Filozofski vestnik
ISSN 0353-4510 | Volume 46 | Number 2 | 2025 | 67–92
 | DOI: 10.3986/FV.46.2.03

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Breast and the Jetty: On Traversing Anxiety

Keywords
anxiety, the breast, desire, originary fantasy, the future, GIFRIC, psychosis

Abstract
This essay explores a possible traversal of anxiety in dialogue with Chapter 5 of Joan Copjec's *Read My Desire*, "Vampires, Breastfeeding, and Anxiety." At stake in this traversal is an act of freedom that opens up a future for the human. Starting with the play of Freudian resonances in Copjec's title, "Breast and the Jetty" plays, in turn, as an echo of "Death and the Maiden" that enables an analysis of fantasy as a solution to castration anxiety in the neurotic, which has the effect of circumscribing desire. Analyses of the problematics of the breast as partial object and object cause of desire and of the "forbidden woman" Copjec locates in Chris Marker's *La Jetée* emphasize a shift from Lacanian theory, centered on the symbolic, to Willy Apollon's recent metapsychology, developed from GIFRIC's clinic for the treatment of psychosis in Quebec. By attending to this work, and to the nuances of originary fantasy Lucie Cantin offers, I discern the qualities of an unfettered quest of desire, independent from the conditions of neurotic fantasy and capable of confronting a future for which there is no reference in language.

Dojka in pomol: o prekoračitvi tesnobe

Ključne besede
tesnoba, dojka, želja, izvorna fantazma, prihodnost, GIFRIC, psihoza

Povzetek
Prispevek raziskuje možnost prekoračitve tesnobe v dialogu s petim poglavjem knjige Joan Copjec *Read My Desire*, »Vampirji, dojenje in tesnoba«. Pri tej prekoračitvi gre za dejanje svobode, ki človeku odpira prihodnost. Medtem ko v naslovu zadevnega

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poglavja iz Copjecine knjige odmeva naslov Freudovega spisa, pa v naslovu pričujočega članka »Dojka in pomol« odmeva naslov slike »Deklica in smrt«, ki nam omogoča analizo fantazme kot rešitve kastracijske tesnobe pri nevrotiku, kar ima za posledico omejitev želje. Analize problematike dojke kot delnega objekta in objekta-vzroka želje ter »prepovedane ženske«, ki jo Copjec najde v filmu Chrisa Markerja *Mesto slovesa*, izpostavi premik od lacanovske teorije, osredotočene na simbolno, k nedavni metapsihologiji Willyja Apollona, razviti v kliniki za zdravljenje psihoz GIFRIC v Quebecu. Iz obravnave tega dela in različic izvorne fantazme, ki jih ponuja Lucie Cantin, avtorica v članku razbere lastnosti nebrzdane težnje želje, ki ni odvisna od pogojev nevrotične fantazme in se lahko sooči s prihodnostjo, za katero v jeziku ni nobene reference.

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From Trimethylamine to the Navel

Freud's 1926 "Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety" is the echoed title in "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety," Chapter 5 of Joan Copjec's *Read My Desire*. Through Jean-Jacques Rousseau's and Mary Wollstonecraft's texts, however, "Vampires" and "Breast-feeding" both appear as symptoms of a culture preoccupied with the drying-up of the breast *qua* representative of submission to the social law.[1] While these authors disagreed about women's role in eighteenth-century society, both saw in breastfeeding mothers the key to a child's and a society's flourishing. Thinking of the French libertine tradition, more specifically of Lacan's work on the Marquis de Sade and ethics, Copjec briefly notes this is also a moment in history when the individual subject emerges as synonymous with "exalted evil" in libertine thought, in other words, as impossible "to integrate" into society. She further points out that this non-integration implies a "necessary interrelation" between subject and society, rather than their mere "external opposition."[2] The individual subject as the site of singular experience is indeed the central discovery these different thinkers respond to. For instance, although Rousseau would not see it as evil, he too suggests that an exalted excess inhabits the child, even when breastfed by a loving mother who protects it from becoming spoiled and secures strong ties amongst family members and in

1 Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists* (New York: Verso, 2015), 127.

2 Copjec, 124.

society.[3] It is because the individual subject is at once irreducible to society yet never fully decouplable from it that these articulations and positions regarding the law are theorized and explored as modes of human life.

When Freud, with his patients, invents psychoanalysis at the turn of the twentieth century, he relies on this dimension of individual experience that refuses to simply adapt to the social environment constraining the individual. For Copjec, both eighteenth-century encouragement of mothers to breastfeed and twentieth-century historicism—the textual methodology she pits against Lacanian theory—deeply fear the confrontation with the real. In the first case, however, the symbolic shielding against the real in a way recognizes this real, whereas the second case involves a foreclosure of the gap induced by the real, giving the historicist "a certain deafness, to the signal sounded by the dream."[4] The dream invoked here in relation to the signal of anxiety is none other than Freud's own dream of Irma's injection, where he peeks into Irma's mouth to encounter strange, disturbing forms that point back to his own body. Copjec proposes that Freud also turns away from anxiety, and that his triumphant limit against the anxiety this encounter provoked in him lies instead in the symbolic tactics of naming the substance he injects into Irma's body "trimethylamine."[5] But I would like to come back to what disturbs Freud in the open mouth. If this moment of self-reflection is uncanny, it is not merely because the image is of his unseemly nasal passages afflicted by cocaine use, but above all because it points to his own body as the source of an act with consequences for others. It is interesting to consider that this dream was not only crucial to inaugurating psychoanalysis, but also to marking out an intractable real as that which anxiety signals, the navel of the dream without which there simply is no dream in clinical terms. While "trimethylamine" is certainly symbolic—in Freud's analysis it points to Wilhelm Fliess' theory of sexual chemistry as well as to the friendship

3 Rousseau famously relates his lasting eroticized childhood experience of Mme. Lambercier's physical punishment, which he only refused to reproduce to avoid this maternal figure's moral disapproval. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, trans. Angela Scholar (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14–15.

4 Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 125. Copjec presents Erikson and a female participant, who interprets the dream in pointing out the suffocating effect of women's clothing worn in Irma's time, as instances of the historicist position within the discussion around Freud's dream.

5 Copjec, 121.

between the two men—it is not the navel *per se*.[6] Like the subject of "exalted evil," the navel of the dream can neither be fully represented nor interpreted. It is the genuine site of the subject, which cannot be traced back to the social, unlike everything else in the dream. At this site, the signifier fails and yet the subject's singularity is mobilized to pass to the act precisely because nothing in language can support it.

