According to its subtitle, *Adorno in Neapel* (*Adorno in Naples*) aims to show “how a landscape of yearning was transformed into philosophy.” It was, however, already getting late in the book before a formulation really grabbed me and showed me the way. The author argues that in his jazz essays Adorno declared that the constellation, the wrap for his work and the problems under investigation, had been stolen.¹ By the time Adorno finished his essay “Notes on Kafka” in 1953,² it was restored.

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

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¹ Martin Mittelmeier, *Adorno in Neapel. Wie sich eine Sehnsuchtlandschaft in Philosophie verwandelt* (Munich: Siedler Verlag, 2013), 176. Karl Kraus faced the rise of National Socialism with a similar proprietal awareness that his satirical strategies for letting the abuse of language in our journalistic Sensurround bleed and read had been coopted by the literalness of the Nazi violence in word, indeed.

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

Writing to Benjamin on December 17, 1934, about the essay “Franz Kafka” pre-publication, Adorno jumps on the formulation of guilt to make a point he drives home:

Doesn’t he have his place beside the father of the house – is he not the father’s care (Sorge) and danger, is not the overcoming (Aufhebung) of the creaturely relationship to guilt prefigured in him – is not the care (Sorge) – truly a Heidegger put back on his feet – the cipher, indeed the most certain promise of hope, precisely by the overturning (Aufhebung) of the house?

With Kafka, then, Martin Heidegger stands on his footnotes and Goethean-Faustian Sorge is on the same page with Freud.

While reading Augustine on love under the covers with Heidegger, Hannah Arendt situated the liminality of creatureliness between the “no longer” (nicht mehr) and the “not yet” (noch nicht). The formulation is set on St. Augustine’s own

oeuvre, which spans like the onset of allegory a pagan education and the after-the-fact impact of the turn to Christianity.

In her 1946 review, “No Longer and Not Yet,” Arendt activated for the first time extramurally her key formulation of creaturely temporality in characterizing the impasse following the First World War. Where did the transition/tradition binding the loss in generations to the continuity of high culture go? “Hume once remarked that the whole of human civilization depends upon the fact that ‘one generation does not go off the stage at once and another succeed, as is the case with silkworms and butterflies.’ At some turning-points of history, however, at some heights of crisis, a fate similar to that of silkworms and butterflies may befall a generation of men.”6 In pitching the advent of a third option, which Arendt associates with Kafka, she reintroduces her timing of the creature. “Between the generations, between those who for some reason or other still belong to the old and those who either feel the catastrophe in their very bones or have already grown up with it, the chain is broken and an ‘empty space,’ a kind of historical no man’s land, comes to the surface which can be described only in terms of ‘no longer and not yet.’”7

According to Adorno, Kafka saw the Nazi death-wish factory realize the creaturely estate according to a malignant superegoic model of a punishing fulfillment without rescue or hope. “In the concentration camps [...] the line of demarcation between life and death was erased. They produced a liminal state, living skeletons and the decaying, victims whose suicide fails, Satan’s laugh at the hope of an end to death.”8 Adorno’s emphasis in his essay on a Freudian infrastructure in Kafka’s works offered a stay against the forwarding of all unidentified liminal states to philosophy’s new “uncanny” address. The Odradek story (“Die Sorge des Hausvaters”) was published the same year as Freud’s analysis of the uncanny. A few years later, the Enge (“narrowness”) that is the etymon and strait place of Angst (“anxiety”) is

7 Ibid., 122.
for Heidegger a misapprehension of the embarrassment of possibilities we lag behind. We take flight into “fantasy worlds” from das Unheimliche, our literally “not being at home,” which is our situation or condition.  

“Notes on Kafka” opens with the author’s dissatisfaction that the work enjoys such a great popularity with those seeking it out as their “information desk” for the insider knowledge that allows them to reduce untenable situations to what’s already known, seen through, and throwaway. “But it is the false fame (der falsche Ruhm), the fatal variant of forgetting, which Kafka wished for himself in bitter earnest, and which compels our insistence before the riddle.”

If Adorno was able to retrieve the theft of his constellation by the time of publication of “Notes on Kafka,” then he found a third option that plagiarism cannot breach. It’s easy to overlook that Kafka, one of the bestselling authors of high Kultur, was posthumously rescued from the realm of the unread. Tested by the prospect of annihilation, its own holocaust, the work is uniquely free of proprietary influence. The fit Deleuze and Félix Guattari found with the flow charts of their pre-Oedipal, I mean Anti-Oedipal, manifesto-theory allowed them to be, not unlike Adorno within his constellation, in alliance with Kafka. In Kafka, it’s not “Steal This Book!” It’s “Just Try Stealing inside the Burrow to Claim It”: “Only the principle of multiple entrances prevents the introduction of the enemy, the Signifier and those attempts to interpret a work that is actually only open to experimentation.”

Adorno went back to the scene of his wartime work on the reversals of psychoanalysis to revisit the culture industry’s theft of his critical praxis, the constellation. You go back to achieve the best formulations of your retired inquiry. Adorno’s essays on television came out of this replay of his sojourn in the under-

9 Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1986), 5–95.
world. The third one, “How to Look at Television,” was written in English. His main effort during this return engagement was *The Stars Down to Earth*, the analysis of an LA astrology column that he began studying in 1952 and also wrote down in English. At the time, he was contemplating residing in California indefinitely. His wooden English might have been the best reason for his return to the German-language world. He was back in time for publication of “Notes on Kafka,” which launched Adorno’s postwar West German career as famous author whose essay collections were on every bookshelf.

The horoscopes that Adorno began studying in 1952 offer non-sequiturs, so-called “blanks,” which the reader can fill in emotionally so as to believe. A practical aspect aids in rationalizing these blank desires as recreational contact: “The semitolerant integration of pleasure into a rigid pattern of life is achieved by the ever-recurring promise that pleasure trips, sprees, parties and similar events will lead to practical advantages. One will make new acquaintances, build up ‘connections’ that prove helpful for the career” (65).

Because the columnist addresses their “fondest hopes,” the readers are “temporarily prepared to accept the most improbable promises” (78). What is compelling about the forecasts, however, is the status quo’s authoritarian grasp, which force-fills in the irrationalism gap, its corollary, with good sense and direction. “The common-sense advice itself contains [...] many spurious ‘pseudo-rational’ elements, calling for some authoritarian backing to be effective” (24). The nimbus of down-to-earth counseling in the forecasts falls into the gap: “the law according to which the reasonable attitudes are applied to ‘realistic situations,’ is arbitrary and entirely opaque” (39). Freedom means

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volunteer for nothing else to do: “there is in astrology an implicit metaphysics of adjustment” (28).

Adorno analyzes the wrap of fantasy in reality, the flight to reality, within the B-genre that reaches for the stars:

This wide-spread fad may owe its tremendous popularity to its ingenious solution of the conflict between irrationality and common sense. The science fiction reader need no longer feel ashamed of being a superstitious and gullible person. The fantasies of his own making, no matter how irrational they are, and how much projective content of either individual or collective nature may be implied, appear no longer as irreconcilable to reality. (85)

Science fiction both updates Christianity and denies the provenance, defending against the depressing prospect with the fantasy-ring of reality: “Thus, the term ‘another world’ which once had a metaphysical meaning, is here brought down to the level of astronomy and obtains an empirical ring” (85–86). Contrary to the law of convergence, which holds that the development of life even on distant planets would be more or less continuous in terms of enabling conditions and outcome, science fiction follows out instead a “secularization of demonology” to bring back entities of “olden times” but “treated as natural and scientific objects coming out of space from another star” (86).

In these borderlands of fantasy and science fiction, notions of soft and hard science add up to the “bill” that astrology presents “for the neglect of interpretative thinking for the sake of fact-gathering” (114–15). In the half-educated gathering, the “facts” of stellar movements and well-known psychological reactions contribute to “the readiness to relate the unrelated” (116). Fact-based “wild constructs” arise, while “the spuriousness of the links goes unacknowledged” (115–16). The gathering that thus arises draws consolation from “fatality, dependence, and obedience.” The “will,” that is, “the will to change,” is reduced to private “worries” for which the column promises “a cure-all by the very same compliance which prevents a change of conditions” (117). But the reduction must be an internal adjustment supervised by the reader’s own insight: “Meekness towards the more powerful
seems to do less damage to so-called self-esteem if cloaked as the outcome of higher insight either into oneself or into those whom one obeys” (90).

The irrationality of astrology is not that of a dream world but in its processed form is comparable rather to what the so-called dream factory assembles (34). “The message of the dream, however, the ‘latent dream idea’ as promoted by motion pictures and television reverses that of actual dreams” (46). The promotional idea that the dream is seen to transmit is the wish – for controlled release, to be controlled. “It is an appeal to agencies of psychological control rather than an attempt to unfetter the unconscious” (ibid.). Adjustment works because it allows you, too, to roll off the assembly line: “The semi-irrationality of ‘everything will be fine’ is based on the fact that modern American Society [...] succeeds in reproducing the life of those whom it embraces” and grasps (43). The pitch to adjustment, reasonableness, and so on, is the hitch by which “threat and help converge” (46). The comforting trust conveying that in due time everything will come out all right corresponds to a child’s fantasies of what will happen when grown up (58).

The column deploys a timeline in its counseling that dispenses “with contradictory requirements of life” by “distributing these requirements over different periods mostly of the same day” (56). A pseudo-solution results that swaps first–next sequences for the either–or impasses of life: “Pleasure thus becomes the award of work, work the atonement for pleasure” (58). The flight trajectory of fantasy is thus stuffed inside the twenty-four-hour span of time to give it all the illusion of quality time – like the boon for signing up with the Devil. “Sexuality itself is being desexualized, as it were, by becoming ‘fun,’ a sort of hygiene” (65). The infernal rear view of power is staggered in fits and starts: “Encouraging ‘behind-the-scenes’ activities is an inconspicuous form of conjuring up such tendencies usually projected upon out-groups. [...] The advice to finagle is countered – undone in the psychoanalytic sense – by interspersed reminders to keep within the realm of the permissible” (79).

The omnipotence in wish fantasying that pumps up outer reality makes the adjustment to a greater power that calls the shots: “The pleasures ordained are no longer pleasures at all, but
really the duties as which they are rationalized, the rationalization containing more truth than the supposedly unconscious wish” (66). The culture industry turns around the relationship between wish fantasy and poetry into how-to rationalizations for adaptation to the practice of wishing well: “The idea of the successful, conforming, well-adjusted ‘average’ citizen lurks even behind the fanciest technicolor fairy tale” (46).

These are the moments Adorno strung together under the slogan or rebus “psychoanalysis in reverse,” which he applied both to the culture industry and National Socialism. Pivotal to a reading of the mass-media psychology going into National Socialism, the provenance of the phrase lies in the benign plagiarism or teamwork among the Frankfurt Schoolers in exile. That Leo Lowenthal is occasionally given the credit means that it was, biographically speaking, an occasional formulation that subsequently, however, grew like a rumor in meaningfulness.13 We can also find it cited in Adorno’s second essay on American television, “Fernsehen als Ideologie” (“Television as Ideology,” 1953). Before he gives the phrase (in quotes), he unpacks its sense in the setting of a TV story: “Psychoanalysis, or whatever type of psychotherapy is involved, is abbreviated and concretized in such a way that not only is the praxis of such a procedure mocked, but its sense or purpose is even turned around into the opposite.”14

By its extension to the relationship between wish fulfillment and B-culture, Freud’s 1907 analysis of the structure of daydreaming shows, in effect, how liminality or uncanniness can be reshuffled and reedited by the culture industry. “The Poet and Daydreaming” is either a wrap with the culture industry or it gives the outline for production. Freud also argued that every daydream bears, just the same, the datemark of its triggering in the present going on recent past, whereby a portal opens to the

13 In “How to Look at Television,” written at the time of his astrology study, also at the Hacker Foundation, Adorno writes that Lowenthal coined the term “psychoanalysis in reverse” (223). The Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television 8, no. 3 (Spring 1954): 213–35.

underworld of the fantasy in history. It is one of those moments of breakthrough in analytic theory that can be seen as giving the how-to for proper conduct of psychic reality. In your daydream, however, as Freud argues, the fantasy arc jettisons the wish from an idealized past directly to the future of fulfillment. This can be taken to be owner’s manual instructions for imagineers. The reversal of psychoanalysis is the gist of Adorno’s plagiarism by the culture industry.

Edmund Bergler was one psychoanalyst who claimed expertise in understanding plagiarism. However he had to treat it more carefully than, for example, writer’s block. Intellectual property theft can only be looked at closely, he admits, and case by case. Only historically does it come into focus at all. It is at once a byproduct of “publicity” and a “privilege” of the limited set of people pursuing scientific, literary, or artistic vocations: “other persons have little opportunity to plagiarize even should they want to.”

That plagiarism is a privilege of publicity makes it the tour de farce of the wish to be an author. Ernst Kris may be best known by now for his dismissive treatment by Jacques Lacan (in “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power”) in regard to his interpretation of plagiarism. Kris undertook the second analysis of a patient afraid of plagiarizing. The first analyst, with whom Lacan seems to side, was Melitta Schmideberg, Melanie Klein’s acting-out daughter who specialized in the correction of adolescent acting out, and yet in a manner so antipodal to Winnicott’s treatment of the asocial tendency that Lacan strikes two rivals with one championship.

