We can see the supreme case of love’s deception and the leading characters’ failure to traverse fantasy in Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958).

In Lacanian theory, hysteria, obsession, and perversion all refer to the intricate means through which the subject’s fantasmatic desire is formed as a defense to avoid the very direct encounter with the empty void in-between himself and the Other. Whereas a hysteric subject (like John Ballantine in Hitchcock’s *Spellbound*) constantly questions what kind of an object he is for the Other, a pervert does not try to get from the Other answers to the questions of who he is, and what he wants—regarding the question “Che vuoi?”; the pervert always already possesses a certainty of the object that needs to be placed in the gap/ lack, in his phallic fantasy. From this perspective, I will argue here that Scottie Ferguson is a pervert and Judy Barton is a hysterical pervert in *Vertigo*. With regard to the enigmatic question “Che vuoi?” Scottie never asks what Judy wants. Scottie just keeps struggling to deprive Judy of the difference between herself and the fictional Madeleine, who is his ideal lover. Scottie perceives the difference, by which Judy can never coincide with Madeleine, as the only blockage that makes the fulfillment of his desire (his love relationship with Judy, or re-union with (another) Madeleine) impossible, so he struggles to remove the difference, craving to complete his “fantasy of a “total” being (though composed of two halves).” He believes that only if Judy becomes the same as the fictional Madeleine, he can re-possess his perfect lover who will fill out his lack and then be free from his enigmatic symptom, acrophobia, that is, the fear of falling.

Equally crucial is that Scottie has no feeling of guilt about recreating Judy in his image of

---

Madeleine, depriving her of her own identity and presence. In the case of Judy, obviously, she exactly follows the Lacanian formula of desire; she desires to possess Scottie by offering herself to him to be the phallus of his desire. For Judy, the answer to the questions of who she is and what she wants is “I am what is lacking in you; with my devotion to you, with my sacrifice for you, I will fill you out, I will complete you.”

That is to say, considering Lacan’s discussion of sexuation in *Encore*, both Judy and Scottie take the masculine and phallic position “to have” the *impossible* object of desire, that is, *objet a*. If fantasy stands for the desperate gesture of suture to avoid the traumatic real of *objet a* as the radical opening in-between the subject and the Other, as Žižek points out, “traversing the fantasy is synonymous with confronting the abyssal opening” engendered by the impenetrable question “Che vuoi?” In these contexts, I will argue, *Vertigo* is the story about how Judy and Scottie fail to traverse their phallic fantasy, by which they struggle to cover over the radical opening in their own beings.

From the Lacanian perspective, when the subject traverses the defensive fantasy and faces the truth of *objet a*, s/he can accept that the Other does not have what s/he (was supposed to have) lost, and renounce her/his attempt to fill that lack. That is to say, when the subject succeeds in traversing the phallic fantasy, s/he can obtain freedom from her/his narcissistic desire, that is, ego-centric narcissism. Thus, in a sense, if traversing fantasy brings about the subject’s *ek-stasis*, that is, “standing outside” narcissistic desire, the ethical call awakening the subject to her/his freedom is, in Lacanian terms, epitomized by the object voice and the object gaze, as the little pieces of the Real. And, here, I will argue, we need to note that the voice and the gaze are situated at the vacant

---

center of the Lacanian triad, which is what I continue to call “Delta,” in Lacan’s formula. With regard to the voice and the gaze, what “Delta” signifies is the pivotal point of self-apprehension which introduces a rupture at the core of self-presence. It can never be simply present or absent; in other words, it can never be “fully” present or absent.

This rupture at the intersection (what I continue to call “Delta”) is the ex-centric place where an irreducible ex-orbitant excess occurs which engenders the failure of the phallus and truncates any phallic fantasy. Thus, it should be read as the feminine beyond the phallus, rather than as the lack of phallus. This “feminine” is neither the (transcendental) Thing nor “nothing”; it is literally “not” itself. Owing to the radical opening, the subject’s phallic desire is castrated and “That’s it / That’s all” is continuously changed into “That is ‘not’ it / That is ‘not’ all.” In the feminine place, the phallus-structured subject always fails to seize objet a, the feminine ex-orbitance which resists and does not allow itself to submit to any suture or fixation. This feminine Delta place as a (w)hole embodies a space open to the autonomous call of what exceeds “the I” which cleaves and bars the Other in an ineradicable “extimacy.” Thus, in this chapter, I will examine how the feminine place of ek-stasis, in which the ethical call for awakening takes place, is depicted in Hitchcock’s Vertigo, especially in relation to the object voice and the object gaze.

In Vertigo, Scottie Ferguson (James Stewart) is a former police detective and limited by his vertigo or acrophobia which is caused by his guilt complex over a fellow officer’s death and which has prompted him to quit the police force. Scottie is contacted by a college acquaintance Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore), who has heard of Scottie’s

---

208 Ibid., p. 56.
accident and wishes to hire him to trail his wife Madeleine (Kim Novak), who Elster believes is possessed by the spirit of her great-grandmother Carlotta Valdes. Scottie is initially skeptical but begins to follow the beautiful and mysterious Madeleine in her wanderings around San Francisco, and eventually falls in love with her, more precisely speaking, he falls in love with the fictional character named Madeleine. After a date wandering together, as she had requested, he takes Madeleine to the spot at San Juan Bautista which she described as the place in her dream where she would resolve her symptom. But, when they arrive, she, after professing her love for Scottie, runs agitatedly toward the bell tower. She heads up the spiral staircase with Scottie in hot pursuit. Near the top of the tower, Scottie’s acrophobia strikes, and he is unable to continue the climb. Before he can climb any further, he hears a scream and sees Madeleine’s body falling past the window, hurtling down onto the rooftop of an adjoining building. Unable to accept her death or his inability to save her, Scottie flees.

After the event, Scottie becomes possessed by the dead Madeleine. Wracked with guilt and grief, Scottie spends the next year catatonic in a sanatorium, where Midge, his former fiancé, attempts to bring him back to reality. While wandering the streets of San Francisco after being released from the sanatorium, miraculously, he comes across a brunette Madeleine; although she claims that she is not Madeleine, but Judy Barton from Kansas, and her rather coarse manner is nothing like that of the enigmatic blonde Madeleine, Scottie insists on dating her. She initially resists, but she eventually agrees to join Scottie for dinner—once Scottie has left, we learn of her true identity. An intervening scene showing Judy alone in her room establishes, through flashback, that she is indeed the woman Scottie knew as Madeleine. Preparing to flee before he can see her again, she
begins to write him a letter admitting that she was Gavin’s lover and was involved in the murder of his wife—the real Madeleine Elster. Gavin faked the suicide by hiding at the top of the bell tower and tossing his wife’s already-dead body out of the bell tower. Gavin used Scottie as a witness to her apparent suicide by correctly predicting that his acrophobia would prevent him from climbing all the way to the top. But Judy had fallen in love with Scottie, so she chooses to hide the truth.

Later, as Scottie and Judy have dinner at Ernie’s, Scottie stares intensely at this reincarnation of Madeleine, the dead woman’s image completely possessing him. He is in love—but not with the real, brunette Judy—, only with the ideal she recalls. He gradually transforms Judy so that she bears an uncanny resemblance to “Madeleine.” He buys Judy a gray suit and shoes identical to those Madeleine wore. She feebly protests but loves Scottie too much to resist him, naively hoping to win him on her own. He is truly a Pygmalion figure. He makes Judy dye her brunette hair to icy blond and even forces her to get the same hair style as the dead Madeleine’s. When Judy, willing to do anything just to keep him, comes out of the bathroom, she looks exactly as Scottie remembers. They kiss, and, as the camera revolves around them, their surroundings blend into the stable at San Juan Batista and then back again. However, eventually, when Scottie notices that the necklace Judy puts on is Carlotta’s necklace, he comes to realize Judy’s true identity. After all that, Scottie brings Judy to the bell tower at San Juan Bautista once again. And, there, Judy, the living Madeleine, comes to be exactly the same as the dead Madeleine. That is to say, she falls into the spiral of death.

Now, to read “Delta” as the place of ex-sistence and ek-stasis in Vertigo, here I suggest a diagram which will be helpful to explain the relationship between Judy and
Scottie as follows.

**Delta**, the radical opening as the immanent exteriority at the intersection of the three: what it signifies is not “nothing,” but literally “not” which makes all of the three “not”-all / “not”-whole. Here, the fictional figure, Judy-Madeleine appears as *objet a*. Judy-Madeleine ex-sists as the inner split in both Judy and what the fictional Madeleine’s non-existence signifies, that is, Nothingness itself. Owing to her ex-centric existence, the non-existence of the fictional Madeleine cannot be transcendental. Thus, considering Lacan’s discussion of sexuation, Delta-She is the feminine beyond the phallus.

Ironically, in the film, Scottie’s ideal lover is a fictional character who has never existed from the beginning (what I mention here is not the real Madeleine, Gavin Elster’s real wife, who has shown up only once to be thrown from the bell-tower by Elster). Nevertheless, the fictional Madeleine is the pivotal figure that holds the whole plot of *Vertigo* in place by her absence. The paradox is that she ex-sists in the Delta place, as we see in the above diagram, as the inner split in Judy. She ex-sists as a part of Judy at which Scottie gazes with his phallic desire, but, at the same time, she is the immanent exteriority of Judy with which Judy can never coincide. “She” cannot be radically absent in Judy but *non-absent* or *ab-present*, and so her difference also locates a state of *pre-ab-sence* which transgresses both pure absence and pure presence, transgresses the conditions of both existence and non-existence. Thus, in Delta place, her enigmatic ex-sistence occurs as Lacan’s *objet a* or Hitchcock’s *McGuffin*. In Delta place, Judy-Madeleine (as a fabrication) ex-sists not as “nothing,” but as “something important still unaccounted for” which keeps the interpreter dissatisfied, the novel still open, the process of interpretation

---

still able to continue.\textsuperscript{210} That is to say, Judy-Madeleine embodies an irreducible remnant sticking out of the text that continuously defers “That’s it! / That’s all!” Thus, if we merely define her as “nothing,” it is a hasty, unjustifiable, and even violent “suture,” and what it signifies is that we fail to escape our narcissistic viewpoint. Thus, I will argue, what is at stake here is her \textit{ex-sistence}, rather than non-existence.

She herself is the (w)hole as not-whole (or, not-all). In the uncannily ex-centric place, neither-inside-nor-outside, she ex-sists in full. “It is not because she is not-wholly in the phallic function that she is not there at all. She is \textit{not} not at all there. She is there in full (\textit{à plein}). But there is something more (\textit{en plus}).”\textsuperscript{211} She ex-sists ex-orbitantly and overflowingly. As an ex-orbitant excess, she is, indeed, not “nothing” but “something that gives elsewhere.” She is a kind of empty floating signifier which lures Scottie’s desire. In Lacanian terms, she is \textit{objet a}. In Scottie’s phallic fantasy, she is the very thing which will complete the fullness of his being. However, in the relationship of Judy—the fictional Madeleine—Scottie, if the Judy-Madeleine ex-sists as \textit{objet a} in Delta, the feminine space of ex-sistence, she must remain irreducible not only to nothing but also to the Thing, and her place as the inevitable and essential vacuum among the three must remain unfilled and open. She must remain as “not” and as the zeroed sign of \textit{pre-absence} to maintain an incessant metonymic displacement for “That’s NOT it” in the field of desire. In Lacanian terms, she is like the purloined letter as a pure signifier. As “it is


the purloined letter and its diversion which governs the characters’ entries and roles"\textsuperscript{212} in Edgar Allen Poe’s \textit{The Purloined Letter}, the pivotal core which leads the whole story of \textit{Vertigo} by determining other characters’ roles and interactions is the fictional Madeleine. Just as the subjects’ displacement is, in \textit{The Purloined Letter}, determined by the place which the purloined letter comes to occupy in their trio, it is the fictional Madeleine, in \textit{Vertigo}, which functions as the pure signifier in the spiral of displacements and substitutions of other characters (Gavin Elster, his real wife Madeleine, Carlotta, Judy, Scottie, and Midge) who are inter-relayed to each other in the repetitive pattern.\textsuperscript{213} In the film, her key role is to make \textit{not-yet} “That’s it!” Thus, in her ex-centric place, the letter should not arrive at its destination; instead, it should arrive over and over again without standing still. In her place, the Delta place, the letter should keep drifting/ floating/wandering around without the end. In the feminine ex-orbitant overflowing, the letter should be always without place; it is not locatable, not circumscribable; it always slips away, refusing to be pinned down.\textsuperscript{214} Thus, her place is, figuratively, the space of Derridian \textit{diff\textsuperscript{e}rance}. According to Derrida, “\textit{diff\textsuperscript{e}rance} is “not,” does not exist, and is not any sort of being-present (on). And we will have to point out everything that it is not, and consequently, that it has neither existence nor essence.”\textsuperscript{215}

In these contexts, we can argue why the story of \textit{Vertigo} leads to a tragic end. As Lacan articulated, if we can see only the abyssal opening of the infinite Emptiness behind

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., p. 45.
the veil—we can see the supreme case in Hitchcock’s *Spellbound*—“Each veil when removed only reveals another veil, ad infinitum, unless the last exposes an emptiness”\(^{216}\)—when we face the truth of *objet a*, we must free ourselves from obsessive pursuit of the impossible object; it is the ethics of “traversing fantasy.” As we have already discussed, owing to the traumatic gap in-between which opens the empty space and vacant time of desire to “That is ‘not’ it,” desire is forever barred and always subject to detours and delays; paradoxically, the detours and delays in which the gap of desire is inscribed “sustain” desire.\(^{217}\) However, Scottie who is caught up by the death drive, the fundamental narcissism, cannot accept any distance or detour to obtain the object of his desire. When he realizes the truth, that the object of his desire is indeed empty, he pushes his phallic desire to the end. His destructive phallic desire now seeks to abolish the gap, in which emerges *différance*. Scottie can endure neither difference nor “not,” he is totally obsessed with “That’s it.” If what he desires is to fill in the void of his subjectivity, his narcissistic desire goes to the end when he makes Judy’s existence “the same” as the non-existence of the fictional Madeleine. In other words, by abolishing the gap—difference in-between Judy and the fictional Madeleine, which signifies “not” itself, which gives metonymically elsewhere by incessantly generating an ex-orbitant remainder, and thus by which Judy cannot coincide with Madeleine—Scottie materializes the fictional Madeleine as an embodiment of Nothingness and reduces Judy to the void at the core of her being; in doing so, he pursues his *objet a* to the end in his phallic fantasy; in other words, he fails to traverse the fantasy to the end.


After a long drive together along the mountainside for an excursion to the redwoods—indeed, this driving scene itself emblematizes Scottie’s long pursuit of Madeleine—Madeleine (actually, Judy’s fake version of Madeleine) tells Scottie about the dream she had the night before, pretending to be totally possessed by the dead spirit of Carlotta Valdes.

MADELEINE: There is so little I know. It is as though I were walking down a long corridor that once was mirrored, and fragments of the mirror still hang there, dark and shadowy, reflecting a dark image of me… and yet not me… someone else, in other clothes, of another time, doing things I have never done… but still me… And I can’t stop to ask why, I must keep on walking. And when I come to the end of the corridor there is nothing but darkness, and I know when I walk into the darkness, I’ll die… But I’ve never come to the end. I’ve always come back, before then. Except once.

…

SCOTTIE: You don’t know where you were. But the small scenes, the fragments in the mirror: you remember them.

MADELEINE: Vaguely….

SCOTTIE: What do you remember?

MADELEINE: A room… there is a room, and I sit there alone… always alone…

…

SCOTTIE: What else?

MADELEINE: A grave….

SCOTTIE: Where?

MADELEINE: I don’t know. An open grave. I stand by the gravestone looking down into it. And it’s my grave.

SCOTTIE: How do you know?

MADELEINE: I know.

SCOTTIE: There’s a name on the gravestone.

MADELEINE: No. It’s new and clean, and waiting.
(Aleck Coppel and Samuel Taylor, *Screenplay*: 70-71)

Here, Madeleine’s narration of “fragments of mirrors” reminds me of *mise-en-abyme*. Mise-en-abyme means, by definition, “placing into infinity” or “placing into the abyss.”

Standing between two mirrors, seeing an infinite reproduction of her image, what does Madeleine feel? In the abyssal space, what Madeleine gazes at is her own image as a vanishing point infinitely keeping herself away from herself. She says that when she comes to the end of it there is nothing but darkness, and when she walks into the darkness, she’ll die. Here, then, the question is “Who is speaking now?” Is she Madeleine, or Judy? In other words, is she speaking as the fake Madeleine whose soul is supposed to be possessed by the dead Carlotta, or as herself, the double victim, who is entrapped into faking the fictional Madeleine? Who is here crying out in horror at being devoured by the open grave? When Judy pretending to be Madeleine comes to see her own image through the fragments of the mirror, that is to say, when Judy encounters the fake Madeleine face to face through the mirror, what she comes to experience is the very *mise-en-abyme* as the swirling vortex in the midst of a big feminine eye in the opening credit sequence of the film.

The Judy-Madeleine (or, Judy as Madeleine) cries out, “I don’t want to die, but there’s someone inside me, there is somebody else, and she says I must die... Scottie, don’t let me go!” It is clear that Judy is faking the fictional Madeleine, and this fake Madeleine (actually, Judy) is pretending to be possessed by Carlotta Valdes. Then, whose voice is crying out? As Katie Trumpener asserts, “she is and is not Madeleine; she is both a reincarnation of the past and a real person”\(^{218}\) living in the present. Scottie answers her,

“I’m here, I’ve got you,” and holds her tightly then kisses her passionately. It seems that here Scottie is fascinated by his own fantasy that he has captivated / possessed Madeleine as his objet a at the moment. Madeleine whispers “Don’t leave me. Stay with me.” Scottie answers, “All the time.” This dialogue actually comes to effect Scottie like a very powerful spell. After the fake Madeleine’s fall to her death, Scottie comes to be spellbound by this incantation. Scottie becomes unable to overcome his melancholia and his serious obsession to be with the lost objet (that is, Madeleine as his objet a). Even after Scottie gets released from the hospital, he is still unable to stop himself from obsessively thinking about Madeleine. As Spoto puts it, “Now Scottie begins to impose his lost dream on reality, seeing every woman as Madeleine no matter how remote the similarity of dress or manner—he is living within the closed circle of an obsession, and he sees his dead beloved everywhere: outside her apartment house, at Ernie’s restaurant, at the Legion of Honor Palace.”

Thus, when Scottie comes across the living image of his dead lover, that is, Judy Barton, although she is “a poor, tarty, brunette shopgirl,” it becomes his second chance. Driven by his obsessive love for Madeleine, being totally possessed by Madeleine’s image which lures and intrigues him, Scottie devotes himself to “recreate[ing] Judy into his image of Madeleine, making sure that she has the right clothes, make-up, hair color / style and so on.” Thus, Scottie is usually compared to Pygmalion. The difference is that Scottie desires to remake a real woman (Judy) to be the same as a fictional one.

---

(Madeleine). Scottie’s narcissistic and violent love coerces Judy, “What hinders our love is your difference. Please, remove your difference and be the same with Madeleine.” After starting to transform Judy into a new Madeleine, what Scottie keeps saying is “No, it’s not right!” or “That’s not it!” One day, during a seemingly happy date, Scottie brings Judy to the suit department at Ransohoff’s. Because what Scottie aims at is the restoration of Madeleine, he cannot accept any difference.

SCOTTIE: (selecting clothes for Judy): No, that’s not it—nothing like it.
SALESWOMAN: But you said gray, sir.
SCOTTIE: Now, look, I just want an ordinary, simple gray suit.
JUDY: I like that one, Scottie.
SCOTTIE: No, it’s not right.
SALESWOMAN: The gentleman seems to know what he wants.
JUDY: Scottie, what are you doing? You’re looking for the suit she wore! For me?!!
SCOTTIE: I want you to look nice. I know the kind of suit that would look well on you.
JUDY: You want me to look like her! No! I won’t do it! I don’t want to be dressed like someone dead! It’s a horrible idea! Is that what I’m here for? To make you feel that you’re with someone that’s dead?
SCOTTIE: It can’t make that much difference to you. Judy, you’ve got to do this for me!
...
JUDY (later): Why are you doing this? What good will it do?
SCOTTIE: I don’t know—no good, I guess. I don’t know. But there’s something in you.
He reaches to caress her face, then withdraws.
JUDY: You don’t even want to touch me.
SCOTTIE: Yes, I do.
JUDY: Look, couldn’t you like me—just me—the way I am? When we first
started out it was so good—we had fun. And then you started in on the clothes.
All right, I’ll wear the dam clothes if you want me to—if you’ll—just—like me.
SCOTTIE (gazing distractedly at her red hair but obviously thinking of the blonde he had adored): The color of your hair!
JUDY: Oh, no!
SCOTTIE: Please, it can’t matter to you.

