

The Traveller's Pathos - A Clinical Exercise in Byzantine Perspective

Summary of the Doctoral Thesis

Submitted

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A psychoanalytic conceptualisation of the touristic would by necessity challenge the ontological status of the tourist, while, in parallel, proceed to the formulation of a modern subjectivity which is *per se* touristic. Is there a subject of Tourism, and what would its desire be? Why and how can such a subject be identified with the subject of science, the subject upon which analysis is exercised?

If the subject exists as *ex-sistant*, the dialectics of being-out-of-place will define not only the horizon of its existence, but existence itself; these very dialectics will become the horizon of every definition. If the modern subject is the one that can enunciate 'I feel a Tourist in my own Life', we are faced with a development, necessary due to the direction taken here. A touristic subjectivity becomes, more than a reference to the subject in the act or performance of tourism, a digressive or inversed possibility that the modern subject is *per se* touristic, that is, emerging *in distance*.

The displacement of the body takes here the place of the body itself; if something is displaced upon the body in the case of hysteria, for example, there is some sort of legitimacy in an attempt to look for something displaced upon the displacement of the body, in the case of tourism. Because, what proceeds through the opposition between *Τόπος* (the place of corporeality) and *Λόγος* (the word, sense, the symbolic), results in a topology. This, of course, in itself, negates the ontological status of a distinct phenomenon of tourism, while, in parallel, justifying the conceptualisation of a touristic subjectivity.

In a sense then, tourism is nothing more and nothing less than a reversed symptom, than a symptom turned inside out, not the opposite of hysteria, but rather some kind of hysteria starting from the end to make a circle all the way to the beginning, that is hysteria par excellence. The Hysteric is a tourist of her own life, in her own right; her body becomes a producible and consumable landscape of an unaccountable picturesque.

But, still, within the Discourse of the Tourist, the tourist is a mere shadow of the Gaze. It is by the function of the gaze, the object gaze, which is separated from the emerging subject that the 'I' can finally be articulated. Thus, though, it is by definition a Touristic 'I'. Indeed, despite the finest of intentions, and some considerable insight, that the concept 'Tourist Gaze' has so far carried, it has remained within the discourse of the Tourist as the actor of touristic mobility, hesitating to cross a line that would constitute the Tourist another term for the Subject itself. By seeing the differential quality of Distance we might be able to make a crossing that would situate the Tourist within the Dialectics of Desire, and allow us to discern the Touristic of the Subject.

The tourist gaze is not seeing; it is, on the contrary, showing. It is not the manner in which the tourist appropriates the landscape, the picturesque, let alone the picture, it is, reversely, the manner in which the tourist is appropriated by and objectified within the landscape. It is the shadow of the Gaze, confronted like that, as an object to be gazed upon, that the tourist is. The Gaze is what introduces the tourist into the picturesque, regardless of the form the latter may take, something ever outside the picture dropping its shadow - namely the tourist - inside it. If tourism is unfinished, or un-finalised, this is because this Gaze cannot return to the subject.

The supposition of an Other in tourism is the supposition of an incomplete Other, necessary for an imaginary effect to take place. As fantasmatic, tourism seeks to 'invade' the Other, like performance would invade a scene, to fill out "a void in the Other". The picture of the picturesque is the picture including the tourist himself, by means of the tourist's absence. It functions as Other as long as it includes an offer-able void to be filled in by the touristic fantasy.

Whatever the tourist may be trying to retrieve, to re-cover, he will always be coming face to face with an always-already covered object. Whatever the tourist gazes is the gaze of whatever gazes back at the tourist, the thing of which the tourist is the shadow. Therefore, the tourist will always re-turn; he will always be a re-tourist. However, the re-tourist will always re-turn as a symptom. Externality, exclusion from the Truth of the - hence lacking - Other, introduces the subject as an integral part of the Other's game. My externality is internal to the Other. The *objet petit a*, the Tourist Gaze, is this 'secret' of the Other, eluding as much the Other as within the Other.

Only writing offers the opportunity of not returning. It can simply remain unread. And yet, writing will still be there. It appears to be the one true perversion, and the truth of travel. After all, Pathos always appears in terms of a displacement of the body, as a 'heroic exit' that could always also be taken as a return, that is as destiny. If desire calls the body away from the surface of the mirror, protecting it from the eventual crash into it, Pathos celebrates this very crash.

And, certainly, there has to be a certain getting-off in it, which would also explain the intensity of the resistance mounted to it. Could this be a symptomatic writing, or even the writing of a symptom? It is, in any case, however, a circulation around pretexts. Even the subject appears to be pre-textual and contingent - it is there as something, as an impossibility, to be written. A pre-textual subject striving to make its appearance on the surface of a text, which, if it is to really be a text, and have a surface as texts are supposed to, has to keep the subject under it; and, on the other hand, an understanding of the subject, that is, in its truth, the response to a demand to stand-under the text.

An exercise in Byzantine perspective? Perhaps. It would, at least, be interesting to see how the subject of this reverse perspective appears in the perspective of things, and what it is to be a subject which, in the field of the visible, is positioned as the vanishing point, as is the case with Byzantine perspective.

If the subject of Brunelleschian perspective needs to resort to some sort of trickery, and hide itself behind a hole, a small opening at the vanishing point, from where it will have to look in a mirror, and is thus introduced in the field of the visible as what is kept outside it, present as absent, in *αφάνεια*, then this *αφανές* subject is one that has somewhere to go and somewhere to enter.

At the end of the day, there is no other Aphanisis than the *Αφάνισις* of the subject, which indicates a threat realized by the presence of the Other, and even this seems to be of a rather illusory – imaginary, that is – character. In final analysis, what is kept hidden is that the subject's eye is positioned at the vanishing point, not unlike the Byzantine subject's eye.

