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Publication Date

2014

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

The Shadow: An Unruly Modern Specter

by

Emina Musanovic

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

German

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Winfried Kudszus, Chair

Professor Karen Feldman

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Fall 2014

Abstract

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This study makes a contribution to the question of what it means to engage with literary and filmic texts in times of a transnational, environmental crisis. To this end, it takes up texts as complex, poetic encounters with diverse ecologies. Specifically, this study investigates the ecological complexity of the figure of the shadow as it emerges in filmic and literary texts. A prominent figure in the catalogue of uncanny doubles, the shadow is most commonly interpreted as a representation of interiority—the soul. This project offers a different perspective: the shadow as a figure that explores the limits of the body and its profound enmeshments with the material, nonhuman world. Rather than focusing on the shadow as a figure of immateriality, lack, or absence, I pursue it as an interface between the human body and its environment. In works by E. T. A. Hoffmann, F. W. Murnau, Walter Benjamin, and Thomas Mann, the shadow is overfull and lively. It contests the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman and challenges notions of human isolation and apartness from her environment.

This project benefits from the recent material and ecocritical turns in literary theories. Ecocriticisms and new feminist materialisms that build the theoretical scaffolding of this project repudiate the notion that matter is passive and explore the complexity of the interactions between humans and nonhumans. Furthermore, I rely on queer ecologies as well, which challenge binaries like human/nonhuman, animate/inanimate, man/woman, nature/culture. Explored against this backdrop, the shadow emerges as a figure with the potential to reconfigure the sensible and to disclose the present life-worlds as always in flux. It situates human bodies in their environment and broadcasts their profound enmeshment with the material, nonhuman world. This study foregrounds the shadow's potential to upset, or rather *queer*, the essentialized elements and limits of human and nonhuman bodies.

In this project, I also investigate how advances in technologies of seeing (x-ray, cinema, and psychoanalysis), and the shadow's involvement in these technologies register in literary, philosophical, or filmic works. I furthermore ask how the shadow, reconfigured through said technologies at the close of the nineteenth century, brings about the disruption of the distinction between inside/outside, reframes the situatedness of the human, and functions as an interface between the human and the nonhuman in selected texts.

to nena, mama, tata, and edo

Acknowledgments

Words of thanks mean to arrange torrents of familiar and nameless helpers into villages of sympathetic hands. And so, at the end of a protracted writing excursion, one builds an affective capstone and writes, in one form or another: “it took a village.” And it did. It truly took villages. Still, as I confront this inventory of overdue thanks, I am all refugee again, unable to shake the feeling that I am also sorting through the costs of carrying on, as if it were loose change.

Paralyzed, I have perhaps allowed unsaid thanks to accrue into a teetering mountain. After all, there are those I still can and desperately want to thank; there are still those who can receive my thanks and turn them over in their hands. Of those, I thank Prof. em. Ed McLuskie. He was the first to grant me a place at the table. I didn’t even know one could go from refugee to graduate school until he made a passing suggestion. His small remark—an unexpected statement of worth—set me on this path just in the moment I was starting to accept my place and abandon all dreams for myself. I thank Prof. Mary Rohlfsing who showed me how to rewind, regroup, and restart, or to simply start something, anything. I thank Prof. Winfried Kudzusz, my Doktorvater, who gave me the space and support to get lost, to find some voice, perhaps even a voice I can call my own. One day I will also be able to thank him for teaching me patience, for now, however, despite of his best efforts, I remain restless. I thank Prof. Niklaus Largier for giving me spirited feedback on some of my most, for better or worse, adventurous compositions. I thank Nikolaus Euba for helping me forge a path as a teacher and find an anchor in academia. I thank Prof. Karen Feldman, my second committee member, for her care in reading my work. I thank Prof. Hans Sluga, the third reader of this dissertation, for his encouraging words and the priceless reminder that I can finally catch my breath, that I may have done it, that I just may have finished.

I am grateful to the Department of German at UC Berkeley for being a home to me for the last several years. Without the staff, the fabric and soul of this department, without Elizabeth Lamoureux, Nadia Samadi, Mari Mordecai, Verónica López, and Myriam Cotton, who embraced me and held me up as I nervously waited outside after my qualifying exam, I would have never made it. I thank Cathie Jones and Andrea Rapport for helping me weather the frequent financial and bureaucratic storms. I also thank the faculty who kept their doors open, who understood what it means to walk the hallways of an institution, when all that one knows from institutions are closed doors and red tape. I thank my cohort and all of the colleagues across disciplines and campuses who taught me the importance of laboring together rather than apart, of generous reading, and service oriented work.

To survive the adventures and misadventures of graduate school requires that one build a family. I am unabashed in my belief that I have the best one. Along the way, I acquired a sibling, a kindred spirit—Ashwin Manthripragada. We have wandered the streets, the woods, the meadows, and the seas full of heart and out of our minds. He has taught me a softer gaze. I admire his faith that the road will go on, even when he can’t see it (even when the road turns out to be a dilapidated dam that dead-ends in a cliff in the middle of the night). Then there is Dagmar Theison. I wish I could write my words of thanks to her in the textures of her hair. She is made of defiance and love, generous and crabby to the bone. I thank Kevin Gordon for circling around the block and into the nineties with me. I will eulogize my grunge days with him any day. I am grateful to Sheila Bienenfeld for her trust in me. Few words of encouragement have built me up like hers. I thank Cullan and Lenny whom I will miss always. I am grateful to Sasha Rossmann

with whom I have belly laughed more than is healthy. His policing of the make-shift food shelf after midnight in the *Stille Stube* will remain unrivaled. I thank Seán McKeithan for venturing out with me, even without handlers. I thank John Kaiser and Malaika Gray—the one for the calm and the other for the frenzy. I thank William Kaiser who is forbearance incarnate, a person of unrivaled talent. He reminds me to never stop painting. I thank Ari Edmundson for his love and for building tables and chandeliers with me when I was off-course and abuzz with nervous feeling.

I thank my family that now spans continents and cultures. From my dear aunts, uncles, cousins, and my new sister in law, Alisa, I have only known support. I thank my mother, father, and brother. I am in awe of their strength, resilience, and love. I hope to once be deserving of their perpetual support and tireless effort. Those, whom I can no longer thank, whose voices have been silenced, are inscribed in the other side of my every word.