(Aleck Coppel and Samuel Taylor, Screenplay: 116-122)

Noticing his intention, Judy becomes horrified and tries to resist it. However, what Scottie claims is “Do this for me.” As Donald Spoto points out although “Do this for me” are words, Hitchcock implies, heard daily in the boardrooms, staterooms and bedrooms of the world, no matter how innocent or blithe, they contain the seeds of a fatal blossom.” 222 These words imply how Scottie is pathetically ego-centric, that is, narcissistic, in the relationship with Judy. Fully obsessed by images of his dead lover, Scottie is unable even to touch Judy who still has differences from the fake Madeleine. Here, as Spoto analyzes, Scottie is suffering from two opposite drives. Scottie desires to see his dead lover come to life through Judy, thus he reaches to caress Judy but soon withdraws. He might well be aware that such a perfect restoration of his ideal beauty is merely illusory.

But, now, Judy herself becomes so desperate to get Scottie’s love, Spoto says, “at this point comes perhaps the film’s most tragic and human statement, the moment in which there is highlighted the theme of romantic delusion, as we hear the desperation in the voice of a girl longing to be accepted and loved, and willing to do anything to achieve that” 223

---

223 Ibid., pp. 293-94.
JUDY: If I let you change me, will that do it? If I do what you tell me, will you love me?
SCOTTIE: Yes—yes.
JUDY: All right. Then, I’ll do it. I don’t care anymore about me anymore. I just want you to love me.

(Aleck Coppel and Samuel Taylor, Screenplay: 123)

That is to say, whereas Scottie desires to fill his own traumatic emptiness by recreating another Madeleine with Judy, now Judy renounces herself only to be accepted and loved by her lover Scottie. Judy decides to offer herself to Scottie as the object of his desire to fill in his lack. Thus, Spoto portrays this scene, “Perhaps never have exploitation (disguised as love) and self-annihilation (disguised as self-sacrifice) been so tragically presented in film.”224 Judy has been split in the contrast between Judy as Madeleine and Judy as herself. If Judy’s presence and existence as herself has been denied from the beginning, the irony is that now, paradoxically, Judy has to pretend to be Judy as herself to conceal her involvement in the murder of the real Madeleine. But, the further irony is that Judy’s existence as herself is denied once again by both herself and Scottie. Therefore, in a sense, we can say that although the Judy-Madeleine is a nonexistent fictional character, indeed, it is Judy as herself who is portrayed as the very “non-existence” throughout the film. Although Judy is a real woman who has a body, she cannot exist as who she is; her subjectivity, identity, and all her positive characteristics have been negated and effaced by the patriarchal and phallic desire of two male characters (Gavin Elster and Scottie Ferguson); now her own phallic desire is added in; thus, Judy as herself becomes negated doubly or triply; moreover, in the end, her existence is totally devoured by the dead Carlotta and the fictional Madeleine. Therefore,

224 Ibid., p. 294.
I will insist, Judy as herself is none other than “non-existence,” whereas the fictional character “Judy-Madeleine” ex-sists via Judy’s existence, in the film. Thus, Žižek says, “If the false Madeleine resembles herself, it is because she is in a way already dead. The hero loves her as Madeleine, that is to say, insofar as she is dead—the sublimation of her figure is equivalent to her mortification in the real.”^225

Meanwhile, Scottie’s acrophobia which is always accompanied by vertigo signifies his intense ambivalence towards “falling,” more precisely speaking, the paradoxically simultaneous fascination and horror of falling in love. Throughout the film, Scottie is really depicted as impotent, unable to fall in love with “a real woman composed of blood and flesh.” Figuratively speaking, he might fear that his penis would be devoured by a real woman’s vagina. Scottie’s neurotic fear of “falling” is dramatically and symbolically portrayed in his colorful and cartoonlike nightmare scene; he actually falls into Madeleine’s (or Carlotta’s) open grave at the end of the dream; when he is devoured by the gaping grave, his head detached from his body is shown as a fragment, and it signifies that he is figuratively castrated. In a sense, this is the reason why Scottie is obsessed by the pursuit of an elusive and unattainable fantasy creature and almost obsessively or perversely struggles to mortify or thingify Judy to be the same as what the fictional Madeleine’s non-existence signifies, that is, nothingness. Thus, as Katie Trumpener puts it, “in Vertigo, falling in love turns into the loved one’s falling.”^226 Here, if the loved one refers to Judy, the meaning of “falling” is two-fold; Judy’s degradation (falling) into a mere object and even a non-existence, and her falling into death at the end of the film. Here, it is critical to note that Donald Spoto links Scottie’s symptomatic

---

vertigo to the spiral geometric patterns of the film:

The image of the spiral is more than an innovative and arresting design suggesting the dizziness of vertigo: it is the basic image on which the entire structure and design of the picture are based. The winding staircase of the bell tower at the mission, the twists and turns of the cemetery walk, the spiraling dark hair in the portrait of Carlotta Valdes (and, in imitation of that, Madeleine’s and Judy’s hair); the spiraling downward journey of the two cars on San Francisco’s hilly, vertiginous streets, the rings of the tree in the forest, the camera’s encircling Judy during the letter-writing scene—all these swirling motions create and sustain the hallucinatory, dreamlike effect of the film, the condition of vertigo with which Scottie is afflicted. The geometry of the film is itself vertiginous: set in America’s most vertical city, the manner of the film entirely threatens verticality itself. The condition, after all, is described as the fear of falling and the desire to fall; the longing for risk and the fear of loss; the desire to die and the terror of death; the fear of losing balance and control and the concomitant desire to swoon, to pass away, to lose life itself in the pursuit of love.227

On the other hand, Žižek reads Scottie’s acrophobia as the phobia of depths: if the real truth of the ultimate Thing, das Ding, which Scottie’s desire points towards, is the abyssal opening (represented by the Madeleine’s open grave in his dream), he has the fear of falling and the desire to fall, into the Void. Thus, with regard to the vertiginous spiral shapes from the credits, Žižek asserts that we should distinguish the Thing, which is represented by the abyssal vortex that threatens to engulf Scottie, from the “object small a—objet petit a” as the pure form of a curve, which sustains detours and delays until arriving at the abyssal Void.228 In this context, especially, Žižek reads the lock of Madeleine’s curly blonde hair as the emblem of objet a in association with the series of

227 Donald Spoto, The Art of Alfred Hitchcock, pp. 276-77.
228 Slavoj Žižek, Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences, Routledge (October 24, 2003), p. 162.
spiral curves in the film—the uncanny curved shapes from the credits, the curve in Madeleine’s hair (copied from the same curve in the hair of Carlotta Valdes according to her portrait), the winding streets of San Francisco where Scottie is tailing Madeleine, the spiral of the descending staircase in the tower of the Juan Batista mission, up to the full circle (360 degrees) movement of the camera around the embracing Madeleine and Scottie.\(^{229}\)

When, in the love scene in the barn towards the end of the film, Scottie passionately embraces Judy refashioned into the dead Madeleine, during their famous 360-degree kiss, he stops kissing her and withdraws just long enough to steal a look at her newly blonde hair, as if to reassure himself that the particular feature which transforms her into the object of desire is still there… Crucial here is the opposition between the vortex that threatens to engulf Scottie (the ‘vertigo’ of the film’s title, the deadly Thing) and the blond curl that imitates the vertigo of the Thing, but in a miniaturized, gentrified form. This curl is the objet petit a which condenses the impossible deadly Thing, serving as its stand-in and thus enabling us to entertain a livable relationship with it, without being swallowed up by it.\(^{230}\)

However, here I will argue, the curly blond hair is a kind of fetish which is traumatically associated with the fictional Madeleine, as the partial object of Scottie’s narcissistic perversion, rather than the emblem of objet petit a. From a Lacanian perspective, objet a is an impossible object that must incessantly give “elsewhere” without being obtained, and thus sustains desire as a lure. In the domain of desire, thus, a curve represents the detouring movement of desire; but, in the domain of drive, the curve comes to signify the circular movement of drive. To quote Žižek’s words, we should bear in mind here

\(^{229}\) \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 162-63.  
\(^{230}\) Slavoj Žižek, \textit{The Fragile Absolute, or, Why is the Christian legacy worth fighting for?}, Verso, 2001, p. 20.
Lacan’s well-known distinction between the aim and the goal of drive: while the goal is the object around which drive circulates, its (true) aim is the endless continuation of this circulation as such.\(^{231}\) Thus, in this context, the circular patterns in the film, including the above mentioned 360-degree shot, “illustrate drive’s temporal loop, the way its movement is folded into itself.”\(^{232}\) Especially, in terms of the film’s plot structure, the circular repetitive patterns show us “the way Scottie is caught up in drive’s endless loop.”\(^{233}\) Thus, Žižek articulates, “The Freudian drive is thus another name for the radical ontological closure”: in the domain of the closed circular palpitation, the subject of drive finds satisfaction in endlessly repeating the same failed gesture.\(^{234}\) That is to say, when Scottie gets another chance with Judy since he failed to grasp his objet a, the fictional Madeleine (actually, Judy-Madeleine), he tries to fulfill the same (phallic) desire by repeating all the same failed gestures through/with Judy. Thus, Katie Trumpener asserts, “After an hour and a half, the whole story begins again. Madeleine and Scottie drive north of San Francisco, south of San Francisco, back and forth; Scottie—first looking for Madeleine, then together with Judy—revisits everywhere he has been with Madeleine…. The most intricate and lengthy path he travels in pursuit of her (Judy who is faking Madeleine possessed by dead Carlotta) leads him back to where he (and she) started from.”\(^{235}\) In this sense, the plot of \textit{Vertigo} is multiply repetitive and circular, which is represented by the precise phrase, \textit{mise-en-abyme}. According to Deborah Linderman, this film is constituted by an “unending metonymic series, one framed within the other,

\(^{231}\) Slavoj Žižek, “The Liberal Utopia” (http://www.lacan.com/zizliberal.htm).
\(^{232}\) Slavoj Žižek, \textit{The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology}, Verso, 2000, p. 300.
\(^{233}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 300.
\(^{234}\) Slavoj Žižek, \textit{The Plague of Fantasies (Wo Es War)}, p. 30.
although in fact the very principle of the frame is eroded by the principle of incorporation: what is outside the frame is also inside it, the frame is contained by what it frames.\textsuperscript{236}

Then, in a sense, if we can say that the multi-colored graphic spirals in the opening sequence return in the shape of Madeleine’s curly hair, here, I will insist, it is critical to stress that Brigitte Peucker links the spiral lock of hair to Medusa’s hair. Actually, Madeleine’s spiral lock of hair is a copy originating from the portrait of the dead Carlotta. Peucker analyzes the museum scene in which Judy’s “Madeleine” is sitting in front of Carlotta’s portrait as follows:

In the museum scene as elsewhere, Scottie is an apt interpreter of Madeleine’s tableau: twice the camera’s motion, standing in for Scottie’s glance, traces a connection between the real and the represented, focusing first on the bouquet lying next to Madeleine, and then on an identical one in the portrait of Carlotta at which she gazes. Next it fixes on the whorl into which Madeleine’s hair is sculpted in order to point to that same figure in the painting. This whorl—a visual analogue for the snakes that replace Medusa’s hair—is also the figure for vertigo.\textsuperscript{237}

In this scene, the point is that whereas Judy-Madeleine is pretending to be possessed by the spirit of Carlotta, Scottie is indeed possessed by the curve in the spiral lock of the dead Carlotta and the fictional Madeleine—this curve is, here, I will argue, a small token of the lethal Thing, the abyssal Void. That is to say, at this moment, I will insist, in Scottie’s phallic fantasy, in the domain of his compulsive or perversive drive, the curve of desire is transformed into the curve of the abyssal vortex which devours and annihilates

\textsuperscript{237} Brigitte Peucker, \textit{The Material Image: Art and the Real in Film}, p. 81.
everything like a black hole or Medusa’s gaping mouth. Thus, here, the spiral lock of hair presages the tragically destructive outcome of the (love) relationship between Judy and Scottie. Indeed, recreating another Madeleine via Judy, Scottie’s last request to Judy is “to have” the spiral lock, in the same style as Madeleine’s. Ironically, it means that he is asking her “to be” a copy of a copy.

Upon Judy’s agreement, Scottie moves ahead with the final tragic transformation. At a beauty salon, Scottie directs the correct hair color and makeup for Judy to be the exact same as his ideal of feminine beauty, the fictional Madeleine. In the next scene, we come to see the close-up of Judy’s eyes and lips. Here, it is critical to note Trumpener’s words, “the film begins with the close-up of lips and an eye; they will reappear later, reflected in the mirror of the beauty salon, as one identity gives way to another, Judy to Madeleine.”²³⁸ Actually, there is no mirror scene in the beauty salon sequence. However, in this scene, if what we have witnessed at the beginning of the film is repeated, it is the fear of Judy who is being deprived of her own property and identity and forced to be a copy of a copy (or, a copy of a fictional one). It might be the vertiginous sensation of falling into an abyssal black hole. That is to say, Judy’s mirror-relationship with the fictional Madeleine is dizzyingly mise-en-abyme; thus, facing herself which is being transformed into the fictional Madeleine, what Judy feels is a horrible sense of déjà vu, as if she is walking down “the mirrored corridor reflecting mirrors within mirrors,”²³⁹ of which she had spoken in the previous scene.

When Judy returns from the hairdresser with her hair at shoulder length, as if making one last attempt to hold on to part of her real self, Scottie insists that she must put

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 180.
it up making the spiral lock of hair the exact same as Madeleine’s.

Anxiously, Judy acquiesces, and when she reemerges from the bathroom the metamorphosis is complete, and the haze of green light which surrounds her suggests the captured presence of a spirit, Scottie’s repossess at last of his romantic ideal. (“For that hotel room set,” Hitchcock told me, “I deliberately chose a hotel that had a vertical green sign outside. I wanted her to emerge from that bathroom as a ghost with a green effect, so I put a wide sliding glass in front of the camera, blurred at the top when she first appears. We raised this glass as she came toward Scottie and the camera. In other words, he saw her first as a ghost, but with her proximity she became clarified and solid.”)²⁴⁰

In the very next scene, we can see the famous 360-degree shot: when he can finally fulfill his fetish, Scottie almost has tears in his eyes and passionately embraces the newly born Madeleine. At this moment, for the first time since they started to date, Scottie can kiss Judy as a recreated version of Madeleine. “While the camera makes a full circle around them, the scene darkens and the background which indicates the setting (Judy’s hotel room) changes to the site of Scottie’s last embrace with Madeleine (the barn of the San Juan Batista mission) and then again back to the hotel room, as if, in a continuous dreamlike space, the camera passes from one stage to another within an indefinite dreamscape in which individual scenes emerge out of darkness.”²⁴¹ As I have already discussed, if the spiral lock of Madeleine’s hair is a small token of the abyssal Void around which Scottie’s perversive drive circulates, it is critical to note that, in this 360-degree shot, just after the close-up of Judy’s hair, that is, the very object of Scottie’s fetish, we come to see half of Judy’s face which is split into two halves. Žižek analyzes this

scene as follows:

[T]he left half is completely dark and the right half is in a weird green (from the neon light outside the room). Instead of reading this shot as simply designating Judy’s inner conflict, her inner split, one should confer on it its full ontological ambiguity. As in some versions of Gnosticism, Judy is depicted here as a protoentity, not yet ontologically constituted in full (a greenish plasm plus darkness). It is as if, to fully exist, her dark half waits to be filled in with the ethereal image of Madeleine. In other words, we get here literally the other side of the magnificent profiles shot of Madeleine at Ernie’s, its negative: the previously unseen dark half of Madeleine (the green anguished face of Judy) plus the dark half to be filled in by Madeleine’s dazzling profile. And, at this very point at which Judy is reduced less-than-object, to a formless pre-ontological stain….242

Here, I will link this argument to the diagram of the relationship among “Judy—the fictional Madeleine—Scottie” that we have already discussed.

---

![Ontological Void of the Three Diagram](image)

**Ontological Void of the Three**
If Delta is the space which the fictional Madeleine, i.e., Judy-Madeleine, occupies, what we see in the above scene is none other than Judy’s being split by this ontological void. This void is “not”-nothing, (but) something “in Judy more than Judy herself” which takes place in her innermost core. The irony is that the more Scottie (and Judy also) desires to suture this void, the more Judy’s self, that is, Judy as herself, becomes reduced, until she as herself comes to be totally devoured by the abyssal Void.

Meanwhile, Spoto analyzes when Judy reappears from the bathroom after fixing her hair style, “in a gray suit as if she just stepped out of the San Francisco fog” and “with all the green light around her as if she is elusive unattainable, perhaps even slightly

---

unreal like a fantasy creature or a ghost,” her metamorphosis into the dead Madeleine is complete, and that when Scottie kisses her, his repossessio

n of his romantic ideal is at last accomplished.\textsuperscript{243} However, I will argue here that it is still not “That’s it.” If all the differences by which Judy cannot coincide with the fictional Madeleine are completely removed, if the restoration of Madeleine, in other words, Judy’s transformation into Madeleine, is totally complete, then, here, the film itself should be also “That’s it.” That is to say, when Judy becomes exactly the same as the fictional Madeline, Judy herself must be “not” in the end. Then, what remains?

After this 360-degree kissing scene, preparing to go out with Scottie for dinner, Judy wears Carlotta’s necklace, a souvenir of the murder. Now she looks almost the same as the fictional Madeleine. Trying to fasten the necklace around her neck, Judy asks Scottie to help her. At the back of her, when Scottie takes the ends of the necklace from Judy, he says, “I’ve got it.” Fastening the clasp, Scottie glances into the mirror and sees the necklace clearly for the first time. In his flashback, it is the same necklace which is around the neck of Carlotta Valdes in the portrait. In the museum sequence, it is Judy as Madeleine who is sitting in front of the portrait. There, Judy is pretending to be Madeleine who is pretending to be possessed by the spirit of Carlotta. Thus, if now we see the actual mirror scene of Judy’s Madeleine which was not shown in the beauty salon sequence, I would raise a question, “Now, who, or whose image is Judy mirroring?” Actually, throughout the film, the fictional Madeleine never wears the necklace. In Scottie’s memory, it is always Carlotta Valdes who wears the necklace; she appears in her portrait in the museum scene and reappears in his dream after Madeleine’s death once more; and, now, Judy is wearing it in just the same way. Then, we might say that the real

\textsuperscript{243} Donald Spoto, \textit{The Art of Alfred Hitchcock}, pp. 283; 295-96.
(or the ultimate) object of Judy’s mirroring is, now, Carlotta Valdes, just as it was in front of Carlotta’s portrait in the museum scene. That is to say, Judy is now, through the mirror, facing her own image not as Madeleine but as Carlotta, or as both. Significantly, what this means is, I will argue, that she becomes closer to the gaping Carlotta’s grave (or Madeleine’s grave) that we have seen in Scottie’s grotesque dream: “there is a great black abyss” which resembles the empty void at the core of the spiral lock of hair, or the abyssal vortex of the opening credits.

Ironically, through the mirror, after looking at her own image which is fully dressed up, finally with Carlotta’s necklace, Judy says, “Ah, Scottie… I do have you, now…,” and embraces Scottie. It signifies that Judy herself believes that she is now, at last, exactly the same as the fictional Madeleine (or, Carlotta Valdes) which is enough to possess her beloved Scottie. That is to say, wearing the necklace of Carlotta, Judy has decided to make herself the same with the ghostlike non-existence, only to “have” Scottie. Figuratively speaking, at this moment, Judy has chosen to enter into Madeleine’s place abandoning her own place, and thus her being comes to overlap with Madeleine’s, the fictional creature which has never existed. The irony is that this choice makes Judy as herself annihilated, rather than “be with” her ontological void; thus now her presence moves towards the ultimate abyssal Void. Spoto analyzes this scene as follows:

And so we move to the final sequences. Judy absentmindedly puts on the necklace worn by Carlotta in the painting, and at once Scottie knows the truth in a moment of illumination that must have simply brought to his conscious mind what he suspected all along. “I’ve got my face on,” Judy says with ironic veracity. It’s possible, of course, that Judy’s wearing of the necklace was no accident: Scottie cannot love her as Judy and cannot “forget the other, forget the past.”