Tracy McNulty has pointed out Freud's declared struggle regarding the patient who provoked the dream. On the one hand, he still hopes that informing Irma of her unconscious wishes fulfills his role, leaving her to accept them and thus become free from her symptoms. On the other hand, McNulty claims that "Freud is discovering for the first time that the patient is confronted with a real for which there is no name, about which she knows nothing, that is not an object of conscious knowledge."[7] It is thus at the place of the open mouth, McNulty notes, where Freud sees the terrifying forms reminiscent of illness and death, that he inserts a footnote to indicate the "navel of the dream," what has no signifier and is the dream's "point of contact with the unknown."[8]

This point of failure of the signifier is the site of an eventually possible act that does not fail and instead introduces and sustains a subject's desire in the world while assuming its consequences for that subject and for others. In his seminar on Freud's dream on March 16, 1955, Lacan highlights this site of chaos and loss of the subject in the dream to show that in analyzing his own dream Freud addresses himself to us, avowing his transgressive desire.[9] "No doubt the syringe was dirty," Lacan writes, ventriloquizing Freud, and emphasizing the contagious effect of his act of curing patients "who until now no one wanted to understand, and whose cure was forbidden."[10] McNulty in this regard proposes that Freud's analysis of his dream has the status of a true act of transmission,

6 Sigmund Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–74), 4:116–17.

7 Tracy McNulty, "Untreatable: The Freudian Act and its Legacy," *Crisis and Critique* 6, no. 1 (2019): 226–51, 234.

8 Freud, "Interpretation of Dreams," 4:111n1.

9 Jacques Lacan, *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954–1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 170.

10 Lacan, 170.

with which his work as an analyst first of all confronts analysands, whose drive is called forth by the analyst's desire. If Freud's analysis of the dream can be seen as a "pass," it is "not so much because he manages to construct and put into words an unconscious logic, but because he emerges from the dream-analysis having accepted what is acting in him, as well as in his patients, rather than fearing or repudiating it."[11] In this sense, Freud's dream of Irma's injection inaugurates psychoanalysis as an experience of the body and introduces something new and different from the medical doctor-patient relation, and different from a psychotherapy, whose aim is instead to limit the confrontation with the real in its nameless and deadly quality. In other words, the work of an analysis is in this light inextricable from an encounter with and even an embrace of the cause of anxiety. But if an analysis "confronts [his] patients with death at its very core,"[12] traversing this experience of anxiety gives birth to the unfettered quest of desire.

It is the anxiety-inducing navel of the dream that confronts us with an ethical question. What is there to do with this thing that resists interpretation and which the dreamer alone must face? In his analysis of his dream, Freud realizes he is eluding responsibility for his desire as an analyst, the desire that provoked transference in other bodies and brought psychoanalysis into existence, a desire not represented by a medical commitment. Today, one hundred and thirty years after Freud introduced this dream to psychoanalysis, it is important to examine the offer made by the navel of dreams and therefore by psychoanalysis. For today takes place not only after Freud and Lacan but also in a time when the social contract—conceived by Rousseau and absorbed, like a dose of trimethylamine, by France to end monarchy and by the modern world to establish legitimate authority in its political communities—has lost credibility.

Like the mother's breast milk in Rousseau's and Wollstonecraft's views, "trimethylamine" in Copjec's reading of Freud operates as a shield, a safeguard against the *extimate* object and, specifically, its emergence as "a bodily double we can neither make sense of nor recognize as our own."[13] In such an encounter, the object—*per* Lacan's seminar on anxiety, wherein he enumerates the breast, the gaze, the voice, the phallus, and feces as the modes of the object-cause of

11 McNulty, "Untreatable," 238.

12 McNulty, 236.

13 Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 128.

desire—emerges suddenly too close to remain a partial object sustaining the neurotic fantasy. In contrast, at the correct distance, "as a lost part of ourselves," where this loss is a condition for becoming a subject, this object "functions as the object-cause of our desire."[14] This allows Copjec to show us, in addition to the problem of the bodily double epitomized in Gothic literature in her own analysis, another problem.[15] This problem concerns the impossibility of a future, renounced in favor of "an unabandoned embrace of *jouissance*."[16] Copjec finds a great example of this problem in *La Jetée*, Chris Marker's 1964 postapocalyptic time-travel film, a photo-novel in the director's terms.[17] The jetty at Paris-Orly Airport is the site of a childhood memory revisited in the flesh by the adult protagonist, who runs toward the unabandoned embrace of a woman—and meets death before reaching her. Like the hero who falls as he rushes to join the woman from his past facing him at the end of the jetty, the fantasy also collapses as the distance, ◊, between the barred subject, $\$$ and its object, *a*, disappears.

My own engagement with these insightful claims and with the example of *La Jetée* in this chapter from *Read My Desire* is based on a concern for the future that requires grappling with anxiety at the point where something important has happened not only to some individuals but to humanity as such. What happens is that the shield of the symbolic is no longer effective. Anxiety, which "gives a signal,"[18] is caused, Copjec writes, by "that which nothing precedes, that which follows from nothing."[19] In this regard she also points out Freud's wrestle with the causality of anxiety, where he tries to work out whether repression precedes anxiety, as he originally thought, or the other way around, and whether Otto Rank is right or not about there being, for the newborn, an anxiety of birth. I would say anxiety has to do with oddly approaching *something*, with an increasing proximity against which there is no shield and no refuge. Most often, this *something* functions as an object at once rejected and internalized to constitute oneself as subject, opening, Copjec suggests, the possibility of occasional uncanniness, when one comes too close to it. Yet in *La Jetée* it is not only a matter of encountering the feeling of the uncanny but also of reopening the foreclosed

14 Copjec, 129.
15 Among her examples is Wollestonecraft's daughter's masterpiece, *Frankenstein*.
16 Copjec, 131.
17 *La Jetée*, dir. Chris Marker (Argos Films, 1962).
18 Sigmund Freud, "Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety," in *Standard Edition*, 20:92.
19 Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 118.

future. Anxiety thus sounds a signal of what is to come, though without offering any hints of what it might resemble, since it is exactly the lack of resemblance to anything that provokes this strange feeling. Both the symbolic and historicist solutions to anxiety react to the void of sense it confronts them with by turning away. Yet as Copjec importantly points out, "Freud does not simply flee from the unconscious or from the real of Irma's desire: *he holds on to them* [. . .]. [I]n its refusal to interpret [the unconscious and the woman's desire] psychoanalysis maintains them, for there where they are interpreted they cease to be."[20]