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Introduction



Fig. 1. Duchamp, Marcel. *Entrance to Gradiva Gallery*. Glass, original destroyed. 1938. ArtStor Slide Gallery. Web

This book takes the side of the eye, of its siting; shadow is its prey. The half-light that, after Plato, the word threw like a gray pall over the sensory, that it consistently thematized as a lesser being, whose side has been very rarely taken, taken in truth, since it was understood that its side is that of falsity, skepticism, the rhetorician, the painter, the *condottiere*, the libertine, the materialist—this half-light is precisely what interests this book. (Lyotard, *Discourse*, Figure 5)

Film is not just a contemporary phenomenon. It may make people happy, but the devil sometimes does that. I am unalterably persuaded that the devil shows himself, so to speak, in living shadow play. The shadow that speaks and acts is what *Satan* is. The cinema marks the beginning of the twentieth century. It ushers in the end of the world. Please don't underestimate that. Telephone, radio, aeroplane, are nothing in comparison to it: the separation of the shadow from the man. (Roth 337)

The Shadow as the Prey?

For André Breton's gallery *Gradiva*, Marcel Duchamp designed a glass door (Fig. 1) that featured the silhouetted cutouts of what appeared to be two entangled figures—a couple. Breton beckoned visitors to pass through this glass door with the following words: "Like the bellows that connect two cars of a train, these shadows you love await you to lead you to the threshold of Gradiva" (Hollier 15). The *Gradiva* in question here is a modern muse, the figure from Wilhelm Jensen's novel *Gradiva; a Pompeiian Fancy* famously investigated by Freud in the essay titled *Delusion and Dream in Jensen's Gradiva*. Inspired by an antique relief of a woman walking

forward, the folds of her dress arrested in stone in midst of frenzied motion, this figure that comes to life in a dream or a hallucination, becomes nothing less than a muse for Breton and other surrealists. However, while Gradiva is generally taken up as a symbol of the “transitory nature of passing beauty that is about to disappear in the masses,” for Breton, “she is a figure advancing and announcing the future with all of its promises, secrets, and anxieties” (Rissler-Pipka 162, *translation mine*).¹

Gradiva? This title, drawn from Jensen’s wonderful book means primarily, SHE WHO MOVES FORWARD. Who could “she” be, other than tomorrow’s beauty, as yet hidden from the multitude, and only glimpsed here and there, as one draws near some object, goes past a painting, turns the pages of a book? She adorns herself with the lights of the never seen that force most men to lower their eyes. Yet she haunts their dwellings, gliding at dusk through the corridor of poetic premonitions. (Breton, as cited in Gardner Coates 74)

The entrance through the glass door shadows guides one to Gradiva, a perpetually futural figure. These multimedial shadows thus promise to transport those who enter to a future that is akin to the ever-retreating horizon or, rather, to set them onto the path of pursuit of unreachable but ever beckoning future horizons. As if though separated from the bodies that once cast them, these shadows cut into glass now await a couple that could reinstate a lost coincidence of object and shadow by, so Denis Hollier, “[letting] themselves be sucked into their own shadow...seduced by...shadow” (15). The shadow thus guides the visitors of Breton’s gallery into a kind of utopian space of the not-yet. Imbued with this promise, these shadow doors act like a restless conveyance, turning the act of entry into a sustained activity without a point of rest or arrival or, put differently, into an extended close encounter with ever-withdrawing, transforming *queerness*. In this fragile installation, the shadow comes into view as a *queering* figure. “Queering,” so Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “is at its heart a process of wonder” (Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* 38). “Queerness works by contiguity and displacement, knocking signifiers loose, ungrounding bodies, making them strange...It makes people stop and look at what they have been taking as natural, and it provokes inquiry into the ways that ‘natural’ has been produced” (Carolyn Dinshaw, as cited in Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* 38). The seduction by shadow, in other words, potentiates an intimacy with alterity and hosts of unassimilable others. The entrance through the shadow leaves us forever in transit at a threshold where we can begin to “undo normative entanglements” and start “[fashioning] alternative imaginaries” (Giffney and Hird 4). Powered by the force of the shadow that reforms those who enter, Breton’s gallery can be imagined as a not-yet space that curates “fluidity, über-inclusivity, unknowability, the preposterous, impossibility, unthinkability, unintelligibility, meaninglessness, and that which is unrepresentable” (Giffney and Hird 4).

This dissertation pursues precisely this kind of shadow that grants entry to Breton’s Gradiva. It takes the shadow—a seemingly innocuous, quotidian figure—as a queering figure, in other words, as a figure, that potentially sets those who engage with it on paths toward a “forward-dawning futurity” (Muñoz 22). After all, queerness, as Jose Muñoz wrote so beautifully, is something that, like the future, “does not exist yet” (Muñoz 23). Just as André

¹ The full quote in the original: „Im Unterschied...betont Breton mit ‘Gradiva: Celle qui avance...’ nicht die Flüchtigkeit der vorüberschreitenden Schönheit, die sich im nächsten Augenblick in der Masse auflösen wird, er sieht in ihr eher eine Figur, die vorwärts schreitet und die Zukunft ankündigt mit all ihren Versprechen, Geheimnissen und Ängsten.“ (Rissler-Pipka 162)

Breton installs the shadow at the entry to the not-yet, this dissertation takes it up as a figure that reconfigures the sensible and discloses the present life-worlds as futural and in flux. A constant companion and double of all more or less opaque bodies, the shadow moves external boundaries away from the surface or the skin making them fluid and permeable. It situates bodies in their environment and broadcasts their enmeshment with this environment. It simulcasts bodies as always intimately caught up in the activities of a motley world and as constituting and constituted features of landscapes, or complex ecologies. In the shadow, the body is reconfigured as an acting component of a heterogeneous, fluid assemblage. Here, where the shadows of human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate bodies intersect and take on the texture of surfaces and atmospheric conditions, bending and refracting on a hot summer day, the human could grasp her body as “not human (or at least, [as] not only human)” (Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* 41). The shadow thus carries the potential to upset, or rather *queer*, the essentialized “constitutive elements, limits, exclusions” of human and nonhuman bodies (Giffney and Hird 7). Perpetually in flux, the shadow, however, does not and cannot replace the disturbed boundaries with new ones. This, precisely, is what makes the shadow a figure of a particular, open futurity—a *queering* figure. Gazing upon the shadow that turns all things into gnomons, the human becomes a stranger to herself, a “utopian spectator” (109) of her being, for “queerness is always on the horizon” (Muñoz 11).