According to Schmideberg, her patient’s tendency to steal in his youth was so successfully corrected that by adulthood, because he could not risk the crime of plagiarizing, his research was utterly blocked and his livelihood threatened. But then Kris discovers in his follow-up treatment that in the research team to which the patient belongs, a more established member was exercising his

prerogative and recycling the younger man’s research. When the patient saw his senior colleague’s recent publication, rather than remember and recognize his own input, he felt an illicit desire to steal the other’s work, which set off the phobic chain reaction. This leads to Kris’s analysis of the patient’s failed adaptation to the team setting of academic communities: “Finally, the distortion of imputing to others his own ideas could be analyzed and the mechanism of ‘give and take’ made conscious.” In the food chain of teamwork you only steal what’s already stolen.

The other amazing tidbit of give and take that the patient offered Kris in session, which Lacan cites with glee, is that for some time now upon leaving the analyst’s office he likes roaming among restaurants like a ghouλ searching the posted menus for his favorite meal: fresh brains. This is one rare occasion when Lacan hears a “daydream.” A patient anxious about being a plagiarist who in session with his author–analyst says that he likes to eat brains strikes out against the recording agency of the case study by a literal fulfillment of the analyst’s wish for recognition.

Lacan concludes that Kris’s analysand was afraid of stealing “nothing.” But Lacan steals away from a spot of oblivion in their presentations. Kris prominently referred to Helene Deutsch’s case example of a patient who suffered oblivion in the present to cover and enable his plagiarism. Although Kris admits he forgot all about the article he is sure that it influenced the strategy he was following in his analysis of the patient with a similar disorder. Deutsch’s patient forgets the scientific literature that he was just reading and then all his own pages of research in progress. Because it is the present moment that he forgets, Deutsch makes the fantastic intervention of asking her patient to bring his current research to session. She is taking a short cut through his intellectual pursuits, usually a diversion in analysis from the problem at hand. A close friendship with a colleague is part of

his workspace. It is only by bringing his scene of writing into the sessions that she discovers that not forgetting but plagiarism (of the friend’s work) is the presenting problem. Indeed, oblivion seems always to attend plagiarism, even its study, which is tantamount either to admission of guilt or to the untenability of its transitive charge.

Bergler’s revision of the Oedipus complex as “no more than a desperate inner defense developed in the desperate inner battle of passivity” no doubt qualifies as one of the many subtypes of plagiarism he identifies by letting the charge roam. But plagiarism, by the account of Bergler’s theory, offers the best defense against writer’s block. By manifestly defending against plagiarism, which is just as plainly a first defense against the deepest wish, to be refused, ignored, and unread, plagiarism cuts to the quick of every case of writer’s block. One of Bergler’s cured author–patients recognized the slip he had given the block when he recognized “burglar” in his treating analyst’s name.

Medleys

The constellation, which was the import of his relationship to Benjamin’s *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, grew on Adorno. In their correspondence, whenever Adorno calls Benjamin to account on the turf of the allegory book, he scores winning reformulations of “their” insights, although his friend seems to have forgotten his share. A strong example is Adorno’s memo to Benjamin that the recent past remains the time zone that lurches back into the present catastrophically as prehistory (August 2–4, 1935). Adorno takes the dream out of Benjamin’s equation with the dialectical image in order, he says, to bring the friends back to the constellation hovering between the *Origin* book and his study of Søren Kierkegaard. The constellation gives allegorical form to their respective readings in the debris of fan-

21 Adorno and Benjamin, *Briefwechsel: 1928–1940*, 11. Some time ago I emblazoned this passage, an Adorno “original” dispatched between friends, on the banner of my own work.
tasying, waking dream states, and media – the hell of civilization. The nonrapport between the cosmic design of constellation and its representatives on earth was another form of legibility in gaps that cannot be filled (or fulfilled).

Adorno’s 1928 essay “Schubert” enters the lost-and-found department of a bowdlerized reception to hoist upon its retard his first constellation in which the truth of the lost work shines brightly. The essay opens on a volcanic landscape that commands Adorno’s reverie. Suffering a shiver of horror (Schauer) as he crosses the threshold between Ludwig van Beethoven’s and Franz Schubert’s death years, Adorno glimpses the landscape rise up out of the ashes. If Schubert’s music doesn’t flex the will that is the focal point of Beethoven, it still ends up in the same chthonic depths out of which the will emerged – and sits under the same stars that shine beyond all eager willful grasping.

But then Adorno enters upon new landscaping befitting smaller views, like those on postcards. He starts over inside a fairground, lowering his sights. Artworks aren’t creaturely or organic. They are like targets on a fairground booth’s shooting range, which the visitors aim to hit. If the right number flashes, then the target falls over and reality shines through (19–20). “The unveiling of the image remains the work of man. [...] The image of truth, however, stands at all times in history. The history of the image is its decay” (20). Truth steps out of the ruination of the image. This “movement” is reprised several times in the course of the essay, each time adding an element, which counts that round as fundamental.

The targeting reduction shrinks what blocked our view of the spellbinding landscape (21). Like a hinge, the Biedermeier-genre postcard allowed Adorno to open up the essay’s own landscape horizon. What next falls into place is the relocation of Schubert’s music to the “inadequate world of the medleys (Potpourris),” which, however, granted the music a second life (21–22). No accident that the medley came to be introduced in the nineteenth century as a surrogate for musical form. It is on

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one continuum with the miniature landscape, another bourgeois commodity in its many variations, including the picture postcard (*Ansichtskarte*) (23).

Adorno appears to be reading Schubert’s music at its weakest point. But it is through its “depravation” in the setting of the song medleys that the music still plays and can yet be heard, more “eloquently” in fact than the music of his contemporaries (24). It is this depravation that brings the music closer to its origin and truth. “In the medley the traits of the work, scattered through the decline of its subjective unity, move together into a new unity, which cannot legitimate itself as such, but which directly confronts and illuminates the uniqueness of the traits” (22). While rigor mortis befell the opera medleys of the nineteenth century, with Schubert the themes press onward without the medusoid recoil (ibid.).

The interchangeability of every thematic unit indicates a simultaneity of all events, which lies outside history. “Out of this simultaneity one can yet discern the contours of the Schubert landscape, which it otherwise infernally mirrors” (ibid.). That the infernal foe is yet kept in check by the landscape perspective pushes the origin of the depravation back inside the music itself.

Every truly legitimate depravation of aesthetic contents is inaugurated by artworks in which the unveiling of the image has gone so far that the power of truth in the image shines through, not stopping in the image but penetrating reality. That transparency, for which the artwork pays with its life, is suited to the crystalline Schubert landscape. Here fate and reconciliation rest together undivided; their ambiguous eternity is shattered by the medley so that it can be recognized. It is the landscape of the death before (*zuvor*). (23)

The death before is an object relation. We are approaching mournfulness, the ultimate addition to the movement reprised unto the essay’s conclusion.

The depositing of death runs deep inside Schubert’s landscape: “but not in order to resolve itself in the affect of the individual, but rather to rise up rescued following the descent out of the musical form of mourning” (25). A qualitative change has
thus occurred. “But change is only possible in that which is most small” (ibid.). On the larger scale death reigns, reining in the relations with the dead, blocking mourning. Upon introducing the wanderer as allegorical reader on the track of the dead, another turn of the perspective reveals the constellation in the landscape. “The eccentric construct of that landscape in which every point is equidistant from the center is revealed to the wanderer passing through but never advancing” (ibid.). The last and first steps are equally near death.

If this is timelessness, then it’s the mood (Stimmung) that swings. Because citation cannot be simultaneous, the mood has a certain momentum (27). As we swing around in the oscillating musical structure or “landscape” of the degrading reception of Schubert’s music in Schubert’s music, we are at the portal again to decline, but now mourning is added, and in the first place, which changes everything. “The affect of death – for the affect of death is imitated in Schubert’s landscape, the grief (Trauer) over men not the pain in them – is alone the gate to the underworld, through which Schubert descends” (29). Grief attracts the infernal foe: “thus the mirror of the Doppelgänger sentences man on grounds of his sorrowfulness” (30). Just the same, grief opens the other pathway through Schubert’s music, the parallel universal alongside depravation’s track, which it leaves behind. Now we begin to recognize the liberated music of a mankind transformed. How sad that we yet fall short of these utopian prospects. It doesn’t matter if mere sentimentality jerks them out: our tears let us see better “the ciphers of ultimate reconciliation” (33).²³

²³ I’ve underscored in the first volume the welling up of tears arising with the eucatastrophe’s joyous anticipation and deferral of an ultimate ending. The direct hit of music appreciation reflects and deflects a lost and found specific emotional situation. Now Adorno reads in musical tear jerking the inscription of a far-out reconciliation. A guaranteed party-pooper, Edmund Bergler identified happy tears as the insignium of an author’s defensive illusion of autarchy, his self-consolation. These tears are self-produced and self-given. “Paradoxical Tears – Tears of Happiness,” in Selected Papers of Edmund Bergler, M.D. 1933–1961 (New York and London: Grune & Stratton, 1969), 906.
In the study of Kierkegaard, to which Adorno applied himself right after the musical rehearsal of the constellation in “Schubert,” the opening up of a landscape of yearning is hard pressed to ally itself with and within Kierkegaardss philosophy. In his 1933 review of the book, Benjamin summarized the reversal of perspective Adorno undertook to dislodge Kierkegaard’s philosophy from its receiving area in Existentialism:

Here Kierkegaard is taken not forward but back – back into the inner core of philosophical idealism, within whose enchanted circle the ultimately theological nature of his thought remained doomed to impotence. [...] Nowhere does Wiesengrund’s insight go deeper than where he ignores the stereotypes of Kierkegaardian philosophy and where he looks instead for the key to Kierkegaard’s thought in its apparently insignificant relics, in its images, similes, and allegories.24

By the conclusion, Adorno is able to secure the constellation of fantasy through the images printed on sheets for children to cut out. “Yearning does not end in the pictures, but rather lives on in them, just as it stems from them” (199). The Ansichtskarten, the miniature views that inspired Adorno to find the affirmation of Schubert’s music in its very depravation, its fragmentation in the medleys, are on the same page with Kierkegaard’s image sheets. That we are also on the same page with Winnicott’s analysis of the dissociated daydreamer, which we followed in the first volume of Critique of Fantasy, is owed to the import Adorno grants the miniature in or as childhood in establishing and sustaining visual literacy, a capacity he later called sublimation and judged evacuated – washed and watched out – in the TV viewer. Was it a daydream or night dream on which she awoke that saw her cutting out a pattern for a dress? Patient and analyst were at a border dislodging the opposition that Winnicott was plying between the depravation of fantasying and the symbolism, even poetry of

the night dream, and that consequently required new thinking and language. The third option for the analysis, then, became a fantasizing of fantasy, admitting in the patient’s fantasizing new approximations to dreaming, waking, and living.

Adorno underscores Kierkegaard’s fascination with the picture sheets and shows how the exception that the philosopher thus makes heads off at the impasse the melancholic core of interiority decoration he dwelled on and in. “If Seligkeit itself, around which wish and cipher of all images gather, knows no images, then Kierkegaard’s discourse is delivered of a ‘burden of hope’” (194). Seligkeit is the word for a happiness still borne that extends to (or ends in) the “bliss” one prays is the lot of the blessed departed (as Freud elaborated its ambivalence in his reading of Daniel Paul Schreber’s Memoirs of My Nervous Illness),

“Undialectically the images are to him finite goods that block the infinitude of Seligkeit” (194). But through his elevation of pictures on sheets for children to cut out, the philosopher’s “modesty (Unscheinbarkeit) signifies not only the annihilation of appearance (Schein) in death but rather its ultimate extinction in truth, which, for once corporally present, would let the images disappear, in which it however has its historical life” (193).

What Adorno lets stand in Kierkegaard’s words is the identification of posthumous works as ruins, the appropriate haunt for the retired, secluded, or dead. What the philosopher Kierkegaard would like to get across, Adorno interprets, gains through art the effect of posthumous works. Art manifests a pleasure that is never present, but in which a moment that is past always inheres, a pleasure that enters consciousness but as already passed (198).

The cutting out of the pictures outlines the fantasy in the fragment. “If the history of guilty nature is that of the decay of its unity, then it moves the decaying toward reconciliation, and its fragments carry the fissures of decay as ciphers of promise” (198).

Fragmentation (cutting out, sorting through, collecting) can circumvent the impasse, for example between improvement and controlling interest, by reducing the scale of change. Adorno’s concluding line: “For the step from mourning to comfort is not the biggest but the smallest one” (200).

The slightest elaboration through fantasy brings rescue. “The model for this realization Kierkegaard […] found in the behavior of the child cutting images out of a picture sheet” (196). While fantasying a dream of cutting out a dress Winnicott and his patient discover that the dissociated daydreamer’s “childhood environment seemed unable to allow her to be formless,” creative, and so she could not accede to the transitional object. 26 Winnicott and his patient must make the cut of starting over and by potentiating the fantasying push back her suicidal impasse of daydream dissociation. Adorno wants to get past Kierkegaard’s thoughts of sacrifice by underscoring the moment of respite that lies between the lines of cutting out picture sheets, throwing them away, and letting them rebound as prehistory.