This is already, by definition, a subject-out-of-place. If the vanishing point appears to be elsewhere, then it is the subject itself that vanishes. And it would require some further trickery, such as the anamorphic object in Holbein's 'Ambassadors', and a very specific, from a spatial point of view, positioning of the subject, to reveal that it is, indeed, there – but yet to be written, contingent. And this, to the Cartesian subject, always comes as a surprise, if not as anathema. After all, it is not by accident that the anamorphic object in the scene is a skull. In all eventualities, the subject, uprooted from the visible and mobile as it may be, is unidirectional. This is the direction in which destiny and destination become indistinguishable.

So, instead of seeing in tourism 'metaphors of/for', one could see in the touristic the metaphorical itself, the structure itself of the metaphor, and do away with tourism altogether. Because, if I can say 'I feel a tourist in my own life', if, in other words, I see my life in perspective, attributing at the same time a spatial quality to it, then it is not the tourist, in the act of tourism, on the symbolic level, that constitutes the positioning of the signifier 'tourist' within the – all too common – phrase possible, but the signifier emerging in it that makes the act of tourism possible.

And let's not forget the fundamental 'theorem' at work here: The subject is the subject of being-out-of-place. Therefore, we are interested in the tourist insofar as he can be paradigmatic of the being-out-of-place, and the tourist is paradigmatic of the being-out-of-place to the extent that tourism presupposes a return. It's difficult to miss, here, that in the touristic, in that excellent metaphor of return, one can see the real always returning in the same position. Perhaps, a theory of the touristic – which is not to be understood as a theory of tourism – could lend a helping hand in answering how it is that the real always does so. The obvious answer might be that the real never really left. Perhaps, it is not the real, but the position itself that appears, only to disappear again, that surfaces, goes 'under', and resurfaces, in a repetitive manner. Perhaps, it is the position that should receive more conceptual attention.

And only when the motion of nostalgia, and the nostalgia of all motion, with whatever nostalgia allows to emerge, this *άλγος* of *νόστος*, the pain of return to a forever lost home, subdues the study of socioeconomic impacts of the temporary displacement of subjects within some industrial or post-industrial structure, we may be able to learn something about the subject from Tourism. Only when Tourism as such is posed as a problem and a request for Truth will its subject surface.

It may not be coincidental that at precisely the same period when tourism begins its historical development, the Victorian era, hysteria would become (re)cognisable in the context of that very discourse of displacement, of *Verschiebung*. If when we speak of a subject of tourism we most frequently have no idea what we're talking about, it is most probably due to

the fact that we forget that it is the Cartesian subject, the subject of the *cogito*, that we are concerned with. If there is something to be articulated, this would be the question of the form itself, always imprinted in the seemingly simple phrase ‘I need a vacation’, present as a demand for which no object that would satisfy it can be located. Or, rather, through the repetition of the touristic demand – for pleasure, rest, knowledge, difference – corresponding to a certain need, and mediated by language, desire reveals itself. A desire, however, the object of which remains obscure. After all, there is no object ‘vacation’, as anything else than what it etymologically implies – a void.

The fantasy of its filling up, the fantasy of fullness, is but a structural necessity of the emergence of a desiring subject, the stage where its desire will be ‘performed’. Going on a vacation guarantees nothing else, at the end of the day, than that a vacation will be again in order. A cycle of demand is always concluded with its repetition, ‘sketching’ the object of desire. A touristic subjectivity is the subjectivity of ‘Je suis là où je ne pense pas’ (I am there, where I don’t think). Material, corporeal displacement will result to a status of a temporary being-out-of-place, addressing, however, the question of the subject’s consistency of being-in-the-world, further displacing the latter onto the dialectics of space, in what could probably be an attempt to put a limit to it.

In a nutshell, I become a tourist, because I will, by necessity, consequentially also have to become a re-tourist. I may have claims about the reasons of my trip, which will most probably be accurate as regards the subject of the sentence in which they take place. After all, we can always find reasons for our behaviour. And, after all, it is all too proper to psychology to look for ‘the shadows of motives’. But, for psychoanalysis, it is the production of a knowledge on the level of the desiring subject, the subject of the enunciation, which manifests itself as Reason, and which will reveal that mastery over the body – by the very act of returning, revealing, as it does, the impossibility of return – constitutes a renouncement.

Only the real returns in the same position, and, as we have already guessed, this is most probably due to the position, and not due to the real. In any occasion, the question of the position appears, when it comes to the subject, to be directly related to the imaginary, and its fraudulent character, since, in final analysis, it always refers to the field of the visible, whether this has to do with perspective – the necessary condition of positionality – or with the emergence of the subject in front of the mirror, through the recognition of that image in there by the (m)Other. Alas, that very recognition, which allows the subject to emerge as such, that gaze of the (m)Other which shows me that I am *there*, also tells me that I am *out* there, and burns a hole on me, very much like the hole in the centre of Bruno Catalano’s travellers. It is around this hole that the subject is structured, it is away from this hole that the (m)Other’s gaze has burned open that the subject attempts to flee, and it is that hole that the subject carries with it. This could even be the void which vacation is a reference to, as well as the hole of the vanishing point from where the true subject gazes in order to construct the illusion of depth and space, and, ultimately, the illusion of a position in it, given that, for Brunelleschi’s trick to work, the subject has to stand in a specific position, it has to be, in a sense, tied down. In order for perspective to work, the subject has to stand still. The slightest displacement would instigate the advent of the real, the revelation of the trickery, the collapse of perspective and of the illusion of a world that makes (symbolic) sense.