Such encounters with the shadow in and through literature and film are at stake in this dissertation. In particular, I engage with the literary, philosophical and filmic texts composed by Walter Benjamin, F. W. Murnau, and Thomas Mann. In these texts, I investigate the challenges the shadow poses to various “constitutive elements” (Giffney and Hird 7) of human and nonhuman bodies and to the conceptualizations of human and nonhuman interactions. I ask, for example, how creative approaches to the shadow reshuffle notions of activity by granting agency to the shadows and the nonhuman. How does the shadow in these texts reconfigure the boundaries between human and nonhuman bodies? How does it interfere with the fixity of limits between inside and outside? What de-anthropocentric strategies accompany the shadow? The texts in question in this dissertation are produced after the shadow is recruited as a medium or metaphor in x-ray technology, cinema, and psychoanalysis—all of which are developed in the same period and enter public circulation in 1895. I thus also ask how the shadow itself is reconfigured at the turn of the century, and how does this contribute to the complexity of the shadow as an interface between the human and the nonhuman. In the following, I will provide a brief sketch of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this dissertation, outline the chapters included, and detail some possible future directions for this project.

Methods and Motivations

One of the main catalysts for this project was the realization that the shadow, a figure so ubiquitous and varied in literature, philosophy, cinema, and the visual arts, is most commonly interpreted as a representation of interiority—the human soul. I found the fact that a phenomenon so quintessentially dependent on specific external conditions—or, more precisely, on the coincidence of opaque bodies, surfaces, and light sources—is thus thoroughly purged of its environs or constitutive conditions of its being, deeply problematic. In such approaches, namely, the ecologically complex shadow is reduced to a “shapeless [receptacle] for human categories” (Latour 52), a “passive and blank slate awaiting the active inscriptions of culture” (Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* 150), or a “matter for the self-formation of the only social being in the productions of knowledge, the human knower” (Haraway, “Situated Knowledges” 592).

These practices of reading are implicated in what Zoe Sofoulis calls “resourcing,” that is, the denigration of the nonhuman to the “raw material of culture,” (as cited in Haraway, “Situated Knowledges” 592).

These readings of the shadow, can, furthermore, only be pursued if the “cultural domain of language and re-presentation” is taken up as singularly complete and “self-sufficient,” while “the corporeal or natural ground of existence that precedes language is understood in terms of deficiency” (Kirby 270). In this project, I incorporate tenets of ecocritical theory (Lawrence Buell, Cheryll Glotfelty, Kate Soper, Ursula K. Heise, Greg Garrard, et al.), as well as post-humanist theories and the criticisms offered by contemporary (new) feminist materialists like Stacy Alaimo, Karen Barad, Vicki Kirby (corporeal materialism), Donna Haraway, Jane Bennett, et al. This combination of theories and positions allows me to revisit the figure of the shadow in literary, philosophical, and filmic texts while also exploring alternative approaches to reading in an age that has come to be known as the Anthropocene—the epoch marked by the predominantly adverse effects of human activity on global “geology and ecology” (Crutzen 16). “Humans are causing one of the few major extinction events that have occurred over the past billion years” (Walter Dodds, as cited in Kennedy 171). This age of “the global environmental” crisis poses a challenge to humanities, for it is a “crisis...of an entirely different order—it extends beyond the human to encompass non-human species, living organisms, things, and the earth itself” (Kennedy 171). A widespread sense of human exceptionalism concurrently undergirds the acceleration and bent of human impact on global geology and ecology and the approaches to humanities that situate the human outside of the nonhuman context. As Rosanne Kennedy asserts, “it is now widely recognized that [this] presumed autonomy of ‘man’ has been achieved through oppositional thinking in which one term in a dualism—mind/body, [culture/nature], human/animal, male/female—is valued and naturalized, while the secondary term is repressed” (Kennedy 171).

Within this dissertation, I thus apply strategies of reading that, informed by new materialist feminisms, “[acknowledge] the formative, productive role of inhuman forces which constitute the human as such” (Grosz 186). Thus, rather than taking up the literary and filmic approaches to the ontologically slippery shadow as representations of human interiority, this dissertation takes it up as a figure that explores the amorphous limits of the human body and its profound enmeshments with the material, nonhuman world. Instead of exclusively focusing on the shadow as a figure of immateriality, lack, or absence, I pursue it as an interface between the human body and its environment. I understand *figure* and *figuration* as a “materially entangled, embodied, and embedded” (Blaagaard and Tuin) “living map” and not as a metaphor (Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory* 15) that circulates in the closed-off linguistic, discursive realms of “disembodied epistemologies” (Barad, “Queer Causation and the Ethics of Mattering”). The slippery figure of the shadow in these literary and filmic texts, this project asserts, has the critical power to keep re-orienting, situating and re-situating the human in the nonhuman world. It holds the potential to open up the terms like *nonhuman*, *nature*, or *materiality* that are commonly inscribed with passivity and immutability “to the temporal forces of endless change” (Halberstam 5). By gesturing beyond the autonomous human individual and by broadcasting her unceasing locatedness in an ever transforming, fluid mesh of human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate others, the shadow also signals beyond the agency of the human and beyond the “timescale in which human life is positioned” (Kennedy 174). The critical engagement with the figure of the shadow poses a challenge to the “image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter [which] feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and

consumption” (Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* xi). The conceptualization of the nonhuman as passive matter

[prevents] us from detecting (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) a fuller range of nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies. These material powers, which can aid and destroy, enrich or disable, ennoble or degrade us, in any case call for our attentiveness, or even ‘respect’ (provided that the term be stretched beyond its Kantian sense). The figure of an intrinsically inanimate matter may be one of the impediments to the emergence of more ecological and more materially sustainable modes of production and consumption. (Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* xi)

Literary approaches that emphasize the situatedness of the human in the world, de-center the human and heed the vibrancy and agency of the nonhuman, take up the human as