In *La Jetée*, wherein a Third World War has destroyed Paris and made most of the world uninhabitable due to intense levels of radiation, there is neither a social link nor a city in which to take shelter. Instead, there is a void, unbearable because it appears like a dead end. How to step forward, to pro*ject* oneself from this destruction into a future? Since there seems to be no way forward or beyond this dead end, the historicists turn away from this void and retreat to the resources of language and culture, resources accumulated to manage this defect and regain confidence in a world whose historical moment has exposed the point of failure of the signifier and the site of a possible act. Freud momentarily responds in this manner, as well (insofar as in his dream he attempts to place the blame for Irma's illness in the other doctor figures). In a way, *La Jetée*'s hero appears to perform the same maneuver, since he tries to escape into the past where he tries to rejoin a woman whose company he had enjoyed, in other words, to seek refuge in the ideal of the couple, where the woman is an object of satisfaction for a man. However, this solution renounces the future in its truly unprecedented quality, in favor of the familiar, or of a delimited creativity within "safe" boundaries. What makes Freud's dream in his own analysis ultimately side with unprecedented creativity, insofar as he inaugurates psychoanalysis, is that he recognizes in the flight to medical culture the truth that he has gone too far and that his unconscious desire is stronger than his ego within culture.

It is difficult to imagine what lies beyond the void of the real as livable. But it is also only through this void that a genuine future can be explored. This emphasis on the inevitable and even essential confrontation of the void is in fact already present in Freud's dream of Irma's injection, as I have just discussed. In *La Jetée* those who, in the narrator's words, "believed themselves victors" of the

[20] Copjec, 123; emphasis in original.

war and ran a prisoner-of-war camp in the underground passages of the Chaillot Palace in Paris, seem to know this too.[21] This is why "the camp police spied even on dreams," we hear the voice-over narrate while we view the protagonist lying on a hammock, waiting to undergo a series of experiments. If this disposition is reminiscent of the analytic couch, the upright scientists poring over the subject of the experiment with bulky spectacles certainly are not analysts. As the protagonist learns, the scientists understand "the human race is doomed." No one, police or prisoner, is therefore above the problem described by the inventor addressing the man in terms of "space being closed off from humankind," leaving time as "the only link to the means for survival." Still, to save humanity, the scientists prefer to put prisoners rather than themselves through time-travel, whereas the analyst must go through their own analysis to eventually take up their position. Through trial and error (leaving trial subjects "disappointed, dead, or insane"), these scientists have learned that individuals "endowed with powerful mental images" are more likely to tolerate the intensity of the procedure. This detail highlights both the work of filmmakers capturing images at twenty-four frames per second as well as the deliberate use of still frames in *La Jetée*, stills which stress that the world has stopped. Yet, this detail also points to the question of irreducible individual subjectivity and its articulation to society. In the film's postapocalyptic situation it becomes clear that there will be no human life, no society without mobilizing exactly that which can never coincide with society in an individual, where the latter's subjectivity resides.

Thus, this detail and its ingenious portrayal in *La Jetée* lay bare the fact that to sustain the subject is to take the side of radical creativity. The capacity for mental images is not the product of anything observable in shared reality, even if these images are made from bits of that reality and even if exercising such a capacity requires the material support of a brain. If someone can be "endowed with powerful mental images" it is due to the work of the drive in that individual, which exceeds not only the present, but also what is given in perception and language. In the time-travel experiments featured in *La Jetée*, the protagonist "was chosen among a thousand others" in the prison camp. Yet if the idea of the gifted or endowed mind is admittedly evoked—for instance, in that this man unlike others can tolerate being torn away from the present without going mad or dying—what seems more relevant is the very capacity for mental images as constitutive of the

[21] In fact, this palace was built for the *Exposition Internationale* of 1937.

human, making possible experiences that are not locatable in space-time. The differences among prisoners have less to do with unequal levels in mental power, then, and more to do with the effects of such unobservable experiences for each one, and with their clash against the field of the Other where shared reality lies. In the protagonist's case, he is "fixated on an image of his past." He initially does not understand why this image had remained in or returned to his mind so intently, but it nonetheless provides an orientation for his quest.

Originary Fantasies

Like the protagonist perplexed by his own fixed memory in *La Jetée*, I also did not initially understand why, in following the rich thread of texts, figures, and images through which Copjec takes up the question of anxiety in her chapter, a surreal duo came to my mind: "Breast and the Jetty." Beyond the explicit textual/cinematic references in the chapter, the full sense of this couple escaped me. That is, why these two elements among the many others that could stand for the chapter's core, and given Copjec's own proposal of the chain "vampires, breastfeeding and anxiety"? And why would these two, not three, be linked by the conjunction "and"? Casting meaning aside, what I could discern from the outset was an echo of that well-known, centuries-old couple, "Death and the Maiden." One might visualize Hans Baldung Grien's 1517 painting or recall the *lied* and quartet Schubert composed three centuries later, in 1817 and 1824, respectively. Both manifest the urgency of death's foreboding call and its effect of terror over the maiden. In German, *Der Tod und das Mädchen* has masculine and neuter articles—*der*, *das*—for the two participants, whereas the English translation loses grammatical gender and drops the article before "Death" to sound idiomatic. One could say "The Breast and the Maiden," especially since "*the* breast" is, to a Lacanian ear, one of the possible forms of *objet a*, as mentioned. Without its article, "Breast" could indicate the start of the anamorphosis whereby the object shifts from its partial status to that of the vampire in Copjec's chapter, which she explains is "a complete body [. . .] whose distorted bodily form indicates its possession of a certain excess object: the breast once again, but this time as source of *jouissance*"[22]—much in the way that Death, too, emerges close to the maiden, almost too close to that youthful beauty, as "a body too much"[23] intent

[22] Copjec, 129.