“The moments of fantasy are the holidays of history. As such they belong to the free, liberated time of the child, and their material is historical like the picture sheets themselves” (197). The situation of the people and the commonplace, the “concrete images of their wish,” hit home and secure access to images by a wish fulfillment that is free of sacrifice (200). “If fantasy cannot grasp the ultimate images of despair […] then this incapacity is not its shortcoming but its strength. […] The unimaginability of despair through fantasy is its guarantee of hope” (196).

Team Player

Freud allowed that the screening of the primal scene (all over town) as false memory made it hard to reconstruct. But he also stressed in his case study of the Wolfman the all-importance of the scene’s priority. 27 By setting reality (realization or fulfill-

26 D.W. Winnicott, Playing and Reality (Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2001), 34.
ment) before the wish, the scene places fantasying on a schedule of racing to catch up with but never overtaking the deadline of realization.

In Dick’s *Ubik*, all devolution of commodities, the allegorization of half-life, stops at 1939. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok lodged their notion of the crypt in a language of cryptonymy that added syntax to the images used by the survivors of the death camps: “the homeless dead,” “missing grave,” “the imitation corpse.” The Holocaust doesn’t discount other atrocities in history but places them on a schedule of legibility with its priority in the reality and realization of the death wish, with, in other words, the priority of the reality of fulfillment over the wish. The heft of realization in the construct of traumatic history’s primal scene is rehearsed in the mise-en-scène of déjà vu between doubling and fantasying.

Adorno identified the new setting of the *Doppelgänger*, the daydream milieu of déjà vu, as the other future that Kafka’s writing foretells: “Perhaps the secret aim of his writing in general was to make déjà vu available, technical, and collective” (263). The resemblance to the night dream and its pre-logical logic is so ubiquitous in Kafka’s works that Adorno sees the dream factor unthematized and excluded. Kafka addresses our second nature as daydreamers, but under the aegis of déjà vu, the false memory that keeps android doubles going. Like memory, déjà vu interrupts fantasying: Haven’t I been here before? Don’t I know you? But the interruptus that coincides with the triggering of the fantasy, which passes for or into “memory” in order to keep the untenable wish concealed, is at no point recognized by or shared with anyone else. The Kafkan text addresses the daydreamer in the reader: “Each sentence says ‘interpret me,’ and none will permit it. Each compels the reaction, ‘that’s the way it is,’ and with


it the question, ‘where have I seen that before?’ The déjà vu is
declared permanent” (263).

In his essay on Kafka Adorno lined up in a row both scenes of
psychoanalysis, the primal and the double. That also means, as
touted in Adorno in Neapel, that the Holocaust, which Adorno
was reading like science fiction extrapolated from the present-
going-on-recent past in Kafka’s works, in effect restored the con-
stellation that the series of reversals of psychoanalysis had stolen.
That Kafka imagined collecting his early stories in a volume titled
“Versöhnung,” literally, almost, “becoming a son,” fits a charge
not against the fathers, but against the sons, the bargain haunters
in the stricken world of late capitalism.

Freud argues in “The Uncanny” that déjà vu looks like the
return of an early animinstic belief that mankind (or the adult)
was so convinced had been already and definitely overcome. But on this occult track we might lose sight of the bottom line
of Freud’s déjà vu analysis, which is the death wish. To lose sight
of what we nevertheless fill in: this gives the gist of Adorno’s
critique of the occult in the contemporary setting. In his earlier
analysis of déjà vu, Freud found compelling the case example of
a patient overcome with the sense of having already been there
while visiting two school girlfriends in their home. The contin-
uuity shot was that their brother had recently succumbed to the

29 Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” in The Standard Edition of the
An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works, 247–48. For a thorough
account of the history of anticipations and forgettings going into
Freud’s formulations of the psychological significance of this psychic
state, see Peter Krapp, Déjà Vu: Aberrations of Cultural Memory
(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

30 Theodor W. Adorno, “Thesen gegen den Okkultismus,” in Minima
Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben, Gesammelte
Schriften, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, vol. 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp,

31 Sigmund Freud, “Fausse reconnaissance (‘Déjà Raconté’) in
Psychoanalytic Treatment,” in The Standard Edition of the Complete
and Taboo and Other Works, ed. and trans. James Strachey with Anna
illness from which her brother had recently recovered. Yes, we’re in the environs of the death wish, but we are brought before its fulfillment first, leaving the wish to catch up in the span of a near miss.

Robert Altman’s *The Player* (1992) got past the verdict upon the California culture industry that Adorno was also able to get over. Adorno’s culture industry crisis, however, inspired Michael Tolkin, like a “wild” Frankfurt-Schooler, to write the judgmental novel. In their altercations during filming, which were legend, Altman assured Tolkin that the screenplay revisions would be to the author’s credit. The novel like its sequel tells the story of an “American Psycho,” whose criminality proves to be business as usual.

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

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

That the new rival for the position of heir is one reverb in the greater figuration of a malignant superego becomes manifest when David Kahane, the screenplay author Griffin has sought out on the chance that he likes sending upsetting postcards,
starts speaking in the name of Larry Levy, elaborating the rival’s threat as his own. But before they meet up, Griffin stopped by the Kahane home and placed a call watching through the window. If it was telephonic, then it was only platonic. But that can also mean that what Griffin sees is primal. A woman answers; it’s David’s partner, June Gundmundsdottir. When Griffin gives his name, she recognizes it and innocently repeats David’s nickname for him, “the dead man.” She tells him David is out, gone to the movies. She never goes, she says: life is too short.

Griffin follows his screenwriter suspect to a theater that’s showing The Bicycle Thief. While references to European art cinema have been making the rounds to demarcate in terms of cultural difference the impasse between the Hollywood-only producers and the middlebrow authors pitching entry into development heaven or hell, this happens to be a film that redresses stealing by showing it to be an inadequate synonym for losing.

When he figures how Griffin knew where to find him, David calls June “the ice queen.” We are reminded that in the game of chess the queen mother is the son’s best ally in checkmating the king. When David begins spouting the words of the rival and then, push coming to shove, knocks him over, Griffin fantasti- cally rallies and attacks back. Griffin undergoes the attack like a convulsive episode. Subsequent scenes with the police, which are surreal, reinforce the sense that the murderous “attack” screens a wish fantasy. In his essay on Dostoevsky Freud argues that the author’s epileptic seizures were the p-unitive reversal of wishing the father (inside and out) dead. 32 His gambling compulsion was a similar enactment. Gambling to lose enacts the double hand job of the father’s punishment and the child’s masturbation.

To conclude his essay Freud turns to a story by Stefan Zweig, “Twenty-Four Hours in a Woman’s Life,” in which a young man, a gambling addict, meets an older woman who offers a night of lovemaking to counter and contain the compulsive schedule of

playing. The fantasy that the mother should initiate her son into sex to stop the harm he does himself by onanistic playing was thus fulfilled. While Zweig’s protagonist breaks his promise the very next night and is again lost to gambling, the fulfillment of the wish fantasy elucidated by Freud does illuminate Griffin’s happy end. Griffin drinks mineral water only, which means he is on a schedule with addiction. An afflicted player enjoys a wonderful life but just can’t get through the day. Not to be a loser for twenty-four hours means a good deal.

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

The conclusion that Fritz Lang or Thea von Harbou chose for the 1922 film Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler (Dr. Mabuse, the Player) shows the gambler or player defeated, lying low in an underworld he shares with his victims. By his multiple identities a superhuman team of one, Dr. Mabuse runs his criminal schemes like a terrorist organization in thrall to an idea, which can therefore forgo what crime after all does pay. While the novel by Norbert Jacques that Lang and Thea von Harbou adapted closes with the detective rescuing his love interest from Dr. Mabuse, who then falls from the sky to die, the ending on screen suggests that there is a supernatural ready position available for his return.33 Identification with Nietzsche’s superman turns the time to come into the future of wish-fulfilment, but that future is right now. To block the identification, Freud proposed in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego that the superman in fact belongs in the past. The superman was the primal father,

33 In 1932 the doctor returns to deliver a “Testament,” the significance of which Siegfried Kracauer adapted for his psychohistory of German cinema.
whom we murdered, devoured, and mourned. That we are still in recovery is good news.\textsuperscript{34}

The “ice queen” told Mill that the ex, the dad rival, had not believed in happy endings. At the end of \textit{The Player}, we witness the Enlightenment right to pursue of happiness (like in a Mozart opera) attain apotheosis via the most negligible and least respected plot point in cinema. There is a happy end, however, that is an end in itself, marking the convergence of the pursuit of happiness with Kant’s imperfect duty to oneself, one’s talent and potential. The Christian and utilitarian happy ends intercept the end in itself, forging a means to the happiness of the majority inheriting the earth. However, even for Tolkien, there can be a work of fantasy only if the ultimate happy end is kept out of the fiction. The affective impact of the work of fantasy resonates within a gap between the postponement of the rendemptive end-all and the story’s eucaotastrophe, which wishes and hopes because the resolution of the work remains out of reach.

\textit{The Player} only looks like a satire on Hollywood. Instead it is more like a guide to the film industry, even a how-to manual for those who would make a career of it. As big as Hollywood, but pulled through the fantasy of a happy end unto the utopian prospect of reconciliation with our omnipotent wishing, it was Altman’s Hollywood blockbuster.

\textbf{California Susan}\textsuperscript{35}

To know Susan Sontag was to know her disappointment each time she put another new non-fiction publication out there. Her


\textsuperscript{35} “California Susan” was also the title of my lecture/essay commissioned for two events in Germany held during the ten-year anniversary of Sontag’s death in 2014. The paragraphs on Sontag here and in “My Camp” are taken over largely intact from the essay, which appeared in the original and in German translation in Anna-Lisa Dieter and Silvia Tiedtke, eds., \textit{Radikales Denken. Zur Aktualität Susan Sontags}
signature essays, in which she had given thought to every line she wrote, fell short of the words of Walter Benjamin. Like Josephine the Singer, however, she expected the declarations of her friends and fans to the contrary while she scoffed and sobbed. But she had been very lucky to secure a fallback position that she could occupy. For every niche in which she couldn’t join Benjamin or Kafka there was always the cozy corner of diehard identification with Thomas Mann in the thicket of his inner object relations. This free gift that came with her adolescence in Southern California helped see her through the career she made out of the wish for it.

There is one sustained autobiographical account of Susan Sontag’s adolescence in California, a 1987 *New Yorker* article titled “Pilgrimage,” about an audience with Thomas Mann in Los Angeles, forced upon her, as a kind of dare, by a slightly older friend, who in this account goes by the name Merrill.36 The Sontag who graduated from North Hollywood High School at age fifteen might be characterized, like the subtitle to *Gidget*, as the little girl with big ideas. Little, however, in the sense of young: Sontag was the tallest girl in her class. Just as Kathy Kohner a.k.a. Franzie Hofer a.k.a. Gidget was mediated as somewhat laughable, though charmingly so, through the midlife criticism of her father Frederick Kohner, who, as the author of the 1957 coming-of-age book, mimicked and ventriloquated her, so teen Susan, as recalled by Sontag from the other shore of fulfillment of the

*(Zurich: Diaphanes, 2017). The Gidget allegory has grown from a dash into a rich filling.*

36 Susan Sontag, “Pilgrimage,” *The New Yorker*, December 21, 1987, 8–54. Subsequent page references are given in the text. I am returning to a footnote I gave this essay in *The Case of California* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) in the closing section on Thomas Mann and the decision he reached in Southern California to come out with the posthumous publication of his diaries. In the same book, Gidget was implicit in phrases like “gadget goes.” The Gidget novels came out in German translation with the heroine bearing the name April. When I pointed out that this was the reason there was no German word for gadget, two German friends jumped up and down exclaiming “April, April!,” the German version of “April Fools!” I rest my case.
wish to be an important intellectual author, is a touch ridiculous for the purity of her aspiration to become the big-ideas version of herself.

According to “Pilgrimage,” Susan was a close consumer of the émigré culture in Southern California always in the company of one of her two special friends. Peter, whose parents were refugees from Nazi Europe, was earmarked for her romantic involvement in the near future because taller than Sontag, her early requirement for mating. The other best friend was Merrill, a surfer type who consumed philosophy, in other words: a typical surfer.

Cool and chunky and blond, he had all the trappings of “cute,” a “dish,” a “dreamboat,” but I, with my unerring eye for loners (under all disguises), had promptly seen that he was smart, too. Really smart. [...] Merrill was the only one of my friends I doted on. I loved to look at him. I wanted to merge with him or for him to merge with me, but I had to respect the insuperable barrier: he was several inches shorter than I was. (40)

That he is recalled as an object of merger, at once downsized and off-limits, strongly suggests that he is already inside her.

Peter appears in diary entries in 1949 and 1950 but, with her first lesbian affairs in the ascendant, he’s already on his way out. Merrill is not accorded a place, at least not in name. Is he perhaps E, one of two persons who accompanied her on the Mann visit, according to a long diary entry from 1949? “E, F, and I interrogated God this evening at six.”37 In an earlier entry, the characterization of E’s intelligence and of Susan’s closeness to him make him at least a likely ingredient in the makeup of Merrill: “Yet the only tangible good I have gotten out of the summer is my closeness to E, whose intelligence I genuinely respect” (47).