‘an imperfect but potential receiver for all manner of signals from a world that thus far have been processed as noise or static, but which now assume the urgent status of positive or negative feedback. Rendered as telephone/screen/interface, always on, always waiting for the call, human life now becomes the zone for other entities to manifest or to be judged as manifesting in ways we will term ‘alive,’ ‘lively’ or ‘alife’ (Doyle, 2003)... The prospect or uncertainty of the future hollows out the present as the ‘human’ acquires an altered definition, a becoming interface or space of connection, a reverse or inverse *prosopopeia*. There is, to reprise Avital Ronell, no off switch for the ‘post-human.’ The call is always (for) you. It leaves you ringing. (Yates 223–224)

This project also deeply benefits from attempts to queer environmental approaches to humanities. Queer ecologies are emergent directions that seek to formulate a queer theory that “doesn’t rely on the subject, heteronormativity...or even the human” but “brings queerness to bear on the nonhuman” (Blas 103). As Zach Blas writes further “Queer Theory’s mode of operation has been to take an object that is rendered stable, normal, accepted, solid and destabilize it, reveal its construction, expose its holes. This is what Berlant and Warner call queer commentary, what I have said is queering” (106). Wendy Arons defines queer ecology as

a mode of ecocriticism that challenges conventional binary thinking about humans and nature by observing that ‘Nature’, because it does not draw firm, bright boundaries between humans and nonhumans, is essentially queer. Drawing on queer theory, ecology, evolution, and the philosophy of ‘vibrant materialism’ queer ecology argues for an ethics and politics that equalizes the status of the “others” that have historically occupied the right-hand side of the human/nonhuman divide and imagines nonhuman beings as ‘people’ in a radically democratic sense. (Arons 565).

Queer ecology, in line with Karen Barad, considers “ethical questions” that are not only about human desires or “about how nonhuman animals are being appropriated for human desires but also how our desires and our beings are co-constitutively reconfigured as well” (Barad, “Queer Causation and the Ethics of Mattering” 335).

Ethics is not simply about the subsequent consequences of our ways of interacting with the world, as if effect followed cause in a linear chain of events, but rather ethics is about mattering, about the entangled materialisations we help enact and are a part of bringing

about, including new configurations, new subjectivities, new possibilities – even the smallest cuts matter. (Barad, “Queer Causation and the Ethics of Mattering” 336)

Drawing from these recent ecological turns in queer theory, this dissertation, as mentioned in the previous section of this introduction, engages with the *queering* potential of the figure of the shadow that is rarely considered. If shadows are, as Denis Hollier intimates (16), comparable to the surrealist technique of automatic writing, indeed, a kind of automatic writing of objects themselves, then the texts they write are *queer* and demand differently attuned reading practice. This practice of reading must incorporate a strong skepticism toward naturalized categories of humans and nonhumans and tend toward “taxonomic indetermination” (Negarestani, as cited in Blas 108).

This dissertation relies on a host of scaffolding theories that, by seeking to acknowledge the constitutive activity of the nonhuman and re-situate the human in the nonhuman world, also demand a particular attentiveness in scholarship, the work with texts, and human and nonhuman *Others*. Moving the human from the center even ever so slightly, however, bears on language and propels one into a world of semantic acrobatics that are still only emerging. This is, of course, not without precedent. “Queer commentary” alone, has “involved a certain amount of experimenting, of prancing and squatting on the academic stage. This is partly to remind that there is an academic stage and that its protocols and proprieties have maintained an invisible heteronormativity,” and, as queer ecologists would add, an invisible anthropocentrism detrimental to humans and nonhumans alike, “that [infiltrate] our profession, our knowledge” (Berlant and Warner 348). As Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner point out further, the resulting more or less successful semantic acrobatics do not signal an embrace of “the indecorous per se. Indecorum can be a way of bringing some dignity to the abject. But it is a way...of keeping the door ajar” (348).

For at least some foothold, I have tried to, but not always succeeded in adhering to Elizabeth Grosz’s notion of critique by accepting that “[no] text or position is without problems, contradictions, weaknesses, points of uneasiness” and exercising “an affirmative method, a mode of assenting to rather than dissenting from” the “primary” (Grosz 3) texts I rely on in this dissertation. This project is my attempt at “[answering] to a duty....a responsibility to listen to others while subjecting [myself] to encounters with otherness” (Michael O’Rourke, as cited in Joy). As Jane Bennett argues in *The Enchantment of Modern Life* and as Eileen A. Joy ecstatically affirms, humanities scholars must strive to produce work that generates what “might be called presumptive generosity” toward our human and nonhuman *Others* (Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*). I hope that this dissertation can make a contribution to such modes of work—“the work of ‘rendering oneself more open to the surprise of other selves and other bodies’ and of being ‘willing and able to enter into productive assemblages with them’ (Jane Bennett, as cited in Joy). This work thus strives to be suffused with an “ethos that ‘emerges in conjunction with a picture of the world as a web of lively and mobile matter-forms of varying degrees of complexity’” (Jane Bennett, as cited in Joy). I cannot claim that, along the way, I have always succeeded. Sometimes, I have failed miserably. But failure is productive as well and, as Jack Halberstam reminds in *Queer Art of Failure*, “from the perspective of feminism...[failure] has often been better bet than success” (4). After all, one could also recognize failure as a “way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline and as a form of critique” (Halberstam 88).

Chapter Summaries

Throughout all chapters, I investigate how advances in technologies of seeing (x-ray, cinema, and psychoanalysis), and the shadow's involvement in these technologies register in literary, philosophical, or filmic works. I furthermore ask how the shadow, reconfigured through said technologies at the close of the nineteenth century, brings about the disruption of the distinction between inside/outside, reframes the situatedness of the human, and functions as an interface between the human and the nonhuman in selected texts. Within each chapter, I seek to highlight the different "taxonomic indeterminations" (Negarestani, as cited in Blas 108) that the encounters or work with the shadow beget.