What’s to happen next day, when Judy Barton is due at Magnin’s? How long can the charade be sustained? Each time Judy became Madeleine, she willingly annihilated her-self. Isn’t there in this poor girl a lingering fascination with death, a vertigo to match Scottie’s? She’s caught in her own spell now, for a meaningful existence without the false Madeleine is impossible for both of them. She has become Madeleine for Scottie’s sake now, not for Elster nor for his plot to murder his wife. This time she has really renounced herself and has become the double of a double, an imitation twice removed from the reality. She has allowed herself to imitate the false Madeleine who was herself forced to imitate the real Madeleine who we never see, never know. The first Madeleine was simply an Elster-concocted fraud, an impersonation by an imposter, while the second is an indulgence of Scottie’s fantasy. So following the double death (the literal death of the real and the figurative death of the false Madeleine), Judy is compelled—by her own passion—to become a nonexistent person again, and so there occurs the death of the real and of an imitation—of the real Judy and of the false Madeleine.245

Then, with the necklace, is Judy’s metamorphosis into Madeleine fully completed? Thus, is Scottie finally satisfied with the result? The answer is no. Then, what still remains? As a melancholiac, Scottie could not overcome his loss of Madeleine. He believed that his Pygmalion-like recreation of Judy, a living being, into the dead Madeleine would compensate for his loss of Madeleine. But, ironically, far from being alleviated, his anguish at the loss becomes aggravated more and more by his fetishism. Judy as a copy of the dead Madeleine is the very memorandum that Madeleine did exist and he lost her. By making Judy identical with Madeleine, what Scottie gets is only a copy of Madeleine which signifies ‘the absence of Madeleine,’ not a restoration of Madeleine. The very existence of Judy as a substitute for ‘the lost object’ indicates only the fact that he has

failed to possess his real *objet a*, the dead Madeleine. Nevertheless, according to Žižek, this melancholic loss is not the worst that can happen to him. Žižek says, “[M]elancholy is not simply the attachment to the lost object but the attachment to the very original gesture of its loss.” Thus, for Scottie (as a melancholic) “the true horror, worse than melancholy, is that of the ‘loss of a loss’; this occurs when Scottie is forced to accept that the lost object which transfixes his desire *never existed in the first place* (that Madeleine herself was a fake).”

When Scottie recognizes the necklace that Judy wears around her neck through the mirror, what he comes to know is the truth that Judy was acting the part of Madeleine and his desperate love for Madeleine is based on a fraud. Thus, for Scottie, what the necklace signifies is the very “loss of a loss.” Realizing that Judy herself is indeed Madeleine whom he loved and still loves so madly, Scottie cannot but admit that the restoration of Madeleine is forever impossible because his Madeleine never existed. It means that Scottie has lost “what he actually never possessed and thus never lost”—to put it differently, what he has possessed (paradoxically) “in the very mode of loss” in/on which his desire has been fixed so far. In other words, when Scottie realizes the true meaning of the necklace, it becomes a signifier which emblematizes the infinite distance between Scottie and his Madeleine. Now, there is no way to erase the distance. Then, at this moment, Scottie must go through and be free from his phallic fantasy; only if he can recreate a new Madeleine by sacrificing Judy’s self, can he finally fill in his traumatic lack and dissolve his symptom of acrophobia (or, inability to fall in love with a real

---

woman). But, on the contrary, Scottie pushes his fetishism to the end. If what he made is a mere copy of a copy, not his Madeleine, Scottie decides to destroy the copy. Or, if the real truth of his Madeleine is non-existence itself, now Scottie desires (or decides) to thingify Judy herself into the exact same figure as Madeleine’s non-existence.

If he failed to possess his Madeleine due to her suicide, now as a second chance he persists in having Madeleine, even by driving Judy to her death, that is, by erasing Judy’s own existence. If Madeleine does *not exist, never did exist, and never could have existed*, now Judy also must not exist. Scottie cannot endure that his ideal lover, “Madeleine” who was eternally embalmed by her death and thus has been the absolute object of his desire becomes degraded into a mere physical woman, that is, Judy as a living being. Thus, in his destructive phallic fantasy, Scotties’ perfectly (indeed, fantasmatically) ideal love for Madeleine can be assured and preserved only by Judy’s death. Now, on the basis of masculine violent narcissism, Scottie desires to transform Judy completely into his ideal woman, eternally changeless because essentially lifeless, by abolishing her mortality and carnality.\(^{250}\) That is to say, because Judy’s presence and existence signifies the loss of his loss, as I have already discussed, Scottie now almost perversely desires to reduce Judy to an absence and non-existence, paradoxically, to affirm the eternal presence and existence of his Madeleine.

Thus, just after the recognition, Scottie brings “the second Madeleine” back to the Spanish Mission of San Juan Bautista where the first Madeleine climbed up the bell tower and threw herself to her death. Confused, Judy asks, “Where are you going?” Smiling wryly, Scottie answers, “To complete my cure. One final thing I have to do, and

then I’ll be rid of the past. I have to go back into the past. Once more. For the last time.

... Then, when it’s done, we’ll both be free.” In the spiraling layered plot of Vertigo, like
the mise-en-abyme, which is symbolized by the redwood tree’s annual growth rings,
Scottie re-turns to the time and place of the “death” of Madeleine (the fictional
Madeleine) taking along the copy of her, that is, Judy. As Trumpener puts it, here “the
whole story begins again.”251 Thus, considering the tree’s annual growth rings, if the
outermost ring indicates the present and the inner rings indicate some points of the past,
now they are running ahead to the past. However, in the innermost point of the
vertiginous spiral, there is only an empty void, figuratively, an abyssal open grave.

Scottie drags Judy—now, we cannot easily distinguish whether she is
“Madeleine” or herself, with Carlotta’s necklace around her neck—back to the bell tower.
Scottie says, “One doesn’t often get a second chance. I want to stop being haunted.
You’re my second chance, Judy.” However, when they go back to the very point from
which Scottie’s horrible trauma and melancholic obsession with the dead past started, can
they really complete Scottie’s cure and be free from the past, from the dead? No. What
they come to complete there, at last, is none other than Judy’s death, which was
incomplete the first time around. In a sense, if the chase among “a suspect—Scottie’s
policeman colleague—Scottie” which we have seen in the opening part of the film is
repeated in the triangular relationship among “the fictional Madeleine—Judy—Scottie,”
we might say that the suspect and the fictional Madeleine represent Scottie’s objet a, and
the colleague and Judy correspond to the medium between Scottie and the impossible
object as a protective screen and an obstacle, simultaneously. When the first chase comes
to an end by the effacement of the medium, that is, the policeman’s falling to his death

while trying to save Scottie, Scottie’s acrophobia, representative of his entrapment by the vertiginous trauma, is triggered. Then, in the second chase, what happens? Paradoxically, to cure his vertiginous symptom, Scottie himself removes the medium, that is, Judy. Scottie forces Judy to re-enact her suicide for him, once more, for the last time.

SCOTTIE: You look like Madeleine, now. Go up the stairs.
JUDY: No!
SCOTTIE: Go up the stairs, Judy. (Pushing her to the step) I’ll follow. …. This was as far as I could get. But you went on. Remember? … The necklace, Madeleine. That was the slip. I remembered the necklace. We’re going up the tower, Madeleine.
JUDY: No! Let me go!
SCOTTIE: We’re going up the tower.
JUDY: You can’t. You’re afraid!
SCOTTIE: I’m going to. It’s my second chance.
…
JUDY: What are you going to do?
SCOTTIE: Look at the scene of the crime. Go on in. Go on!
He pushes the door open. She shrinks back. He pushes her through and follows her in.
…
SCOTTIE: (his voice choked with grief) And the necklace. That was where you made your mistake, Judy. You shouldn’t keep souvenirs of the killing. You shouldn’t have been—you shouldn’t have been that sentimental. Oh, I loved you so, Madeleine!
JUDY: Scottie, I was safe when you found me. There was nothing that you could prove. But when I saw you again I couldn’t run away, I loved you so. I walked into danger and let you change me again because I loved you and I wanted you. Oh, Scottie, please! You love me now! Love me! Keep me safe! Please keep me safe. Love me… keep me safe…
SCOTTIE: It’s too late… too late… there’s no bringing her back.

(Aleck Coppel and Samuel Taylor, Screenplay: 135-140)

Looking at Scottie imploringly, Judy kisses him passionately, almost desperately. And, suddenly Judy’s eyes, looking past him, go wide with horror. Here, we can see Judy’s enigmatic last gaze. She looks directly into the camera, as if asking “Who are you? What do you want from me?” Thus, here, Judy’s gaze “sticks out” from the film just as the revolver’s firing into the screen does (that is, the camera’s eye, or the audiences’ eyes) with a bleeding-like red explosion in Spellbound (1945). In Žižek’s terms, it is the Hitchcockian blot, the “remainder of the real.” To quote Žižek’s words, Judy’s last gaze is “precisely the detail that “does not fit,” that “sticks out” from the idyllic surface scene and denatures it, renders it uncanny. It is the point of anamorphosis in the film.”

252 At the level of gaze, Judy’s last gaze is the very stain or spot which disturbs and blurs our clear and ‘direct’ perception of it – which ‘bends’ the direct straight line from our eyes to the perceived object.

253 Thus, Žižek says, “This paradoxical point undermines our position as ‘neutral,’ ‘objective’ observer, pinning us to the observed object itself. This is the point at which the observer is already included, inscribed in the observed scene—in a way, it is the point from which the picture itself looks back at us.”

254 In other words, Judy’s gaze cuts open a space towards us (and the director) to ask directly, “What do you want from me?” just as Thorwald shouted to Jeff “Who are you? What do you want from me?” in Rear Window (1954). Due to the radical frontality, we—who have aligned ourselves with Scottie (or Hitchcock)’s narcissism (that is to say, Scottie’s recreating of Judy as well as

---

254 Slavoj Žižek, Looking awry, p. 91.
Hitchcock’s recreating of Kim Novak)—become stunned, because it enables us to confront our own violent narcissism reflectively. In other words, through Judy’s gaze, our own violently narcissistic gazes turn back to ourselves. Throughout the film, we have looked with Scottie. As Spoto points out, “We don’t like Judy as much as Madeleine any more than does Scottie. We’d like to see the dead Madeleine come to life, that handsome, loving couple restored to us.” However, Judy seems to ask us “What do you want from me?” just before she becomes exactly the same as the never-existed Madeleine by leaping into the Void, or by throwing herself to her death.

In *Vertigo*, Judy has existed as a mere object in three-fold. She has been the object of two male characters (Gavin Elster and Scottie Ferguson)’ make over. “He made you over, didn’t he?” Scottie shouts at Judy in the finale. “He made you over just like I made you over—only better. Not only the clothes and the hair, but the looks and the manner and the words. And then what did he do? Did he train you? Did he rehearse you? Did he tell you exactly what to do and what to say? You were a very apt pupil, weren’t you? You were a very apt pupil!” As much could be said of the director and actress in the film, that is, Hitchcock and Novak. Just as the two guys have desired to control Judy as if playing with a marionette, Hitchcock also desired to fully control his leading lady, Kim Novak. Spoto says, “*Vertigo* is a testament to Alfred Hitchcock’s lifelong fascination for making over actresses according to his dream ideal of blond perfection. He supervised everything about their presentations onscreen, from hairstyles to wardrobes, from makeup to shoes, from camera angles to the final cut.” So, if “Judy’s direct look into the

---

camera here is a direct declaration of the camera’s presence, a look that acknowledges Hitchcock and us.”

I will insist, as the question “Che vuoi?”—“Who are you? What do you want from me?” Judy’s last gaze rips the surface of the narcissistic and phallic desire of the camera, the director, and the viewers, “as if tearing at the very film, ripping the screen.”

With Judy’s gaze, the film penetrates spectatorial space as the gun goes off “in our faces” in Spellbound; and, momentarily representation and reality collapse into one another.

As Trumpener puts it, “The distinctions between levels of vision collapse in Vertigo along with all our other distinctions, our accustomed hierarchy of actor and audience, fiction and reality; as we lose our illusions, we simultaneously lose our bearings, our depth perception, our ability to tell apart the two-dimensional and the three.”

That is to say, through Judy’s last gaze out of the frame, we, the viewers, come to be included in the film and the film would not remain as a mere representation but become a reality. Or, to borrow Trumpener’s words, “We have projected ourselves into the movie projected for us; we have become the outermost layer of the spiral [frame of Vertigo].”

In a sense, Judy’s last gaze is a “wounding punctum” in Barthes’s terms. It is an unexpectable, uninterpretable, unexperienceable, unfathomable punctum. It is an element that “shoots out of [the scene] like an arrow and pierces” our conscious self. It seizes our eyes and makes us unable to shut our eyes to the horribly violent narcissism of our “Eye” and “I.” It disturbs our narcissistic perspective of who we are. Thus, it “attracts and

262 Ibid., p. 183.
distresses”264 us simultaneously. In this context, we might say that what the director of *Vertigo*, aims at through Judy’s last gaze is, to quote Žižek’s words, “not simply to ‘tell the entire truth about it,’ but, above all, to confront the way we ourselves, by means of our subjective position of [seeing or viewing], are always-already involved, engaged in it.”265 Therefore, I will insist that owing to Judy’s last gaze, our narcissistic desire can stop turning into the death drive, and thus that here is a turning point of *Vertigo*. Here, it is critical to note Spoto’s words, “Hitchcock chose to sacrifice surprise in order to gain suspense: from this point, we not only look with Scottie, we look at Scottie, observing his reactions, wondering how he will respond to Judy. Additionally, Hitchcock wants the audience to evaluate our own responses to this revelation, and to see how far we might go with Scottie in his deadly retribution once he knows the truth.”266 That is to say, if we have seen with and at Scottie wondering how he will react to the truth since his recognition of Carlotta’s necklace, at the very moment when our eyes meet Judy’s stunning gaze, we become able to detach our point of view from Scottie’s. From this moment, the point is not whether Judy is guilty or not, or how Scottie will punish her. The crucial point we should note is that when we see Judy’s horrified gaze, we cannot but realize our own narcissistic and phallic fantasy which is already identified with Scottie’s. In other words, through Judy’s gaze, we cannot not see Judy’s horror of being objectified or thingified; we cannot not hear, with our eyes, Judy’s muted scream, which reminds us of Munch’s *Scream*, which rips open our narcissistic fantasy that keeps us from facing the truth of our own narcissism—from this perspective, I will insist that the most pathetic tragedy of Scottie is that he fails to see Judy’s gaze at the end of the film. To quote

264 Ibid., p. 27; 40.
Žižek’s terms, it is a unique experience of “seeing in the mode of hearing.”\textsuperscript{267} Thus, I will insist that here we come to be exposed to the voice and the gaze \textit{qua} object—for which we can refer to Lacan’s seminar on the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis (Lacan 1979). To quote Mladen Dolar’s words;

The gaze as the object, cleft from the eye, is precisely what is dissimulated by the image in which one recognizes oneself, it is not something that could be present in the field of vision, yet haunting it from the inside. … By analogy, there is a schism between the voice and the ear (cf. Miller 1989, 177-78). The same inner disruption of narcissism has to be introduced here and the same inherent ambiguity of the seemingly self-transparent auto-affection. As soon as the object, both as the gaze and as the voice, appears as the pivotal point of narcissistic self-apprehension, it introduces a rupture at the core of self-presence.\textsuperscript{268}

Just as the gaze beyond subjectivity and identification is on the side of woman, as an interior obstacle to self-presence, the voice beyond words is also “self-evidently equated with femininity.”\textsuperscript{269} Dolar articulates, “The voice undermines any certainty and any establishment of a firm sense. The voice is boundless, warrantless, and, no coincidence, on the side of woman.” The voice and the gaze \textit{qua} object are the parts that can never be simply present—but are not simply absent, either: they are the pivotal point at the intersection.\textsuperscript{270} To put it differently, the (ex-centric) object as the voice and the gaze discloses the presence and gives ground to its imaginary recognition, but it is at the same time what inherently lacks and disrupts any notion of a full presence; it makes it a truncated presence, which covers the lack; it introduces the scission, the rupture in the

\textsuperscript{268} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{269} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{270} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 27.
middle of the full presence and refers it to a void. Here, the void is the ex-centric feminine space as the scission from the inside, that is, the immanent exteriority; it is the space open to the autonomous call of what exceeds me (from within me). In these contexts, I will argue that the voice and the gaze *qua* object are situated in the iconic triangular vacant center of the Lacanian Borromean Knot, that is, what I continue to call “Delta,” which signifies the traumatic gap within both the subject and the Symbolic. Thus, if Judy’s direct gaze into the camera in the ending part of the film is equated with her silent scream, as the (ethical) voice which calls us to awaken from our narcissistic fantasy, to which we must respond, I will insist, it leads us into Delta, the feminine space of *ek-stasis*.

Thus, here, I want to link Judy’s last gaze to the feminine single eye which we have seen in the opening credit sequence. Indeed, when our eyes meet Judy’s eyes directly which are looking past Scottie into the camera and which are frightened and wide with horror, we come to recall the horrified woman’s eyes in the opening part of the film. That is to say, Judy’s direct gaze into the camera comes full circle to the close-up of the woman’s eye in the opening credit; thus, I will argue, the eccentric (or, ex-centric) repetitive feminine eyes constitute the outermost layer of the film, considering the spiraling repetitive frame of *Vertigo*.

---

271 Ibid., p. 27.
In this sense, thus, as we see, Judy seems to gaze at the woman’s pupil, in which a swirling vortex incessantly emerges, which looks like an open grave waiting for her, and which thus seems to symbolize the abyssal Void. Here, I will argue, in Lacanian terms, what the feminine single eye signifies is the gaze as a little piece of the Real, in association with the traumatic question “Che vuoi?” That is to say, through her direct look into the camera, what Judy comes to see is none other than her own gaze reflected in the camera lens. When Judy’s eyes meet her own gaze, she must, inevitably, face the question about her own identity and desire. In a figurative sense, what Judy is seeing, in shocked, frozen, immobilized surprise, is the abyssal opening in the center of the woman’s pupil which looks like an open mouth asking her “Che vuoi?”—“Who are you? What do you want?” In this context, I will argue, the multicolored swirling vortex in the midst of the feminine single eye is the very ex-centric space of the simultaneous voice and gaze *qua* object; it emblematizes Delta space, the feminine space of *ek-stasis*. Therefore, confronting the question “Che vuoi?”, if Judy is called upon to reflect on “Who am I?” and “What do I really want?”, here she must traverse her masochistically distorted fantasy and free herself from being the object of Scottie’s destructive desire. This might be the last chance for her to be awakened from her own phallic fantasy in
which she will be able to possess Scottie by offering herself to him as the object of his desire to fill in his lack. However, at the moment, Judy seems to choose to throw herself into the abyssal Void, rather than to confront the real truth of her own desire. That is to say, “in order to avoid the horror of the encounter of the (ethical but frightening) voice qua object,”\(^{272}\) and not to be awakened into the nightmarish real, Judy decides to fall into death, again, but really and finally at this moment. Thus, at the moment, the Delta space for awakening, i.e., ek-stasis, becomes the lethal abyssal open grave which signifies now the lethally fascinating Thing, the Void. For this reason, I will argue, Judy’s mirroring of Madeleine is here wholly completed. Through her own mirrored gaze, what Judy comes to see is the unveiled real truth of objet a; that is to say, from Judy’s point of view, now what she is seeing is Madeleine as her own mirror image, which must remain as “not”-nothing but something “in Judy more than Judy herself” but now totally and completely reduced to the absolute Nothingness. Thus, in the very next scene, Judy pulls out of Scottie’s arms and leaps into the lethal Void to be exactly the same as the Nothing itself. What it signifies is that Judy has failed to traverse her disastrous fantasy to the end.

Then, what about us? Through Judy’s direct gaze into our eyes, we also come to confront the question “Che vuoi?”—“Who are you? What do you want?”—the question about our own identity and desire. That is to say, figuratively speaking, by facing Judy’s gaze, we are also called upon to traverse our own fantasies in Delta space of ek-stasis that is emblematized by the swirling spirals in the midst of the feminine single eye in the opening credit of the film. From Judy’s point of view, (as I have already discussed), it is a lethally murderous gaze so that she chooses to fall into death to avoid it. Thus, along with Judy, if we also come to see the deadly thing reflected in Judy’s horrified eyes which is

\(^{272}\) Slavoj Žižek (ed.), *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, p. 93.
now changed into Medusa’s reifying gaze owing to Judy’s failure to traverse the fantasy, here, I will insist, it is critical to note Brigitte Peucker’s words;

At the moment of her glance—it is not a sustained gaze—it can only be the spectator who is its object. Judy’s look out of the frame fleetingly brings the spectator into the space of representation. Almost immediately, editing procedures replace us with the ghostly nun, now become the object of Judy’s look. But that ghostly figure is only retrospectively the object of her gaze. In the shadowy moment before the nun materializes, perhaps it is ourselves we fear to see within the frame. This is the moment of the “cut” in a Hitchcock film: a hesitation, a gap, is introduced between the one object of the gaze—the spectator—and its diegetic replacement. Rather than separating us from the scene, Hitchcock’s camera fleetingly brings the spectator into the space of representation. If for that instant Medusa’s gaze renders us statues, this act of petrification forms a shield between ourselves and our death.273

That is to say, we come to be saved from our death because Hitchcock’s camera fleetingly replaces us with the ghostly nun as the object of Judy’s murderous gaze. In other words, we the viewers can avoid the very direct encounter with the empty Void and confront the vertiginous abyss of the Thing, “in a miniaturized, gentrified form,”274 at a bearable level, even if we have to be petrified for a while due to the confrontation.