[23] Copjec, 130.

on forming a couple that can never survive. In this sense, the couple "death and the maiden" precisely names a fantasy. Whose? "Death and the maiden, together," says death, pointing to the ground with one hand while pulling a lock of the maiden's hair with the other, under the words *hie must du yn*, "here you must go," in Baldung's painting. The maiden instead, pleading with hands pressed together in the painting, racing away in the quartet's first movement, seems to say, "Death or the maiden, it's you or me." "Leave me now alone!" she begs in the poem by Claudius Mathias that Schubert set to *lied*. It is also a fantasy for European culture. The beginning of this obsession with death and the maiden is often explained as an expression of the experience of extremely high mortality rates under the bubonic plague known as "The Black Death" (which peaked between 1347–1351) and its recurrences up to the eighteenth century. Of course, this traumatic historical event (resonant with our own post-Covid19 pandemic context), along with the wars and colonial expeditions, would put death on people's minds and in their dreams.

Yet it is essential to consider that, in the analytic sense, a fantasy responds to something irreducible to external circumstances, since it is a solution by which the subject covers up, in a highly specific way, castration and the failure of the signifier to support unconscious desire. This does not minimize historical traumas, but instead, I believe, takes the gap of the real seriously. The fantasy could coalesce in the sentence: "A beautiful maiden is courted passionately, lustfully, by a deadly lover." The *jouissance* of being the object of this courtship is tucked away, for one. Analysis is interested in exposing this inadmissible *jouissance*, and in confronting and facing castration, against which the fantasy is a last resort. However, this confrontation of lack is not only a matter of assuming, as a position, that the subject can neither be nor have *it all*. Assuming one's place in the symbolic is not the sole outcome of the analysis of the fantasy. This seems especially limited in an age when the cultures and civilizations that support symbolic life are so unstable and barely credible. In the context of the bubonic plague this fragilization would apply, as well, and the more elemental wish not to be annihilated is certainly expressed in Baldung's painting. This, in fact, prompts a distinction of modalities of the fantasy, since here it is less a matter of the price paid to enter language and the symbolic than of a primal confrontation with a deadly force, the image of death itself. Lucie Cantin explains that the originary fantasy "re-traces and represents the child's confrontation with the censored Thing in the body of the woman who is its mother," which the child experiences in its

body "as a danger, an anxiety, or a jouissance, in any case as something unmanageable for which nothing in what is said offers a way to face it."[24]

In Baldung's painting, the maiden's round, youthful body contrasts with horrifying, skeletal death behind her, driving her toward the abyss or the underworld. Her smooth and taut skin stands against his rough, ragged flesh; her body seems still, except for the tears on her face, whereas he seems to march effortlessly, dragging her in the direction he points to, down and out of the frame's lower left side.[25] What would it mean for the maiden to traverse this fantasy? The image indicates that the two figures' physical separation would involve cutting the maiden's long hair, since it is by a lock that death's hand holds on to her. But then the maiden would run away only until she is caught again, dragged back to where she must inevitably go. This scene offers no traversal.

The only way out of this deadlock involves dismantling the Other of the originary fantasy, represented here by lustful Death. This work through the cause of anxiety and *jouissance* opens another, more radically emancipatory possibility, and what is fascinating to me about of the references Copjec invokes in relation to the anxiety of the uncanny concerns this very possibility. This emancipatory possibility involves a change of perspective on the "death (drive) and the (beautiful) maiden," one that allows the parenthetical elements in this conjunction to burst out to become the explicit and unrestricted agents of a different fate or vicissitude for desire than merely a premature end to the maiden's life. This shift opens a perspective on the death drive that is fundamentally creative, and in relation to this perspective, it renews a commitment to the beautiful—a feeling whose importance Copjec considers in her chapter, insofar as it supports the impossibility of saying and interpreting it all, and is therefore true to the cry to read a subject's unspoken desire.[26] The key to this commitment lies in Cantin's

[24] Lucie Cantin, "The Fantasy: Its Function and Modalities, Traversal and Clinic," in *A Psychoanalysis for a Reemergent Humanity: The Metapsychology of Willy Apollon*, ed. Lucie Cantin et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, forthcoming).

[25] There is a sense of calm inevitability both in the painting and in the auditory presence of Death in Schubert's *lied*.

[26] Copjec refers to Lacan's use of Kant's conception of the beautiful in the *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. With regard to the Death and the Maiden couple it is interesting that, in his *Ethics* seminar, the beautiful "is the limit of the second death," and the function of the beautiful is "to reveal to us the site of man's relationship to his own death, and to reveal

account of the originary fantasy, which shifts the emphasis from language and symbolic castration towards the real, and particularly toward the censorship of the feminine. Cantin defines the feminine as a real outside-of-language that is the source of boundless creativity in each subject. The clinical wager is that, through an analysis, lifting this censorship put in place by a culture welcomes an expression of the feminine that can be aesthetic and make a space for the beautiful and the sublime beyond cultural and civilizational limits. This aesthetic space is therefore not equivalent to Lacan's understanding of love in his tenth seminar, where he defines it as "the sublimation of desire" and as "a cultural fact."[27] The aesthetic as an expression of the feminine is the realm in which it becomes possible to open the future, as a concern beyond individual survival, in its unprecedented quality.

We now have reference points to begin taking up "breast" (to then return to "jetty" via *La Jetée*, and hopefully discern something of their conjunction "and"). Lacan, after Freud and Melanie Klein, identifies the breast as a partial object correlative to the oral drive, and specifically as the infant's first object, from which it obtains *jouissance* through sucking and from which it will eventually wean itself. In Copjec's text the breast initially emerges in the previously mentioned context of political advocacy of breastfeeding, where breastfeeding mothers are seen as the basis of a healthy society, made up of citizens who are ready to act for collective unity as a priority over individual inclinations.[28] Copjec shows how this advocacy betrays an unrecognized anxiety that is captured by vampire fiction "in all its Gothic forms" as its equivalent.[29] Vampire fiction expresses the anxiety over "the disappearance of the fantasy support of desire."[30] Copjec finds in vampire fiction an image of anxiety's implicit fears over what Lacan described in his seminar as "the drying up of the breast"[31] by following his indication that vampirism is the image that expresses not only the infant's temporarily parasitic organism but the fantasy of the oral relation. Separating

it to us only in a blinding flash." Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960*, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 136, 260, 295.

27 Lacan, *L'angoisse*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 209–10; my translation.

28 Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 127. In the preceding chapter of *Read my Desire*, however, Copjec highlights the fact that psychoanalysis refuses this belief as the key to happiness.