While parked in a car on the rim of Mulholland Drive, according to the 1987 memoir, Sontag and Merrill didn’t join in the local mating rituals, but instead, on the outer rim of identification,

even internalization, passionately discussed modern music, which was the main medium of their joint engagement with European high culture in Los Angeles. Sontag admits that the duo felt compelled to admire the “ugly” work of Arnold Schoenberg or John Cage but sincerely loved only Igor Stravinsky’s music (41). At the highpoint of their commitment to each other, they shared the waking fantasy of their joint sacrifice of years of their lives to add to Stravinsky’s lifetime. After Sontag discovered The Magic Mountain and passed it on to Merrill, the duo revered two gods of contemporary high culture, Stravinsky and Thomas Mann. These recollections are at once charming and unrepentant. The tinge of the infernal that attends their bargaining with lifetime bears association with the middlebrow milieu Mann thematized in Doctor Faustus, ironically at his own peril.

Closer to the real time of her adolescence than her 1987 reminiscence, Sontag diagnosed as the hallmark of SF movies of disaster, a Californian teen staple, the absence of an adequate emotional response. She doesn’t supply mourning. Instead she registers the loss we are at in these films, the loss, ultimately, of our own affective relation to the traumatic histories of the twentieth century. In “Pilgrimage,” Sontag underscores an emotional response in her own adolescent milieu, which is hard to call adequate: it seems intransitive and intransigent, abject and illegible. Though triggered by the recollection of meeting Mann, it covers her own sojourn in the B-genre of Californian adolescence. It is how the New Yorker article begins: “Everything that surrounds my meeting with him has the color of shame” (38).

The Indo-European root meaning of shame is cover. Has a wrapping been thrown over the absence of an identifiable emotional response? At the conclusion, Sontag again tugs at this shroud: “I never told anyone of the meeting. Over the years I have kept it a secret, as if it were something shameful” (54). The lines that follow seem to modify “something shameful,” but stand out as a foreign-body non-sequitur: “As if it happened between two other people, two phantoms, two provisional beings on their way elsewhere.” Yes, she is pairing off Mann, soon to return to

Europe, with herself, who too would soon depart, in her case to realize her wish to be a big ideas author. However, a third figure is suddenly no longer accounted for, “melted” as Sontag writes in her diaries of her relationship to E, whose “unstruggling emptiness” reverberating inside her renders him the poster boy of the absent response (55).

According to Heinz Kohut, shame reflects not a disparity between the ego and an excessively demanding ego ideal but the “flooding of the ego with unneutralized exhibitionism.”39 The exhibitionism of the grandiose self goes unadmired, unapproved, unmirrored. One of Freud’s few accounts of shame, in the case study of the Ratman, interpersonalizes the failure of admiration as betrayal. The older boy who wants to be Ratman’s best friend in childhood, dumps him once he gains admission to the household as tutor; he was interested only in Ratman’s sisters.40 According to Sontag, it is to Susan’s relief that Merrill does all the talking during the Mann visit, but it is at this point that the new situation of the wish to mirror or merge counted two, not three.

When she recalls Thomas Mann asking them about their studies, trying to find the same page on which he and the two teens might meet, Sontag starts splitting: “Could he imagine what a world away from the Gymnasium in his native Lübeck, where fourteen-year-old Tonio Kröger wooed Hans Hansen by trying to get him to read Schiller’s ‘Don Carlos,’ was North Hollywood High School, alma mater of Farley Granger and Alan Ladd? He couldn’t, and I hoped he would never find out. He had enough to be sad about – Hitler, the destruction of Germany, exile. It was better that he not know how really far he was from Europe” (50).

The homoerotic souvenir she gives as the measure of their cultural difference shows that Susan unconsciously clued or cooled, as Gidget might put it, the wooing going down without

40 See my discussion of shame in The Psycho Records, 49–51, in the reading of Peeping Tom, which belabors the same Ratman reference.
her. According to his diaries, Mann only kept under cover and in another place his ongoing homoerotic appreciation of life is a beach, of his being a teenager at heart, just as in “Pilgrimage” Sontag kept her adolescence alongside her as her fellow teen thinker, in the separate bod of a surfer object.

Prior to Merrill’s dare that they go ahead and visit Mann, Susan had already rehearsed merger with the fictional character Hans Castorp via the author’s tenderness toward him: “I loved the tenderness, however diluted by condescension, with which Mann portrays him as a bit simple, overearnest, docile, mediocre” (42). She sees through his condescension, and thus through his irony, also because she applies it in this retrospective account to herself. Following “mediocre” in the list of Castorp’s attributes, Sontag inserts a parenthetical interjection or introjection: “what I considered myself to be, judged by real standards” (ibid.). As she builds up the identification that will see her through the Mann visit, she leaves this niche of emotional response empty.

Shame tends to be linked in the clinical literature to the sense of being a fraud, an impostor, typically in adolescence and psycho-pathologically in adult borderline disorders. As Gershen Kaufman summarizes: “The impostor syndrome is one of the important cognitive signs of shame affect.” 41 While there is the passing sense of one’s own fraudulence in adolescence, the impostor as syndrome builds on an organization by identification that isn’t single-occupancy. The admiring audience is a requirement, according to Helene Deutsch’s profiling of the impostor, even if secured by sending out pseudopodia into the hard shell of its simulation. The impostor’s success lies in the eyes of the projected observer: “As one’s ego ideal can never be completely gratified from within, we direct our demands to the external world, pretending [...] that we actually are what we would like to be.” 42 The impostor is the group shoved into an individual format, like teenagers packed inside a telephone booth. According to Lionel

Finkelstein, whose study of the impostor applied the composite picture Phyllis Greenacre shot and assembled in the 1950s, those who have studied impostors (and, he adds, homosexuals) “often comment on how many can be observed once one has become aware of their existence.”43

Greenacre argues that the impostor is a special case of the daydream fantasy known as the family romance.44 The wish fantasy that someday one will be delivered of one’s parents by the evidence of true blue progenitors goes into what Otto Rank identified as the birth of the hero – for better or worse. Oedipus benefits from the family romance only as long as he enacts it without knowing it. Oedipus started out a baby left out to die because the father sought to undo what he was foretold, namely that an heir would be his undoing. Oedipus, rescued and entrusted to foster parents, hears the same prophecy in adolescence, whereupon he loves and leaves the only parents he knows. But young Oedipus, grown strong enough to act on his wishes, walks straight into the prophecy’s fulfillment. He kills a belligerent stranger, his father. Did the altercation between young Oedipus and the older man qualify the murder as homosexual panic? As a young man, Laius, the father of Oedipus, kidnapped the teen son of his host and raped him. Sometimes a pun that seems to come from nowhere or is too close to home doubles as a direct hit: Kenneth Burke’s “riddle of the sphincter” upends the saga like a spoiler.45 There’s more on all fours than babies.

In “Pilgrimage,” Mann, too, is contaminated by the shame. “What I was obscurely starting to mind was that (as I couldn’t have put it then) he talked like a book review” (48). That Mann’s reliance on phrases recycled from his public interview persona

45 Burke repeatedly made recourse to this punning image. See, for example, his Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method (Oakland: University of California Press, 1966), 338.
made his pronouncements sound like review writing communicates across the decades with Sontag’s own engagement in cultural journalism. From the more tolerant vantage of her grown-up career, she identifies the embarrassment of her adolescent riches as a gap folded deeply in memory, the scream memory of shame:

Years later, when I had become a writer, when I knew many other writers, I would learn to be more tolerant of the gap between the person and the work. Yet even now the encounter still feels illicit, improper. In my experience deep memory is, more often than not, the memory of embarrassment. (ibid.)

There are few indications in Sonntag’s diaries of the shame attending her Mann visit. Alongside Mann’s observation during the meeting that the relationship of The Magic Mountain to his personal experiences before WWII was metapsychological, there is a marginal jotting of disappointment, which, even without the editor’s corroboration, no doubt hails from a later date, perhaps the time of composition of “Pilgrimage”: “The author’s comments betray his book with their banality” (58).

In her diary record of the visit, Mann talks about Doctor Faustus and refers to the English translation as concluded in the recent past. By backdating the 1949 session in “Pilgrimage” to 1947, Sontag remembers herself in the sweet high-school phase of the wish to be someone important, which by college age can already begin to circle around the drain of unfulfillment. But most important, the book Doctor Faustus (in English translation) is removed from the foreground of the encounter. Susan’s relationship to or through Doctor Faustus, discernible already in the soul-murder pact with Merrill, runs deep in her diaries.

Somewhere, in an earlier notebook, I confessed a disappointment with the Mann Faustus... This was a uniquely undisguised evidence of the quality of my critical sensibility! The work is a great and satisfying one. (19)

In the course of an autobiographical rundown from 1957 titled “Notes of a Childhood,” Sontag’s diaries register a one-line recol-
lection, which counts after all as the single and strong reference to the shame of her 1987 reminiscence: “Being caught at the Pickwick Bookstore for stealing Doctor Faustus” (113).

There is no sign that Susan stole compulsively; rather we have Sontag’s word for it in “Pilgrimage” that, given her puny allowance, she bought when she could but occasionally stole when she dared. However, something like compulsion is registered when she allows that she didn’t even think of going to the library. Buying and stealing become at some point interchangeable: “I had to acquire them, see them in rows along a wall of my tiny bedroom. My household deities. My spaceships” (39).

That Susan’s book collection was her alternate network of good object relations is indicated by her express powers as “demon reader” over and against her parents: “to read was to drive a knife into their lives” (38). By her merger with Hans Castorp, or rather with Mann’s tenderness toward him, Susan fleshed out the inner recess into which she followed the rapport between Mann and Merrill. But there was one disturbing thought as she contemplated the extent of her identification with Castorp, namely, that she could be a Goody Two-Shoes, the appalling accusation her mother once hurled at her (42).

How does one learn to steal or cheat in adolescence or go out on a date and make out for that matter? Libidinally benign peer pressure. But what commences as initiation rite into a new milieu that recruits you and issues the group license can also end up, through the pressure cooker of internalization, the main sexual outlet. Stealing is already the extra step inside. It is a clandestine operation of appropriation of items, which must be treated as already and always there. I don’t know how they got into my purse. Hence the psychoanalytic view that one steals or steals back only what belongs to one: the true mother, not the faux one currently getting in the way of her daughter. In Playing and Reality, D.W. Winnicott interprets stealing in a grid of internalizations, elements he names by gender. In a final note appended at the end of his case presentation of the male patient who was containing a girl (which we discussed in the first volume alongside the case of Oscar Wilde), Winnicott asks what in stealing, which the male element tends to carry forward, corresponds to the female element in boys and girls: “The answer can be that in
respect of this element the individual usurps the mother’s position and her seat or garments, in this way deriving desirability and seductiveness stolen from the mother.”

Sloburbia

The father/daughter relationship celebrated on the stage of the bourgeois Trauerspiel, not only during the Enlightenment but in all that era’s introjects and rocket ships, is the other mainstay of the Oedipus complex. Without it there is no father function. In its postwar modern iteration this relationship of authorship and invention works through the heir pocket of homosexuality, which more and more was hiding out in the open. In “Valley Girl,” Frank Zappa’s biggest single hit, his fourteen-year-old daughter Moon Unit, his collaborator on the song, talks us through a school scene in which the beringed male teacher ogles all the boys in class. It’s a new high point in the lingo, because the midlifer’s breach of the teen setting of recruitment gags her with a spoon. But the term that rides the waves breaking between coasts and generations is “bitchen” – the defiant condensation of life’s a bitch and life’s a beach. The Hollywood counterpart to Manhattan’s dismissal of the bridge and tunnel crowd (coming into the city for the weekend) is the beach and valley crowd. And yet the innovation – the lingo – of California’s Teen Age folds out from under this arc and projection like its datemark.

In Gidget: The Little Girl with Big Ideas, every gesture of transgression fits inside the protagonist’s ambivalent relationship to psychoanalysis, including the transgression to which the book owed its publication, at least according to the story told together with the publicity photos when the book was released. Fredrick Kohner had written down the teen discourse of his sixteen-year-old daughter largely by listening in on her phone conversations. Wanting reassurance about his daughter’s involvement with those beach bums, the fictional father asks son-in-law Larry, a psychoanalyst, to probe Gidget for the truth. She gets to listen in on the extension phone when Larry reports back the outcome of their meeting. What she couldn’t possibly have recognized

46 Winnicott, Playing and Reality, 85.
or imagined is what Frederick Kohner alone could have mixed up out of his memories of psychoanalysis in Germany. The Californian analyst “sold” his father-in-law “a double size of Freud and Adler, well mixed.”

For the fictional world of the Gidget novels, Kohner remade himself as Professor Hofer, who teaches German literature at the University of Southern California. Kohner wasn’t without academic credentials, having studied literature in Vienna and Paris, concluding his graduate education with a thesis titled *Film ist Dichtung* (*Film Is Poetry*). The Hofer family into which the psychoanalyst married is educated, cultured, and travels in an orbit that skips the East Coast. Waiting for her flight to Hawaii, Gidget makes a new acquaintance, a girl from the big apple, who just can’t believe she doesn’t know what “the Village” is. But the Californian rallies (in earshot of Gertrude Stein on Ezra Pound). Swapping their addresses at the destination, the New Yorker says she’ll be staying at The Hawaiian Village: “Brother. She was a real expert on villages.”