Meanwhile, thus, if what Judy sees at the end of the film is the ghostly nun, how can we interpret this black shrouded figure? Should we read it as a “bringing back” of Madeleine, as Spoto asserted?275 In the film, when the black figure moves towards her, Judy, terrified, backs away, perilously close to the edge of the drop. Although the black-shrouded figure is seen as a nun when it advances into a shaft of moonlight, here, I will

274 Slavoj Žižek, The Fragile Absolute, or, Why is the Christian legacy worth fighting for?, p. 20.
275 Donald Spoto, The Art of Alfred Hitchcock, p. 298.
insist that the ghost-like black figure is the very embodiment of Judy’s gaze, and, at the same time, the murderous gaze of the ‘impossible’ Thing; that is to say, what it signifies is the gaze *qua* object as a little piece of the Real, in Lacanian terms. Therefore, here, I will argue, what it embodies is the apostrophe which is ripped off from Judy in her mirror relationship (a-a’) with the fictional Madeleine. According to Žižek, “the apostrophe is what distinguishes the image of a double (a) from “myself” (’a’): this apostrophe later becomes the objet petit a (i.e., when the objet a is no longer conceived as an imaginary other, but as the real object-cause of desire). In other words, objet petit a is the *unheimlich* surplus forever missing in the mirror image, i.e., “unspecularizable,” yet precisely as such present in it in the shape of that unfathomable X on account of which the mirror image obtains its *unheimlich* character.” 276 Here, the “objet a,” a nonspecularizable remainder, refers to none other than the gaze *qua* object. Žižek says, “There certainly is in the mirror image “more than meets the eye,” yet this surplus that eludes the eye, the point in the image which eludes my eye’s grasp, is none other than the gaze itself.” 277 Even though Peucker interprets Hitchcock’s camera as fleetingly replacing us with the ghostly figure, as the object of Judy’s direct gaze, indeed, as I have already discussed, what Judy sees when she first looks into the camera is her own gaze reflected in the camera’s lens. Thus, when it is replaced by the ghostly black figure, that is to say, when Judy comes to see it through the ghostly figure, I will insist that it is the moment when Judy’s being comes to be exactly the same as Madeleine’s finally and completely; it signifies that the apostrophe as a token of the difference between Judy and the fictional Madeleine is chipped off from Judy into the black figure. Now, *via* the black ghostly

---

277 Ibid., p. 127.
figure, Judy is facing the empty black hole as the deadly real truth of (unveiled) objet a. In the mirror relationship between Madeleine and Judy like the mise-en-abyme, the only distinction is removed, the middle distance vanishes, and thus the film becomes “That’s it,” eventually. Thus, when Judy falls from the roof, Madeleine dies again with her; the original and the copy break together.  

Then, if Scottie’s acrophobia represents his fear/impotence of falling in love with a real woman, and thus he has tried to complete his cure by removing the ‘real body’ of a physical woman, that is, Judy, now, does Scottie succeed in overcoming his acrophobia? Does he really stop being haunted by the past, in the end? Tony Magistrale says, “Only in the last five minutes of the film does Scottie break out of his solipsistic circle and triumph over the past…. ” However, Spoto argues that this triumph is very empty; “Throughout the scene, he calls her alternately Madeleine and Judy, and although he at last overcomes his vertigo and climbs successfully to the belfry, the victory is empty—indeed deadly.” Just as Quentin (in The Sound and the Fury) tenaciously clings to his perverted narcissism, the destructive libido to be “one” with the beloved object by all means, Scottie, another melancholic who is unable to mourn his loss of the object, also fails to escape the narcissistic death-drive to the end; the difference is that Scottie’s death-drive comes out as the desire to erase Judy’s existence while Quentin’s object-loss leads him to the desire to erase his own existence. Thus, Scottie’s failure is two-fold because what he can obtain by destroying Judy is not the re-union with Madeleine, but nothingness which represents the absence of her. Although Judy became exactly the same as the nothingness

---

of the fictional Madeleine, it can neither compensate for Scottie’s loss, nor fill in his lack. Ironically, what Scottie has desired from the first is “not” the intact Nothingness of the fictional Madeleine’s non-existence, but “Judy-Madeleine” which is represented by the Delta space, the uncanny alterity or exteriority “in Judy more than Judy herself.” Thus, even after Judy as herself has been devoured by the empty void of the absolute Nothingness, the “not” which makes impossible “That’s it” remains unmurdered, to the end. Therefore, the sacrifice of Judy is both deadly and tragically meaningless. Besides, if Scottie has truly overcome his acrophobia, the fear of falling, now can he fall in love with any real woman, for example, a Midge?²⁸¹ Spoto describes the last scene of Vertigo as follows: “The last image is of Scottie standing on the roof of the mission, his arms spread out in the identical gesture as in his dream, when he plunged into Madeleine’s open grave. This is an image of an utterly drained man destroyed by his own illusions.”²⁸² And, Jonathan Freedman asserts, “After Judy flung herself off the tower, just as “Madeleine” had appeared to do and as the policeman had actually done, Scottie is plunged back into the madness he has seemed, finally to escape; he stands on the edge of the tower, like a stickless scarecrow, his body slumped and his arms akimbo, perhaps to follow Judy and hurtle himself off the side of the tower, or perhaps—at best—to fall into the abyss of madness itself.”²⁸³ That is to say,

²⁸¹ Katie Trumpener, “Fragments of The Mirror,” p. 185.
²⁸² Donald Spoto, The Art of Alfred Hitchcock, p. 298.
although Scottie finally seems to cure his acrophobia, when his vertigo is stopped, he is about to fall into the abyss of madness itself. By pushing his phallic desire “to have” the impossible object to the end, what does Scottie come to get or see finally? When all veils are lifted, there is only the Medusa-woman’s gaping genitals. In other words, when he pursues the impossible Thing, or Nothingness as the real truth of objet a, directly and persistently (almost perversely), by the death drive, what Scottie finally comes to see is, I will insist, only the abyssal opening of *vagina dentate*. The eye-like or mouth-like engulfing space is symbolized, in the film, by Madeleine’s gaping grave in Scottie’s dream; and now, so much can be said of the exploding galaxy-like vortex in the midst of a woman’s eye in the opening credit sequence. To sum up, whereas Judy is called upon to traverse her fantasy by facing her own gaze, as the simultaneous voice and gaze, the ethical call to awakening, but chooses to fall to her death to avoid it, Scottie fails even to see the gaze. Consequently, it means that both of them fail in their narcissistic fantasy of “total being” by pushing their phallic desire to “suture” the traumatic gap in their own being to the end. Witnessing this tragic double failure at the end of the film, whether to traverse our own fantasy and respond to the call for awakening is up to our own choice and decision; it is our share of the film.

Chapter 5.
Delta (∨), the Ek-static site of the Feminine Love

Lacan’s extensive discussion of love in *Encore* is thus to be read in the Pauline sense, as opposed to the dialectic of the Law and its transgression: this second dialectic is clearly “masculine”/phallic, it involves the tension between the All (the universal Law) and its constitutive exception, while love is “feminine,” it involves the paradoxes of the non-All.

—Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*

Faulkner’s acute social consciousness and profound historical imagination have been often overlooked in his novels, compared to the high modernist elements, such as interior monologue and stream of consciousness, which were used for elaborate depictions of the character’s psychological reality, and thus have attracted considerable attention, particularly from psychoanalytic critics. However, if Faulkner’s radical experiment with narrative form and language cannot be evaluated merely as an imaginative adventure or intellectual play, it is because it has always been linked with his social and historical vision, viewing the reality of human life in the context of history and historical process. Since *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Faulkner’s imaginative capabilities have been devoted not only to exploring the subtle realms of the human inner world but also to illustrating how characters’ individual desires are intertwined with social and historical contexts. Thus, Faulkner’s reputation as “one of the great American writers, or rather, one of the very greatest of modern literature,” which was pronounced when he received the Nobel Prize in 1949, was based on the extension and intensification of his social and historical consciousness. From this perspective, if Faulkner’s social and historical vision is superbly displayed in *Go Down, Moses*, I will examine how accurately and acutely the book conveys Faulkner’s message concerning social and racial problems, “beneath the
formal complexities."\textsuperscript{285}

Robert Penn Warren asserted that “the interpretation of Faulkner’s works is the most challenging single task for critics in modern American literature.”\textsuperscript{286} Among Faulkner’s works, I will insist, the singular, and thus the most challenging text might be \textit{Go Down, Moses}. More than any of the others, because the book straddles the fence between a short story collection and a novel, critics have been troubled about what to call it.\textsuperscript{287} Owing to the unusual structure, it has been described as: “a remarkably unified novel,” “a single novelistic structure,” “a loosely constructed novel,” an “experimental novel,” “a hybrid: a loosely jointed but ambitious novel masking as a collection of short stories,” “if not exactly a novel, then, at least a narrative which begins, develops, and concludes,” “a blend,” “a mosaic in which not only the sequence but the very presence of all seven stories is meaningful,” “a set of variations upon two major themes,” and a “book of related short stories.”\textsuperscript{288} \textit{Go Down, Moses} consists of pre-published short stories, so “it lacks the kinds of unity readers expect in novels. It has a single setting, Yoknapatawpha County, but ranges across a period from 1807 to 1941. Far from treating events in chronological order, it jumps bewilderingly back and forth across the years. There are radical shifts of tone. The book focuses on no single character.”\textsuperscript{289} Nevertheless, if \textit{Go Down, Moses} comes to seem whole despite its obvious fragmentation, I will argue, it is because all its stories are based on a common theme: that is, how to be, or how to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{285} James Early, \textit{The Making of Go Down, Moses}, Southern Methodist Univ. Press (Dallas: 1972), viii.
\item \textsuperscript{286} \textit{Ibid.}, vii.
\item \textsuperscript{288} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
live, with others in the world.

In “The Bear,” the most famous part of the book, “a wonderfully fitting culmination to the entire volume,” Isaac McCaslin, the central consciousness of the book, asserts that the land is accursed by man’s betraying the responsibility “to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood.” Thus, he decides to repudiate his inherited land to put an end to the curse. However, that decision is expressed as his ascetic renunciation of the world along with abandoning all his social obligations. After that decision, he withdraws into the woods to free himself from the shame and guilt of his ancestry. It has been regarded as his retreat into a closed world of “self,” and thus as his failure to be with others in the real world. Indeed, in an interview, Faulkner himself criticized Isaac McCaslin, “I think a man ought to do more than just repudiate. He should have been more affirmative instead of shunning people.”

According to Cleanth Brooks, Faulkner’s concern for community implies a concern for the break with community—whether as passive isolation from it or active rebellion against it; since he knows what community is, his notion of what its loss means is also clear.

Isaac (Ike) McCaslin is portrayed, at first, as a possible agent to cure social evils—symbolically, he is anointed, by Sam Fathers in the wilderness, as the chosen one who can inherit the spirit and the intuitive knowledge of nature, and thus who can reconcile the wilderness and human society—but, ironically, when he reappears as a

---

weak and impotent old man near death, after a lapse of almost sixty years, he is awakened to his ultimate failure by an unnamed young woman. The unnamed woman, as a female descendant of Tomey’s Turl and as the mistress of Roth Edmonds, visits old Ike in the Delta, the “inverted apex, \( \triangledown \)-shaped section of earth between hills and River” (326) which resembles a woman’s pudenda. In the Delta, when the unnamed young woman asks him, “Old Man … have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you don’t remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?” (346), Ike comes to realize that he has sacrificed his whole life for nothing.

Karl F. Zender asserts that Faulkner’s career between *The Sound and the Fury* and *Go Down, Moses* consists in large measure of a deepening understanding of what the word “love” means and of the range of inequalities its adherents must struggle to overcome.²⁹⁴ Thadious M. Davis articulates, considering the main plot of *Go Down, Moses*, that Ike’s major burden of his heritage is “the inability to love.”²⁹⁵ Indeed, I will argue, Ike’s devotion of his whole life to free himself from the shameful and sinful inheritance, paradoxically, leads him to the failure of freeing himself from his narcissistic defensive fantasy of the self, and thus to the failure of being with others in the world. If Ike comes to realize the failures, too late, in the Delta place, by the woman’s visit and the question of “love,” I will examine how the question of “love” is linked to the Lacanian ethical injunction to “love the other,” who dwells there with you at the core of your-self, as thyself,” in terms of Agape love—“love thy neighbor as thyself”—, and how the Delta place can be read as an opening of space where the call to ek-stasis, that is, standing

outside the self, occurs and thus “new possibilities of being-together, of responsiveness to
the other, can arise.” In particular, if Lacan’s ethics is rooted in a view of freedom of
the subject, I will examine how the Agape love is associated with the ethical topos of
*ek-stasis*, with regard to the title of the book and the biblical motif of exodus.

First of all, I will insist, the ethics of “Agape love” is to be said in terms of
“Lacanian “feminine” love which involves the paradoxes of the non-All”; that is to say,
Agape love is a feminine way to “be with” the other, as *objet petit a*. The object small
other occurs at the intersection in-between the subject and the Other; it ex-sists as the
inner split in the Other, and, at the same time, as the inherent alterity and exteriority with-
in the subject; thus, the small other (as the little piece of the Real) is neither-the subject-
nor-the Other, and simultaneously, both-the subject-and-the Other. This small other is
what is in the subject more than subject, and, at the same time, what hinders the Other
from being the ultimate transcendental or absolute exterior. Agape love is, thus, a double
affirmation of “the immanent exteriority (in other words, *objet a*)” which is situated at the
vacant center in-between the subject and the Other. Agape is to love the small other
which is always already with-in me, from which I cannot keep my distance. Agape love is
to take responsibility for, and to live together with the other. When I utter the sentence, “I
love you,” it means that I open my “self” to you, proclaiming “you,” the other, is already
with-in me. What enables this love is not the subjectivity of the I. Rather, this love is a
unique way by which the I is subjectivized; the subjectivity of the I is not a pre-given,
absolute, symbolic characteristic, but what is constituted by responding to the call of the

---

297 Ibid.
other. To borrow Žižek’s words, the subject is “re-subjectivized” when he encounters the small other (that is, objet a) by traversing his narcissistic and defensive fantasy of the I.

In *Go Down, Moses*, I will insist, “the other” as objet a occurs as Negro and Woman that are the focal symptoms of the McCaslin family history and the white male-oriented society, and as the wilderness which civilization is rapidly destroying. In the book, “the other” is not allowed to have its proper place or proper name. For example, as Doreen Fowler points out, in *Go Down, Moses*, for the most part, the narrative pointedly avoids identifying women by name. To quote Fowler’s words, “with few exceptions, the women of *Go Down, Moses*, as their namelessness suggests, scarcely exist. Excluded from power, they are practically excluded as well from the narrative and from the consciousness of the men among whom they dwell.” Indeed, the female characters exist not by their names, but by their relations with male characters as a mother or a daughter, as a mere component of the male-dominated family history. Nonetheless, they appear where the phallo-centric narratives cease or suspend, and speak what is left unsaid in the novel, in a different or feminine way, with the most mesmerizingly uncanny power. Paradoxically, but significantly, that is the way they exist in the book. Thus, if we might say that where they exist is the gaps or interruptions of (white) male characters’ narratives, as the feminine delta spaces of the book (in line with my argument of Delta), another aim of this chapter is to read what they are saying in the book through their traumatic ex-sistence. In *Go Down, Moses*, if the theme of “being with others in the

---


world” is linked to the ethical injunction of Agape, that is, “love thy neighbor as thy self;” I will examine how the feminine delta spaces of the book, which “the other” (in other words, “objet petit a,” the traumatic object-cause) of the book occupies, can be read as the (im)possible “lieu” in/from which the feminine love is overflowing, going under “the dialectic of the Mosaic Law and its transgression,”302 and through which we can hear the repressed or muted voices of “the other” and witness the failures of the masculine and narcissistic “self.”

From Isaac McCaslin’s namesake to Mollie Worsham’s grief for her dead grandson by saying “Roth Edmonds sold my Benjamin. Sold him in Egypt. Pharaoh got him” (361-62), the main motif of Go Down, Moses is apparently the biblical narrative of Exodus. If Exodus deals with the Israelites’ long journey out of Egypt to the Promised Land, considering the book’s title and main plot, I will insist that Isaac McCaslin is the one who is chosen to assume the role of Moses, as the recipient of the command “Go Down, Moses” for the mission of exodus. Admittedly, the title of the book is borrowed from one of the most famous African American spirituals, which is often known by its refrain line, “Go Down, Moses … Let My People Go.” This Negro folk song expresses the yearning for freedom of African-American slaves who lived in the South prior to the Civil War. Through the message of the song, slaves express their hope and desire that God send a deliverer to command the slave owners to “let my people go.” Then, we might say that by borrowing the title and the related biblical references, Faulkner tried to attack slavery and the plantation system of the South. From this perspective, what “Egypt” represents in Go Down, Moses seems to be the slave system in the South. However, on the other hand, the bondage represented by “Egypt” refers to, inclusively,

what the oppressed must resist and get out of (or stand outside of) to be free. Thus, in line with the main theme of this dissertation, I will attempt to read the motif of *exodus* in association with the term, *ek-stasis*. In these contexts, I will examine whether Ike McCaslin is portrayed as a figure capable of achieving *ek-stasis*; if he fails, in what sense we should read the failure; and if Faulkner would not give up the hope in terms of *exodus*, how and from where we can investigate the possibility of a new hope in the novel.

*Go Down, Moses* consists of seven short stories and every single story is co-related to each other thematically and allegorically. In the trilogy of “The Old People,” “The Bear,” and “Delta Autumn,” the so-called wilderness trilogy, which has always been regarded as the heart of *Go Down, Moses*, Isaac (Ike) McCaslin functions as the central consciousness of the book. The first part of the wilderness trilogy, “The Old People,” begins with the rite of Ike’s passage into manhood by killing his first deer. As the title “The Old People” suggests, in the woods, the young white boy Ike McCaslin has listened to stories about the old days and the old people—those old times and those dead and vanished (165)—from the Chickasaw Indian Sam Fathers. In other words, Ike has learned, from Sam Fathers, how to commune with the dead and powerful spirits of nature which still inhabit the wilderness and which have became a part of his present. To quote Paul Scott Derick, “Sam has chosen Ike to be the last human repository of the consciousness of his race. Those numberless voices of the dead, murmuring an incomprehensible language in Isaac’s mind, are apt expression of the intuitive knowledge of nature that is the real gift the boy inherits from Sam. This is a “revolution” in Ike’s thinking; it enables

---

303 It is noteworthy that in “The Bear,” through the debate between Cass and Ike on the question of ownership, the violation of human beings and the land, more precisely speaking, through Ike’s voice, Faulkner attacks slavery and the plantation system of the South.
him to perceive the land in a different way.”\textsuperscript{304} When Ike is twelve, he kills his first buck. When he has slain the deer, Sam Fathers says to him, “You’ll be a hunter. You’ll be a man” (170). Sam outwardly signals Ike’s initiation into manhood by smearing the slain deer’s blood on his face. Thus, besides being chosen as the heir to his patrimonial heritage (as his biblical namesake, “Isaac,” the heir to the Promised Land, implies), if Ike has also been anointed by Sam Fathers as the inheritor of the old people’s primordial way to be in the wilderness and of the intuitive knowledge of nature, what qualification has Ike obtained to be the chosen one?

According to the chronology, when Ike is ten, he is allowed for the first time to join the semi-annual hunting party composed of adult male hunters including his cousin Cass Edmonds, sixteen years his senior, Major de Spain, General Compson, Sam Fathers, Boon Hogganbeck, Tennie’s Jim, Uncle Ash, and Walter Ewell. The young Ike thinks that they are going not to hunt bear and deer but to keep a yearly rendezvous with a bear named Old Ben, which they do not even intend to kill (186) because it “represents a “wild immortal spirit,” related to the endurance, humility, and courage of the hunter in his contest with the wilderness.”\textsuperscript{305} The bear is “not a mortal beast but an anachronism indomitable and invincible out of an old dead time, a phantom, epitome and apotheosis of the old wild life” (185). According to Cass Edmonds, through the rendezvous with the bear, man can act from the heart and thus gain truth: “Courage and honor and pride, and pity and love of justice and of liberty. They all touch the heart, and what the heart holds becomes the truth, as far as we know truth” (284). Thus, the hunting trip is a ritual

through which the hunters can partake of communion with the nature and can learn the truth of the human heart. It is “of the wilderness, the big woods, bigger and older than any recorded document” (183), and “of the men, not white nor black nor red but men, hunters, with the will and hardihood to endure and the humility and skill to survive” (184).