29 Copjec, 118.

30 Copjec, 128.

31 Lacan, *L'angoisse*, 272.

ourselves from the object is necessary to enter language, which, Copjec points out, implies internalizing it as *extimate*, as a stranger within. This makes us susceptible to encountering the uncanny, where the breast "no longer appears as a partial object."[32] In Lacan's reading, Freud's account stresses the weaning that results in the breast as lost when the child can see the whole person to whom the organ belonged, allowing the object to function as cause of desire. According to Copjec, however, the breasted vampire emerges as an excessive double of the victim, endowed with the object as a source of the *jouissance* sacrificed by the neurotic to enter language and constitute himself or herself within a social reality.[33] Here, again, the focus is on language and symbolic castration, occasionally unsettled by the uncanny vampire-image. Yet the oral drive and its object, the breast, latched onto with the lips, points to infancy, to a time before language in every human individual's existence, there where the subject is overwhelmed by the unnamable Thing in "the body of the woman who is its mother." I repeat this previously cited turn-of-phrase of Cantin's for its resistance to the reduction to "the mother," since it is precisely in that reduction that the censorship of the feminine in the woman occurs. Moreover, the Thing confronting the child and causing "fear, anxiety, or jouissance" consists in nothing other than the part of the woman unrelated to being a mother and, unlike motherhood, without an assigned place in social reality. In other words, the oral drive takes us beyond the two options of breastfeeding advocacy or vampire fiction as an example of the sporadic uncanny feeling, though showcasing the relevance of this third way will require some more steps in my exposition of what is at stake in the breast.

In his seminar on anxiety, Lacan repeatedly states that, in the case of the oral drive, the point of anxiety is in the field of the Other. The oral drive is therefore interesting, and different from other partial drives, insofar as it reveals something of the structure of anxiety concerning the articulation of the relation to the Other and libidinal satisfaction, as Clotilde Leguil explains.[34] The breast corresponds to this drive in that it is not only "plastered," as it were, to the body, and therefore detachable, like the other objects, but also, in that the child and the maternal subject do not have the same relation to the breast. Like the placenta, the breast is "an amboceptor," a term Lacan adopts to show not only an

32 Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 129.

33 Copjec, 129.

34 Clotilde Leguil, "Le sein lacanien," *La cause du désir* 94, no. 3 (2016): 37.

organ for nutrimental exchanges, but the different ways in which it puts into play the cut for the child and the mother.[35] Consequently, the experience of lack for each subject is different and they do not correspond to each other. Reading "The Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual" for this particular point, Leguil speaks of an "inaugural discomfort" that a mother simply cannot assuage, which can help her manage her feelings of insufficiency.[36] Yet in the interest of opening a different possibility for the breast, one can, returning to Cantin, glean the following: What may seem like a discomfort for the child provoked by lack is also the trace of subjective freedom and creative potential. In other words, the inaugural cut represented first by separation from the placenta and then by weaning from the breast concerns a loss of environmental limits conditioning the organism's life, and therefore the mobilization of the drive, inaugurating a body in the analytic sense, as a fundamentally singular inscription.[37] Just as the censored *jouissance* in the body of the woman who is the child's mother could not possibly be satisfied by the child, so is there a dimension of the child's cry that does not correspond to a mother's nourishment (or any Other's). That the cut does not pass at the same place for woman and child does not mean the child is not exposed to this *jouissance* in the woman's body, as I stated previously.

All this, however, is unconscious and unspoken. Moreover, not only is this unconscious and unspoken, but, as Cantin's account implies, there is simply no signifier for it in language. Moreover, these experiences and their unsatisfiable nature are necessarily ignored from the perspective of culture, which constructs the woman required for its material and ideological reproduction by censoring the feminine in her, subsuming it under an ideal of motherhood. Given these constraints, it is extremely common for a woman's femininity to remain censored under this cultural formatting, which affects the child. Cantin writes:

> [W]hat has not found expression of [the woman's] femininity and of the quest of desire will come to trap her relationship with her child. Motherhood in such circumstances remains caught up in an "address' to the child, a tacit demand for love, for reparation and recognition, in which something is expected of the

35 Leguil, 39.
36 Leguil, 39.
37 Cantin, "Fantasy."

> child through a series of unconscious expectations, acts, affective reactions, gestures—in short, a series of unspoken things that the child feels and responds to reluctantly.[38]

Hence, the child's response expresses the unique inscription of the drive in her or his body and the representation she or he makes of this experience in the originary fantasy.

The work of analysis is directed at lifting not only the repressed, that is to say, what the subject does not want to know anything about, but also censorship of the feminine that in the case of a woman who is a mother causes her, as the previous citation suggests, to become "caught up in an "address'" to the child, but also to a partner—for instance, the child's father. She has no access to the feminine in her, which remains out-of-language and unknowable, manifesting only through disturbing symptoms and involuntary acts. When this censorship is at last lifted, the possibility of exploring the boundless creativity of the feminine beyond the relationship to the Other in the social link is opened. This implies the discovery of "the unfoundedness of the symbolic," in Willy Apollon's term.[39] If this dimension of experience exceeds symbolic limits and even exposes its lack of foundation, the acts that express it have consequences, and once the subject comes to know how her own *jouissance* is implicated, it is possible to take responsibility for these acts rather than imputing them to the Other.

In his seminar on anxiety, Lacan devotes some attention to two paintings of female saints by the seventeenth-century Spanish painter Francisco de Zurbarán. One of them is Saint Agatha, depicted holding a tray on which her two breasts rest like mounds, her head tilted toward them, while she calmly looks at the spectator. The other, Saint Lucy, holds her two eyes on a tray. The images emphasize a specific part of the body detached from the rest, but also the fact that the martyrs to whom these objects corresponded are themselves holding the part up and offering it to the viewer. In other words, unlike Baldung's maiden, they do not appear as victims. According to the hagiography, Agatha was an early Christian Sicilian maiden who made a vow of virginity at age fifteen. Since

38 Cantin, "Fantasy."

39 Willy Apollon, "Psychoanalysis and Literature, Pass and Impasse," trans. Tracy McNulty, *Penumbr(a)* 3 (2024): 58, https://www.penumbrajournal.org/no-no-3-/-after-anti-oedipus.

she refused the advances of the Roman prefect Quintanius, she was tortured, her breasts were removed by tongs, and after none of this worked to make her break her vow, she died in prison. Zurbarán's Saint Agatha and Baldung's maiden then present us with two different responses to anxiety and to the originary fantasy. Whereas the maiden fears Death and sees him as the voracious Other trying to take something precious from her—her youth and life—Saint Agatha has gone through death and dismantled the Other of the originary fantasy, to the point that she alone can uphold the object.