After he left Berlin in 1936, Friedrich Kohner became Frederick Kohner and continued working as screenwriter in Hollywood, joining his older brother who had since his 1920 career move established himself as a prominent Hollywood agent. *Gidget*

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47 Frederick Kohner, *Gidget* (New York: Berkley, 2001), 77. Subsequent page references are given in the text. That one of her boyfriends at college was a Jungian – in the sequel *Cher Papa* – completes the German triangle of eclectic psychotherapy central to the Göring Institute in Nazi Berlin. While there are residual traces of the Kohner family system in the *Gidget* novels, there seemed no one there backing Larry the analyst (until now). There was, however, a psychoanalyst in the extended family. Gottfried R. Bloch, the brother of Hannah Kohner, Walter Kohner’s wife, was the author of *Unfree Associations: A Psychoanalyst Recollects the Holocaust* (Los Angeles: Red Hen Press, 1999). Pancho Kohner pointed this out in an email dated August 22, 2019. I was also in email contact with “Gidget.”

48 Sometimes he teaches modern literature, at one point he refers to his Old High German field, at another station stop he appears to be teaching at UCLA.

was Frederick Kohner’s big success. He sold it as book and as a film within one week. His writing scheduling adapted itself to the alternating momentum of *Gidget* versions between media. The same year that the movie adaptation was released, Kohner published the first sequel, *Cher Papa*. He also wrote novelizations of the two subsequent films, which didn’t adapt his novels. The second novelization, *Gidget Goes to Rome*, appeared the same year as another of his own efforts, *The Affairs of Gidget*. The next in line, *Gidget in Love*, appeared in sync with the first year of the TV show.50

That Frederick Kohner remade his daughter as the next generation of émigré culture in Southern California was displaced to the background by her status as dream teen. To express that she could just drop dead in *Gidget Goes Parisienne*, the Californian teenager asks to be buried alongside her great-great-great uncle Heinrich Heine. That’s about as close as we get to her Jewish background.51 In *Gidget Goes Hawaiian* we learn that the ten-years-older sister Ann was born in Berlin.52 In the finale, *Gidget Goes New York*, our heroine steps out of the paperbacks into life’s hardcovers, her father notes with approval, after she meets UN Ambassador Arthur Goldberg: “he looks a bit like my old man. Very sympático.”53 Shortly after she arrives in New York, this is her first time outside the California/Europe orbit, Gidget stands across from Jewish-American ethnicity in the person of the waiter, who “talked in a flavorful Jewish brogue” and “permitted himself one of those double-something looks that would have done credit to Groucho Marx” (42).

50 He wrote other non-Gidget novels, too, but whatever was fulfilled through the fictionalization of his relationship to his daughter it wasn’t his wish to be an author.
53 Frederick Kohner, *Gidget Goes New York* (New York: Dell, 1968), 29. Subsequent page references are given in the text. The father’s blessing of his daughter’s decision in the tidy packaging of authorship is on page 35. Gidget uses the same analogy on her own toward the end of *Gidget Goes Parisienne*, 149.
Any details of the Kohner family history get lost in the eight Gidget novels, where surfing, skiing, or being a So-Cal teenager, however, come to share a lexicon with an eclectic interest in high culture. The elective affinity between the academic father and his precocious daughter on the basis of cultural reference first takes off in the novelizations. In the first novel, Gidget is at a loss when Cass (a.k.a. Cassius or the Great Kahoona) calls her Undine (27). Oddly she’s also never heard of a faggot or a flit, terms the surfers use as warning labels to protect the impenetrable homoerotics of their lifestyle. The Great Kahoona is the slightly older leader of the surfer pack, a primal father, to be sure, but without the backend deal.

Susan Sontag was grateful to her stepfather for her distinguished signature name sans the diversion of obvious ethnicity. Kohner turned his daughter Kathy into Franzie Hofer, aka Gidget, who isn’t obviously Jewish while showing all the trappings of belonging to a secular assimilated So-Cal Jewish family. Franzie’s parents like Kathy’s were originally Austrian, and when her father adopts the lingo in their repartee she finds the German-accented result deplorable, which could be another overlap between fact and fiction. In time, Gidget’s patois starts bouncing around the Gestell of the academic father’s learning and culture, probably an invention and an upgrade.

In the first novelization of the first sequel to Gidget, Gidget Goes Hawaiian, the So-Cal teen dabbles in the lexicon of high culture, as when she realizes she can’t find solace in her reveries:

I knew then there was no use pretending or trying to cajole my mind into silence or contemplating the stars which might have been okay for Immanuel Kant or Albert Einstein – but not for me.54

Or again, finding analogy for the sounds her car makes: “The old Nash started rattling and coughing and gasping like Mimi in the last act of La Bohème.”55 When our heroine watches senior citizens wobble toward the surf and then come alive in the ocean

54 Kohner, Gidget Goes Hawaiian, 103.
55 Ibid., 93.
she’s reminded of the painting of the fountain of youth that hangs in Berlin.\textsuperscript{56}

In the second novelization of the second sequel on screen, \textit{Gidget Goes to Rome}, the heroine counters her insomnia by counting cultural references and looking forward to living them: “In a few hours, you’re going to walk the same cobblestones that old Julie walked and Marcus Aurelius and Michelangelo and Napoleon and Keats and Shelley and old Johann Wolfgang and Casanova and Vitorrio de Sica (about whom I’m specially kookie).”\textsuperscript{57} Or again, thinking with the lilt of literary reference: “Both Marcello and the jeweler exchanged looks that bespoke a complete short story by de Maupassant.”\textsuperscript{58}

While references to WWII are few and far between, and often steeped in adolescent ahistoricism,\textsuperscript{59} the Cold War setting that both Kathy Kohner and Franzie Hofer visited in Berlin holds together history in the making. As Kathy Kohner Zuckerman tells it in an interview in the magazine \textit{Jewish Woman},\textsuperscript{60} she turned to the quest of surfing upon her return from the family’s two-year sojourn in West Berlin, where her father had found employment with a local film company (in the novels Professor Hofer had been on sabbatical leave). Europe or her experiences there had changed or displaced her and she couldn’t find the point of reentry with her peers. That’s why when Gidget again meets close-up one of the figures on the beach in Hawaii who had reminded her of the painting in Berlin, she recognizes in the hale eighty-three-year-old a Berlin analogy stripped of high-cultural reference.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 34–35.
\textsuperscript{57} Frederick Kohner, \textit{Gidget Goes to Rome} (New York: Bantam, 1963), 23. The adventure begins with the father tutoring Gidget to be culturally prepared for her Rome experience. However she not only takes to the prep work, she outflies it.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 72.
\textsuperscript{59} I give an account of the German history inscribed within the \textit{Gidget} novels in \textit{Germany: A Science Fiction} (Fort Wayne: Anti-Oedipus Press, 2014), 122–25.
Her body above the waistline looked rather depleted while everything below still had the vigor and freshness of youth. It was like Berlin, Germany. The Eastern Zone hoary and decrepit, the Western still full of juice and vinegar.\(^61\)

Since early childhood when her mother tried to stretch her short daughter at least beyond the midget limit through a regimen of rigorous swimming, as Kathy Kohner Zuckerman continues in the conversation with Jewish Woman, she was athletic and aquatic. “By learning to surf, I could do something physical and prove something. It took practice and perseverance but, of course, it was fun – and there were all these good-looking guys.”\(^62\)

In Gidget: The Little Girl with Big Ideas, our heroine identifies the significance of the setting of her surfing quest right before she shoots the curl: “This was the final testing ground that I had picked for myself” (148). In “Pilgrimage,” Sontag introduces us to her adolescent obstacle course of testing grounds in L.A. Accompanied, she writes, by Peter and Merrill, she proceeded to the subsequent stations in her bildungsroman. “I [...] studied philosophy, and then, and then [...] I went on to my life, which did turn out to be, mostly, just what the child of fourteen had imagined with such certitude.”\(^63\)

The realization of the fantasy carries forward unambivalence, the flip side of the shame hanging over “Pilgrimage.” In The Affairs of Gidget, the heroine takes time out from her relationship to psychoanalysis by marriage, which is not so different from Sontag’s own personalized sojourn in psychoanalytic theory, to get past ambivalence:

> In trashy books and stories, you always read about the ‘confusion’ of emotions. Well, fans, let me tell you that there is no such thing as mixed emotions. It is quite impossible for a person to have more than one emotion at a time. And mine was of shame.\(^64\)

\(^61\) Kohner, Gidget Goes Hawaiian, 46–47.
\(^62\) “Gidget,” Jewish Woman.
\(^64\) Frederick Kohner, The Affairs of Gidget (New York: Bantam, 1963), 47.
To enter the testing ground of fantasy is to separate out in the mix and mess of wishes crossing the mind at the speed of thought one emotion at a time, and to make it each time a big one. Daydream fantasizing can mean to be in training for big ideas and big feelings.

Going Steady; or, the Other Walking on Water

Adolescent psychology is girl psychology, but for boys, too. As documented in the *Gidget* novels, the teen milieu is neither intolerant nor tolerant of homosexuality. An applicant for a modeling job in Paris, the heroine of *Gidget Goes Parisienne* is asked by the designer, Pierre, to strip down to her underclothes. She hesitates, until she recognizes the significance of what Pierre is wearing: “my eyes fastened on something dangling on a silver string around his neck: a medal glued to a piece of leather. The sure sign of the fagel.”65 While she goodnaturedly thinks of her hairdresser, after he builds her elevating bouffant in record time, as an “Italian flit,” and in paraphrasing the school director’s pitch for the suitability of progressive education to all kinds of students automatically slips in “the high I-Queer,”66 when Gidget admits that a female friend she’s having trouble with attracts her, she refuses the identification: “I know I’m not queer or I am and don’t want to admit it.”67

Faggots and flits are available to those already in the band, which means they are off-limits to a dynamic of recruitment in which one can be straight or gay for a day. The teen deems sexual identity, especially the marginal kind, an unacceptable limit

65 Kohner, *Gidget Goes Parisienne*, 44.
67 Kohner, *Gidget Goes Hawaiian*, 51. At the high point of their altercation, Gidget suggests that the New Yorker’s problem is that her parents didn’t practice birth control (62). Writing about Wonder Woman and her lesbian gang, Fredric Wertham adds to his infamous reading of Batman and Robin spice that’s not nice: “Their attitude about death and murder is a mixture of the callousness of crime comics with the coyness of sweet little girls.” *Seduction of the Innocent* (Laurel: Main Road Books, 2004), 193.
and limitation on the pleasure to be had through the trials of free membership. If a gay teenager is a contradiction in terms, then the contradiction runs deep inside psychoanalysis. Based on compatibility with group ties, homosexuality is noted most likely to succeed in groups.68 The strong ego of the pervert makes him an outsider, who can fit in, however, by manipulating the teen milieu of likeability.69 However individualist or different the leading idea in adolescence may be, when it comes to the all-important group bond of likeability, what is important is that one should remain uncomplicated and open to enlistment.

The teenager works hard to align going steady with her membership in a milieu of recruitment. Since the first novel, Moondoggie or Jeff Griffin is Gidget’s true love. When distracted by snorkelling in the first novel, Franzie strayed too far out where the waves broke and was out to sea. Moondoggie hauled her onto his surfboard and brought her to safety and into the surfing group. He gives her the name Gidget, a mix of girl and midget, a free gift that comes with in-group membership. Owing to what she repeatedly calls her ambivalence, however, and because Jeff’s away in the military or she’s away at college, Gidget finds herself falling for the others she has not yet forsaken. But it all remains a near miss never going all the way to betrayal.

It turns out that bouts of falling or being in love aren’t the same as loving Jeff. This beam or board that she holds onto was the curb appeal of the series. Frederick Kohner was running the risk of overinvolvement in the father/daughter relationship. That’s why at the end of the first novel his daughter’s surfing triumph throws a shadow of doubt on the reality both of her true love and her first near miss affair: the former was just a dream and the latter reflected curiosity alone. Because of the gap between his family setting and her teen milieu of dating, the father/daughter

68 Freud, “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,” 141.
The sequel, *Cher Papa*, introduces Professor Hofer as protagonist and first person narrator thinking about and conversing with Gidget. In the novel that crossed the line, he performs the wish for his elective affinity with his fantasy daughter: “Did I establish a mutual admiration society of which we two were the only members? I did.”70 She’s fallen again for the near miss from the first book, now a ski bum at the resort where she’s working for a term off from college. More than understanding his daughter the narrator father contemplates the “long amorphous photo gallery of other ‘dreamboats’” (10) that had knocked true love Jeff aka Moondoggie out of the running. Who’s falling for the near miss when we read first person that “he was Diogenes, Lord Byron, and Heathcliff all rolled into one” (18)?