Had I not returned, had I gone on with the pleasure of being there, this pleasure would turn into a suffocating, painful thing of death, depriving me of any possibility to desire being there; therefore, I return, I cut it off myself, and give myself the chance to have a ‘there’ that is not ‘here’, offering an opportunity to the spatial dialectics of desire to function. It is practically the structural necessity of castration that the produced knowledge reveals: I, as the master of my body, have to be castrated in order to be able to desire and have the ontological status of a desiring subject. In this manner, though, the subject also discloses the failure of

mastery over the body - that is castration - which, paradoxically, is also the condition of the existence of any mastery. Here the signifier represents the subject while, at the same time, it makes it vanish. The whole operation of Brunelleschian perspective, in constituting the modern subject, opens up before our eyes.

And, indeed, distance is experienced, traumatically, as alienation, as a difference, the 'geographic' difference between the here and the not-here, the here and the elsewhere, the place of the Other, metonymic of the 'linguistic' difference between the subject and its representation. Distance, the spatial distance to be covered, to bring the body to the place of the Other, functions as nothing but the metonymy of difference, and, in being so manifestly metaphoric, this *μεταφορά* of the - tourist - body is what characterises tourism and perspective at once. Hence, in trying to capture desire, the tourist will be constantly ending up being captured by it.

It is with Seneca that this knowledge became available, when he attested that man travels in search of an eluding object. This is what ascribes, for instance, in the mind of the young student Freud, the character of the sublime to Acropolis. Acropolis is an 'unattainable thing of desire', the meeting with which can never take place, an ever missed object. It can only be a limit which can never be reached. It is a sublime object that exists only as elusive, the existence of which is guaranteed by its non-attainability, the latter guaranteeing, in its turn, the possibility of desire. The object Acropolis seems to be a maternal thing, and as such not only unattainable, but also forbidden. The knowledge produced by the travel to Athens, and the visit to Acropolis, expressed by the realisation that it, Acropolis, really does exist, is the knowledge that the master, that is represented by the father in this case, could have never attained it, could have never been the desire of the mother. Hence the visit to Acropolis becomes an interrogation of the master, regarding the structural necessity of the master's castration.

In a bizarre way, this disturbance of memory on the Acropolis reflects the problematic of the question itself of the subject of the cogito: it is one thing to think of Acropolis, and another to be there. This is yet another way given to us to approach the manner in which the discourse of displacement gains its existence within the entanglement of what is spatial with what is of the subject. Indeed, what is seen here is the splitting of the subject, finding a support to emerge, in the presence of what can only be inscribed as absence and cannot be symbolised. The Acropolis simply keeps the role of that impossible object. It stands there not as an object of reality, not as a symbolic object, but as a Real object, that managed to become inscribed only because there was a failure in the process of formalisation, an object that, had it not been for the question Freud had to pose by his travel, and the failure that travel would evoke, would remain one that doesn't cease not to be inscribed. In last resort, it was the enjoyment mediating the knowledge Freud the tourist gained, that the master, in the face of his father, is castrated, that was the non-sense of his trip, filled with guilt and pain, as all such enjoyment is. A change in/of perspective, perhaps.

But, on the other hand, which traveller, tourist, ethnographer, or pilgrim ever cared to admit that it is a pleasure too intense and guilty to admit that guides the production of knowledge by means of (corpo-real) displacement? Something like libidinal (e)utopias of cannibalistic orgies, for instance. The level of the desiring subject, of the Freudian subject, at issue here, the level of a subject not identical to the self, is not the level of anthropological operations, which require an 'out there', a perspective, within which they will 'take place'. Indeed, the question that has - not by accident, certainly - never been really asked by anthropology itself is exactly the one regarding the desire of the anthropologist: What does the anthropologist (as an ethnographer, tourist, pilgrim or even warrior) want? Interestingly enough, this constitutive omission, or even evasion, of anthropology as a discipline could be regarded as an attempt to conceal not only the desire propelling the displacement of the

anthropologist itself, but also the role of castration therein, and its relation to writing and the establishment of a 'body of (anthropological) knowledge'.

Anthropology has been very successful in failing to formulate and posit the only meaningful question, by means of depositing it in order to confront the epistemological question in its place. By asking whether it can know the other (an object like the self – an objectification of the subject as self), how, how much, and from what position, it displaces the question of its own desire, by the displacement of the anthropologist's body – and on this level at least there is nothing separating it from any other kind of tourism. To be certain, this is the operation of modern science, of the field of the Cartesian subject: the separation, the cut, the breakage between epistemology and ethics (given that ethics, as psychoanalytic experience has shown, is concomitant to the question of desire). By its very constitution as a discipline, anthropology, then, cannot escape claiming its inscription in the scientific discourse, for as long as it presupposes a self identical to the subject and articulates its desire as a desire to know the other.

In this context, it follows that the positioning of the subject is being equated to the position of the (imaginary) self. This is also why the position from which the 'partial truth' of ethnography is spoken is the position of the anthropologist, of the anthropological self, that is, of an imaginary identification. Those 'partial truths' then, are no truths at all, to begin with. In sustaining the identity of a self as identical to itself, anthropology, as ethnography, tourism, pilgrimage or war, is bound to remain confined in a field where the game to be played is one of (mis)recognitions, which will allow the anthropologist to (mis)recognise himself as same, by positioning the other (as same to his own self) as other. What is at stake, of course, is not whether the anthropological self is same with or other than the other (but always a self identical to itself), something that 'halfie anthropology', for example, is all too keen to position at the centre of its problematic, but, rather, the extend to which it can be understood that the constitution of the self is always, structurally, a process of misrecognition, that is, that 'I' is always another.