In her short essay on the Lacanian breast, Leguil suggests that the breast in Lacan's 1963 seminar is the "part that must be given up to pay the price of one's desire," so it is no longer only an object of the drive, but also an object cause of desire.[40] What matters here, she suggests, is not that she lost the object but rather that the Other tore it off from her and that she can assume her own subjective desire: "What makes her a saint is that she has traversed anxiety and can present these organs of her body as definitively separated from her. She can offer the Other the object *a*, her object *a*, which is also the object cause of desire."[41] It is possible, then, to not turn away from anxiety but instead traverse it to the point of acting from the position of the object-cause of desire. Leguil underscores Lacan's comparison of the analyst to the saint in terms of this position regarding the object. Agatha indicates a different possibility with the breast, a possibility beyond the alternatives of the politics of breastfeeding and vampirism. When a subject can take responsibility for the free drive in her body and for her acts and their consequences for others, the future—rather than repetitions mandated by the logic of fantasy—is opened.

". . . and the Jetty"—A Time Beyond Neurosis

As previously mentioned, Copjec introduces Chris Marker's *La Jetée* into her analysis as part of her observations on the necessary distance between the subject and object *a* to secure symbolic existence, which Lacan represents with the lozenge (◊) between the barred-S and the lowercase-*a* in the formula of the fantasy of the obsessional neurotic: $\$ \lozenge a$. The hero of *La Jetée* is haunted by a powerful image from his childhood at Orly airport's jetty, which he visited on

40 Leguil, "Le sein lacanien," 40.

41 Leguil, 40.

Sunday afternoons, a few years before the Third World War began. Due to the presence of this specific, powerful image in his mind, he is selected among the prisoners to undergo an experiment in which he receives some kind of injection that results in him travelling back in time. The narrative structure of *La Jetée* begins and ends with this location of the jetty, at the precise moment that gave consistency to his image and to which the protagonist physically returns as an adult, thinking he can reach a woman whose face he remembers there along with a violent scene that for a long time troubled him, and that he only later understood to have been the death of a man. In the prologue to the story, or the first jetty scene, the male voice-over narrator also explains that this boy continued to see the images of the unmoving sun, the setting at the end of the jetty, and a woman's face. It is important to notice that upon his return to the jetty, there have been important developments regarding these images. He lived underground after the war that destroyed Paris, in a sunless, dark world without depth of field; over the course of the days of the time-travel experiment, he has also built a very different connection to that woman's face and, importantly, to the time spent by her side. As he runs toward her, he discovers, tragically, that he is the man he remembers seeing in that violent scene, and what he had witnessed without understanding it that first time is his own death. As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, Copjec presents this final situation as a collapse of $\$$ and *a* resulting from the dissolution of the lozenge between them. This signifies nothing less than the collapse and dissolution of the fantasy altogether.

The space of the lozenge that, in the formula, represents the relations which prevent this collapse of the logic of fantasy seems to be ruined in *La Jetée*. Ruin is evoked by the narrator's mention that "the surface of Paris, and undoubtedly of the largest part of the world, was uninhabitable, rotten by radioactivity." Copjec in fact suggests, in the chapter preceding the one in question here, that the absence of fantasy space or virtual space in Clérambault's fetishistic photographs of Moroccan bodies wrapped in silk indicates the inoperative status of fantasy there. Instead, the images confront viewers with a perverse gaze that denies lack. Copjec also observes the lack of depth of field in the images of the underground camp in *La Jetée*. Is a perverse gaze in play here, too? At any rate, I would say this indicates precisely that the photo-novel presents us, not only in the hero's fatal moment, but from beginning to end, with a problem for which the neurotic fantasy could never be a solution. Copjec writes:

> In *La Jetée* the hero allows himself to enjoy the woman. But things do not work out very well for those who enjoy, for, as it turns out, when nothing is prohibited, then everything is prohibited. The negativism of psychotics is proof of this; libidinal cathexis is withdrawn from the world, producing the psychotic experience of the "end of the world." Since every affirmation is founded on a negation, no future is possible in *La Jetée* as long as the hero clings to rather than negates the image of the woman.[42]

After the hero works to first recognize the female face that truly corresponds to his memory, he gradually approaches the woman to begin speaking and strolling around the surface of pre-World War III Paris with her. Children and the sound of birds occupy the space around them in this situation, although a true flow from one frame to the next remains inexistent. In contrast with the outdoor spaces comes a sequence of images in a bedroom, featuring close-ups of the woman's head, naked shoulders, and bare arms, shifting positions while sleeping in a bed as the sound of a flock of chirping birds intensifies, until she awakens as the chirps and calls reach their peak. At this point, famously, she looks directly at the camera and blinks a few times, a striking moment in the film otherwise made up of photographs that either abruptly disappear, replaced by the subsequent one, or, as is the case during the sleeping sequence, slowly fade into the next. This bedroom scene and her smiling eye-contact with the camera can be taken as an indication that the protagonist is who she sees when she awakens. It is not only the formal prohibition on the moving image that has been transgressed at this point, but also the prohibition Copjec points out, against "enjoying the woman" off-limits. Copjec then draws on a claim by Freud in his 1925 "Negation" essay, namely that "the negativism displayed by some psychotics, is probably to be regarded as a sign of a defusion of [drives] that has taken place through a withdrawal of the libidinal components."[43] In sum, because the distance from the forbidden woman was not observed as a grounding negation or "no," nothing is possible; it is the end of the world, and, importantly, there is no future in *La Jetée*.

In the film's plot, after this bedroom scene and a final visit to the Museum of Natural History, the protagonist in fact succeeds in traveling into the future, to

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42 Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 131–32.