To keep it parallel and not perform the body switch of incest, Professor Hofer enjoys the company of the near miss’s ex, who arrives at the resort odd woman out. “A hundred sensuous delights started pervading me, seducing my mind, transporting me back to the days of my youth” (27). Through the midlife elation their roles reverse and Gidget is parentified. The ex is an ex-gun moll, now the merry widow of a dead gangster’s ill-gotten fortune. To ensure a level playing field, Gidget does something really unimaginable, she reports the woman’s cash carrying extravagance to the FBI (83–84). The nasty teen, however, redeems herself through a rescue operation that stops the reunion of near miss and ex, but also leaves her alone with Papa.

Edmund Bergler notes that an author’s second work following a success the first time around is the testing ground for the array of defences against the wish to be refused.71 Dropping Jeff from the equation or telling his father/daughter story outside his bit part in her first-person narration just didn’t work. He was carrying a girl – not his daughter – who demanded a full-corpus shot at fame fictionalization. The two films scripted by other

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70 Frederick Kohner, *Cher Papa* (New York: Bantam, 1960), 5. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
authors, each of which he studied closely and novelized, kicked “his” Gidget back inside the story lines. Aligned again Gidget works her way toward the end in the dead end, the inner reality she manically defends against, which is her father’s delegation, until she makes it to the end in the happy end. Let’s say it leaves the father fantasizing fantasy about contact with the reality of adolescent or group psychology on Germany’s other coast via his fictionalized dream-teen daughter.

Each of the follow-up novels wraps another near miss. There are three of them in *The Affairs of Gidget*, in part because her father urged her at its start not to limit her sentimental education. It’s not good to be pinned down by her absent boyfriend while attending college. Far worse would be elopement, he says: he has seen among his USC students too many early marriages end in early divorce. Throughout the series, however, Gidget’s more serious near misses are with older men. While warming up to oldtimer Marcello in *Gidget Goes to Rome*, Professor Hofer’s daughter notes: “I even began to judge my own father with different eyes.”

In *The Affairs of Gidget*, Franzie Hofer’s English Lit professor makes moves that she is more than prepared for by transference. He uses their shared special interest in contemporary literature and philosophy to bring her in for testing at the recruitment center. “They say one falls in love. Well, fans, let’s say I had stumbled into love.” The first stumbling block is the stack of books she must remove to sit down in his office: *Sex Histories of American College Girls* (19). His chief strategy is to teach Existentialism, which allows him to bring up his open marriage. “I was to find out soon why he insisted that I read *Justine*” (25). The harassment charge has not yet been formulated, but if his morals are found wanting he could lose his job. When he asks that she have enough savoir faire to keep his pursuit of her under cover, she is appalled. “The whole Existentialist façade collapsed before my eyes” (33).

72 Kohner, *Gidget Goes to Rome*, 73.
73 Kohner, *The Affairs of Gidget*, 18. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
Unlike California Susan, Gidget has no career-size wish to fulfill. She comes closest at the end of the first novel when standing alone on her board she’s too “jazzed up” to care “whether I would break my neck or ever see Jeff again” (148). What sends her into the surf, the final testing ground, was, however, the “pin- nacle” she reached upon recognizing that Jeff indubitably loved her back (147). To qualify as a coming of age novel, Gidget has to sign off with the heroine’s attainment of an epiphany of her own. But who can separate the surfer from the surfing?

In the series of novels, Gidget wants true love and must work through the ambivalence that keeps her hovering between ingroup recruitment and the couple. While she is a good mimic of her father’s knowledge, Gidget often seems really only to know the names and the titles and some of the plot and a few lines from many sources. At least that’s the story in Gidget in Love. To show up Jeff’s doubts about her seriousness of purpose as a college student, Gidget, still a junior, gets a job teaching literature at a So-Cal progressive high school. She convinces the director, a petite heavily accented woman, who like her father comes from the old country. Gidget goes down her list of names and titles and repeats something she remembers reading: teaching is love.74

Ja! Ja! They are like two California antibodies in a pod.75

The ambivalence that Gidget likes to cite hides out in wish fantasy. When she’s making up with Jeff at the end of Gidget Goes Hawaiian, she gives the happy-end reckoning: “Everything up to now that had ever happened to me had a dash of make-believe, a sprinkling of wishful thinking.”76 With Jeff she over and again finds a reality “that didn’t need any fixing up from me.”77

In The Affairs of Gidget her courtship of the local dentist, about the age of her first near miss, the Great Kahoona, sets off

74 Kohner, Gidget in Love, 22.
75 The setting in which Gidget uses her paternal inheritance spread thin to challenge Jeff “had a peculiar haunting charm, à la Brothers Grimm. The only outward sign that this edifice harbored a school and not Boris Karloff was a plaque with the legend: ‘Learn to live, and live to learn’” (19).
76 Kohner, Gidget Goes Hawaiian, 115.
77 Ibid.
a spiritualization that seems to make room for friendship without group-membership benefits. This is a variation on the near miss that recurs in the series, always auguring a peaceful inner separation from Moondoggie and ending as an embarrassment of riches (with nowhere to go, send, or spend).

The affair with the dentist offers a full cardiogram of the spiritualization of the near miss, the ultimate paternal fantasy. While waking up from the anesthesia following extraction of her wisdom tooth she thinks she sees Jeff in the fog and kisses the dentist: “it was like Cloudsville. Like Last Year at Marienbad.” Cloudsville means spiritual, because it’s what she feels even though she knows their lips touch. The dentist reflects, however, that the kiss can be explained away but how did she know to call him by his name, Jeff? Kismet.

During the postop visit while he checks her wound “the hi-fi was playing the ‘Liebestod’ from Tristan and Isolde” (91). She already administered the love potion by her drug-addled mistake. Geoffrey invites her into his private quarters to listen to Schubert’s Unfinished on tape. Unfinished? No kidding.

“You know I had certain reservations about asking you in here.”
“Did you?”
“Yes. You see, I have a pretty clean record around college.”
“I don’t understand.”
“Well – my patients are mostly recruited from the student body. Or should I rather leave out the ‘body’ part?”
He smiled. I got the drift in a flash. (93)

He didn’t leave out the recruitment part. What she takes from the “wordless communion” (96) that follows while they listen to the tape is that their relationship is “spiritual,” a welcome change: “Usually I’m torn between the old flesh and the spirit” (99). She becomes his confidante: “Cloudsville, fans” (100). “I’m constantly renewing my emotional virginity” (99). She’s thankful for the spiritualization and accepts Geoffrey’s invitation to

78 Kohner, The Affairs of Gidget, 84. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
share Thanksgiving dinner with him and his daughter Muffie, visiting from his divorce.

The death potion is, after all, served. Muffie innocently addresses the fantasy of making wishes with a bird’s bone:

“I wonder if birds can make a wish – with their wishing bone.”
“It’s possible,” said Geoffrey.
“No, it isn’t,” Muffie said, seriously. “Because when they find it, the birds are already dead.” (103)

Cute can kill. At least Gidget concludes that if she did take the substitute seat, next to the adorable daughter she’d be as good as nothing, just like the dead bird (ibid.).

She sends all the erotic yearnings that her spiritual friendship metabolized or denied “straight into the deep freeze” (104). The wishbone is no longer connected to the boner. She can now turn down Geoffrey’s subsequent proposal to start dating officially and seriously and she does so in the name of her surfing prize, Jeff a.k.a. Moondoggie. Remembering lines by Walt Whitman she whispers goodbye to her fancy (109).

In Gidget Goes New York, just when our heroine is convinced that she really is through with the ghost of Jeff a word denied casts her back. It belongs to Jeff’s sentence and sentencing that made her a peacenik working at the UN. Won’t he be in Greenland forever far away from the Vietnam War?

“No such thing as forever,” Jeff said. “They’re sending them out every day.”
Again he gazed in my direction and my heart made some sort of erratic movement. I guess it was the word “forever.” It is fraught with mystical meaning.\(^79\)

There is a Chinese saying that comes up repeatedly throughout the Gidget series, because it made her Jeff’s lifelong responsibility when he saved her life. It comes up again in Gidget Goes New York: “Screwy, but that’s the mysterious Orient for you” (16). In

\(^{79}\) Kohner, Gidget Goes New York, 103. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
this final installment, we enter the discourse of the mystery via Gidget’s best friend at the United Nations, Minnie Chan, whose father is in the business of manufacturing fortune cookies in Reading, no kidding, Pennsylvania. Minnie has contributed a few proverbial prophecies and indeed speaks in fortune-cookie phraseology. Where do all those fortune sayings come from, Gidget wants to know. They can’t all be quotations from the sages of the ages. “People send them in,” Minnie said. “They love to have them printed. Makes them all writers” (65).

At each bad turn in the renewal of contact with Jeff, Minnie has a phrase of fortune that keeps Gidget on course. Minnie takes over from Professor Hofer who sent his daughter off to the UN with a blessing fit for a cookie: “Life offers usually only one great experience, and the secret of life is to repeat that experience as often as possible” (36). When she came to his office for a debriefing following her first involvement with peaceniks on campus, he helped her recognize that her “subconscious” wanted something else and that she was drawn to the cause of peace because she wanted to protect Jeff (25).

In the first novel she dreams at night that she and Moondoggie are in love (56). There is no conscious residue from the day that motivates the dream, no daydreamy thought or wish that’s being fulfilled. Gidget realizes the “spirit” of her dream of living and loving over and against mere fantasy fulfillment, in other words, the “old flesh” of the father’s/author’s fantasy life.

Frederick Kohner cultivated his wish for fame and success by fictionalizing his relationship to his daughter’s idiom and libido. He couldn’t use his own ticket to the Teen Age washing up onto the beach from Germany, not after the success of the ventriloquist act. The fictional Californian daughter knows that when her mother “goes to the opera in the intermission she reads such stimulating stuff as the Sorrows of Werther – and I kid you not.”

That she mentions next to this souvenir of her mother that it’s more her father’s speed to look through a copy of Playboy attests to the ongoing reversals, backflows, and adjustments that keep the hybrid of the fictionalized father/daughter relationship up and running.

80 Kohner, Gidget Goes Hawaiian, 25.
There is a glancing thought at the start of *Gidget in Love* that Frederick Kohner kept living up through the Gidget figment: “Most kids I knew would simply die to have something mystical like Moondoggie happen to them.”¹ The end in sight of the father/daughter writing fantasy is Gidget’s forever. “He was tanned all over and had exciting grace in his legs and limbs.”² Gidget’s surfer bond/bod is what Sontag carried inside. That he was her inner gay’s object of delectation had consequences for her career as a writer of fiction. But it allowed her to score realization of her wish to be a successful author of big ideas in the medium of midlife criticism and teen journal-ism. Shoot it Susan!

**My Camp**

According to the 1910 psychoanalytic consensus, as summarized by Freud in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci, the homosexual finds a way out of the incestuous bond with his mother not via repression or substitution but by identification. He loves his objects as his mother loved him. He was young then; his objects are as young now. The gay relationship to youth is an inside job. In her diaries, Sontag records the following lines of her dinner partner: “The past is completely unreal to me. I live only in the present + the future. Is that why I look young?” Sontag’s caption to the swish fantasy: “Dorian Gay.”³ Inside his attachment to youth, Oscar Wilde was forever, in relation to the youths he worshipped, the younger, less developed boy with both feet still in latency. What carried his identificatory desire forward was his recruitment, in reality or fantasy, by an older boy.

Falling victim to homosexuality is part of the act. In a 1962 diary entry, Sontag notes her partner’s “fantasy of conducting, or more often, submitting to a medical examination – where the point is not to show sexual excitement as long as you can” (304). It is a fantasy in explicit contrast to the heavy breathing of

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² Ibid., 10.
the “American idea of sex,” as she calls it, in other words heterosexuality. A few months later she resists “love as incorporation, being incorporated” (307). But then, five days later, the medical exam fantasy is on her list of “sex fantasies of losing autonomy” (309). It’s hard to know whose fantasy it is. But for sure it is an afterimage of the counsel she received from the two slightly older teen boys with whom she visited Thomas Mann. In a 1949 entry, Susan writes that she heard it from F that he and E knew already the year before that she was probably a lesbian. It’s important that E, the object of merger, is absent but cited and summoned in what follows. Because next F tells her what to do before it’s too late.

“Go out with a couple of men at the same time. Park and let them feel you + have their little pleasures. You won’t like it at all at first, but force yourself to do it [...] it’s your only chance” (44).

The in-group groping for a response against the reign of sexual identity imparts to Susan a hands-on object lesson. This ambiguously straight milieu of recruitment is reborn with Susan as the inner world that would carry forward unto successful realization her wish fantasy of being an author of big ideas.

By the slight alterations that Sontag adds to her souvenir, we are also inside the fantasy flashing on an identification-driven amalgam. In his diaries, Mann notes that three Chicago students stopped by to interview him about The Magic Mountain. It was an interview with young intellectuals, not a conversation with high school kids. No libidinal impression was left behind for all their college professionalism. He may also not have been available for E’s surfer charm because during this holiday period he was so distracted by son Golo’s boyfriend “Ed.” Several months later, he would be all over the pages of his diaries about the cute waiters in Switzerland. Some have the legs of Hermes, another he immediately falls in love with.