Chapter 1 interrogates the queering force the shadow exercises as a double of bodies and a double of words. Here, I situate the shadow in a lineage of uncanny doubles that circulate in literary texts and compare it, most explicitly, to the Enlightenment and Romanticism automata. In the latter part of this chapter, I then explore the critical potential of the comparison between the shadow and the word, which is quite common in literary and philosophical texts. The point of departure for this collation is a strophe in Hans Magnus Enzensberger's poem *schattenwerk* (shadow work). The comparison between the shadow and the word hints at the status of the shadow as a sign. This chapter thus, contends with the following questions: If the shadow is a sign, what kind of sign is it? How does it coincide with and contrast deixis? And, finally, if the shadow is a sign, who or what is the speaker constituted through it? What disruptions in our understanding of the written word and authorship irrupt through this deployment of the shadow?

In Chapter 2, I explore the shadow as an ally in Walter Benjamin's dialectical/thought images. Focusing on the shadow in the thought image *Kurze Schatten* (*Short Shadows*), I explore how the workings of this figure coincide with the elusive program of the dialectical image. Guided by this short thought image, that grants the shadow agency, I address Benjamin's insistence on the co-activity of nonhuman objects, which surfaces in his theory of language and translation, his dialectical images, and is associated with the irruption of discontinuity. This disruption suspends, as this chapter argues, among other things, the communication of the purposiveness of objects and confronts us with their co-activity. The premise of his linguistic theory, which asserts that all that is has and partakes in language, identifies translation as that which mediates all encounters. It is a process of mutual, co-laboring translation, wherein all instances involved are made foreign, deterritorialized. In Benjamin's dialectical images, the inert object is superseded by a co-laboring object, perpetually caught up in transit; a queered object (Ahmed). By embroiling the object in questions of human condition, Benjamin bypasses the disciplinary nature/culture divide and allies the projects of human and object de-objectification (de-reification).

In the third chapter, I take up the shadow in Murnau's *A Symphony of Horror*. Specifically, I look at how the history and *materiality* of the shadow subtend and disrupt the narrative projected on the luminous screen. F. W. Murnau's film introduces us to the vampire Nosferatu, a figure that is at times all shadow or indistinguishable from its shadow (e. g. the famous staircase scene). Intrigued by this vampire's power to survive through ages and media (e. g. his cameo in the cartoon *Spongebob Squarepants*), I ask what about the shadow, the "sign that doesn't survive" (Hollier and Krauss 114), allows it to return again and again. In this chapter, I argue that the ever-changing status of Nosferatu's (non)humanness, underscored and conditioned by its collusion with the shadow, is one of the things that give it such impressive temporal and mediatic mileage. In this film, the vampire and the shadow take on critically salient trans-medial, trans-special, and trans-material dimensions, which build the focus of this chapter.

The final chapter of this dissertation singles out the shadows described in the x-ray scene of Thomas Mann's *Zauberberg*. Here, the objective of the x-ray camera looks into the irradiated interior of the human body and reveals something creaturely: a beating heart. While this particular scene in the sanatorium's x-ray "atelier" is often discussed, the startling discovery of the beastly when the skin is virtually pulled back is largely overlooked. Unlike the static x-ray image that extends the horizon of Castorp's gaze and allows him a forbidden glimpse into his own grave, the cinematic x-ray vision in vivo discloses a living creature—a nonhuman at the heart. This scene builds a unique bridge and contrast to Dr. Robert Janker's controversial experiments conducted in the 1930s. His x-ray film of the alimentary system, for example, combines recordings of an irradiated human head and an animal body to demonstrate processes of ingestion, digestion, and excretion. Like Mann's, Janker's collage associates the human and the nonhuman. However, the latter also explicitly upholds the notions of human superiority and sanctity while maintaining the presumed baseness of the nonhuman. Thus, although the advent of x-ray technology renders all bodies penetrable, indifferently turning their interior inside out, Janker's scientific films ultimately pull the skin back over the exposed human bones and organs like a chastity garment. By combining these texts in a trans-disciplinary move, I am able to explore the shifting positions of the modern subject and the concurrent, seemingly paradoxical mystification of technologies of vision. Through the shadows of the static x-ray image described in the text, an animate, living body appears transformed into inanimate matter (skeleton), while the moved x-ray shadows traffic in sensuousness between the human and the nonhuman animal. In other words, while the fixed shadows of one image disclose immanent death, the animate shadows of the other disclose a living interior virtually indistinguishable from the nonhuman. Janker's body collage, however, by upholding the hierarchy of the human (elevated) and the nonhuman (base) mystify the body once again and reverse the penetration by x-ray—the very marvel and science on display in his x-ray film.

Looking Ahead

In future revisions of this dissertation, which will hopefully take it in the direction of a publishable book, I hope to foreground issues of gender, race, and sexuality. Although they are at the forefront of my concerns, they are here present mainly in the fabric of the theories I rely on. I thus hope to bring texts into this dissertation that will allow me to explicitly address these matters. Peter Weiss's *The Shadow of the Body of the Coachman*, for example, would lend itself quite well to the critical exploration of the disruption of bipolarized gender and sexuality through the shadow. I also hope to further address the racialization of the shadow and investigate how this figure is or can be used to forge alliances between oppressed communities (migrant communities, working class, people of color, women, LGBTQ) and nonhumans to promote advocacy on behalf of both across differences.

Chapter 1

The Shadow: A Dubious Double of Bodies and Words

Illusions From the Play of Shadows?²

shadows are my works
and i am a shadow
cast by other shadows
to the future
to other nights
to other faces
to new works
shadows are my works. (Enzensberger 92–93, *translation mine*)³

This is an archeology of a modern specter: the figure of the shadow as it drifts through literature, philosophy, and film from the nineteenth into the twenty-first century. It seeks to unearth what cannot be buried amidst the rubble left behind by an age that, in a quest to eliminate phantoms, only begot new ones. As it came to a close, the nineteenth century unleashed a host of shadows. Emerging simultaneously in 1885, X ray technology, cinema, and psychoanalysis—the three “phenomenologies of the inside” (Lippit, *Atomic Light*)—pursued shadows either as medium or prey. X rays irradiated the human body and, transgressing against the boundaries of skin and soft tissue cast onto a screen the shadow of the interior; the bones otherwise only laid bare in death. The shadow, a surface phenomenon, paradoxically came to light as the image of the interior. The electromagnetic flash instantly stripped the inner space of its depths and transformed it into surface. By slicing through the skin, exscribing, and rendering the interior visible like nothing more than facade so that it could be searched for medical errors, X ray technology suspended or, at least, interfered with the opposition between inside and outside. But these spectral renderings did more than open up a sacred boundary and expose the interior’s shadow: they offered a glimpse into the future—an image of what remains after the human. Through X ray technology, the discovery of extransensory reality reached ahead. Not only was there a reality independent of and beyond the limits of human sensory perception, there was a reality after the human. The shadow of the irradiated body was a prophetic specter mapping out what performs after the human. Or, put even more pointedly, the X ray shadow became a portending *Schauplatz*, literally a site for seeing, observing a posthumous, posthuman performance.