43 Freud, "Negation," in *Standard Edition*, 19:239.

speak with other human beings and get help from them to restart the world. This help comes in the form of "a power unit" the hero brings back to the underground camp. He is thereupon released from the experiment, knowing he is no longer useful to the camp directors, who he is convinced will "liquidate him."[44] But he receives a message from people in the future who know how to travel in time more easily, and they open a door for him to join them, which he trades for the opportunity to go back to the jetty (a choice that can be read as an instance of negativism); upon making this choice, he is too late to realize that one of the camp officers has followed him; the policeman shoots the protagonist. While Copjec's reference to the psychotic experience of the "end of the world" comes in to support the argument about forbidden *jouissance*, I suggest it deserves further attention within *La Jetée* itself. For the problem in the story, within a film released in the wake of the Second World War is, precisely, that the world indeed has ended with a Third World War, and the mission the hero is told he is on is one of nothing less than saving humanity and the future. As previously mentioned, the hero is moreover "chosen" by the camp police, and he is convinced that it is because of an image in his mind, even when nothing indicates his having spoken about this to anyone. The voice-over narration explains that the police "spied even on dreams." As for him, the voice-over narrator also states that "he never knows if he directs himself toward her, if he is directed toward her, if he is making things up or if he's dreaming."[45] All these plot details evoke the psychotic experience of the end of the world and of being personally tasked by the Other with a colossal mission, without having a choice. The structure is closer to the work of the delusion than to a fantasy. Yet this is not a case of "*defusion* of drives" and withdrawal of libidinal investment from the world. How does the delusion prompt us to rethink the condition for a desire to live? How does the concern for securing a symbolic existence that the fantasy was supposed to support become displaced by a psychotic mission? Finally, how might the problematic of the forbidden woman also be transformed in a psychotic structure?

To address these questions, I now briefly draw on a psychoanalytic clinic of psychosis, developed in Québec over the past forty-three years by Cantin, Apollon, and Danielle Bergeron. The psychotic delusion responds to what Apollon calls the defect in language; the delusion attempts to repair the structure of the social

44 *La Jetée*, dir. Chris Marker.

45 *La Jetée*, dir. Chris Marker.

link, whose failure to "say it all" the psychotic confronts directly,[46] that is to say, without the mediation of an ego that deploys the cover of repression.[47] Rather than thinking about psychosis as a flawed position where the Name-of-the-Father was not properly installed, the analysts of the GIFRIC (Groupe Interdisciplinaire Freudien de Rechereches et Interventions Cliniques et Culturelles) emphasize a lived-experience that is out-of-language, a "quest for something else" than what already exists, as essential to what constitutes every human being,[48] while remaining *unaddressable* and felt as unwelcome by the Other of culture, that Other in collective consciousness.[49] In the psychotic structure, the symbolic shield against the defect in language is insufficient, and giving up on this intimate quest out-of-language to comply with and be recognized by the Other of culture, that Other who establishes limits to what is sayable, is simply not worthwhile. In fact, when the construction of the sexual—what Apollon calls the cultural montage of the sexual—that censors the feminine and sense within a civilizational framework are imposed to replace desire, the psychotic subject experiences this as violence. Instead, the psychotic subject works to counter the defect in language through a delusion. This delusion is a response to the logic of a mission that carries an unspoken concern for the human in specific modes. In analysis, "the out-of-language that haunted the work of the [psychotic subject's] delusion can pass to the act of a speech [. . .] welcomed within the space of transference" opened by the analyst.[50] Speech about until-then unaddressable "foundational subjective experiences" distils the concern for the human at the core of the delusion and gives modes of expression to the quest and, Cantin writes, "*defuses* the conflict" between "the part of the being where a subjective quest originates and its unreceivable status in the social link" and "frees the energy of the drive that was invested in realizing the enterprise that justified the theory of the delusion."[51] In other words, the unbound or free drive itself is far from "defused." Spurred by a concern for the human, this free drive's trajectory goes beyond the articulation of the individual to society.

46 Willy Apollon, "Le transfert du psychotique," in *Le traitement psychanalytique des psychoses: Sa clinique et ses résultats* (Québec: GIFRIC, 2024), 178–80.

47 Lucie Cantin, "Moments-clés dans la cure analytique du psychotique," in *Le traitement psychanalytique des psychoses*, 192.

48 Cantin, 191.

49 Apollon, "Le transfert du psychotique," 166.

50 Apollon, 182.

51 Cantin, "Moments-clés," 204.

Copjec observes that *La Jetée* "names the primary location of the narrative—the jetty at Orly airport—as well as the danger that threatens completely to overwhelm not only the diegetic characters but the diegesis itself: a 'little piece of reality,' a childhood memory that has not been rejected, thrown out by the hero."[52] In this configuration, the jetty appears as rather vampiric. Yet I think "the jetty" is different from the vampiric double whose function was developed from the perspective of the neurotic structure. What is not thrown out by the hero whose mission in the diegesis is to reinitiate the world after the apocalypse is an image, a memory of a foundational, subjective experience, to recall Cantin's term, whose site is the jetty that gives the film its title. We can thus read the jetty differently: She (*jetée* is a feminine noun in French and therefore comes preceded by the article *la*) does not remain stuck in place, unable to take off, but rather is already breaking out of spatiotemporal limits, out of domains and territories, out of a preexisting order of things. Reminiscent of the ballet leap, called a *grand jeté*, a jetty is an architectural structure that receives its name from the fact that it juts out beyond the shore, throwing itself out into the sea. Later, with the invention of airplanes, a jetty could throw itself out onto the runway tarmac, toward the sky. The transgression inherent to the jetty's architecture is precisely what is at stake in the time-travel situation to which the hero is submitted and which he ends up choosing.

But this is only one loop of the distinctly *spiral* form that insists in *La Jetée*, evoking Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca*—which Copjec mentions as another example of the "body too much"—but also *Vertigo*.[53] All three films explore the problem of the woman and her doubles imprisoned in different temporalities and imposing a dangerous, vertiginous processes of remembrance, reenactment, and working through. *La Jetée*'s reference to *Vertigo* is well known. It takes place in the scene in the park where the couple observe the concentric circles of time visible on the sliced sequoia trunk in front of them, which further evokes the visit to Muir Woods by the couple, where the detective is enthralled by this woman's mysterious suspension in a past moment (she seems to become "possessed" by her great-grandmother who committed suicide after her lover and the father of her child cast her out), which puts him in a position of saving her. One could

52 Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 130.

53 *Rebecca*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (Selznick International Pictures, 1940); *Vertigo*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (Alfred J. Hitchcock Productions, 1958).

say that *Vertigo* and *La Jetée* both present the woman as an object for the man, the hero in search of truth, even if she is raised to the dignity of the Thing. The symptomatically nameless heroine of *Rebecca* is instead in the position of a subject, struggling, in Copjec's words, "to enter the symbolic framework of the household" because her place is occupied by the "dead-without-knowing-it Rebecca."[54] This place is that of the mistress of the Manderley mansion and of the wife, Mrs. de Winter. The heroine's freedom, according to Copjec, consists in "the exteriorization of her battle with the excess body." When it "becomes objectivized as a narrative conflict rather than the psychical conflict it had been up until this point, the second Mrs. de Winter begins to escape the hold of the first."[55] What is possible for the women in these three films from a perspective centered around the symbolic is a position of lovable, named, and "saved" object in a relationship to a man, who is also bound to the position of "savior," believing he can give the woman what she wants and surpasses what she can expect. In other words, these narratives make it seem as if the man as lover and hero were the solution to what I earlier indicated as the censored thing in the woman's body (to which the child is exposed in its mother). All of this remains caught up in the cultural montage of the sexual.