As a kind of prelude to her first well-received novel, The Volcano Lover, Sontag renders in 1987 by metonymy and absence an unshared fantasy of teen heartthrob in the parlor of the eternal/internal adolescent. The Mann diaries were already out.
Sonntag played it straight with the other items of her memoir. The tender misunderstanding that attends the distance between Hans Castorp and North Hollywood High School graduates Farley and Ladd picks up heat between the lines. Both were icons of ambiguously straight attractions. While Ladd as Shane is as gender nonspecific as Lassie, beloved by all the children going into adolescence, Farley’s role in Rope is that of the straight enlisted by the more explicit or forthright friend.

The foundation of an inner world must reach into early childhood. We saw that like Norman Bates she fantasied stealing and wearing the mother’s raiment, her very appeal. Then there was her missing father. While her mother didn’t tell her that it had happened until he was long gone, both parents were often gone to China, to the exotic place that would remain for Sontag the first address of fantasy. That the cause of his death was withheld so long from her, in part because tuberculosis held shameful associations, is identified (aptly I think) by Sontag’s German biographer Daniel Schreiber as the traumatic point of return for her study of the rhetoric of illness and the crux of her dedication to The Magic Mountain, the model for The Volcano Lover. Sontag’s childhood inability to mourn her father’s disappearance amounts to the derealization, nonrealization of his death.

In The Volcano Lover, the following passage refers to lost objects in the protagonist’s collection, but the inability to mourn is writ large upon a whole life:

To begin to mourn, one must get past the feeling that this is not happening or has not happened. It helps to be present at the disaster. [...] Whatever does not happen before our eyes must be taken on trust. [...] The Cavaliere mourned for his treasures. But a mourning that begins so posthumously, and under such conditions of doubt and disbelief, can never be fully experienced. 

Upon this melancholic foundation that Mann told to the mountain rests an assemblage of charming confidence teens, like Felix Krull, the protagonist who followed more directly Mann’s elaboration of the infernal contractual deadlines internal to an artist’s success. The good fortune of the impostor inherited the fateful aspirations of Faust.

When she first reads Kafka, Sontag confides to her diary in a binding flash of insight, that her former gold standards, Mann and André Gide, were now relegated to the inflation of mere reputation. But then she came down off the high (not in her critical standards but in her literary orientation). The lessening she learned, her badge of shame, gets sublated in fictionalized or internalized retrospective and, in her most successful novel, prospectively revalorized as collection (another name for an oeuvre driven by cultural journalism).

In *The Volcano Lover*, Sontag identifies her protagonist’s dedication to collection as allegory of her own developing realization, which allowed California Susan to raise the consumerism of culture to the power of composition while drawing her own early antisocial attachment to books (and her murderous raging against her mother) through the loop of melancholia staggered and redeveloped unto art.

However, if he is to obtain at auction what he must have and without feeling ripped off, the collector must “perform a whole theatre of being a little interested, but not immoderately; intrigued, yes, even tempted; but not seduced, bewitched. […] So the collector is a dissembler, someone whose joys are never unalloyed with anxiety. Because there is always more” (71–72). That he must get the next piece of his puzzling out of culture at any price reveals that the collector–impostor nevertheless remains in touch with a more basic impulse: “Every collector is potentially (if not actually) a thief” (73).

Early on in her diaries, young Sontag anticipated an academic career as the best security for the life of a serious writer. But then a somewhat older Sontag scrawled across the entry: “Jesus!” This teen impatience with academia is, in the US setting, a remarkable refusal for an intellectual, a denial, in fact, since there is no intellectual life in the United States off campus. This was brought home by the so-called structuralist controversy, which took place
at the Johns Hopkins University in 1966. Twentieth-century European thought was henceforward no longer an introductory offer, nor the trauma of a year abroad. The earlier niche market of representing European developments to a US readership, which Sontag shared with Frederick Kohner and Paul de Man, was soon beside the point. While the grafts of Foucault and Lacan, which had been applied beforehand, also benefitted, “deconstruction in America” was in the ascendant. At one point, Derrida declared Southern California the seat of deconstruction. What happened in America didn’t stay there. Only four years after the 1966 convening of poststructuralism, Roland Barthes’s reinvention of his method in *S/Z* reflected nothing closer to home than deconstruction in America. In her book-length studies, Sontag did not adjust to the new proximity of European thought and thus her major works remained outside the ken of deconstruction. But off and on campus Sontag continued to score as cultural journalist.

Before the retrospective of shame and only a few years after the charge that SF movies testified to an emotional failure, Susan Sontag discovered in “Camp” an alternative affective response to the sliding scale of high and low culture in a post-apocalyptic world. Her 1979 article on Hans-Jürgen Syberberg’s *My Hitler* provided the appropriate emotional response she had earlier found wanting in SF movies, but it was grief in the mode of distancing, internalization, and ironization, which in the meantime she had discovered for or inside herself in Camp. In writing “Notes on ‘Camp’,” she summoned her inner gay, the one once buoyed up by Thomas Mann’s tenderness toward Castorp urging merger with Merrill. The ready position that she introduces at the start of “Notes on ‘Camp’” to justify and protect her ability to read the sensibility of an in-group, what she identifies as a taste in emotion, goes to the position beyond ambivalence, but not for the shame of it: “I am strongly drawn to Camp, and almost as strongly offended by it. That is why I want to talk about it, and why I can.”

When Sontag reveals as essential camp the “ambition on the part of one man to do what it takes a generation, a whole culture

86 Susan Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp’,” in *Against Interpretation*, 275–76.
to accomplish,” 87 she identifies the hard shell of her inner correspondent, the fantasy of teen prematurity, of genius-insight independent of reservation or confirmation over time. In other words, there is success in inevitable failure, a tender feeling, as she notes toward the end, which turns up the contrast to the more adult condition of being wrecked by success, together with its mass psychology of fateful identification with lost causes. Camp gets across not only as charming but also as “winning.”

That Sontag wonders out loud in her 1996 afterword to a new edition of Against Interpretation that no one had as yet written on the camp phenomenon when she seized the chance thirty years before defers to the inner recruiter who remade adolescent journal writing into lucky art journalism. I once heard one of Sontag’s gay art journalist peers in New York express envy that he hadn’t written the Riefenstahl piece first. By the identification that brings about a reversal in time, the inner-outer gay transmutes scooping out the mother’s creativity into omnipotent scooping and scoring of deadlines.

Sontag’s first novel, The Benefactor, opens a season of internal metabolization of gay enrollment through the protagonist Hippolyte’s relationship to the writing of the novel itself. It all turns on his relationship to dreaming, which he commences revisiting and extending into daytime programming through his exchanges with a bona fide author, Jean-Jacques, who is also commercial gay trade. At one point Jean-Jacques even enlists Hippolyte for the one-time one-night stand. To the extent that his dreams are continuously summoned within waking fantasy, they drive the novel’s composition like the realization of daydream fantasies. Realization rather than fulfilment is the identificatory rapport with fantasy. As Hippolyte reflects: “The bridge which I built between my dream and my daytime occupations was my first taste of an inner life.” 88

In a 1972 diary entry, Sontag introjects parenthetically the history of her own initiatory seductions: “By the age of 16 on, women found me, [...] imposed themselves on me emotionally

87 Ibid., 284.
+ sexually. [...] How grateful I am to women – who gave me a body, who made it even possible for me to sleep with men.” 89 And even made it possible for her, at least according to the legends of her early liaisons in New York, to sleep with gay men. Over time, same-sex seduction into a body, her integration of psyche and soma, let the gay man out and about.

In 1963 diary entries, Sontag reflects on her writing at the time of the appearance of her first novel: “My writing is always about dissociation” (319). Her novel, in turn, is a meditation on “dissociative faits accomplis, their hazards + rewards” (ibid.). And again: “there are no people in what I’ve written. Only ghosts” (320). Sontag generated her second novel, Death Kit, out of this ghost of adolescence that malingers on in her suicidal midlife protagonist, Diddy:

Diddy, not really alive, had a life. Hardly the same. Some people are their lives. Others, like Diddy, inhabit their lives. [...] Eventually for such a person, everything is bound to run down. The walls sag. Empty spaces bulge between objects. The surfaces of objects sweat, thin out, buckle. 90

Every time the word “now” appears in the novel, it appears in parentheses, at once a datemark, a trigger, and a site of circumvention.

Only by bedding her with “Alice in Wonderland” was Sontag able to write about Alice James, a true abject of identification, odd woman out in a household of male genius, a psychosomatic invalid who ended a cancer patient, an innate talent whose work remained her diaries. At the mad tea party held for the double Alice, the advice of women writers established in history jump starts Alice, bed-ridden by dissociation, on a tour of daydream fantasying whereby she conjures up a sojourn in Rome.

Sontag confides in the Note appended to Alice in Bed that ten years earlier she dreamed up the play from start to finish. Again,

89 Sontag, As Consciousness Is Harnessed to Flesh, 370–71. Subsequent references are given in the text.
she prefers to address the extension of dreaming into waking rumination and reflection rather than daydream fantasy – the “triumphs of the imagination” rather than wish fulfillment.\(^\text{91}\) However, when she concludes the Note with the assurance that “the victories of the imagination are not enough” (117), we are inside the frame of reference of waking fantasy. That the relation to a submerged reality, what Sontag refers to as “a real encounter with a representative of the world” (116), nevertheless leaves its mark is a basic feature of the genre of daydream fantasy. This mark of the present is still part of the fantasy, like the idealized past in Freud’s formula. Perhaps it is the ultimate fantasy, as Freud observes of the moment in Jensen’s _Gradiva_ when the protagonist’s sense of reality is suddenly restored. As in D.W. Winnicott’s treatment of the dissociated daydreamer in _Playing and Reality_, it is by extending fantasying to what lies outside, dreaming and living as Winnicott puts it, that Alice could start over in formlessness. What she is free to catch up with, however, is the adolescence of recruitment. Alice fantasies, then, not seduction and fulfillment, but recruitment and realization, and thus pries loose for a captured moment from her dissociated state.

Protest rallies in Winnicott’s patient a dissociated self-reference in fantasying and sets a limit to the span of Alice’s respite. In Ulrike Ottinger’s 1979 film _Bildnis einer Trinkerin – aller jamais retour_ (Ticket of No Return) the dissociation of daydreaming seeks a breach by the layering of fantasying in psychic reality or on screen.\(^\text{92}\) Like the returning point in the case of Winnicott’s suicidal patient, however, “protest” guards the dissociated state. The drinker can’t cut away from her protest. In a fantasy series of job interviews and job placements, which begins with the drinker’s performance of the Hamlet monologue on stage, each episode ends in failure, notably her dismissal when she takes her

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91 Susan Sontag, _Alice in Bed_ (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993), 117. Subsequent page references are given in the text.

92 I wrote on this masterpiece in my study of the Ottinger oeuvre. See _Ulrike Ottinger: The Autobiography of Art Cinema_ (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). I began this reading of the film as the manifest of a crashed flight of fantasy in summer seminars I taught at European Graduate School.
refusal to stop or hide her drinking to the next level of acting out. Three fate-like allegorical figures of a sociological overview shadow these scenes and run their commentary on the sidelines. They hail from the film that Ottinger didn’t deliver, which ironically was her protest against the new norm that protest built. Protest doesn’t show up only the drinker’s scenes of self-help. It gives all her silent solo scenes the hook.

Ottinger’s film opens with the heroine’s resolution to live out fully her “wishful drinking” and tour the alcoholic pit stops of split-off West Berlin. She decides to make a heroic effort within her dissociated lockdown in fantasying and go beyond the figment-future of fulfillment all the way to realization or reality. Upon her arrival at the airport, the internal demand for reality is transmitted out loud through the public-address system. In circumvention of inner reality, the flight of fantasy aims for outer reality. She goes to town from the airport on the bus advertising the travel agency Wahnfried, the Wagner express.

The film follows the heroine’s commitment to finding a form for her drinking-thinking. The costumes the drinker wears are too architectural for us to ignore the innovation and invention going into their cutting out and assembly. In certain scenes, notably those in which the dwarf impresario joins the lady, we stand at the border to the poetic night dream.

On her first cab ride at night in Berlin the lady drinker becomes the driver. The transposition is like early film illustrations of daydreaming, which are funny, but here it is a jolting loss of boundary and defense, like the mishaps by bystanders cluttering her path already at the airport. While her immersion in alcoholic self-destruction doesn’t leave a smudge on her, she is nevertheless marked as the identified patient of every system she visits. Following the jolt of becoming someone she isn’t, the taxi driver knocks over the bag lady’s shopping cart – and the drinker-protagonist back into the passenger seat. From there she can see better the depressive position. But it’s tolerable even now, fascinating on the human side, and will grow on her, until the two film heroine stereotypes are knocking about together in

93 Tabea Blumenschein, who on occasion acted for Ottinger, was an artist in mixed media, including clothing design.
a relationship that becomes more differentiated in its range of affect than manic overvaluation and devaluation.