While doctors and X ray technicians in white lab coats searched X ray pictures for aberrant shadows, and while publics poured into dark halls where they were mesmerized by the Lumière Brothers’ animated shadows, Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud chased psychic shadows. In the year of the X ray and cinema, the two coauthored and published *Studies on Hysteria*,

2. A play on Freud’s parenthetical remark: „Ich lass mir zuerst im Wachen erzählen, was es gegeben hat, wobei sie das Entsetzen mit gekrümmten Fingern und vorgestreckten Händen vortrefflich darstellt. — Im Garten ist eine ungeheure Maus plötzlich über ihre Hand gehuscht und dann plötzlich verschwunden, es huschte überhaupt beständig hin und her (Illusion spielender Schatten?).“ (Breuer and Freud, *Studien über Hysterie* 60)

3. “schatten sind meine werke // und ich bin ein schatten // den andere schatten // der zukunft entgegenwerfen // anderen nächten // andern gesichtern // neuen werken zu // schatten sind meine werke.” (Enzensberger 92–93)

introducing the technique of psychoanalysis that sought to uncover the causes of hysteria by trying to “honestly and modestly [...] hold on to the outlines of the shadows which the unknown real objects throw upon the wall”⁴ (Breuer and Freud, *Studies On Hysteria* 250). Published in May, this description of a revolutionary approach to therapy blended echoes of past and future shadows by evoking Plato’s cave and inadvertently magnifying the cave’s proto-filmic qualities in advance of a cinema that would not be shared with the public until the end of the year, December 28th.

What seemed to be just an inaugural allusion of kinship between psychoanalysis and cinema became disciplinarily entrenched in film theory. The haunting by shadow, which affects both cinema and psychoanalysis, appears to be one of the main reasons for this continued liaison. On movie screens, lively shadows carry on independent trajectories from the actors who once cast them. Like an animated version of Dorian Gray’s portrait in reverse, the shadows continue to act long after the death of the actors who once cast them. Loosed from the body that cast them, the shadows of early cinema are ghostly *memento moris*. Neither present (because holes in light), nor fully absent (because perceptible), these specters are like memories of a departed person, a lost object, a bygone moment. Suspended between materiality and immateriality, presence and absence, the cinematic projection of shadows echoes the passing from body to memory—from body to abstraction.

In Freud’s essay *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), the figure of the shadow is similarly haunting and laden with death. In an attempt to distinguish between the act of mourning and the state of melancholia, Freud relies on the figure of a freed and thus oppressive shadow. Unable to put the departed loved one to rest or let go of a dear object, the melancholic does not succeed in “[withdrawing] the libido from this object” and redirecting it toward another. Instead, the “freed libido” is “withdrawn into the ego” where it “[establishes] an identification of the ego with the abandoned object.” This loosed, fugitive libido, which Freud calls the “shadow of the object” is so powerful that it “impoverishes,” displaces, and transforms the ego (Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” 586).

Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification. (Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” 586)

If we take into consideration that, in film and psychoanalysis, the shadow continues to act beyond the bodies, objects, and conditions that once colluded to cast it, then considering it merely in terms of absence, lack, or cessation would be too reductive. As a seemingly independently animated double in cinema and an immaterial imprint of a human or nonhuman *Other* in psychoanalysis, shadows have an afterlife of their own while also conveying the traces of the bodies and objects that once cast them into a kind of afterlife. This dissertation is concerned precisely with this shadow that, with the emergence of the three shadow technologies of 1895, sweeps up the exterior into the interior or the interior into the outside—the shadow that can no longer be occupied with fantasies of the sealed off human interiority, of the isolated, singular, authentic *self* dwelling at inscrutable depths: of the human soul. The shadow at stake here is a *Schauplatz* of failed polarities (e.g. inside/outside, human/nonhuman,

4. The full quote in the original text: „Von ihnen gilt immer, was Theseus im Sommerachtstraum von der Tragödie sagt: ‚Auch das Beste dieser Art ist nur ein Schattenspiel‘, und auch das Schwächste ist nicht wertlos, wenn es sucht in Treue und Bescheidenheit die Schattenrisse festzuhalten, welche die unbekannten wirklichen Objecte auf die Wand werfen.“ (Breuer and Freud, *Studien über Hysterie* 221)

animate/inanimate)—a dynamic, spectral interface between the human and the nonhuman. If for Lucretius, images of things are *films* “perpetually peeled off from the surfaces of objects” and as such “[fly] about this way and that through the air ... thrown off from the surfaces of things” (95) then shadows are the *films* of these otherwise overlooked interfaces, collocation, and collaboration between human and nonhuman objects. In this dissertation, I attempt to recast the figure of the shadow as a figure that *queers* the limits between bodies, in particular the human body, and highlights its profound enmeshments with the nonhuman world. Like x-ray technology, cinema, and psychoanalysis, this dissertation seeks to tease out the shadow to the surface and release it from its servitude to representations of radical interiority and human exceptionalism encapsulated by the human soul.

In the League of Doppelgänger: A Brief History of the Double

A prominent figure in the reserve of uncanny doppelgängers, the shadow shares the stage with, among others, the android automaton who preoccupies “audiences, workers, philosophers and kings” (Riskin 601) from antiquity to the age of Enlightenment and to the present. The staying power of the shadow—a rather commonplace figure—in the regularly updated cast of conspicuous doubles cannot be attributed to its ubiquity alone. As is the case with other doppelgängers, encounters with the figure of the shadow push against binaries that organize and divide the human and the nonhuman, the human and *nature*, the animate and the inanimate, the *self* and the *Other*. In their guises as doppelgängers, the shadow and the automaton, by comparison, replicate and omit different features and thus provoke distinct observations and conclusions about the qualities they and their sources or prototypes hold. Rarely scrutinized in tandem because of their obvious dissimilarities, the two figures are linked only taxonomically in parenthetical catalogues of uncanny copies. However, the cause of the shadow’s enduring appeal comes to light in the somewhat counterintuitive comparison of the two and, in particular, the perspectives on the human/nonhuman, human/nature, and self/other they illustrate.