From this field we can state that if ethnography is tourism with an alibi, then tourism is ethnography without a theory. Both the alibi (theory) and its absence cannot, however, account for the traveller's pathos. This is not to say that the investigation of what produces theory or its absence is a question that has no relevance here. Quite the contrary. Psychoanalysis has something to say about the relation between tourism and ethnography precisely because the traveller's pathos will produce something – theory, its absence, or loots of war, for that matter – which cannot account for it.

Ethnography, on the other hand, produces the anthropologist. It must not be by accident that ethnography and tourism are historically symptomatic, although such a chronological consideration would not necessarily signify a lot. The 'armchair anthropology' before Malinowski and Boas made their entrance into the anthropological scene, has been a phenomenon of a different order. On that scene the production of theory was not preceded by tourism as corporeal displacement to the place of the Other presupposing the return to the departure point, which, in this case, is none other than the University, where ethnography will be written. It is the separation of writing and displacement that creates the space for the advent of modern anthropology. After Malinowski, Boas, and their apostles, there can only be an anthropologist iff such a displacement has already taken place. It is this very displacement that will become the sine qua non of the production of an anthropologist, under the condition, of course, that (a) writing will take place after the necessary return.

Hence, Urbain's thesis positioning ethnography as a civilised, modernised, rationalised tourism. What the tourist will acquire or conquer by brute force and an un-accountable will – and that will be surplus enjoyment, or the absence of theory – and which will bring his pathos within the field of the visible, the ethnographer will hide behind knowledge, as if everything

is performed on the anthropological scene from the place of knowledge and for knowledge's sake. He will have to position enjoyment at the place of the Other, at the Other place, blind as he is, by definition, to the fact that Place is the Other and that there is no Other place, and search for meaning.

Anthropology is presented in history as the articulation of the knowledge of an Other, and even when it takes a turn orientating its gaze upon itself, this gaze remains an epistemological function; even then it fails to see that when looking in the mirror there is something that remains ever unseen. There still is an Other, cultural or other, to be examined and thoroughly investigated, but an anthropology of anthropology, even, if not especially, when anthropology becomes reflexive, an anti-anthropology, is still to take place. It is precisely this very failure to distinguish an object, other than the object of knowledge, the profound unwillingness that anthropology has exhibited and continues to exhibit to guess an object of desire, which will constitute it as anthropology in the first place. The misleading character of any ethnography whatsoever, as long as it continues to call itself ethnography, is that the ethnographer will never realise which is the true field of his 'fieldwork', what takes place during the process, that the Other to be confronted is not the other of cultural difference, but the Other of Culture, the Other from whose place the question of the ethnographer's desire will be posed. And, yet, what needs to be recognised in the core of a writing of displacement, simulated by anthropology, of the being-out-of-place, is a thesis which is foundationally and in principle ethical, and which, in any case, presents itself as a reference to a certain ethos: the writing of the being-out-of-place is itself a writing-out-of-place, de-localised, the necessarily displaced writing of displacement. Certainly, such (a) writing does not locate or position, it does not put in place, it doesn't find anything. Like all desire, it aims at dis-satisfaction. It is being written as passion, sadness, pain and joy. It is symptomatic with what indicates the descent of Eros from Thanatos – *Pathos*.

This is how what is of the subject, of the true subject, the displaced one, of the being-out-of-place can be told from what is in the sphere of images, fraud, illusion and meaning – whatever is written on the foot, against the knees, is true, whereas whatever carries the scent of scholarship is of the order of the testimony, of that compulsory lie taking itself for truth in front of the inquisition. Because only when the ego breaks into pieces can the truth of the subject emerge, and this only in the course of a retreat. The subject moves, walks away, departs – in the last resort, returns. The ethical request, as it is positioned by psychoanalysis, is exactly this: 'Eppure si muove', or, in other words, 'Wo Es war, soll Ich werden' – where it used to be, to hide, to be lost, missed, wounded, ruined, I must be torn apart. This 'Eppure si muove' establishes the necessity of the enigma, just as much as it is the only real response to it. We can imagine Oedipus replying 'Man', and turning his back to walk away from the Sphinx, victoriously walking towards his horrible destiny, while whispering 'and yet, it moves'. Because, if we accord it some reflection, even though he thought he was going away, escaping his homeland and destiny, he was, as a matter of fact, returning. Thus we can contemplate the means by which the destination becomes the returning destiny of subjectivity.

More than anything else, this reveals the tragic substance of myth, if not of the paradoxical existence of the speaking-being as being-out-of-place itself – the unknowing return, which has to be as much unknowing, as it must be a return. Isn't this the Freudian discovery, after all? A knowledge that doesn't know itself. The myth finds here a subject that is not the subject of knowledge, a subject that is obliged to be returning, while the subject who thinks it is leaving is just ignorant of this, with this very ignorance constituting what we know as knowledge. In fact, all that this myth finds is an empty place. This returning motion, taking itself for an escape, is what we can allow ourselves to call *Pathos*. *Pathos* positions itself as the quest for the human experience, as the Sphinx has put it, of the human as a subject in motion, as the being-out-of-place.

The Sphinx demands an answer to her enigma, the latter being here perceived both as the enigma posed by her, the one that is spoken by her, and as the enigma of her existence, as an assemblage of bodies. So, it is ‘the answer, or your life’. Of course, there is something wrong with this (Brunelleschian) picture: an enigma, any enigma, the enigma is never really a demand for meaning – that would be a test, a quiz, or whatever of that order have you. An enigma is always the enigma of desire and the enigma of the subject, and it is through it that subject and desire meet. This is what has killed the monster, what has turned her from an insurmountable bar to a barred something – what, in the end, has made her *Τόπος*, and what equates her to the holy inquisition, as the keeper of the letter of the scriptures at the time that something of Oedipus utters through Galileo “Eppure si muove”, which can, in this occasion, be taken as ‘and yet there is a (barred, desiring) subject’. Well, if indeed there is, then this subject moves.