Through the hunting ritual, Ike learns man’s proper relationship to nature, experiencing “an abjectness, a sense of his own fragility and impotence against the timeless woods, yet without doubt or dread” (192). Although he catches his first glimpse of the bear “Old Ben” on his first hunting trip, at the age of ten, he is able to rendezvous with it one year later. Here, I will argue, the principal qualification that the young boy Ike has to prove in order to rendezvous with Old Ben is “the relinquishment of self.” Chasing Old Ben, Sam Fathers tells Ike that Old Ben won’t allow himself to be seen until, without a gun and without giving in to his fear, Ike learns to relinquish himself to the wilderness.306 “It’s the gun,” Sam said…. “You will have to choose” (197-98). But Ike thinks that leaving the gun is not enough; he is “still tainted” (199) with the watch and the compass. Thus, when Ike chooses to divest himself of not only the gun, but also the watch and the compass, he finally becomes able to see Old Ben.

Here, I will insist that the gun symbolizes the phallic defense of man’s egocentrism, and the watch and the compass signify man’s strong desire to control his own life by measuring time and space. When Ike craves seeing Old Ben—“So I will have to see him…. I will have to look at him.” (195-96)—what is requested of him is to abandon the gun. Thus, only after Ike “voluntarily rendered himself completely lost and

---

helpless” in the woods, by surrendering his gun, watch, and compass, he becomes the one capable of looking at Old Ben without any protection. Figuratively speaking, only after Ike proves his ability to relinquish himself to the wilderness, to face “the other” without ego-centrism, he is “rewarded with his first look at Old Ben.” I will insist that this is Ike’s first experience with ecstasy, in other words, the experience of selflessness in terms of ekstasis. If this experience is a critical turning point in Ike’s life, as some critics argue, one which shapes the rest of his life, it reminds me of the scene when God first appears to Moses in a burning bush to realign his life to act within His liberating purposes, that is, to deliver His enslaved people out of Egypt to the Promised Land in the book of Exodus.

Out of the burning bush, when God calls Moses by name for the mission of the exodus, what He first commands Moses to do is to take off his shoes (Exodus 3:5). Here, it is critical to note that at that time to be barefoot meant to be a slave, that is, to renounce the right to the self. Thus, when Moses removes his shoes, it signifies his renunciation of all his rights “to have” anything of his own, even his own self. Thus, I will argue that when Moses proves his humility, that is, his ability to humble himself (or, his ability to “go down,” in association with the title of the book) by taking off his shoes, he can be the chosen one to carry out God’s purpose of redemption. In the same vein, only when Isaac McCaslin proves his ability for “self-relinquishment” by divesting himself of all methods of self-defense, in accordance with the symbolic meaning of his own name, he can be the chosen one to see Old Ben—chosen by the bear as Sam Fathers expected “He will pick

out you” (193). I will argue, that is the moment of, figuratively speaking, Ike’s attaining “vision”—the ability to see what happened in the past, what was and is wrong, the pattern of history, and the plan of God; owing to the vision, he can be anointed as a possible agent of gradual social change. Then, we might wonder why Ike loses the vision and fails to respond to his calling. In the Bible, “Isaac (Ike’s biblical namesake) is the privileged symbol of the endurance of God’s exclusive promise to his chosen people.”

Isaac is followed by Moses and Jesus Christ; all three figures are the representatives of the seed of Abraham. In the book, Ike is quite conscious of his emulation of the “Nazarene” as the chosen redeemer. However, in “The Bear” Ike professes his “repudiating immolation” (270), and decides to repudiate his inheritance. Indeed, when Ike reappears in “Delta Autumn,” he is obviously a mere weak, old, and impotent onlooker, rather than a heroic doer.

At the age of sixteen, after the deaths of Old Ben, Sam Fathers, and Lion, Ike begins to read the ancient ledgers which record the history of his grandfather’s sins against the land and the people who are enslaved on the plantation. If the second part of the wilderness trilogy, “The Bear,” which is considered as the innermost center of the book, is structured around two inversely related occasions in Ike’s youth, the first is his encounter with Old Ben and the second is his reading of his family’s old, yellow ledgers written by his father and uncle. Obviously, the two occasions are narrative reversals. If Ike attained a true vision, at the age of eleven, by relinquishing his “self” to the wilderness to see, to rendezvous with, Old Ben, he loses the vision when he sees the

---


tragic and overwhelming truth about his heritage through the ledgers. Actually, after facing the truth, Ike changes the direction of his life.

The death of Old Ben symbolically signifies “the beginning of the end of the Wilderness.” John Lewis Longley says, “It should be remembered that Sam and Ike agreed that Old Ben would be killed only when he himself no longer wished to live.” That is to say, what the death of the great bear designates is the end of an era and the beginning of a new era, at the same time.

It was the beginning of the end of something; he didn’t know what except that he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too or even just to see it too. (GDM, 216-17)

As we have discussed, in the midst of the transition between two eras, Ike is chosen and anointed as the promise of a new beginning, as his namesake ‘Isaac’ implies—in the biblical sense, as “the child of the promise” who must inherit the Promised Land. In other words, Ike’s role is to be the connecter between two eras; he is supposed to pass down what he has inherited from his previous generation, that is, the spirit and the intuitive knowledge of nature, which he has learned in the wilderness and which remains alive in his memory, to the next generation. However, ironically, when Ike’s eyes are opened to a tragic truth, it marks another turning point in his life.

When Ike is sixteen, he opens the old ledgers in the plantation commissary, and deciphers the painful details of his family tragedy initiated by its progenitor, his grandfather, Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin. Along with him, we (the readers) also come to witness the shameful tragedy of Ike’s heritage, in other words, the curse, the foul

312 Ibid.
taint of slavery in his family history, almost abruptly.

*June 21th 1833 Drownd herself*

and the first:

*23 Jun 1833 Who in hell ever heard of a niger drownding him self*

and the second, unhurried, with a complete finality; the two identical entries might have been made with a rubber stamp save for the date:

*Aug 13th 1833 Drownd herself*

and he thought *But why? But why?* He was sixteen then. *(GDM, 256)*

Arthur F. Kinney annotates:313

Uncle Buddy feels forced to correct the entry (something Ike sees nowhere else in the ledgers) by writing beneath it, “Drownd herself.” Uncle Buck denies this in a subsequent entry expressing his belief that no blacks commit suicide—but Uncle Buddy defiantly insists by again writing “Drownd herself,” and Ike is left puzzled. But he is then only 16. When Ike returns to the ledgers in 1884, it is this riddle he means to resolve. How did his uncle know the drowning was suicide, and why did he insist that the fact be recorded in the plantation account book?

As Kinney points out, “Evidently, Uncle Buck’s notation of Eunice’s death opens wounds.”314 With regard to the question, “Why did Uncle Buddy think she had drowned herself?” (257), Ike figures out that the answer is that his father and uncle thought Eunice’s death was connected with their half-brother Tomey’s Turl’s birth, by studying the succeeding page. The first reads, “*Tomasina called Tomy Daughter of Thucydus @ Eunice Born 1810 dide in Child bed June 1833 and Burd. Yr stars fell*”; the next, “*Turl Son of Thucydus @ Eunice Tomy born Jun 1833 yar stars fell Fathers will*” (257). Thus, Ike learns that his grandfather, old Lucius Carothers, had sired a child with his own half-


breed daughter and tried to pay off his guilt and shame by leaving a thousand-dollar legacy to Tomey’s Turl, his enslaved son, the tangible evidence of his enormous transgressions.

According to Ike’s interpretation of the old ledgers, his grandfather had fathered Tomasina by his slave, Eunice (and covered his misdeed by marrying Eunice to Thucydus), and had fathered Tomey’s Turl by Tomasina, that is, “His own daughter” (259). Thus, Eunice drowned herself in the creek six months before her daughter Tomasina died in childbirth. Davis asserts, “Carothers neither recognizes the wrong that he perpetrates on his daughter (“because she was his property”) and their progeny, nor admits responsibility for the damage and trauma he causes in the lives of his slaves.”315 In his will, old Carothers leaves a thousand dollars to his enslaved son, but not his freedom, because the monetary legacy, as Ike remarks, “was cheaper than saying My son to a nigger…. Even if My son wasn’t but just two words” (258).316 This is the truth which Ike must face through the ledgers when he is only 16 and to quote Paul Scott Derick, “It is this, the recognition of rape, incest and indirect murder that Isaac inherits from old McCaslin with the land.”317

Here, I will insist, it is critical to note that Eunice and Tomasina exist only through Ike’s reading and interpretation of the ledgers in the book. The two black slave women are inscribed in the ledgers by two white male masters’ annotations, and in a few pages of Go Down, Moses by the white male author. They are already dead and not allowed to have their own voices. Nevertheless, ironically, reading the several lines of the ledgers along with Ike, we can see how powerfully and poignantly the (racially, socially,

315 Thadious M. Davis, Games of Property, p. 182.
316 Ibid., p. 162.
317 Paul Scott Derick, We Stand Before the Secret of the World, p. 111.
and sexually) repressed or excluded women speak and manifest themselves through the gaps or interruptions in the white male narratives. That is to say, the two dead black women ex-sist in the book, and their ex-cribbed voices exert the most mesmerizingly uncanny power in *Go Down, Moses*. As Doreen Fowler puts it, “[T]hese soprano voices are more compelling because they reach us from the very periphery of the narrative. Paradoxically, then, the stories of these women are all the more poignant precisely because they are not told.”318

With the vision that Ike attained when he encountered Old Ben in the wilderness, Ike is able to see very vividly what happened in the past, and able to hear what the tragic women say towards his heart and consciousness from the blank spaces in the pages.

[Looking down at the yellowed pages spread beneath the yellow glow of the lantern smoking and stinking in that rank chill mid night room fifty years later, he seemed to see her actually walking into the icy creek on that Christmas day six months before her daughter’s and her lover’s (Her first lover’s he thought. Her first) child was born, solitary, inflexible, griefless, ceremonial, in formal and succinct repudiation of grief and despair who had already had to repudiate belief and hope (*GDM*, 259)]

Through the old, yellow ledgers, if Ike can see the truth of his grandfather’s sin against land and humanity, I will argue, it is none other than Ike himself who must remember the most evident victims of the corruption of slavery and the plantation system (that is, Eunice and Tomasina), and must convey what they speak through their traumatic ex-sistence, as the reader of and witness to their horrible tragedy. However, for Ike, at the age of sixteen, what he discovers from the old ledgers is so overwhelming and unbearable that he decides to shut his eyes to the traumatic truth. As Bruce Danner puts it, “Tomasina

---

and Eunice function as vanishing point for Ike, exposing the limits of his insight beyond which he cannot (or dare not) look. Ike closes the ledgers to save himself from the irreparable curse of patrimonial sins.

[T]hat was all. He would never need look at the ledgers again nor did he; the yellowed pages in their fading and implacable succession were as much a part of his consciousness and would remain so forever, as the fact of his own nativity…. (GDM, 259)

That is to say, although Ike has an insight, capable of seeing the sin and shame of his heritage, ironically, owing to the insight, he loses his innocence, which can never be regained. Since that point, Ike obsessively devotes the rest of his life to setting himself free from the burden of his heritage. Figuratively speaking, when Ike opened the ledgers, what Ike tasted is forbidden knowledge, as an allusion to the bitter fruit which Adam tasted against God’s prohibition in the Garden of Eden; that is to say, what Ike came to know from the old ledgers has caused the loss of his Eden. Thus, despite his ability to see the truth, or rather ironically because of his recognition of the hidden truth of his family heritage, Ike becomes blind—unable to realize what his real calling is. Indeed, Ike believes himself to be the chosen redeemer to perform the Christ-like act of expiation for sin. However, being eaten up by the spirit of self-righteousness, Ike so focuses on the guilt and shame that he needs to expiate (or to escape) that he cannot see the true meaning of his calling (in terms of the ethical injunctions, “Go Down” and “Love,” with regard to the title of the book); as a result, Ike fails to act out of “love.”

At twenty-one, Ike repudiates the plantation tradition of his grandfather by

---

320 Donald M. Kartiganer, The Fragile Thread, p. 131.
renouncing his birthright, the ownership of the McCaslin land. In the commissary, where five years earlier he opened the old, yellow ledgers, Ike has a critical argument with his older cousin, Cass Edmonds, a descendant of the McCaslins through the female line. Ike declares that he will relinquish all rights and responsibilities related to the McCaslin land. He explains his own reason for doing so.

The primal injustice is the ownership of land in violation of man’s God-given trusteeship “to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood” (1990b 246). From this derives the greater horror of the ownership of people, which can lead to that final secret of the commissary ledgers, old Carothers’s begetting, without acknowledging, a son upon his own mulatto daughter. Because of this double crime against land and humanity, “the whole South is cursed,” Ike thinks, and “descendants alone can – not resist it, not combat it – maybe just endure and outlast it until the curse is lifted” (1990b: 266).321

Thus, if Ike decides to repudiate his inherited land to atone for his grandfather’s sins, here, I would raise a question, “Should we read it as his self-immolation?” Ike (Isaac McCaslin)’s biblical namesake was chosen by Yahweh to be sacrificed by his father, Abraham, and thus to prefigure the immolated Jesus (Gen 22). If Ike attempts to purge the heritage of sins by repudiating the inherited land, then, who indeed does he try to save by such renunciation? Is it an attempt to “set at least some of God’s lowly people free” (248)?

Chronologically, as we have discussed, Ike had attained vision when he received his first rifle from his cousin Cass but renounced it with the watch and compass to see Old Ben at the age of eleven; had been anointed as the chosen one by Sam Fathers in the

---

wilderness after slaying his first deer at twelve; and then had first read the commissary ledgers at sixteen. Since then, what has he done for five years until he decides to divest himself of the land ownership, attempting to expiate his grandfather’s sins at twenty one? Ike might try to purify his tainted self in the Big Woods; but, perhaps, he recognized that the woods are no longer Edenic without Old Ben and Sam Fathers, and thus he is unable to get back his intact innocence even in the woods. Thus, instead, he seeks out the black Beauchamps, the children of Tomey’s Turl (James (Tennie’s Jim) and Sophonsiba (Fonsiba) Beauchamp), and attempts to pay off the past, that is to say, attempts to give them their rightful legacy to expiate his real inheritance, i.e., his family’s wrongdoing and the shame initiated by his grandfather. But the payoff fails. Thus, when Ike realizes that he is able neither to ignore the responsibility for the past nor to erase it, he decides “to refuse his inheritance of the McCaslin plantation and legacy, giving his cousin Cass “the trusteeship” of his grandfather’s black descendants,”322 in order “to relieve himself of the shame and guilt of his miscegenetic and even incestuous ancestry.”323 That is to say, the real reason why Ike repudiates his heritage is because he realizes that he is “unable to bear the burden of McCaslin history, having tried unsuccessfully to pay off its debts, and so, wants to be rid of it entirely and forever.”324

“I am free”” (285), Ike insists, “‘Yes. Sam Fathers set me free’” (286). Thus, although some critics consider Ike’s renunciation of his heritance as an act of self-sacrifice, I will argue, what Ike refuses to give up is his “self” to be untainted by his family legacy, even if he has to abandon his inherited land. In other words, the real purpose of Ike’s abandoning the ownership (along with the responsibility) of his inherited

324 Ibid.
land is “in order to free himself from even the smallest accumulation of property, which would be a reminder of his heritage and the shame of his part in Terrel’s fate,” rather than to set at least some of “God’s lowly people free” (248). By repudiating the irrefutable evidence of his ancestors’ brutality and disgrace, Ike tries to free himself “from further effects of his accursed heritage.” In short, Ike is able to repudiate the ownership of his family’s plantation but unable to repudiate the ownership of his “self.” Thus, I will insist, Ike’s repudiation of his inherited property cannot be described in terms of “self-sacrifice” or “self-immolation.” Ike, who had proved his ability to relinquish himself to the wilderness by renouncing his gun, watch, and compass to rendezvous with the great bear Old Ben, here, fails (or refuses) to renounce himself, his self-centeredness, and his self-righteousness. Thus, ironically, despite his refusal to inherit his share of his family legacy, Ike comes to inherit “the major burden of his heritage, that is, the inability to love.” In this context, Ike’s refusal of land and patrimony is to be read as “an act of evasion, or irresponsibility, or cowardice,” as Cass asserts, arguing with Ike in the commissary.

If God has a plan for the redemption of “His lowly people” (248)—“the sons of Ham” (249)—and for “the new Canaan” (267), indeed, as we see in their arguments, both Cass and Ike agree that “the chosen redeemer is none other than Ike himself.” But, Ike decides not to accept it.

‘Maybe He chose Grandfather out of all of them He might have picked. Maybe

325 Thadious M. Davis, *Games of Property*, p. 179.
327 Thadious M. Davis, *Games of Property*, p. 221.
He knew that Grandfather himself would not serve His purpose because Grandfather was born too soon too, but that Grandfather would have descendants, the right descendants; maybe He had foreseen already the descendants Grandfather would have, maybe He saw already in Grandfather the seed progenitive of the three generations He saw it would take to set at least some of His lowly people free—’ (GDM, 248)

If He could see Father and Uncle Buddy in Grandfather He must have seen me too.—and Isaac born into a later life than Abraham’s and repudiating immolation: fatherless and therefore safe declining the altar because maybe this time the exasperated Hand might not supply the kid—’ and McCaslin ‘Escape:’ and he ‘All right. Escape.—’ (GDM, 270-71)

When Ike clarifies his intention to hand over his inherited land to Cass Edmonds (a descendant through the female line of the McCaslins), Cass objects, “And since I know too what you know I will say now, once more let me say: And one other, and in the third generation too, and the male, the eldest, the direct and sole and white and still McCaslin even, father to son to son—” (285). That is to say, Ike is the only legitimate heir of the land, as the last and sole white male in Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin’s patriarchal line. But, Ike declares “I am free” (285). It is Ike’s solemn signal of his will to redeem himself from the heavy burden—the wretched heritage of guilt and shame and his predetermined mission to carry out. Thus, David H. Evans asserts that Ike’s repudiation of his inheritance is an act which terminates the cycle of generations, and which makes him the climactic end of the providential history of redemption.330

At the age of twenty-one, in the plantation commissary, Ike relinquishes his heritage of the McCaslin plantation. The following day Ike moves to a rooming house in

330 Ibid.
Jefferson and becomes a carpenter; however, this is not an imitation of the Ancient Nazarene (Christ). Nancy Dew Taylor says, “This need to work with his hands may be part of Isaac’s inheritance from Buck and Buddy, who built their cabin by themselves. Sam Fathers also worked as a carpenter.”

not in mere static and hopeful emulation of the Nazarene ..., but (without the arrogance of false humility and without the false humbleness of pride…) because if the Nazarene had found carpentering good for the life and ends He had assumed and elected to serve, it would be all right too for Isaac McCaslin even though Isaac McCaslin’s ends, although simple enough in their apparent motivation, were and would be always incomprehensible to him, and his life, invincible enough in its needs, if he could have helped himself, not being the Nazarene, he would not have chosen it… (GDM, 295-96; Emphasis is mine)

Obviously, Ike’s decision to repudiate his inherited land is in order to set himself free, not God’s lowly people. William Van O’Connor interprets Ike’s choice as “an escape from, rather than an attempt to solve, the present injustice.” O’Connor asserts;

Ike never seems a particularly good representative of the virtues to be learned from the wilderness because he is ineffectual or inactive in contexts where the virtues he has learned in the wilderness, particularly the respect for liberty, might motivate him to some positive action. For example, he allows McCaslin Edmonds to put a monthly payment in his bank account, the profit from the land he repudiates, and he allows his cousin to meet the family’s and therefore Isaac’s own obligations to Carothers McCaslin’s mulatto heirs. Isaac would absolve himself not merely from the guilt but from the obligations contingent upon the guilt.

That is to say, what Ike’s repudiation of the land signifies is just his choosing the easiest

---

333 Ibid., p. 19.
way out; to transfer his own obligations from his shoulders to Cass’s and to take only the profit from the land he repudiates. Thus, it only shows Ike’s impotency and irresponsibility. Meanwhile, Paul Scott Derick interprets it as a sign of Ike’s passivity—or even disengagement—rather than a sign of hypocrisy, because although Ike uses the money, he does not really need it—“He had forgotten the thirty dollars which McCaslin would put into the bank in his name each month” (296). However, here, I will insist, it is important to note that Faulkner criticized such passivity or disengagement. Describing what he called “the trilogy of man’s conscience,” Faulkner spoke in interviews of three kinds of reaction to life—seeing evil and being unable to live with it, choosing rather to die; seeing evil and living with it but withdrawing from the fray; seeing evil and trying to do something about it (FiU 62, 245-246; LG 247).