Representations of android automata burgeon in German Romanticism, expanding and pressing against the already unfolding debate about the mechanization of the human body and the animation of the machine. While its predecessor, the Enlightenment automaton, “dramatized two contradictory claims ... : that living creatures [are] essentially machines and that living creatures were the antithesis of machines” (Riskin 612), the Romantic artificial human (i.e. in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *Sandman*, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, Jean Paul’s *Humans are the Angels’ Machines*, *The Machine-human and his Qualities*, Ludwig Archim von Arnim’s *Gräfin Dolores*) called for meditations on the uncanny and the ever more contested boundary between the animate and inanimate. While in early Enlightenment, the “rational automaton” served “as a heuristic device to illustrate the nature of the body, the state, and even the entire universe constructed by an engineer-God, functioning as the central emblem of the mechanistic cosmos” (75) and, in late Enlightenment, “the automaton-man [sic.] represented a person devoid of freedom either through external oppression or inner conformism,” (159) “a new image of the uncanny automaton emerged in the fevered imagination of the Romantics” (Kang 184). Gradually, “the self-moving machine no longer represented rational or mechanistic ideas but appeared as an uncanny entity of mysterious nature that unsettled and frightened people, sometimes to the point of madness” (Kang 187).

Although its apparatus at times seemed fueled by a ghostly, mystical force, the Romantic machine did not emerge from a *Zeitgeist* “uniformly opposed, as is usually assumed, to the Enlightenment emphasis on reason” (Richards xvii). As Robert J. Richards argues, “many of the

Romantics might rather be classified as hyperbolically rational in that they believed the scientific mind could penetrate into all of the dark corners of the universe” (xvii). To this scientific mind, however, the Romantics brought poetry—aesthetic judgment or the ghost in the machine. German Romantic authors “altered fundamental assumptions about the very character of philosophy and science, arguing that a poetical transformation of these disciplines might reveal features of nature not contemplated by its predecessors” (Richards xvii). These maneuvers in literature and philosophy took place against the backdrop of a “genuine scientific revolution” (Lindberg 39).

By the end of the eighteenth century ... naturalists got more and more fascinated by a number of phenomena that could not be adequately explained through Newtonian mechanics, in particular chemistry, electricity, and magnetism; beyond the scope of mechanics was also biology, which was born as a science around 1800, accompanying remarkable progress in medicine. (Lindberg 39)

The phenomena of electricity and magnetism, in particular, proved vexing for the Newtonian physics “for [their] actions could not be easily reconciled with a world conceived in terms of solid atoms acting directly and mechanically upon one another” (Gilmore 474). Electric and magnetic polarity “appeared ... as manifestations of an active power inherent to matter” (Tresch 98). The mechanistic universe populated with dead, passive matter was suddenly at odds with emerging theories of a vital force that unites all things.

Congruent with the concept of *Weltseele* (*anima mundi*, world soul), put forward by adherents of the speculative *Naturphilosophie* (naturephilosophy), the notion of a vital force took hold in sciences, where, for example, a group of French physicists “explained the action of heat, light, electricity, and magnetism by the vibrations of a continuous, all-pervading ether” (Tresch 94). The certainty of boundaries between human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic, and inanimate and animate faded. In medicine too, the attention to the human body shifted, as “the corporeal entity could no longer be approached as a composite of discrete parts fulfilling their functions under the dictates of a governing organ but an organic, holistic vessel animated by a living force that allowed the entire body to act, change, and grow in harmonious unity” (Kang 149).

However, along with the human body, the automaton is de-automatized as well. Now equally permeated with vital force, a “latent world soul” (Kang 195), it becomes the bulletin-body that collects tests of liveliness. It is almost entirely occupied with questions concerning the *spark* of life—the qualities and prerequisites for life. At this juncture, the machine-man motif in literature counts either to dead things at the brink of “spiritualization” (Tresch 92) or to already, inherently, mysteriously living things. The idea that “life is not a special case of matter ... matter is only a special (dead) case of life” (Lindberg 39) guides automata through this literary hide-and-seek game with life. The counterfeit human supposed to function by repetition and mimicry, not autonomous creativity, thus appears to harbor an uncanny potential to exceed the purpose assigned to it by its maker. When what is formerly deemed dead matter is redefined as *life in waiting*, the subterranean potential of manufactured things to surpass their *function* or even *being for* the human and act beyond and without the human, becomes an explicit possibility. Literary automata manufactured in a landscape in which things that are “apparently in a condition of repose” can no longer be considered “inactive,” act as illustrations that accelerate a transformation which otherwise “takes place so slowly, that it would escape observation” (Hans Christian Ørsted as cited in Kang 192). Hitherto free to transform and subjugate dead matter as needs and whimsy strike, the human stumbles into a world in which anything could spring to life

and, more importantly, in which all of the human creations, artifacts, either continue to live in subterranean efficacy, or spring to autonomous, creative life. The literary obsession with the human's mechanical double complicates more than just the boundary between animate and inanimate life.