There is no anthropology (as there is no psychoanalysis or tourism either), without or before the Cartesian subject, that is, before a subject in *αφάνεια*. See the irony in Catalano’s travellers – with a heavy suitcase in hand, on the way, convinced that they are on that way going somewhere or away, when, no matter where they are or go to, they are only going around that big hole in their centre, in the centre of their body. A body, moreover, that is already dead, symbolic. This is but one manifestation of the ironic character of deriving destination from destiny. And, at the same time, it offers the key to understanding how writing is simultaneously an effect and a condition of displacement, that is, of travel. If what travels is the body, and if that body is dead, overwritten by the symbolic, then the traces it leaves can only be of the order of the signifier, and, as such, they form a text. A certain signifiatory organisation, or else, a required structure of the traces, is not at issue, given the presence of a structure anytime we are confronted with *Topos*, albeit not necessarily obvious. Simply put, the traces that the displaced body leaves always form a structure.

Still, if one would wish to be a tad more accurate in speaking about the traces left by the displacement that, at the end of the day, constitutes the subject as the being-out-of-place, and about the texts thereby emerging, one should take into consideration that it is primarily the non-signifying, yet utterly effective face of the signifier that is at play here, that ‘material support’ of the signifier, that Lacan calls Letter. Hence the textuality of travel, as the material condition of modern, Cartesian, or Brunelleschian, subjectivity. It is rather tempting to say at this point, but still only as a sub-text, that the tourist is nothing more than how Capitalism has interpreted the traveller, or that tourism is merely what capitalism has done to travel, in connecting mobility to a lack of *jouissance*, in turning place into object-destination, and with the production of a surplus. And it is only because the question of Being, or Being itself, becomes, in the Lacanian perspective, increasingly associated with the Letter, the latter being related to *jouissance*, having ‘*jouissance effects*’, that we can conceive of a Traveller’s Pathos, introducing the dimension of Death in what would otherwise be considered the simple joy of changing views and consuming difference.

The consumption of difference, of course, is already in-itself no different than the consumption of signifiers that, as with any consumption, after the model of food consumption, leaves traces, material traces; and it is precisely the question of those traces that perplexes and challenges our Cartesian organizational structures. The desire of Being, of the being-out-of-place, would pose no problem, no complexity, had it not been for the Letter and the traces in question, and nothing would justify our appeal to Pathos. If the obsessive subject – in other words, the traveller – comes, for instance, into being once captured by the Other’s gaze, this could be the Pathos we may be able to distinguish in the bronze eyes of Catalano’s travellers. Yearning for his freedom, his craving, his urge to escape, and, in final analysis, the suffocation of the tormenting limitation the obsessive suffers, cannot be understood outside the material, spatial context, and the spatial context – taken here to be that of Brunelleschian

perspective – is just as real as the traveller's body. He is destined to be returning, and every new destination is destined to become the same point. Put in a slightly different way, the traveller roams the realm of Death.

And quite ironically again, this is also how Eros works for the obsessive – the promise of a new destination, beyond the borders determined by the Other's gaze, is on offer only in the guise of being captured by another's promising gaze; this is how the obsessive falls in love, only in a vicious, repetitive cycle, in the poetics of textuality. Lured by a gaze that appears to be repositioning him outside the field of the Other's gaze and inside a promise-land, when, on the contrary, it only chains or anchors him (ever) more firmly to the gravity of his own lack, which is what we take Catalano's Traveller's hole in the centre of the body to represent.

It seems to be the exclusion of/from a topos, from a promise-land, which takes place the exact moment the obsessive realizes that the Other's gaze has been withdrawn. It is then, at that very moment when he would finally be free, that he has nowhere to go. Take Brunelleschi's demonstration, for example – there is only one position from which it can take place. If the eye is positioned behind the indistinguishable hole on the vanishing point, dictating thus the place of the body, in order to look through the hole into the mirror, to see the mirrored painting as indistinguishable from the mirrored landscape, any displacement, and even the slightest instability, would immediately dissolve the illusion, and allow the truth of the situation of the subject within the Place of the Other, what we could call *unheimlich*, to erupt.

Irony appears to be the obsessive condition itself. At the moment when something is being real-ized, the gravity of his own lack becomes felt the most. The moment of realization is the moment of the withdrawal of the gaze, since, at the end of the day, it was the gaze that burned open the hole upon the event horizon, where the subject takes place, a hole which is never really there, and which the gaze itself took up the role of filling, while, at the same time, it merely keeps it open. The ensuing exclusion from that topos of infinite jouissance, from the promise-land in question, by the withdrawal of the gaze, is castration, and each consecutive rem(a)inder of the withdrawal will oblige the obsessive to confront the fact that he has been castrated, that paradise has been lost.

For us, if the question of the gaze arises at all, this is only to the measure that this gaze is an object which is a remainder after castration, indicating a sacrifice that has taken place, a sacrifice of a part of jouissance, which will introduce the subject to the social, that is, in the symbolic, which is what we know as 'place'. The initial withdrawal of the gaze of the Other in the imaginary, followed by the 'metonymic sliding' of the object in the symbolic, upon which desire is founded, is a necessary condition for the development of Pathos. Nonetheless, the object gaze as plus-de-jouir, or surplus-jouissance, remains within the order of the Real. Once the topos is excluded an entrance to it opens up. The obsessive will develop his Pathos for his hysteric counterpart, for instance, only under the threat of the latter's gaze being withdrawn from him, or, in other words, once the topos of his completion has been excluded. It is the exclusion of the place which allows it to emerge as the obsessive's destination, and as his destiny. And here is a fundamental difference between the obsessive and the hysteric – the hysteric offers herself to the place as meaning, symbolizes it by her presence, whereas the obsessive strives to realize it by his absence. Hence, for the hysteric, place, that is, Topos in/as the symbolic, is always It, while for the obsessive it never is.