Q. Mr. Faulkner, Isaac McCaslin in “The Bear” relinquishes his heredity. Do you think he may be in the same predicament as modern man, under the same conditions that he can’t find a humanity that he can fit in with?

A. Well, there are some people in any time and age that cannot face and cope with the problems. There seem to be three stages: the first says, This is rotten, I’ll have no part of it, I will take death first. The second says, This is rotten, I don’t like it, I can’t do anything about it, but at least I will not participate in it myself, I will go off into a cave or climb a pillar to sit on. The third says, This stinks and I’m going to do something about it. McCaslin is the second. He says, This is bad, and I will withdraw from it. What we need are people who will say, This is bad and I’m going to do something about it, I’m going to change it.

Just as Cass criticizes Ike’s failing to act “trying to maintain an impossible status

---

Faulkner also criticized Ike’s being stuck to his position “which is wrong and sinful.” As Taylor points out, “Faulkner’s work indicates he believes each individual must become, in a sense, his own Moses; even if Ike sees his repudiation as an attempt to “set at least some of His lowly people free” (248), we see no positive results of his action.” Thus, Ike’s renunciation of the land is an empty and pointless gesture. To quote Thadious M. Davis, “While the major virtues Ike espouses are, as he himself indicates, “pity and love of justice and of liberty,” he does not act out of love.” Moreover, Ike renounces not only his inherited land but also the world. By choosing the cut-off from the world in austere seclusion, as Davis puts it, Ike has missed his opportunity to love. Davis asserts, “He can forcefully resist evil in society only if he acts; passivity is no solution, because it cannot generate a social reformation,” and interprets Ike’s failing to act in the following words;

Ike has not been able to translate his strong moral convictions, his shame and outrage at old Carothers’s treatment of slaves and kin, into social action, perhaps because the belief in property and ownership is too ingrained in himself and his community, or perhaps because his sense of individual justice, of renunciation and expiation by withdrawal, leaves him unengaged, suspended, and isolated.

After becoming a carpenter, Ike marries, but soon loses his wife when he refuses her demand that the availability of her body be contingent upon his taking back his ownership of the McCaslin plantation. Consequently, Ike’s barren marriage makes him “Uncle Ike,” “uncle to half a county and father to no one” (3). However, Ike justifies his

---

339 Thadious M. Davis, *Games of Property*, p. 221.
loss of a son as being a salvation for that unborn son who would be freed from the shame and wrong inherited from Carothers and passed down to the male McCaslin.  

In repudiation and denial at least of the land and the wrong and shame even if he couldn’t cure the wrong and eradicate the shame, who at fourteen when he learned of it had believed he could do both when he became competent and when at twenty-one he became competent he knew that he could do neither but at least he could repudiate the wrong and shame, at least in principle, and at least the land itself in fact, for his son at least: and did, thought he had: then (married then) in a rented cubicle in a back-street stock-traders’ boarding-house, the first and last time he ever saw her naked body, himself and his wife juxtaposed in their turn against that same land, that same wrong and shame from whose regret and grief he would at least save and free his son and, saving and freeing his son, lost him. (334-35)

Considering Ike’s biblical namesake Isaac was the heir to God’s covenant with Abraham, “All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted” (Genesis 13: 15-16),” I will insist, Ike’s barren marriage signifies his, another, failure to assume the role of Isaac, which is linked to “the inability to love” along with “the inability of self-immolation.” That is to say, Ike has abjured all the roles of an Isaac, a Moses, and a Christ, by renouncing his ethical and social obligations with his inherited land, just to save and free himself and his son who he has never had.

Meanwhile, Doreen Fowler interprets Ike’s withdrawal into the woods as his imaginary reunion with the wilderness. According to Fowler, the wilderness represents, 

---

343 Ibid., p. 168.
344 Doreen Fowler, Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed, pp. 133-34.
in the Lacanian sense, “the all-satisfying mother-surrogate.” Fowler says;

[W]hen Ike first makes his trip into the pristine wilderness, he seems to be returning to the womb. He “enter[s]” (187) the Big Bottom, a name that itself has a womb-connotation, through “a very tiny orifice” (170), an image for the vaginal opening. Ike negotiates this passage “with Sam beside him, the two of them wrapped in the damp, warm, negro-rank quilt while the wilderness closed behind his entrance as it had opened momentarily to accept him” (187). … It is no wonder, as Ike is first admitted into this “drowsing” world, that he feels as if “he was witnessing his own birth” (187).

From this perspective, we might say that what the young boy Ike had experienced in the wilderness, before the deaths of Old Ben and Sam Fathers, is a kind of ecstasy, a felt oneness with Nature, in an Edenic state of innocence and ignorance of separation or loss. Thus, Ike’s retreat from the actual world into the woods, after repudiating the McCaslin plantation, signifies his re-enactment of a return to the womb, a return to an imaginary relation with a substitute mother, the wilderness. If the death of Old Ben signifies the end of the Eden-like wilderness, as I have discussed, Ike is supposed to accept it and to fulfill his given role, as the anointed one to be the promise of a new era, in the world. However, Ike becomes barren because he fails to get outside of his “self”-centered phallic fantasy, in Lacanian terms. Ike renounces not only patrimony but also paternity; as Doreen Fowler points out, as he declares that someday he will marry “but still the woods would be his mistress and his wife” (311), he remains forever a “boy” (232, 233), “uncle to half a county and father to no one” (3).

As a result, Ike’s inability to love makes him impotent not only sexually but also

345 Ibid., p. 311.
346 Ibid., pp. 133-34.
347 Ibid., p. 41, 134.
socially. Ike’s rejection of his inherited land and legacy to free himself makes him dead to his society. According to Thadious M. Davis, by rejecting “his wife and with her his prospect for a son, progeny, and continuance within his society,” what Ike wants is “only containment, that is, a gravelike space in which to retreat.”\footnote{Thadious M. Davis, \textit{Games of Property}, pp. 168; 126.} That is to say, Ike’s solitude in the woods is in order to shrink from his responsibilities beyond his capacity and to retreat into the shell of his “Self.”\footnote{Therefore, Ike’s solitude in the woods is entirely different from Henry David Thoreau’s—Thoreau went to the woods is, as Thoreau himself explained, to communicate new vision and new knowledge that he could attain through the life in the woods to the world.} Thus, Davis asserts, “Faulkner represents Ike McCaslin in the boundedness of his existence: walled off, violating nobody’s rights, protecting no one, and convinced of his own righteousness.”\footnote{Thadious M. Davis, \textit{Games of Property}, p. 220.} In other words, Ike has forgot “pity and love” for others sticking to his self-love and self-righteousness.

Meanwhile, Michael Grimwood asserts, “Faulkner undoubtedly considered Ike’s renunciation to be irresponsible, but it was an irresponsibility with which he deeply sympathized.”\footnote{Michael Grimwood, \textit{Heart in Conflict: Faulkner's Struggles with Vocation}, University of Georgia Press, 2009, p. 285.} Davis explains the reason by linking Ike’s limitations to those of his forefathers; Ike could not inherit any direct and appropriate solution to the present injustice from his previous generation.

Though Sam Fathers sets Ike free within the wilderness by teaching him the positive values of the natural world, Sam Fathers cannot provide a place for Ike in white society. … Though Cass Edmonds teaches Ike the practical realities of plantation life, Cass cannot join those practicalities of money and goods to Ike’s ideals. Buck and Buddy McCaslin, his father and uncle, show Ike by their example that they object to the treatment of slaves, … but they cannot show Ike how to change the economic system of slavery for they remain complicit in it,
and they do not acknowledge Tomey’s Turl as their brother. Ike cannot escape the complexities of ethical and moral conduct in a society whose laws reinforce the ruthless proprietorship of his grandfather and reduce his father’s and uncle’s circumvention of ownership to humorous eccentricity.\(^{352}\)

However, here, I cannot but ask, “If his forefathers could not manage the problem, could not suggest any practical solution, why doesn’t Ike undertake the task?” Certainly, Ike was expected to be a breakthrough in that deadlock. That is why he had been chosen and anointed as the promised redeemer. To quote Paul Scott Derick, “the real solution to the problem lies in thinking about it differently.”\(^{353}\) Ike was the one who is able to see things differently, owing to the vision which he attained in the wilderness, or inherited from his forefathers’ education. Ike had to be the one to see history’s pattern, to translate the intuitive knowledge of nature and the numberless silent voices of the dead (especially, those speaking through the old ledgers) into words to bequeath to his descendants, and to initiate some positive social action. So, we may say that Ike’s most tragic failure is that, despite his vision, he was unable to seek “alternative ways of interpreting and interacting with the world.”\(^{354}\) Here, I will insist, it is critical to note Faulkner’s words concerning man’s social responsibility as follows:

> Anyone can save anyone from injustice if he just will, if he just tries, just raises his voice. … I don’t hold to the idea of a return. That once advancement stops then it dies. It’s got to go forward and we have got to take along with us all the rubbish of our mistakes and our errors. We must cure them; we mustn’t go back to a condition, an idyllic condition, in which the dream [made us think] we were happy, we were free of trouble and sin. We must take the trouble and sin along with us, and we must cure that trouble and sin as we go. (Lion in the Garden, …

\(^{352}\) Thadious M. Davis, *Games of Property*, pp. 182-83.
\(^{353}\) Paul Scott Derick, *We Stand Before the Secret of the World*, p. 143.
In “Delta Autumn,” the last part of the wilderness trilogy, Ike (so-called, “Uncle Ike”) disciplines his young kinsman Roth, “There are good men everywhere, at all times. Most men are. Some are just unlucky, because most men are a little better than their circumstances give them a chance to be. And I’ve know some that even the circumstances couldn’t stop” (329). But Roth replies, “So you’ve lived almost eighty years…. And that’s what you’ve finally learned about the other animals you lived among. I suppose the question to ask you is, where have you been all the time you were dead?” (329). That is to say, owing to Ike’s retreat into the wilderness, “inward and further away from the demands of living in the world,” “Ike is, Ross implies, inattentive to reality and figuratively dead to his society,” and thus “his memories, his truth, and his experience comes to die with him and the disappearing wilderness.” Thus, Davis emphasizes, “Ike, who has had the moral vision and the potential for effecting social change within the modern World War II era, is finally an old man truncated by the inflexibility of his society and his own rigidity.”

Ike’s bareness, I will argue, comes from his misunderstanding of his vocation and the true meaning of “the Promised Land.” Ike is, figuratively (as both Ike and Cass agreed during their arguments in the plantation commissary), the heir to the McCaslin family’s patrimonial mission to rehabilitate the divine promise of the Promised Land and the redemption of “His lowly people” (248). However, he abandons his inherited land because he believes it is cursed, not blessed; and he determines to sever himself from it and to have no heir. Such decisions, I will argue, reflect Ike’s critical lapse in judgment.

355 Thadious M. Davis, *Games of Property*, pp. 184; 221; 185.
Firstly, considering the title of the book, “Go Down, Moses,” Moses’s first destination to “go down” was Egypt, to set free God’s people and lead them into the Promised Land. In other words, to receive the promised reward, where Moses had to first go was the place to carry out his assigned task. Secondly, in Exodus, Canaan (the Promised Land) which God’s people was supposed to arrive at after 40 years of wandering in the desert was, in a sense, another place in which the chosen people should carry out their own responsibilities in response to God’s plan—to restore Canaan into Yahweh’s land and thus extend their God’s boundary. Therefore, if Ike’s inherited land is cursed and corrupt, in the biblical sense, the land is the very place in which Ike must accomplish his mission in response to His call to action. With regard to the exodus motif, I will argue, Ike (as the heir to the mission of redemption) has to accomplish two kinds of redemption; the redemption of others and the redemption of himself. The first is associated with the imperative “Love,” and the second with ek-stasis, that is, to free himself from the ego-centric self by fulfilling the imperative “Go Down”—here, “go down” can be said in the sense of “going down” into the world to live up to his vision and calling, and of “being able to humble himself” by getting outside of his self-righteousness. However, as we see in his argument with Cass, the most fundamental reason for Ike’s repudiation of his heritage is based on his self-righteousness; he could not bear the shame and guilt of his ancestry. If “vision” means the ability to see, “love” is the ability to see others without passing judgment on them. What is required for true redemption (whether of others or of himself) is, first of all, to renounce “the I” and, I will insist, that is what Ike ultimately fails.

When Ike had opened the old, yellow ledgers and acknowledged the ancestral
shame and guilt, if he had really perceived what his mission would be by vision, he had
to feel responsible for what happened in the past, not just merely to criticize and to avoid
blame. If the creek in which the tragic woman (Eunice) drowned herself represents his
family history which has been corrupted by his forefathers’ sins, Ike’s obligation to carry
it out is, metaphorically, to plow over its bottom to let the creek disemboque itself and
thus to bring it to new life. Ike’s decision to retreat into the woods to keep himself
untainted by the sins of his ancestors signifies his failure to “love,” failure to “get out of”
his ego-centric self-righteousness; that is the reason why Arthur F. Kinney interprets
“Ike’s narrow and jealous desire to maintain the big woods as his own private refuge”\textsuperscript{357}
as an act of pride and arrogance. With regard to the title of the book, “Go Down, Moses,”
if Ike is the one chosen to assume the role of Moses for the mission of redemption and
exodus, he is expected to get out of his self-righteousness and go down into the world for
constructive social actions to bear fruit; it is, I will insist, a way to settle the accounts
regarding his family’s debt to the past by serving others, particularly, poor and lowly
people like Rider, with “Agape” love—actually, in “Pantaloon in Black,” the tragic figure,
Rider cries out, “Efn He God, Ah dont needs to tole Him. Efn He God, He awready know
hit. Awright. Hyar Ah is. Leff Him come down hyar and do me some good” (146).
However, Ike has chosen to renounce the world along with all his obligations to it. Thus,
Ike’s failure to renounce his self-righteousness leads to not only the failure to save others
but also the failure to free himself from his narcissistic self-enclosure. With regard to the
notion of “freedom,” it is critical to note Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber’s summarizing of the

\textsuperscript{357} Arthur F. Kinney, \textit{Critical essays on William Faulkner: The McCaslin Family}, G.K.
definitions of freedom as follows:\textsuperscript{358}

Ike’s inability to act constructively has generated varying interpretation of his ultimate freedom. Many critics have discussed the concept of freedom in \textit{Go Down, Moses}, defining it as “freedom from inner bonds, such as guilt, fear, longing, prejudice, bigotry, or any of the other internal cages we are prey to” (Dawson 388) or the ability to accept fate in order to move past it. Others see freedom in being part of a community instead of separating the self from others. … Elsbree summarizes that “[f]reedom is the acceptance of limits and the completion of self through suffering for and with others, not the rejection of roles and routine, nor a nostalgia for lost innocence.”

Here, it is also noteworthy that Iain Chambers defines the significance of “freedom,” as an ethical topos, in association with the Heideggerian “\textit{ekstasis},” which literally means “to stand outside (oneself)”:\textsuperscript{359}

This is not the imperious freedom that delivers the world over to me to do with as I please, but the freedom of being in the world and there finding my way. This is not the freedom to dominate, but rather the freedom to be in the world, experiencing limits and the wonder of what exceeds my egotism. This is the freedom to respond to, and take responsibility for, worldly dwelling not as its master but as its caretaker. This is to propose a sense of being that is neither a godhead nor a religious force, although it may pertain to the sacred, but as something that exists beyond the subjectivist humanism of individual beings and remains irreducible to it.

That is to say, even if Ike has struggled to free himself from the curse of the past and his ancestry, as a result, he has failed to redeem not only others but also himself; he has been totally dead to his society. Although Ike has been elected to serve as a possible agent to

\textsuperscript{358} Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber, \textit{Subversive Voices: Eroticizing the other in William Faulkner and Toni Morrison}, Univ. of Tennessee Press, 2001, p. 34.

right social wrongs, and thus as the chosen redeemer “to set at least some of His lowly people free” (248), he has renounced the world along with all his obligations to carry it out with his given abilities. Consequently, “Ike brings no meaningful change into his environment because he has given up his opportunity to sustain contact with it.”360 From this perspective, I will insist, Isaac’s renunciation is totally vain and hopeless, just as “the bright rustless unstained tin” (294), the only legacy from Uncle Hubert, represents—the empty tin coffee pot, which is opened on Ike’s twenty-first birthday, is substituted for the silver cup full of gold coins that Ike is originally supposed to receive. Thus, Paul Scott Derick raises a question, “What good was his sacrifice if he has not been able to influence anyone else in his environment?”361 I will argue this is the very point of the unnamed young woman’s question to Uncle Ike in “Delta Autumn.” In “Delta Autumn,” along with Roth’s question, “So you’ve lived almost eighty years…. I suppose the question to ask you is, where have you been all the time you were dead?” (329), the unnamed woman’s question of “love”—“Old Man … have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you don’t remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?” (346)—, I will insist superbly highlights Ike’s ultimate failure.

“Delta Autumn,” the last part of the wilderness trilogy, begins with the scene of Ike entering into the Delta. In “Delta Autumn,” following “The Bear” which dramatizes the vanishing wilderness reaching a peak with the death of Old Ben and Ike’s repudiation of his heritage, when Ike reappears, after a lapse of almost sixty years, as “Uncle Ike” now close to 80 years old, the Mississippi wilderness, the diminishing space of the untamed land, has been reduced to a tiny triangular residue, the Delta called Big Bottom.

360 Thadious M. Davis, Games of Property, p. 184.
361 Paul Scott Derick, We Stand Before the Secret of the World, p. 128.
Thus, if there occurs an omission of sixty years of Ike’s adult life between “The Bear” and “Delta Autumn,” it is critical to emphasize that, as Joanne V. Creighton asserts, Ike’s relinquishment makes his life a blank page until he is met with a belated test of his principle of renunciation on which he has staked a lifelong struggle for integrity.\footnote{Joanne V. Creighton, \textit{William Faulkner’s Craft of Revision}, Wayne State University Press; Detroit, 1977, p. 146.}

Soon now they would enter the Delta. The sensation was familiar to him. It had been renewed like this each last week in November for more than fifty years—the last hill, at the foot of which the rich unbroken alluvial flatness began as the sea began at the base of its cliff, dissolving away beneath the unhurried November rain as the sea itself would dissolve away. (\textit{GDM}, 319)

Here, I will insist, it is significant that Delta (\(\Box\)), the innermost core of Big Woods, that is, the so-called Big Bottom, is the very place in which Ike comes to finally encounter the unnamed woman who asks a critical question which will rip open the casehardened surface of his consciousness and thus enable him to awaken to the inescapable truth of his irredeemably wrong decision.

Another significant aspect of Delta in the book is, as Richard Godden points out, that “events in the Delta (\(\Box\)) contain events from the yellow old ledgers, which they displace.”\footnote{Richard Godden, “Bear, Man, and Black: Hunting the Hidden in Faulkner’s Big Woods,” in \textit{The Faulkner Journal}, Vol. 23, Number 1, Ohio Northern University, 2007, p. 18.} The difference is that while Eunice and Tomasina, the irremovable evidence of the McCaslin family’s crime and shame, are repressed or hidden in (but haunt) the old ledgers like ciphers to be read and interpreted, the unnamed woman appears herself as a voice to speak out for the two victimized women’s muted voices, “as an unexpected
source of revisionary change from within, by surprise,\textsuperscript{364} and thus as a feminine and maternal body for a new life, new hope, new possibilities. As the voice both of the past and the future, as Davis puts it, the unnamed woman, Tomey’s Turl’s female descendant, comes back and stands facing the old and, metaphorically, blind and impotent man in the Delta, to talk back with the strength and passion that was silenced in Eunice and Tomasina and unvoiced in Turl.\textsuperscript{365}

[She] refuses to be excluded from the narrative just as she refuses to be excluded from the sanctum sanctorum of male power: the hunting camp. And she achieves narrative visibility despite male resistance…. [T]he unnamed woman, “young and incredibly and even ineradicably alive” (360) will be seen and heard.\textsuperscript{366}

Her existence, as the female descendant of Tomey’s Turl and as the mistress of Roth Edmonds, itself symbolizes the apparent repetition of Old Carothers’ incestuous miscegenation. Just as Old Carothers did (to Eunice and Tomey), Roth also rejects his nameless mistress and his own son; “Tell her No, … Tell her I said No” (339). Arthur F. Kinney asserts that, here, Roth is really offering Ike a second chance to accept responsibility for the McCaslin past.\textsuperscript{367} Facing the repeated crime, however, how does Ike react? When Ike faced the hidden truth in the McCaslin commissary more than a half-century earlier, he decided to shut his eyes to the tragic truth and leave the two dead women unsaid. Now, if Roth offers Ike an opportunity to atone for his earlier error, does he respond properly to it?