The orientation of the psychotic structure as reframed by the GIFRIC offers a different vantage point on the woman. In an exposition of the experience of puberty as the time when culture imposes the censorship of the feminine, Apollon writes:

> For young psychotics, whether boy or girl, this montage of sexuality immediately appears as a violence against women, the means of ending which must be found. From second childhood already, young psychotics are affected by *the injustice of having to renounce what can be built as a universe to live in*, in order to submit to

54 Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 130.

55 Copjec, 130. In *Vertigo* there is also a problem of doubles and "false claimants." The woman, who appears to commit suicide, reemerges for the depressed detective when he meets a woman who resembles the one he could not save. The reenactment of the suicide leads to the discovery that he had been deceived and to tragedy. There is a parallel structure to the *dénouement* of *La Jetée* in that the hero also returns to the site of a trauma with tragic consequences, although he is not in the position of a savior.

> the need to satisfy the Other in the address and thus to have a place in the bond of companionship.[56]

We can turn back to *La Jetée* to think of the man's experience and decision to return to the jetty at the end of the film. I pointed out that during the camp's time-travel experiments that allow the hero to spend time with the woman, strolling along gardens and public squares, he is not sure what brings him back to her, whether it is his own direction or someone else's. Yet, the moments by her side, although they are fragile and easily interrupted, begin to transform something beyond the lab and camp directors' reach: the two companions' experiences of time. The striking effect of their encounters, from the moment they speak to each other, is that "they are without memories, without projects. Their time builds itself simply around them, with only the taste of the moment they live (*le goût du moment*) and the signs on the walls as points of reference."[57] This particular combination of reference points, the taste of the lived moment and the signs on the walls as marks of other lived moments, that had their own flavor, suggests that the hero is accessing with her what I would call *aesthetic time* to say that it is essential to what Apollon's account of the psychotic subject's experience of second childhood pinpoints, namely, "what can be built as a universe to live in" and which we are asked to renounce in favor of the satisfaction of "the Other in the address," that is to say, in what is sayable and observable within cultural and civilizational limits. It is significant that by going back to "the world of his childhood," the man can discover the taste of the moment and a time that builds itself simply around them as they stroll aimlessly outdoors. There is *un*forbidden *jouissance*, yes, and there is something undeniably uncanny about living a moment twice, and somewhere in a corner of his mind remembering that he is returning from the end of the world. This experience continues but is also continually improved. In the Paris Museum of Natural History gallery of evolution, where they have their last stroll together to look at the display "full of eternal beasts," "the aim is perfectly adjusted. Pro*jected* (pro*jeté*) onto the chosen moment, he can remain there and move effortlessly."[58] In this beautiful moment he does not need to save the woman or the world. The jetty, as I read it, reminds us that subverting the social link, exhausting the chain of signifiers,

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56 Willy Apollon, "The Human in Question," in *A Psychoanalysis for a Reemergent Humanity*; emphasis added.

57 *La Jetée*, dir. Chris Marker.

58 *La Jetée*, dir. Chris Marker.

and transgressing the limits of both the fantasy and the delusion all expose us to anxiety, which can open not only onto a horrific, senseless void, but also to an aesthetic act of creating time.

That he ends up killed by the camp police as he traverses the jetty to reach the woman does not undermine this time; in fact, it emphasizes that the man has acknowledged his capacity not only to represent an image to himself but also to choose his destination, which can go against the good of the collective and of his own survival. He asks the humans of the future to give him "the world of his childhood and this woman who was maybe waiting for him." This is no mere regressive escape into the past, but instead (like the experience of analysis, I would say), a return along a spiral line, each time slightly different, and perhaps, if the Thing that caused the image to become inscribed in him is released from a frightening representation, an opening onto a future different than that of a Third World War and its destruction of Paris and the world. In the key of psychosis, which refuses the montage of sexuality for its violence against women, the woman in the world of the man's childhood could be the bearer of her own quest, and she would be waiting for him not so they can be the man and the woman expected by culture, but instead so they can continue building aesthetic time as a universe to live in, unfolding in a direction that changes the destructive course of history that leads to the Third World War. As he starts to race toward the woman at the end of the jetty it becomes possible to read the red words printed on the t-shirt he wears under another layer of clothing: *El Santo*, "The Saint." The saint in question is a famous Mexican *lucha libre* silver-masked hero from the 1960s. The man indeed seems prepared, like Saint Agatha, to traverse anxiety, as he continues toward his goal, aware "with a bit of vertigo that the child he had been must be present too, watching the planes."[59] As Copjec notes, here (as in *Rebecca*) there is a problem of a body too much. I would say *La Jetée*'s hero, bearing the name of *El Santo* on his breast, wishes to step forward like Saint Agatha, although here he is in the moment of going through the traversal, whereas Zurbarán's Saint Agatha has already undergone the breast excision and death, giving her access to this impossible moment of gently offering the object in a tray.

[59] *La Jetée*, dir. Chris Marker.

As the man collapses, shot by the camp police agent, his left arm lifts in a highly stylized line, like a balletic, dying swan. He is understanding that what he had witnessed as a child was the scene of his own death. A fragment from the childhood memory the narrator highlights at the beginning of the film is *ce corps qui bascule*, "this body that is knocked off-balance." The arm gesture repeats the forms of birds' wings and beaks seen in the gallery of evolution, and recalls the birds heard in the crucial bedroom awakening scene. The collapsing body can be seen, then, as an instance of object *a*, in a fall that paradoxically asserts a certain kind of freedom from the Other who takes his life. If this fatal destiny does not reopen a livable future—one should recall that his journey into the future did allow him to bring back the power unit to restart life after the end of the world—then at the very least he does succeed in reopening a key scene at which his body had been eroticized by the work of the free drive and given him not only an indelible image, but also an experience of aesthetic time to live and die for.

Data availability statement

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

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