The experience of the hysteric is thus the one closest related to the dread of the void; the hysteric's fundamental fantasy is, in fact, an expression of this very dread – she has to become the object that fills in the gap, the one that causes the Other's desire. A silent hysteric is, after all, an oxymoron. A hysteric in silence runs the risk of confronting their own *sous-rature*-subjectivity, that is, the question of their own desire, and this cannot be tolerated. At the same

time, however, what the hysteric's fantasy hides, is that the objective is to uncover and expose that very gap she will try to fill – if there is something to be filled, then this ought to be a gap. She is frequently afraid that she cannot feel, that she is 'emotionally crippled', that she can't really relate. This is, at least, how she imagines the man to be, and, in this manner, it is her womanhood that is really in question. No other, and, in what concerns her, especially, no Other knows what it is to be a woman, and no-One ever did. In luring the obsessive to attempt to show her, as if he could, as if this is possible, she has initiated a process where the meeting with a limit, with a border, will eventually and inescapably take place, and, therefore, the confrontation with castration will be in all eventualities realized.

In adopting such a strategy the hysteric appears usually unaware of the fact that the border in question, the finitude of Topos, introduced by castration, is precisely what the obsessive is after in the first place. It is this very exclusion of/from a Topos that allows him to disengage from the torturing identification with the One who supposedly knows what it is to be a woman, or, in optical terms, will disengage him from the fixed position required by the Brunelleschian demonstration. Paradoxically enough, castration makes free. If it is desire that motivates the subject, this is the desire of the Other, which has no object, and does not thus lend itself to being satisfied. Here we have the source of an agonising anxiety for the subject, which, unable to understand what the Other desires, prefers to interpret this desire as (a) demand, which, at least, has an object, and can be answered.

The obsessive's desire is structured as a resistance, as the desire to not go back, to not return, to not be the object that would satisfy the Other's demand, and, definitely, to not be that object that would cause the Other's jouissance, despite the guilt entailed in his pervert-like fantasies. In this sense, the opposite pole of obsession is not hysteria, but perversion, given that the pervert's fundamental fantasy is to be precisely the object that would cause the Other's jouissance. On the contrary, hysteria seems to have a lot in common, 'a certain affinity', or, at least, share momentum with perversion, since the hysteric's fantasy is to be the object that causes the Other's desire. A certain affinity between the object and the phallus, that is.

Very simply put, the obsessive is the one who has escaped the mOther's body, or, rather, a part of it, and his desire takes the form of a fight – till death, if necessary – to not be taken back. This probability of death is what aligns his desire to his Pathos. The presumed lack, and its exposure, become an offerable object. What, on the other hand, the obsessive has offered, is just as well his displacement from the position of the Other, and this is the only position from which the hysteric expects the question of her desire to be articulated.

He has been displaced, given that the obsessive's desire, as a function of the Law, is structured upon the fantasy of the Other Place, and is inhibited in the Place of the Other. The obsessive enters, therefore, the dialectics of desire in motion. He has to move, to be displaced, in order to respond to her appeal to want her. Nonetheless, the hysteric's desire is the desire of the Other, and not the desire of another. Hence, they will never meet on the plane of desire, given that for both desire is always a reference to the Other, always in relation and with respect to the Other. The question of the hysteric's desire, addressed to her from the Place of the Other, will become of importance to the obsessive only when it is articulated by him from the position of another, but to the hysteric the question is only being posed as a demand, and to satisfy it would be to close the gap, in which occasion the whole prospect of desire disappears. In all the suffering of his Pathos, entailed in the development of such a dialectic, however, the obsessive has achieved the initiation of a process in which the dialectic field constructed is one in which what has been, in final analysis, signified is the absence of the Other. By his displacement, he has managed to evade the presence of the Other, or, at least, so he tried. The 'You are not the Other', that the hysteric will finally address to him, simply signals the departure from the Place of the Other, the absence of the Other, or that the Other

has been muted. Qua Traveller, he has to keep on moving from Other Place to Other Place, as a structural necessity in which we can evidence the predominance of metonymy.

And once again, we see here the functioning of the logic of Brunelleschian perspective in the obsessive strategy. The subject strives to be excluded from the Place of the Other, to remain invisible within the field of the visible, to have a view of the Place which is cleansed of the subject. This is how we understand the necessity of hiding the eye behind the hole right on the centre of the vanishing point. What emerges thus is the Other Place, the Brunelleschian plane, which, one shouldn't forget, is, in essence, a mirroring, and, as such, a 'reversive' function. The Other Place, in front of the subject's eye, the place of fantasy, is but a mere reflection of the Place of the Other, which includes the body of the subject. Any motion towards the Other Place, any effort to enter it, even if it was possible to keep the relation of the mirrored (imaginary) painting to the mirrored (symbolic) background fixed, and it is not, would only bring the subject in a greater distance from it. The subject would only be further away from the field. If in front of Holbein's 'Ambassadors' there is only one position forbidden to the subject, if the subject has the liberty to keep moving around and gazing at the painting from all but one positions, in avoiding the truth of the Place of the Other, when it comes to the Brunelleschian plane, at the moment of the vision of the Other Place, there is nowhere to go, no way to enter, the subject has to remain still in order to retain the vision.