Although Ike now understands that she did not come to meet Roth or to get

\textsuperscript{365} Thadious M. Davis, \textit{Games of Property}, p. 226.
money, he never quite grasps what brought her to the camp. She came to see him. The ties of the family drew her to meet “Uncle Ike” and to announce the existence of her line of the family that runs back through James Beauchamp and Turl to Tomasina and Carothers McCaslin. Although she and the family are bound together, she is free of the McCaslin land and of the restrictions of Southern culture and the family’s own somewhat less narrow racial attitudes. “I’m going back North,” she says. “Back home” (344).368

According to Dirk Kuyk, the unnamed woman ex-sists “within the family, between races, and across regional boundaries”; it means that she achieved a freedom that no other McCaslin has attained.369 That is to say, she takes her place in the vacant center in-between as extimacy, which is neither-inside-nor-outside, and simultaneously, both-inside-and-outside; in short, Delta, the khōra-like place of Ex-sistance in the McCaslin white male line is the place where she ex-sists. Indeed, the woman appears herself in the innermost core of the Delta, where Ike’s cot lies.

She approaches the triangle “in a man’s hat and a man’s slicker” (340), entering it by boat. As a woman from the Delta, she arrives from the South, and may be presumed to gain access to the figure from its lower “apex” or “tip.” … it that the cot rests in the “▽,” itself a version of a resting place marked female.370

She has brought “something else, something intangible” (340). When she reveals her identity, Ike is unable to endure what she brought to him, that is, her very ex-sistence. She is not a mere outside anymore. She is the-outside-penetrating-his-inside. As the innermost traumatic core of his “I,” her ex-centric or ex-centered ex-sistence horrifies the old Ike.

Now he understood what it was she had brought into the tent with her, what old

368 Dirk Kuyk, Threads Cable-strong, p. 163 (Emphasis is mine).
369 Ibid., p. 168.
Isham had already told him by sending the youth to bring her in to him—the pale lips, the skin pallid and dead-looking yet not ill, the dark and tragic and foreknowing eyes. *Maybe in a thousand or two thousand years in America*, he thought. *But not now! Not now!* He cried, not loud, in a voice of amazement, pity, and outrage: “You’re a nigger!” (*GDM*, 344).

She already acknowledges her own hybridity, and does not deny it. To quote Thadious M. Davis, “In her brief exchanges with Ike, the young woman is articulated, self-aware, and clear-sighted, and as such, she removes the stigma of ownership from her Beauchamp lineage. … [S]he refuses to allow Ike to dismiss her as an object of shame.” In the innermost core of the hunting camp, in other words, in the Delta space of the male dominating place, the young unnamed woman is overpowering the old Ike.

In the tableau in which they meet, she stands up, he lies down; she knows both their histories, he knows only his own; she is life-giving, he is dying. Her knowledge and his ignorance signal a break in the old dynamics of power between the two families that are in fact one.

As Davis puts it, “she owns her identity and her self-possession unnerves Ike and his racial ideology.” Ike burns to expel her uncanny existence. “Get out of here!” he cries, “I can do nothing for you! Cant nobody do nothing for you!” (344). Here, Ike seems to assume the role of father that he has shunned for almost eighty years, reenacting the old ancestor’s crime from which he has spent almost his entire life to distance himself. Many years before, Old Carothers had refused to acknowledge his black daughter, Tomasina, and his son by that daughter, Terrel; now Ike turns away another mother and child, the

descendants of Tomey’s Turl. Furthermore Ike delivers Roth’s money to pay off his responsibility to the woman; “Take it out of my tent” (345). Here, as Davis puts it, Ike does not recognize that his action replicates his grandfather’s act of leaving a thousand dollars to Tomey’s Turl, an act that Ike himself condemned: “So I reckon that was cheaper than saying My son to a nigger” (258). That is to say, as the unnamed woman points out, Ike (known as Uncle Isaac) has so spoiled Roth that he repeats his ancestor’s crime, and now connives at Roth’s wrongdoing. Thus, Old Carothers’s crime has come full circle, at this very moment, despite Ike’s lifelong struggle to expiate it by repudiating his heritage. However, if Delta is, as I have discussed, the place for a new hope, a new life, where can we find a turning point for a renewal out of the deadly cyclical pattern? “Wait,” Ike puts out his hand to her; and she in response stretches out her single hand, which holds the money, until he can touch it.

[H]e touched it. He didn’t grasp it, he merely touched it—the gnarled, bloodless, bone-light bone-dry old man’s fingers touching for a second the smooth young flesh where the strong old blood ran after its long lost journey back to home. “Tennie’s Jim,” he said. “Tennie’s Jim.” He drew the hand back beneath the blanket again: he said harshly now: “It’s a boy, I reckon. They usually are, except that one that was its own mother too.” “Yes,” she said. “It’s a boy.” (GDM, 345; Emphasis is mine)

Here, that touch completes a circle. I will argue it represents the return of Tennie’s Jim (James Beauchamp) through the unnamed woman’s body. Thus, Dirk Kuyk asserts;

That touch joins McCaslin with McCaslin. The “man-made” lines of the family come together; and their condensation, though momentary, joins once again—here at the latest as at the beginning of the family’s genealogy—youth and age,

“black” and white, woman and man, the possessed and the possessor. The thematic significance of that touch resembles the significance of the baby.\footnote{Dirk Kuyk, \emph{Threads Cable-strong}, pp. 163-64.}

That is to say, with that touch a cycle completes itself, but another cycle begins with the baby; thus, here, in Delta as the place of re-birth, the baby exists as a junction and a turning point which leads a homecoming into a new departure for a new possibility, that is, a new hope. Even though “by repudiating his patrimony, Ike [has struggled] to remove himself as mediating term and leave the families of Edmonds and Beauchamp utterly divided,”\footnote{Eric J. Sundquist, \emph{Faulkner: A House Divided}, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983, p. 144.} the two family’s (names) come to be together by the existence of baby boy, the next heir of the hunting horn which symbolizes what Ike had inherited from Sam Fathers (the mentor of the life in the wilderness). With regard to the title “Delta Autumn,” if Ike, here as the old and emaciated man nearing death, stands for “Autumn,” that is, late fall nearing winter, the baby boy stands for “Delta” as a new spring after the winter. If Ike has learned endurance, love, humility, courage, pity, tolerance, and patience through the ritual hunting in the wilderness when he was a young boy, it is significant that Ike (old Uncle Isaac) bequeaths his hunting horn, which is the emblem of those highest values, to the baby boy. It signifies that Ike admits the baby boy as the next heir to the spirit of the wilderness and the intuitive wisdom of the old people, who might be able to rebuild their current society into an affirmative society which is morally based on those highest values, and thus one in which people can preserve a harmonious relationship with nature and with each other. Ike says, “It’s his. Take it” (346).

Meanwhile, I will argue, the hunting horn can be said to be in association with the \emph{Shofar} in biblical terms. In biblical references, the Israelites used \emph{Shofar}, the ram’s horn,
to praise God (for example, *Psalms* 150:3); to make a breakthrough (for example, *Joshua* 6:5); to listen to God’s answer (for example, *Exodus* 19:19); to proclaim liberty (for example, *Leviticus* 25:9-10); and, most of all, to remember the Redemption by Christ’s Love. Significantly, the horn symbolizes the ram which was trapped by its horns to be used for a peace offering instead of Isaac, which God himself prepared for Abraham and Isaac who had proved their ability for “self-immolation”; after several thousand years, Jesus Christ eventually replaced the ram for His mission of the redemption of the world. Thus, from this perspective, if Ike has abjured (or failed in assuming) the roles of Isaac, Moses and Christ, the baby boy will be the next generation to undertake the roles. In other words, the baby boy will be the next recipient of the command “Go Down, Moses.” As the next heir of the hunting horn signifying *Shofar*, the baby boy will be a new Moses who might succeed in overthrowing the white male-oriented, and “self-enclosed” order, and thus succeed in breaking out of the cyclical pattern in *Go Down, Moses*, for another narrative of exodus. That is to say, the baby boy embodies a new hope for an eventual improvement, a positive promise for the future where the races come together in the love of brotherhood. Although Ike, the old, impotent, and dying man, cries out “Not now!” in the Delta place, it can be said as “not-yet,” a positive affirmation. It is, on the one hand, “not,” the negativity—like death or winter—which dwells always already in the present; but, at the same time, it is, on the other hand, “yet,” as a promise which will come in the future for another spring, for a new life. Thus, “not-yet” is the simultaneous announcement of an end and a new beginning; figuratively, it is *Shofar*’s sound for announcing a “re-birth” in the Delta place.

Meanwhile, it is ironic that even after passing down his hunting horn to the baby
boy, Ike shows his forgetfulness or inability to carry out his ideal of communal brotherhood. In this scene, what we see is Ike’s incapability to step outside the rigidity of his racial and gender ideology. Ike advises the unnamed woman that she must flee from whites, from the South, from the McCaslin family, and from Roth, to save her from the sin of possession.  

Go back North. Marry: a man in your own race. That’s the only salvation for you—for a while yet, maybe a long while yet. We will have to wait. Marry a black man. … Then you will forget all this, forget it ever happened, that he ever existed—” (GDM, 346).

In fact, here, Ike defines the unnamed woman as the other who should be differentiated and separated from his-self. Then, who does Ike’s “We” refer to, here? To Ike’s prejudiced and intolerant advice, the woman responds with the very question of “love”; “Old Man,” she said, “have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you don’t remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?” (346).

Here, I will read the woman’s question of “love” in terms of Agape love—“love thy neighbor as thyself.” In the Lacanian sense, Agape love can be translated into the ethical injunction to “love the other,” who dwells there with you at the core of your-self, as thyself”; as Žižek puts it, in Lacan’s terms, the agape love is “feminine” which involves the paradoxes of the non-All.” Crucial here is that “the clearly paradoxical place of Love with regard to All” detaches the Agape “love for one’s neighbor”

377 Dirk Kuyk, *Threads Cable-strong*, p. 164.
radically “from the Levinasian topic of the Other as the impenetrable neighbor.”

In Levinasian ethics, love is to underline the impenetrable pure otherness of the Other. However, from the Lacanian perspective, the “too much” assertion of the otherness of the Other can lead to the emphasis on the impassable distance between the subject and the Other by which the ethical encounter with the Other is impossible. Contrarily, Agape love transposes the difference / the gap that separates man from God (the Other) into God Himself, as His own radical splitting.

Thus, when we say Agape love, our focus is not on “the founding Exception (God)” as the absolute Other, but on the radical split in God Himself as the literal “not” which makes Himself “not all / not whole.” This site of the literal “not” is where Jesus Christ is situated, as the Lacanian object a. At the intersection in-between man and God, in which the two immanent exteriorities of man and God overlap each other, Jesus Christ appears with His Law of Love, that is, the Love of the Cross, going under the Father’s Law. There, Christ is “the name of the excess inherent in man, man’s ex-timate kernel, the monstrous surplus”; there, Christ’s call to Agape, “love thy neighbor,” is transfigured into the Lacanian injunction, “love “the other” which disturbs you self-identity at your ex-timate core, just as you love me.”

Therefore, in the Lacanian context, the locus of objet a is where Agape emerges as the “feminine” law exceeding the obscene superego of the Mosaic Law, in other words, as an-other law “deprived of its superego supplement.” That is to say, Agape appears

---

382 Ibid., p. 143.
383 Ibid., p. 113. (Here, it is noteworthy that Tom Cohen asserts, “It is not accidental that the last and titular text, ‘Go Down, Moses’, speaks of a lawyer whose ‘serious vocation was a twenty-two year old unfinished translation of the Old Testament’ (353)” (See Tom Cohen, “(A)Material Criticism,” in Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century, Edinburgh University Press, 2002, p. 287). I will insist, “the translation of the Old Testament” can
within the domain of the Mosaic Law, but not as a prop for “an Infinite Law which, as it were, self-sublates itself, but just reverberates as an empty tautological Prohibition,” but as “the crucial step from the excessive Law to Love beyond the Law.”

Through Agape love, that is, through Christ’s law of love, we can experience the feminine way to love the other. Christ’s love by self-immolation is “not an act of meaningful exchange.” It is a free gift for redemption, as the Love of the Cross. As St. Paul asserts, “The gift is not like the trespass. The free gift ‘overflows’ to the many!” (Romans 5: 15).

The redemption through Christ’s love is not legalistic. If the redemption is given with rank according to man’s faithfulness to the Law, it will make the Law infinite-obscene, and thus it becomes impossible “to pass from the superego hyperbole of the Law to love proper.” Therefore, the redemption through Christ’s love which is given as a free gift liberates man from the obscenity of the meta-Law deprived of any content—“in the eyes of this “crazy” Law, we are always-already guilty, without even knowing what, exactly, we are guilty of; we are in an impossible position of always and a priori being under suspicion of violating some (unknown) prohibition.”

That is to say, through Agape, Christ’s law of love emerges as the only way out from the self-enclosure of the Father’s Law. Agape, the feminine love, in other words, the feminine law, opens up a significant space in the Father’s Law, which is considered as the ultimate perfection, and overflows, making the Father’s Law “not-all / not-whole.” In the feminine space opened by Agape, be seen as the translation the Mosaic Law into a different law, that is, Christ’s law of Agape, in terms of the Žižek’s discussion of “From Law to Love” (Refer to Slavoj Žižek, The Puppet and the Dwarf, pp. 93-143)).

384 Slavoj Žižek, The Puppet and the Dwarf, pp. 103-04.
385 Ibid., p. 114.
386 Ibid., p. 125.
387 Ibid., p. 107.
388 Ibid., pp. 104-05.
the ability to love, to be responsive to, and to be together with “the other” is presented as a different way to redemption.

However, that is not to say that Christianity covers up the abyss of the Other’s desire with love, that is, the imaginary reconciliation of God and humanity, in which the anxiety provoking encounter with the Lacanian “Che vuoi?” is mitigated. Here, I will insist, it is critical to note Žižek’s articulation as follows:

The basic Christian stance is that the expected Messiah has already arrived, that is, that we are already redeemed: the time of nervous expectation, of rushing precipitately toward the expected Arrival, is over; we live in the aftermath of the Event: everything—the Big Thing—has already happened. Paradoxically, of course, the result of this Event is not atavism (“It has already happened, we are redeemed, so let us just rest and wait…”), but, on the contrary, an extreme urge to act: it has happened, so now we have to bear the almost unbearable burden of living up to it, of drawing the consequence of the Act. …The true Openness is not that of undecidability, but that of living in the aftermath of the Event, of drawing out the consequence—of what? Precisely of the new space opened up by the Event.

That is to say, the kernel of the Christian experience is not to suture the abyssal gap of the Other’s desire, but “to draw out the consequence of the new space opened up by” Christ’s love of the Cross. As Žižek articulates, “the Event is a pure-empty sign—far from providing the conclusive dot on the i, the divine act stands, rather, for the openness of a New Beginning, and we have to work to generate its meaning.” In this context, if Christ’s arrival “functions as a signal which triggers activity,” I will argue, Agape, the

---

390 Ibid., pp. 136-37.
391 Ibid., p. 136.
392 Ibid., p. 136.
feminine love, in association with the Lacanian injunction to “love objet a,” is a way to act, that is to say, a feminine way “to live up to it, to decide its meaning, to make something of it.”

Then, to return to *Go Down, Moses*, if the unnamed woman’s question of love can be read in terms of Agape, and thus if I read, here, Ike’s failure to act in terms of his failure to love “the other” in Agape, in the book, what is portrayed as Ike’s “the other”?

In *Go Down, Moses*, I will argue, “the other” occurs in Negro and Woman as the focal symptoms not only of Ike McCaslin but also of the white male oriented community’s defensive fantasy of the Self. If in the white-dominated community Negroes have existed not as human beings as they are, but as “the other” of white males, it is because white males have established such an ethnocentric ideology to keep a safe distance from the different and unknown and to repress or expel their own fear of them from their consciousness. However, in fact, “the other” of the white community is not an actual Negro with black skin but the white males’ innate fear of the otherness in themselves. That is to say, the white males have projected their own fear of the unknown

Delta, the radical opening as the overlap of immanent exteriority at the intersection of the three: what it signifies is the literal “not” which makes all of the three “not”-all / “not”-whole. Here, the Christian Law, “love thy neighbor as thyself” is linked to the Lacanian ethical injunction to “love the enigmatic small other—that is, objet a—as thyself” In this Delta, Agape, the feminine love overflows as a different law suspending or traversing the Mosaic Law. In Žižek’s terms, this Delta stands for the true Openness of a New Beginning.

---

which cannot be signified in their language or knowledge system onto Negroes; and to repress or deny it, they have created their imaginary ideology that the Negro is a beast, rather than a human being, inferior to themselves. In this context, we might say, the Negro is white men’s imaginary symptom. Thus, Eric J. Sundquist says: 394

Because the hallucinating fear of the Negro as “beast” that characterized many theoretical justifications of American slavery and became particularly fierce in postbellum racial hysteria undeniably grew in part out of repressed guilt over the visible actualities of slaveholding miscegenation, the language in which such fears were expressed, both before and after the war, reveals a psychological instability that makes the analogy between repressed white lust and projected black threat acute by frantically denying it, closer for the paradox. In the apt words of Winthrop Jordan, white men attempted “to destroy the living image of primitive aggressions which they said was the Negro but was really their own.” The threat comes not from within but from without: “We are not great black bucks of the fields. But a buck is loose, his great horns menacing to gore into us with life and destruction. Chain him, either chain him or expel his black shape from our midst, before we realize that he is ourselves.”

The same goes for the otherness of woman. According to Lacan, the concept of woman which men have defined as “the other” does not signify a concrete substance which actually exists; rather it (woman) is a mere imaginary fabrication of masculine “self”; in this sense, one of Lacan’s notorious propositions, “woman is a symptom of man” can be read. The point is that Negro and Woman, as “the other,” exist as the extimacy of the white male-dominated community. Here, extimacy signifies the indivisibility between the self and the other. That is to say, Negro and Woman have been always already within the self of the white male-dominated society as the immanent exteriority. If the white male

community has segregated Negro and Woman, as the other, “to have” its authority, integrity, and communal identity, James A. Snead criticizes such “self”-centered phallic and defensive fantasy as follows.\textsuperscript{395}

Yoknapatawpha’s major classifications—“white / black,” “poor / rich,” “male / female”—depend on an obsessive kind of polar thinking. The reality of the human beings thus classified remains absent. Faulkner’s narratives mainly concern the effects of these classifications on human sensibilities, white and black, rich and poor, male and female: how can we ever know each other, if our society works through a forced organization into distinct groupings?

According to Snead, Faulkner tried to disclose the meaninglessness of such binary categories, to prevent people from misunderstanding and committing sins to each other with bigotry and fear caused by those categories. Snead articulates:

By accident, intelligence, or pure stubbornness these Faulknerian protagonists reject division, discovering instead those social and psychological margins where merging, opposition’s opposite, may exist unassailed. Faulkner’s narratives utter a truth of merging across social boundaries that his contemporaries found unspeakable. Faulkner himself set this truth in an elusive, complex discourse of indirection, a literary disfigurement of divisive social figures. (Snead, 152-53)

Then, what about the case of Ike McCaslin, the central character of \textit{Go Down, Moses}?

When he has faced the unnamed Negro woman as the mistress of Roth Edmonds with his baby, the old, impotent Ike cries, “not loud, in a voice of amazement, pity, and outrage: “You’re a nigger!”” (344). The woman replies, “Yes, … James Beauchamp—you called him Tennie’s Jim though he had a name—was my grandfather. I said you were Uncle Isaac.” Now, what her existence in Delta place signifies is, on the one hand, the chief

proof of a complete cycle of his ancestry’s incestuous miscegenation, and on the other hand, the return (or homecoming) of his long lost brother through the woman’s body. However, Ike cries again in that thin, not loud and grieving voice: “Get out of here! I can do nothing for you! Cant nobody do nothing for you!” (344). Here, what we see is, I will argue, Ike’s evident failure to terminate the cycle of “the shame and guilt of his miscegenetic and even incestuous ancestry,” along with his inability to “love the other in Agape.”