After the relay of reality-test fantasies, the camera widens the spacing of its view of unidentified landscapes. It reflects for a spell the pull of the documentary perspective already on the horizon of this art film, a perspective that would ultimately subsume Ottinger’s cinema. Ottinger’s juxtaposition of untenable exoticisms or stereotypes, pulled largely from the film culture of Europe before the impact or fact of Nazi Germany (like the Countess and the fish wife represented by the drinker and the bag lady), skips traumatization. Ottinger projected her first fantasy feature in 1977. Madame X: Eine absolute Herrscherin (Madame X: An Absolute Ruler) was a heroic adventure of piracy on Lake Constance and the China Sea unstuck in the grave of history. It was the idealized past gesturing toward the utopian-aesthetic future of fulfillment, but called back to local responsibilities by the trigger in the present. An unafraid tour critical of but not correct about history made in Germany, which we can follow in Ottinger’s fantasying films, cannot get past the protest culture of retraumatization. Entry upon uncharted landscapes in her documentary cinema could, however, proceed without trigger warning.

Winnicott’s didactic and moral stance upholding the value of the night dream’s symbolism and poetry over against the fleeting fixity of daydreaming and its ongoing risk of dissociation corresponds to the Thomas-Mannian side of Sontag’s realizations, her fiction. His patient who guides the analyst down the path of a third term unto a fantasying of fantasy represents the side Sontag took in her cultural journalism. However, the transferential “mutual-daydreaming” collaboration of both sides in Winnicott’s case study meets denial. The very words daydreaming and wish fantasying don’t appear in Sontag’s writing though they are intimated in the recourse made to prolonging night

94 Although she spent her early years in hiding with her Jewish mother in Constance, the closeness was doting and devoted (the only third person at this time was her other mother or grandmother). Her projection booth in the setting of traumatic history is the cozy corner of this deepened and extended dyad.
dreaming into waking reality. Only in *Alice in Bed* is there an integrated presentation of the two bookends of Sontag’s realization of her early wish to be a big ideas author.

In *Alice in Bed*, the disruptive appearance of a burglar in the fantasy of Alice getting up out of bed is the datemark of a present reality, the trigger of the fantasy pressing toward realization. The burglar tells Alice this isn’t a dream and asks why she doesn’t scream. “What I do is mostly not do things,” says Alice (105). But: “Sometimes I have such odd thoughts” (101). The burglar’s illegal entry, the encounter with bed-ridden Alice, and his theft with her blessing, comprise the play’s climax, as Sontag underscores in the Note. The thief is recruitable by Alice to get a rise out of her dissociative daydreaming. She’s not as old as he imagined, the thief tells Alice and acquiesces (92). In her Note Sontag avows: “I have been preparing to write *Alice in Bed* all my life” (117).

In 1949, Sontag used her diary to compile lists of teen code words for gay identification and experience. It concludes the inside view afforded by her 1987 novelization of an ongoing encounter, call it intrapsychic, between the gay European midlifer she would become and her starting position, the ambiguously straight teen surfer with whom she merged. The following exchange, in which, California Susan notes, “real” means “gay,” throws a summary loop through recruitment unto realization:

“Are you for real?” “I’ll do until the real thing comes along.”

**Chances with the Stars**

Byrd Hoffman gave dance instruction to young Robert Wilson, which, by pulling his speech defect inside out through his body, provided successful therapy. In her name, Wilson carried forward his newfound access to non-linguistic reserves of language onto the stage of a new theater. While he commenced together with the “Byrd Hoffman School of Birds” first experiments in theater and performance, Wilson also worked as teacher and therapist. Chance or luck guided his early choices. He happened upon the plight of Raymond Andrews, who was being harassed by police

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95 Sontag, *As Consciousness Is Harnessed to Flesh*, 42.
as recalcitrant juvenile not realizing, as Wilson recognized, that the boy was deaf. *Deafman Glance*, the silent opera immersed in the trauma time of a mute boy’s recollection of his murdering mother, was the result – with Andrews as one of the performers on stage. When Wilson adopted his muse and charge, he resolutely added choice to chance. It was the affirmation he again provided in the case of another discovery, Christopher Knowles, whose autism served as found resource for the poetry of *Letter for Queen Victoria* and *Einstein on the Beach*.

Susan Sontag wrote *Alice in Bed* for Robert Wilson to stage at the Schaubühne in Berlin in 1993. She didn’t want collaboration; she wanted regular collaboration. In 2000, she remembers to note the importance of Wilson “though he’s increasingly distracting himself with projects like doing the décor for the Guggenheim’s Armani show.” 96 Sometimes Sontag was really clueless. While in the more distant past it was chance encounters that led Wilson to engage, for example, a Freud-lookalike off the street to perform in *The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud*, in time it was the chance of contact with the famous that drew his productions onward. Lady Gaga proposed to Wilson that he be her mentor. When she made contact with Wilson, she was following in the footsteps of her art heroine, Marina Abramovic, who by then had joined those lonely at the top. In 2010, visitors to New York’s MoMA swallowed the Abramovic formula: endurance-testing control over the body is the mind’s Passion, which the artist imparts to her audience face-to-face. When in 2007 Marina Abramovic commissioned Wilson to stage her funeral, her “death,” he agreed on the condition that her “life” also be party to the performance. That three years later, she even played the part of her idealized (and hated) mother belongs to Wilson’s therapeutic intervention.

For his 2014 Paris exhibition, “Living Rooms,” Wilson made a series of video portraits of Lady Gaga, which reenacted artworks in the Louvre’s collection. In one gallery space, there were eleven video portraits based on the severed head in Andrea Solario’s

“John the Baptist on a Charger” (1507) and a single Ingres reenactment. Lady Gaga as “Mademoiselle Caroline Rivière” (1805) was not chopped or cropped in close-up, but the face was accorded its due. What is faced in Ingres’s portrait is the adolescent girl’s death the following year. In another gallery – in the midst, this time, of the old masterpieces regularly on display – was a video portrait of Lady Gaga reprising Jacques-Louis David’s painting “The Death of Marat” (1793). The role of Marat seated expiring in his bath was a performance her face carried off above the single breast slipping out into view.

In the beginning of her career, Lady Gaga masked her face, but then tended to displace the face-to-face through exhibition of her body, at once “perfect” and throwaway, just like a blank used for replication. Just add a face. According to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of faciality (in *Mille Plateaux*), the “aspect” that ranges widely across bodies or landscapes is ultimately the face of Christ. But Wilson’s face-saving intervention underscores that before the deposit can be thus redeemed what we face-to-face is an object of identification dangling in the nothingness of finitude.

A living room is the stage on which we stand, sit, and stretch out, among other conjugations of “being.” Just as the word “standing” (for example) is historically related to “being” in Indo-European languages, so “mourning” in the same lexicon means to “to fall down” (in identification with the dead).

The fall also rises in accord with the repeated throws of chance that initiate in the moment the itinerary or understanding of change. Wilson threw one Lady Gaga portrait out of the loop of reenactment into the center of “Living Rooms.” Wilson reconstructed his residence at the Watermill Center in the Louvre as stage set for displaying a large sampling from his private collection. In the “bedroom,” there was an unidentified flying object, which turned out to be another Lady Gaga video portrait, one that did not refer to a work in the Louvre, however, nor did it belong to the Watermill collection.

What we saw was her body articulated through shibari, the Japanese art of rope-bondage. Is the occluded face not re-inscribed on this “foreign” body lifted up from itself – like the view of her abdomen and womb that Baubo framed when
she pulled her dress up over her head? The flashing of the face on the exposed female body, the punch line whereby Baubo delivered Demeter from the stuck place of her melancholia, can be seen, Freud allowed in “A Mythological Parallel to a Visual Obsession” (1916), as the humorous aside to the infamous prospect of Medusa, the face-to-face that turned some into their own gravestones, but also signaled heterosexual desire’s stiff competition. The bondage portrait dangled before us the prospect of a fall upward, which, like the throw of chance, like the body’s own tumescence in sexual arousal, reverses the pull of gravity (or grave).

The night of the vernissage, Wilson’s *Lecture on Nothing* opened the series of theatrical events at the Louvre, which framed and supplemented “Living Rooms.” John Cage’s 1949 “Lecture on Nothing” is a beacon that Wilson followed early on in his own theatrical reclamation of disconnection (for example, speechlessness) as another form of connection. For a 2012 tribute to Cage exhibited at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin (at the time the production of “Lecture on Nothing” was in the works), Wilson contributed a page he inscribed with a recollection. The composer let him know following a performance of *The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud* that they were pursuing divergent paths. But disappointment gives way to reparation as Wilson writes on with affirmation that Cage’s *Silence* was his greatest inspiration. In the course of his performance of “Lecture on Nothing,” Wilson focused on the irritability Cage admitted in passing: “If we are irritated, it is not a pleasure. Nothing is not a pleasure if one is irritated.” In Cage’s lecture, irritability was absolved by affirmation of “the pleasure of being slowly nowhere.” By turning up the volume on the irritation invoked and denied in the lecture, Wilson accorded ambivalence (“Yes and No”) to Cage’s outright dismissal of their affinity.

Surrounded by excerpts from the lecture handwritten on banners, Wilson took Cage’s express invitation (that bored audience members should go to sleep) to bed on stage. Otherwise the staging made room for daydream association, ranging from an audio excerpt of Cage reading his lecture to the photo-based video images by Tomek Jeziorski of Cage and Alexander Rodchenko. At one point the other live actor (Tilman Hecker) looked over
stage and audience through binoculars from on high, no doubt a reference to Cage’s bird watching, but equally a seafaring image of finding the moment on the map. In an interview at the University of Iowa in 2008 Wilson noted: “My work has always dealt with a kind of space that allows one to daydream.”

In “Lecture on Nothing,” Cage narrated his decision to compose music out of deregulated sound in terms of taking the call he followed on a heroic quest. “Noises, too, had been discriminated against; and being American, having been trained to be sentimental, I fought for noises. I liked being on the side of the underdog.” That Cage makes Kansas the place name on the map of identification with the excluded suggests that it is the fantasy trajectory of The Wizard of Oz and not that of the competition from the same year, Gone with the Wind, that beckons for a chance, a change.

Both the heroic quest into the inner world and the fairy tale of development from primary narcissism to genital sexuality provide captions of legibility to daydream fantasy. Jean-François Lyotard’s reading of Hamlet’s active unfulfillment of every Oedipal task is the allegory of Shakespeare’s composition out of curtailed death wishes, in other words upon the crypts of his dead father and dead son. Mourning defuses the death wishes that melancholia projects, inverts, and staggers. One can add slowly being nowhere to this list of ways of disrupting the consumerism of wish fulfillment to make room for a “wishing well” in daydreaming.

97 Since the 2014 events in Paris, Wilson staged Faust I and II at the Ensemble Theater in Berlin. In the legendary translation scene, Goethe allegorized the advent of a German literary language through the momentum of Faust’s free translation of logos, moving on from the literal and historical options to arrive, fourth try, at the wished-for Tat (act or deed), which triggers the arrival of Mephistopheles. Wilson pulls out of the scene four Fausts (and three Margaretes), making it clear that “the wish” reaches further than “desire.”


Wilson included in his staging of “Lecture on Nothing” a repro of a letter to Cage mis-sent to his own address. We could see that his assistant back then scrawled across the envelope: “Bob, I thought he was long dead.” If the letter always arrives at its destination, then the death wish always comes true. In contrast, the ancient apparatus of I Ching, which Cage commenced applying to his compositions at the time of “Lecture on Nothing,” organizes “nothing” as coming attraction between chance and choice.

In the light of the I Ching’s augury of chance and change, P.K. Dick looks at the local condition of schizophrenia as the Trauerspiel of integration. Klein tied the open end – the incompleteness or fragmentation – of integration to a sense or direction of irretrievable loss, the melancholic destiny of being broken up, lonely, but lonely together with one’s lonely parts and partings. In “Schizophrenia & The Book of Changes,” however, Dick situates the disappointment with integration ineluctably within adolescence:

A human child, at birth, still has years of a kind of semireal existence ahead of him: semireal in the sense that until he is fifteen or sixteen years old he is able to some degree to remain not thoroughly born.

Entry into the shared world is the free gift that comes with going out on dates. But the earlier membership in the unborn state, which the pre-schizophrenic personality can’t let go, renders “asking out” already an unspeakable burden. The doomed personality defers the date request and instead gazes upon the cute prospect “for a year or so, mentally detailing all possible outcomes: the good ones go under the rubric ‘daydreams,’ the bad ones under ‘phobia’.”


102 Ibid.
Like the precog’s ability to view the near future of scientific hypothesis as a bank of monitored futures, the *I Ching* presents not what’s coming soon but the operative forces that determine the future. As such it intervenes at the limit of temporal experience, which Dick personalizes as that of the schizophrenic: “The schizophrenic is having it all now, whether he wants it or not; the whole can of film has descended on him, whereas we watch it progress frame by frame.”

While trying to reconstruct the chances and choices that led to the Lady Gaga video portraits, I kept running up against “James Franco.” I was following the throw of another link – to Mona Kuhn, whose photograph of a seated male nude seemed to promise illumination of the importance of “the sitting” within the conjugation of Being in Wilson’s “Living Rooms” – when I discovered, among the countless images available for searching, a spread of photographs Kuhn took of Franco, in which the first color photographs of Marilyn Monroe showing her intellectual aspect in the setting of her sex appeal shimmered through. I was at the art of wishing well. The report that Abramovic was making a film of Franco’s life, however, pulled up short before the asocial reservation of the daydream. But the Web, like the *I Ching*, neither tells the future nor fulfils wishes. It presents by throws of links the operative forces that determine the future.

103 Ibid.