The process takes, in fact, the form of an effort to neutralize the function of an ever eluding object, to stabilize and fix the horizon, since fixing is exactly what is necessary for a horizon to be crossed. Nothing could be more welcoming of such an operation than knowledge, given that, by its very definition, knowledge is what 'pins down', what finalizes at any given moment. To put it geometrically, a second point is necessary to limit infinity, the infinity of possibilities, and define a line, to finalize, in this manner, a unique possibility. This is a Euclidean geometry, to be precise, but, on the other hand, the Brunelleschian plane is a Euclidean experience, and so is ours. Far fetched, as it may be, but perhaps we can realize in this fashion the importance of the analytic spatial arrangement, with the analyst sitting behind the head of the analysand, there where he cannot become entangled in an unfitting discourse by the latter's gaze. He becomes 'actively absent', in a Topos not accessible to the hysteric's tempting gaze.

There is, indeed, a point at which the traveller has to stop moving, and what guarantees his stasis is his own desire. The desire that behind the surface he is confronted with there is something else, something more, that there is another land after the border would have been crossed. What appears to be an unwillingness to decide whether to proceed, to move forward, bears the protective seal of desire. In this sense, the hubris of Oedipus has been crossing the border, shattering the surface when confronted with the enigma of desire. With the enigma of the Other's desire, to be more precise, since, if there is a (m)Other par excellence, that is no other than the Sphinx, the composite monster, with the female face, the motherly breasts, and the body of a beast, ready to devour the traveller and terminate the travel. That magnificent monster, whose face, from where the symbolic enigma of the human as traveller will be posed, will not hide the real of its bestial body and of the hunger inhabiting it.

Oedipus has already committed his hubris by answering, by responding, that is, to the Sphinx; it is there and then, at the point where he gives the (correct) answer to her, an answer that can only be 'I am that', the answer to her enigmatic desire, since a question always asks for something, that he crosses the limit. The killing of the father, which has preceded the encounter with the Sphinx, can never be the hubris, after all. In that sense, there is no oedipal as anything else than the confrontation with the (m)Other's desire. And if Oedipus could, as he did, provide the Sphinx with an answer, an answer that should have never been given, the 'I am that' that he unashamedly uttered, the 'It is man', coupled, as it usually is with the 'eppure si muove', the reason is that, being on the run from his destiny, which is what he

knew, and running, at the same time, towards it, a knowledge that doesn't know itself, he didn't consider the Other's question as one of desire. A 'that' that moves is, in last resort, either the object or the phallus, depending on whether the question is desire or jouissance respectively.

Scared of meeting (with) the (m)Other's desire, on a fugue, a fugitive of his own will (which, indeed, turned out to be a will-to-jouissance), he fails to recognise the Other in that monster of inconsistency – part woman, part beast, obstructing his way out. The Other always appears somewhere else, as something else, unrecognisable and inconsistent, and when the subject arrives at a confrontation with the Other, the confrontation had already taken place. One will opt for every kind of small death in order to avoid the big one, which, however, is, at the end of the day, unavoidable, for anyone who has been sexually produced. And each kind of small death is small not because it's less of a death, but because it's but a mere reflection of and on the big one, of and on the ultimate hubris. What forms there, between one death and the other, is the Topos where the traveller, that is, the subject, roams, and, although always-already dead, 'si muove' (eppure). This is the Topos of Pathos.

In this the subject is not unlike the Other – once the confrontation with it takes place, it had already taken place. Hence the diarrhoeic parlance of the hysteric, attempting, in fact, to keep the subject moving, in order to avoid the confrontation, or the pseudo-enigmatic, constipational silence of the obsessive, trying to anchor it, to retain it, and evade the threat of aphanisis upon confrontation with the Other. At least, parenthetically, as far as the Ego is concerned, that Ego of speech, the subject aligns the oral and the anal, or even condenses them, in performing the function of the excrement. For that Ego, the excrement is the signifier par excellence of the subject.

In any case, however, a subject whose condition is that of the being-out-of-place, is a subject in exile, one not to be retained, not in the sphere of history, but rather in the sense of what might have been. The theme of exile itself is quite universal, whether it concerns the exile of Adam and Eve from paradise, the exile of the Jews, the exile of Mohamed from Mecca, or the exile of Deganawitha, in the Iroquois federation constitutional myth. It is also present in the claustrophobic mis-appreciation of philosophical environments of Lévi-Strauss, and in Catalano's travellers' hopeless gazes. The Topos on the Other('s) side, the one behind the surface of the mirror, is not only a very dangerous, quite silly, and rather nonsensical place, where one runs the risk of becoming a pawn, not only the dwelling of all kinds of lurking demons, but also an impossibility. An impossible and, at the same time, forbidden Topos. And yet, this also seems to be the Topos of (e)utopia and dystopia together, that is, the Topos of Pathos. On the other hand, it is definitely not the least bit accidental that utopia actually means 'non-existent place'. Behind the surface there is nothing, but in this 'nothing' the 'I' sees the lost paradise, as well as the promised hell.

This is to say that the Real as such, is a retrospective reconstruction, and here one is faced with an epistemological question. And this question doesn't regard the gestalt in the sense that the whole may be more or less than the sum of its parts, but in the sense that the whole is other than the sum of its parts. And this also ascribes the character of retrospective reconstruction to any idea of a maternal oceanic to which the subject yearns to return. If, indeed, there is any desire to return to the sea, the inorganic, the elementary, or the maternal womb, that is a desire functioning, as desire does, as a defence against jouissance.