Considering his biblical namesake, I have discussed that Ike was supposed to assume the roles of an Isaac, a Moses, and a Christ, as the chosen one to carry out God’s purpose of redemption by “self-immolation.” However, Ike has been “unable to ascertain how he fits into the overall divine order, unable to recognize his place in it”—“Isaac McCaslin’s ends, although simple enough in their apparent motivation, were and would be always incomprehensible to him” (296). In Lacanian terms, thus, even if Ike’s failure to act is related to his inability to answer the question, “Che vuoi?”, I will argue, it cannot justify his inattentiveness to reality and his irresponsibility and figurative deadness to his society. If Christianity is the religion of Revelation, Žižek asserts that what is revealed in Christianity is not just the entire content, but, more specifically, that there is nothing—no secret—behind it to be revealed: behind the curtain of the public text, there is only what we put there. If what Faulkner wanted to say through Go Down, Moses is “each individual must become, in a sense, his own Moses,” in that sense, Ike has ultimately

---

398 Ibid., p. 127.
failed. If he “has had the moral vision and the potential for effecting social change,” and thus has been elected to serve, it has been up to his free will regarding the choice and decision about how to draw out the consequence. That was, I will argue, his true freedom, in an ethical sense. However, he has chosen to renounce the world along with all his obligations, and thus missed his opportunity not only “to love” but also “to free himself” from his lifelong trauma: indeed, I will argue, the real curse on Ike is not his shameful ancestry or the inherited land itself, but the fact that he has been incapable of being free from the trauma, the bitter fruit, throughout his whole life, by repudiating his calling to heal the wounds.

When the unnamed young Negro woman asks him, “Old Man … have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you don’t remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?” (346), Ike is stunned into silence and she is forever gone. In the deep center of the Delta, in the tent which is as silent as the grave, “trembling, panting” (347), the old Ike lies back in his cot and is buried in thought. Here, the old Ike’s being in a state of undress represents his moral nakedness. As Arthur F. Kinney puts it, the unnamed woman’s simple question reveals “the bankruptcy of Ike’s social obligation and values.” Through her last question, Ike has been finally able to realize that his wrong decision of renunciation has annulled its moral value. By renouncing his inherited land along with his social obligation to it, Ike has been able to keep himself unstained and aloof from “the shame and guilt of his miscegenetic and even incestuous ancestry,” but Isaac McCaslin’s long life has accomplished nothing. Moreover, the pattern of shame and wrong has come full circle in the end. Since Ike has refused all the roles of Isaac, Moses,

400 Thadious M. Davis, *Games of Property*, p. 221.
402 Ibid., p. 87.
and Christ, he has ultimately failed to set free both himself and others; the chain of sin to be severed is continued and “the wages of sin” have been handed down to the next generation. Then, who will be the scapegoat to settle the debt, which must be paid eventually, instead of Ike? In other words, by Ike’s rejection of the roles which he was supposed to undertake, who is now counting the cost?

At the end of “Delta Autumn,” lying in his cot, “his hands crossed on his breast,” Ike feels that something, somewhere has gone dreadfully wrong. When Legate, one of the hunters, bursts into the tent to look for Roth’s knife, Ike asks, “Who killed it? … Was it Roth?”

“Yes,” Legate said, raising the flap.

“Wait,” McCaslin said. He moved, suddenly, onto his elbow. “What was it?” Legate paused for an instant beneath the lifted flap. He did not look back.

“Just a deer, Uncle Ike,” he said impatiently. “Nothing extra.” He was gone; again the flap fell behind him, wafting out of the tent again the faint light and the constant and grieving rain. McCaslin lay back down, the blanket once more drawn to his chin, his crossed hands once more weightless on his breast in the empty tent.

“It was a doe,” he said. (GDM, 347-48)

No matter whether it is a doe or not, identifying Roth’s mistress (the unnamed woman) with a doe, here, Ike shows that he is finally awakened to one of the results of his wrong decision, that is to say, the fact that Roth repeats Old Carothers’s sin, in that Roth’s killing a doe metaphorically reenacts his abandonment of the woman who has borne his baby. Along with Ike, thus, we also come to witness how Ike’s irresponsible or cowardly evasion of his calling has generated this vicious cycle, the repetition of an old crime. In

---

403 Taylor points out, “Similar phrases recur three additional times in this chapter (336. 22; 347.2; 348.5-6), implying a kind of metaphorical death or even Ike’s readiness for death.” (See Nancy Dew Taylor, Go down, Moses: Annotations, p. 218)
this sense, we might say that Roth is one victim of the former generation (including Ike)’s failure to initiate change through cowardice and escapism. The irony is that, at this moment, although Ike seems to have finally been awakened to the horrible consequences of his failure, in this Delta place, now he is a mere repenting and impotent old witness nearing death. That is to say, Ike’s awakening seems hopeless because he remains a spectator not a doer to the end of the novel (actually, he does not appear anymore after “Delta Autumn” in the book). However, crucial here is that, at least, “we”—the readers of this book, who have witnessed what Ike had experienced and learned from the past and how he has failed to change the present, and thus spoiled the future—, are able not to repeat Ike’s mistake, in other words, not to abandon the lessons of the past which remain alive in Ike’s (or, our) memory and the hope for the future which is represented by the baby boy. Therefore, I will argue, this is the true message to which we are expected to be awakened by the unnamed woman’s question of “love” in the Delta.

Thus, in Go Down, Moses, if the Delta indeed functions as the place of awakening for *ek-stasis*, considering the motif of *Exodus*, I will insist, this Delta place can be associated with the Jordan River in Christian terms. In Christian tradition, “the crossing of the Jordan River” is represented by being baptized with Holy Water, which signifies the renewal of the self in the Holy Spirit (which is considered the maternal agent of the self’s rebirth). In the Bible, the exodus of the Israelites begins with the crossing of the Red Sea, a very huge obstacle, and is completed with the crossing of another obstacle, the Jordan River, before entering into the Promised Land. In the case of Ike, if we might say that his exodus for *ek-stasis* (figuratively speaking, standing outside of his old self) started when he encountered Old Ben by renouncing his gun, watch, and compass, the
final test to complete the exodus has occurred in the very Delta place which symbolizes the Jordan River in the book. That is to say, Ike’s ability to cross over the Jordan River, to stand outside of his “self” has been tested by the unnamed woman’s question of “Love” in the Delta. As I have argued, the word “love” is to be said in terms of “Agape”—in association with the Lacanian injunction to “love “the other” as your self” (in the book, it is linked to Ike’s ideal of communal brotherhood).

Thus, if the Delta represents the Jordan River which metaphorically symbolizes the maternal womb (of the Holy Spirit, in Christian terms), I will argue that it is the unnamed woman who most epitomizes the significance of the Delta in *Go Down, Moses*. She *is* the maternal body which transforms the failure and the death embodied by Ike into a hope and a new life embodied by the baby boy; and the threshold through which “her lineage is transfigured from the paternal past (the Father’s law, in Lacanian terms, the Name of the Father) into the maternal present.” 404 It is also noteworthy that since the unnamed woman has revealed her ex-sistence, in the book, a new narrative of “we” starts; that is to say, in the next chapter of *Go Down, Moses*, the narrative of brotherhood between black and white is translated into that of sisterhood. The new narrative of “we,” “Faulkner concludes with his depiction of Mollie and Miss Worsham, has its limited but best hope in the women who function outside the dominant male codes of property, position, and ownership.” 405 So, in the concluding part of the novel, if Aunt Mollie and Miss Worsham repeat the story of “we” in terms of “how to love the other”—which male (both black and white) characters have failed, “in a different way,” where and how can we see a hope from the two old women’s an-other story?

405 Ibid., p. 230.
Considering the sequence of the chapters of the book in association with the seasonal sequence, figuratively, if “Delta Autumn” signifies “falling” in autumn, we might say that the last section of the book, that is, “Go Down, Moses” signifies a winter. But, this winter does not signify the ultimate end; this winter is a prerequisite for “another” spring, “in the “wisdom” of spontaneous nature, in which all of life is reborn, or recycled, through death.” As we see, the title of the novel is repeated in this last section; I will argue “Go Down, Moses” announces another departure for a new exodus. In “Go Down, Moses” the main topic is the homecoming of Samuel Worsham Beauchamp (known as Butch Beauchamp). Aunt Mollie insists that the body of her grandson Butch Beauchamp, who is executed for murder, must be reclaimed by the family and community and the ritual burial of him must be properly conducted and when Gavin visits Mollie, she intones repeatedly, “Roth Edmonds sold my Benjamin. Sold him in Egypt. Pharaoh got him” (371).

As I have argued, if old Ike’s touch with the unnamed woman’s hand represents, metaphorically, Joseph (James Beauchamp, or “Tennie’s Jim”)’s reunion with his father and brothers (here, Ike assumes the role of father and brother at the same time) in biblical terms, the significance of Mollie’s bitter resentment “Roth sold my Benjamin in Egypt” is twofold. On the one hand, it is the prelude to a New Exodus. In the Bible, the exodus of the descendants of Abraham is preceded by the event that Joseph, Jacob’s favorite son, is sold into slavery in Egypt by his jealous brothers. Since Joseph’s arrival, the Israelites had settled in Egypt and had been bound into slavery for the next 400 years until the Exodus. Therefore, Mollie’s announcement “Roth sold my Benjamin in Egypt” signifies that Jacob’s second beloved son by Rachel is sold into slavery, and thus, it needs a new

---

406 Paul Scott Derick, We Stand Before the Secret of the World, p. 123.
Moses who will lead a new exodus. Here, Mollie is casting herself in the role of the patriarch Jacob and her grandson Butch Beauchamp as Benjamin. On the other hand, in connection with the unnamed woman’s denunciation of Ike, “You spoiled Roth,” it signifies that due to Ike’s failure to assume the role of Moses for the mission of redemption and exodus, Roth has reenacted his ancestry’s old crime, not only “killing a doe” but also transgression against brotherhood (actually, I will argue, the two are the same). Thus, what Mollie insists here is that to expiate Roth’s wrong, at least, the burial of Butch, who represents Benjamin, must be done right at his home just as the bones of Joseph were transferred out of Egypt and back to the Promised Land, Canaan, to be buried (Genesis 50:25, Exodus 13:19).

So, in the last part of the novel, if Mollie and Miss Worsham’s mourning the death of Butch Beauchamp is suggested as an alternative to the patriarchy’s failure of brotherhood, how can we re-define the meaning of “we” with regard to the ability to “love”? In other words, if the two old women show us “a different way” to love the other in terms of Agape, where can we find the new possibility not to give up hope for new exodus, although it is limited, and thus “not-yet”?

In the Bible, when Joseph reunites with his brothers, he decides to test them before he tells them who he is, to see if they really have changed. Joseph lets his steward fill each of his brother’s sacks with grain and put their money back inside, and in addition to that, plant his own silver cup in Benjamin’s sack. After arresting his brothers, Joseph accuses them of stealing the cup. When Joseph’s workers find the cup in Benjamin’s sack, the brothers are horrified, and the oldest, Judah, speaks to Joseph, “How can we prove our innocence? We ourselves will be your slaves with the one who was found to have the
cup” (*Genesis* 44:16). But, Joseph insists, “The man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father” (*Genesis* 44:17). Then, Judah implores Joseph for mercy; “We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother’s sons left, and his father loves him…. The boy cannot leave his father. If he leaves him, his father will die” (*Genesis* 44: 20-22). The brothers could not let Benjamin die leaving his father in misery, thus, the oldest speaks up that he would take Benjamin’s place (*Genesis* 44: 33-34). Right then, Joseph knows that his brothers are truly transformed, and thus reveals his identity.

What we see here is that the love of brotherhood is to share “responsibility,” not just ownership, privilege, or blessing. “I will take Benjamin’s place, I will die instead of him,” this is the Agape love by self-immolation in association with the Christ’s Love, “Father, please forgive and save them, and I will die instead.” If Isaac McCaslin had been elected to carry out the mission of redemption and exodus, it means that he was supposed “to act” in accordance with his own ideal of brotherhood, which can be translated into Agape love—his biblical namesake Isaac prefigures Christ’s self-immolation (*Genesis* 22). If someone must pay the cost of the guilt of ownership on the land and people, why must only Ike’s “I” be exempted from it? By analogy with Joseph’s words, “only the man in whose possession the cup has been found shall be my slave,” if the ideological justification of black slavery is based on “the curse of Ham” 407—as McCaslin argues, “The sons of Ham. You who quote the Book: the sons of Ham” (249)—, here, we all need to ask ourselves; Why cannot or must not “I” share the punishment? Why do “I” struggle

---

407 Refer to *Genesis* 9:25, “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.”
to save only my-self from it? Or, in Christian terms, if Jesus Christ had completely atoned for the sins of every human being since Adam, how can the curse of Ham be the justification of black slavery? Why do “I” put the yoke of persecution, which I myself am unable to endure, on others? With regard to the racism related to the hierarchy between races (for example, the configuration of blacks as inferior), I will argue, it is critical to note that in the Bible, in the history of the descendants of Abraham, we can see a pattern, for four generations, successively, the youngest sons receive the birthright and blessing for the eldest son from the aged fathers (Isaac, Jacob, Reuben, Ephraim are the preferred, to Ishmael, Esau, Joseph, Manasseh). Through these cases, what we see is, most of all, the fact that there is no hierarchy in God’s blessing and redemption. With regard to the title of the novel, I will argue, “Go Down” signifies an ethical act to break down hierarchies in the way of Jesus Christ who descended to a lowly level to save others. Therefore, the hierarchy between races is to be said as the transgression against the brotherhood / sisterhood of “we” and Christ’s law of “Love.”

Meanwhile, considering the fact that Benjamin is the last child of the patriarch Jacob and the half-brother of the other brothers, I will argue here, in the McCaslin family tree, who assumes the role of Benjamin in the novel is not only Butch Beauchamp but also the unnamed woman’s baby boy; the two share the genealogy of “Eunice-Thomasine-Tomey’s Turl.” Because Butch is dead, now the role of Benjamin for a new exodus is the baby boy’s portion; he is the next male McCaslin, that is to say, the last known surviving descendant of old Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin in family lineage; and, significantly, he is the junction of three names, that is, McCaslin-Beauchamp-Edmonds. As the heir of the hunting horn which symbolizes Shofar and
emblematizes the spirit of “being-together” with nature that Ike has learned in the wilderness, the baby boy is the new hope for a new story of “love,” both as the next leader of a new exodus and as the harmonious connector between Civilization and Nature in the age of modernism. Thus, in this context, I will interpret, Mollie’s words, “Roth sold my Benjamin in Egypt” means that Roth had ultimately failed to pass “the test of Joseph” which is represented by the unnamed woman’s visit, by metaphorically “killing a doe.” If through the woman’s body the long lost brother, that is, James Beauchamp representing Joseph, came to test him, what Roth had proved was just his “inability to love.” Just like Ike McCaslin and other forefathers, Roth Edmonds was incapable of saying “I will take Benjamin’s place. I will die instead of him.” In these regards, in the last chapter of the novel, Aunt Mollie and Miss Worsham are retrieving what the patriarchs (Ike and Roth) had forgotten or failed. That is to say, for a promising departure of a new generation, the two old women are performing the responsibility of the previous generation which the patriarchs had failed to do.

Owing to the last part, Go Down, Moses is conceived not as closed, but as open-ended. That is to say, in “Go Down, Moses,” the two old women open up a way out from the cyclical pattern of male narratives of “failure” for a new history. Indeed, the two old women’s story repeats the pattern of the previous male narratives, but it is said in a different way. Even though the two women’s feminine story imitates the previous pattern of the men’s stories, it re-starts, totally new, from the very point where the previous stories have failed. What the two women undertake in “Go Down, Moses” is to heal festering wounds “with love.” From Eunice and Tomasina to the unnamed woman and her baby who are deprived of even name and forsaken by the husband and father, and to
Butch Beauchamp who is removed from society, if their existences are the traumatic evidence of the shame and guilt of the McCaslins, what the two old women try is not merely to deny or to erase the traumatic wounds (just as Ike had shut the old yellow ledgers which contain the traumatic truth of the past), but to remember and mourn them “properly and thoroughly.” Metaphorically speaking, to regenerate a dead and rotten river into a living one where fresh water springs forth, it needs first to plow over its bottom to be revealed. To quote Chambers, “it is to insist upon an understanding of history not as the site of identification, but as the memory of a wound that can never be closed, that remains ‘open to the wind from outside.”408 Without the past, there is no future; without taking responsibility for the past, we will only see the wrong and destructive pattern of shame and guilt repeat itself endlessly. In this sense, remembering and mourning the past is an act of taking responsibility for the future.

In this sense, we can understand why Aunt Mollie insists on publishing the full story of her grandson’s life and death in the newspaper; on the last page of the novel, she asks the newspaper editor, “I wants hit all in de paper. All of hit” (365). It is because to acknowledge was “rightly and thoroughly” is the starting point to cure the past and the present, and thus the future. Doreen Fowler asserts, “Mollie and [Miss Worsham] represent an alternative to patriarchy’s denial. They stand for the represencing of was; they acknowledge life as life-in-death; they issue a call to mourning; and they ask us to remember.”409 In other words, in the last chapter of the novel, the two old women are performing acceptance and embrace instead of patriarchy’s denial, “fueled by a desire to announce, to vocalize, and to textualize, to enter into the public sphere what is most often

silenced, hidden, and secreted out of guilt or shame." To remember wrongs of the past right and to take the responsibility for making sure that our next generation will not repeat the previous wrongs in the future are the duties “we”—what Mollie and Miss Worsham represent in a feminine way in “Go Down, Moses”—all must share. From this perspective, it is critical to note Miss Worsham’s words, “It’s all right. It’s our grief” (363).

With regard to the word “we,” it is significant that Miss Worsham and Mollie Worsham Beauchamp suggest to us a different set of names at the end of the novel. Miss Worsham says to Stevens who came to notify them that Mollie’s grandson is to be executed that night; “Can nothing be done? Mollie’s and Hamp’s parents belonged to my grandfather. Mollie and I were born in the same month. We grew up as sisters would” (357). That is to say, here, the two old women replace the brotherhood between black and white, which the two pairs of fraternal relationships in the novel, that is, Zack-Lucas and Roth-Henry, failed to accomplish, with their sisterhood. Metaphorically, the two women’s an-other story of “we” displaces the broken places of the existing patriarchal stories, with feminine love. Thus, I will insist, the name “Worsham” as the common denominator between the two women leads us into the feminine place of “we,” along with Miss Worsham’s words, “It’s all right. It’s our grief.”

This “we” indicates the feminine mode of existence as communal beings, or, as “being-together with the other.” In the feminine place of “we”—I will insist, it represents Delta (▽), as the ek-static site of the feminine love for the other, in line with my argument of Delta—, we share the ways of ex-sistence and ex-position. The feminine place of “we” is, figuratively, the empty space in-between “the I” and “the other,” like

---

Delta, which can and cannot belong to both “the I” and “the other”; and thus it is an ex-centric and ek-static site in which my ex-sistance meets and overlaps with the other’s in the ethical act to “love.” In the feminine place of “we,” inevitably, all kinds of categories and ideologies, based on distinction and differentiation between the I and the other, collapse. When this “we” becomes a mere extension of “the I,” it turns into another transgression against the feminine law, that is, Agape, “to love the other as yourself.” In this “ek-static” place of “we” (as Delta), in which all we open towards others and thus none of us can articulate “I,” we must actively participate in the sufferings and deaths of the past, to translate the muted voices’ untold stories to be seen and heard, and thus to extend our hospitality to our future. When we fulfill our obligations faithfully in our generation, we can pass our hope for the affirmative tomorrow of this land, which metaphorically represents the Promised Land that we have longed for, to our future generation. In the land that we are supposed to continually improve little by little in the present, the baby boy, who symbolizes our future as a new hope, will be able to prevail, “even though he himself knows that he might fail when the crisis, the moment comes when he has got to sacrifice, that the weak shall be protected, that man shall not be inhuman to man.”411 Whenever he comes to fail, as the unnamed woman did, as the two old women did, “there will be always some voice somewhere saying, “You must be braver than you may be and are; you must be more compassionate than you are; you must be more truthful than you are,” and there [will be] always enough to say, “Yes, I will.”412 Thus, the baby boy will be able to be a new Isaac, a new Moses, and a new Christ, instead of the failed Ike.

411 James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (eds.), *Lion in the Garden* p. 102.
412 Ibid., p. 109.


Hutchings, Peter J. “Modernity: a film by Alfred Hitchcock,” (This paper was presented at the Alfred Hitchcock conference For the Love of Fear convened by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, held from 31 March to 2 April 2000).


—————. “Suture.” In The Symptom (Issue 8, winter 2007; online journal for Lacan.com).


Sun, Dr. William. The Triple Process Remedy: A New Philosophy on Illnesses of Stress, Anxiety and Depression. The Process Centre (February 2008).


Other References —


“Multiple Identity - The Critique Of The Subject - Self, Enlightenment, Centered, Critiques, Adorno, and Horkheimer” (http://science.jrank.org/pages/9748/Multiple-Identity-Critique-Subject.html#ixzz1Hmt9MCNJ)


“Dalet - 4th Letter of the Hebrew Alphabet”