If there is a subject of desire, that is most certainly not our traveller. Because desire is the purifying metaphor, the purifying catalyst at the heart of the metaphoric, originating from the paternal metaphor, from the very function that generates desire as desire for something else, someone else, and somewhere else. This is what will constitute the neurotic symptom meaningful – its metaphoric quality, this function of purifying the subject's desire from its Pathos, by displacing the subject within its Topos of suffering, in last resort, by metaphORIZING

the subject itself. On the contrary, the psychotic will try to construct a Topos in which a position, a Thesis, would be possible. Any lucid enough psychotic becomes aware of the fact that what makes sense 'inside' doesn't make sense 'outside', and that is simply because a Topos where displacement could be taking place is absent. All a psychotic has is a Thesis, a 'here' without a 'there', that is, a Thesis without a Topos. The only reason why this is not a mere absurdity is because, in the emergence of subjectivity, Thesis precedes Topos.

It is the maternal bosom that is the mine, and, potentially, the minefield, of Thesis, Topos, and Pathos, the exile that one will accept or not, be subdued to or not. This is the place of the making of a being-out-of-place. This is the 'I' of God, and the eyes of the mother one will confront again on the surface of the mirror. Perhaps, it is not the breasts with their staring nipples that look like eyes, looking at you, with a welcoming or a frigid, a confirming, capturing, repelling, or reassuring gaze, but the eyes that bear a certain similarity to the breasts. If there is anything human about the Sphinx, after all, that is her face, as the surface of her eyes, and her breasts.

For one thing, for animals, Thesis and Topos form an unbreakable unity, whereas the human infant has to be placed, positioned, localised in relation to the breast. Thus, Thesis precedes Topos. This Thesis, however, bearing the character of a certain permanence, is to be lost forever, and to be replaced by a Stasis, a temporary stop or placement in relation to the breast. Since, nevertheless, there is only one such position, what has taken place is the emergence of (a) Topos, that is, of a matrix around it that is not it. Hence, Topos has emerged due and as a reference to the lost Thesis, the big death, and Stasis, a series of small ones, is left as a rem(a)inder of it. Fantasy, here, serves to veil the primary fantasy of returning to a permanence, which, despite whichever maternal desire, has never been there or possible.

In any occasion, the subject is no other than what has been subjected to castration, than what is determined by the absence of the phallus, than what befalls in the place of the lack. Desire will be defined, in this manner, as a desire to lift subjectivity, to saturate the subject, since there is no other desire than the one desiring the return of the phallus in the Thesis in which it is missing, and which is covered for by the subject. Hence, desire itself bears, by a certain possibility for its fulfilment, the threat of aphanisis. The Thesis at which the phallus is missing is, nevertheless, identifiable for the subject to the Thesis which the subject has lost for good, and to which it strives to return. Therefore, albeit paradoxically, the subject occupies a position which it has lost, the location of which it fails to recognize. In this fashion, the subject is found where it is not, in a paradoxical Topos, of which the horizon is none other than the subject's Pathos, while its condition of exile must, at all cost, be sustained, since a return to the primordial Thesis would most certainly result in aphanisis.

The subject, then, is what might-have-been in its place, at the same time desiring and being threatened by the coming of the phallus, which keeps both the subject and the phallus moving. We encounter here once more the Death drive running through the Pathos of return to the Thesis, the Pathos, that is, for a de-subjectivisation of the subject, which, in all this, functions towards nothing less than its very mobilization. Here, of course, it is writing that represents, par excellence, the possibility of a Thesis, and, mainly, Pathos as the horizon of the Topos of the subject, precisely because *scripta manent*, even if the desire that invests it with signification is somehow modified, or even flies away, since, theoretically, the presence of Pathos does not necessarily presuppose desire, whereas desire is never completely deprived of Pathos; despite the various attempts, especially on the issue of writing, and more particularly in the context of science, through the formalization of language, of which the primary concern appears to be its de-Pathologization.

The subject is thus constantly inscribed as non-inscribable, within the horizon of a Topos, and in a position that it owes not to occupy, in that singular position, the Thesis, that it is due to have lost. It is in this perspective that the symptom is not there to mean something,

doesn't reveal anything, but the threat that the subject coincides with its Thesis, that the condition, if one could not call it a regime, of its exile will be lifted. What the symptom reveals is that the Topos of the subject is in danger of being constituted superfluous, and, as such, meaningless, a situation to which the advent of the symptom is an effort to metaphorize Topos. In final analysis, what is evidenced in the symptom is the fact that a metaphor is always meant to be the metaphor(a) of the subject, and, as such, the subject itself.

And, in other words, the subject being confronted with the threat of aphanisis concurrent with the coincidence with its Thesis – a threat and a danger as real as the maternal breast – it prefers to confront it as a danger of the eclipse of Topos, as a gradual narrowing or nearing of the horizon, to which it responds with a metaphorization of either the body, or of Topos itself, and, especially, of the Stases possible within it, protecting, in this way, its dimensional existence. There is no better manifestation of 'taking a stance', particularly in the ethical dimension carried by that phrase, or of 'standing one's ground' than the Stasis of the symptom, especially considering the Thesis which this Stasis will try to resist.

The real threat to the subject, however, a threat that persists in its truth, is not the threat of aphanisis, and much less, of course, is it the threat of castration, hence, it is not the threat of a loss and the adjacent to it fear; even if every lack is to be considered by the subject evidence of a loss, the subject included as 'missing in its place'. The real threat is the threat of losing the threat of aphanisis itself – that is the real terror. The Real lacks in nothing but lack, and this is really terrifying. Therefore, if the subject insists on a Stasis, on a symptom, for instance, this is not only to be taken as a, more or less futile, attempt to reproduce the primordial condition of Thesis, but also as its opposite, as a, perhaps much less futile, attempt to sustain the threat lacking in Thesis, the very threat that has produced a body and a Topos in which that body can be positioned, in the first place.

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