E. T. A. Hoffmann's much-studied *The Sandman*, for example, unfolds, so Hélène Cixous, "without fail before the reader's eyes ... a kind of puppet theater in which real dolls or fake dolls, real and simulated life, are manipulated by a sovereign but capricious stage-setter" (525). In this tale, the counterfeit human is, or so it seems at least, the beautiful Olympia, a wooden, mechanical daughter borne of two fathers. Nathanael first catches a glimpse of the enchanting doll in the window right around the time that an encounter with a barometer salesman revives a childhood trauma. As Nathanael recalls, one night after sneaking into his father's workroom, he is caught by his father's associate, Coppelius who, after threatening to take his eyes, settles with carefully "[observing] the mechanism of [his] hands and feet" (Hoffmann 98). Coppelius first "unscrews" Nathanael's feet and hands and then repositions them "now this way, then another way" (Hoffmann 98). Unhappy with the reconfiguration of the "mechanism"—none of the parts "fit anywhere as well as where [they] were"—he puts Nathanael back together the way his father, the "old man," who "knew his business" (Hoffmann 98) originally constructed him. This nightmarish episode, while dismissed as a feverish dream, a childish coping mechanism, obfuscates Nathanael's origins by setting him up as machine-like product of a "technical collaboration" (Engelstein 179) between his father and the monstrous figure Coppelius. Thus, when Nathanael later mistakes the automaton Olympia—with whom he, either in the realm of phantasm, psychosis, reality, or otherwise, shares certain similarities like, for example, a mechanical body and (artificial) birth that bypasses the woman—for a living woman and falls in love with her, he also, inadvertently mistakes her for himself or some aspects of himself.

As a counterfeit human, an automaton without individual content of her own, Olympia is condemned to replicate or rather mirror Nathanael's personality without distortion or creative additions of her own. What Nathanael loves about the lifeless Olympia is he, himself. His narcissistic love is the spark that brings Olympia's ice-cold body to life. Put differently, Olympia either becomes a counterfeit Nathanael or, through Nathanael's narcissistic touch, his life extends to her and she becomes an extension of him, transforming them into a kind of a prosthetic unity, a cyborg *avant la lettre*. When Nathanael witnesses Olympia's dismemberment by her two fathers, he relives the trauma or phantasm of his own disassembly. In the instance that he discovers her as a machine, he recognizes the automaton in himself. These twists and convergences in Olympia and Nathanael's relationship upend the commonly unilateral confusion of the boundary between the human and the nonhuman. Here, it is not just the human who mistakes the nonhuman for a human, the human mistakes himself for the nonhuman, or, the nonhuman mistakes himself for the human. The boundaries are blurred in and from all directions.

The distribution of identity from the self onto an *Other* (typically constructed as a woman in the case of automata), also subsumes Fichte's philosophy of reflection along with contemporary attempts to overcome it by Schelling, Novalis, and Jean Paul. On the one hand, it seems that the encounter with the doppelgänger conveniently maps onto the Fichtean theory of *Ich* and *Nicht-Ich*—*I* and *Not-I*—that "had put subjectivity in a relentless motion, a constant turning" (Vardoulakis, "Fait, Accompli" 259). For Fichte, what we usually deem a subject emerges in the back and forth between the *I* and the *Not-I*. In an admittedly cursory version of Fichte's theory, the *I* is the empirical I or, put simply, the individual human subject, while the

Not-I comprises “individual things that constitute the objective world” (Gillespie 81). In the first act of individuation, the *I* posits itself (Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* 21).⁵ In the second act, everything that is not *I* is posited as the *Not-I*. The same impetus that leads to the positing of the *I* leads to the positing of the *Not-I*: self-certainty or the consciousness of the fact that the *I* that posits itself is identical with the *I* that is (Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* 12). In encountering its own negation (the *Not-I*), the *I* does not acquire more knowledge about an external object that is *Not-I*, but rather about itself. As Fichte asserts in *Das System der Sittenlehre*: to posit a *Not-I* at all is a “special way to catch a glimpse of [oneself]” (Fichte, *Werke* 528 [IV, 134]).⁶ This divided, unstable subject that can only hope to know itself, is immanently a lonely, narcissistic subject caught in a world that swarms with human and nonhuman others who can be no more than mirroring surfaces to each other.

Nathanael is just such a tragic Fichtean subject overplayed into satire.

Olimpia, the beloved automaton, is an *other* that is populated with Nathanael’s fiction on several levels. First, Nathanael develops a fiction of her personhood by projecting his fantasy of liveliness onto the lifeless doll. It is his fiction, both as an inscription of his desire upon the machine, and as his actual, creative work, that, for Nathanael at least, increases her aliveness. The more of his poems, visions, narratives, sonnets he reads to her—while she sits unmoved for hours and hours—the more glowing, lively, her gaze becomes. Olimpia, who is described by others as an artifice of human life, an awkward, uncanny machine without spirit, is simultaneously Nathanael’s fiction and his fiction brought to life through him and for him. Put bluntly, Nathanael is the third man in line to give birth to Olimpia. Fiction, then, emerges as yet another method of procreation that circumvents the female body. In her essay *Reproductive Machines in E. T. A. Hoffmann*, Stefanie Engelstein highlights a reproduction-obsessed context in which this narrative emerges. Influenced by, for example, the discovery of asexual reproduction in freshwater polyps (hydras), a subject studied by the Italian naturalist Spallanzani, E. T. A. Hoffmann’s story “[calls into question the role of the female body in generation” (Engelstein 178) and places reproduction into the creative hands of men. Nathanael’s ambiguous genesis (is he an automaton or merely an adult who has retained the wild imagination and sensitivity of his childhood self, or is there something monstrous about him that his disassembled body can “regenerate” like the polyp [Engelstein 180]) and Olimpia’s creation by three fathers (Spallanzani by mechanism, Coppola by vision, and Nathanael by fiction), artfully suspend the sovereignty of reproduction and the certainty of progenitors—*authors*.

While a cursory study of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s story can in no way exhaust the functions of the mechanic *Doppelgänger* in the context of German Romanticism, it highlights some of the discourses that inhabit it. The increasing uncertainty in processes of generation and individuation and the collapsing differences between animate and inanimate matter are the primary themes that find expression in the body of the counterfeit human. The mechanical doppelgänger appears either as the tragic figure sacrificed to the eccentric or conservative distinction of a human from its nonhuman *Other*, or the demonic figure that drives the witless human, who cannot discern between the human self and the nonhuman *Other*, to death or insanity. The amorous interaction between the human and the counterfeit human, as exemplified in *The Sandman*, is also a dance of a split human body; a charged interplay between the body as a “surface on which a meaning is inscribed by others” (Joshua 154) and the body as a sovereign entity. This split can also be

5. „Es ist ursprünglich nichts gesetzt, als das Ich; und dieses nur ist schlechthin gesetzt.“ (Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* 21)

6. „...eine besondere Weise, mich selbst zu erblicken.“ (Fichte, *Fichtes Werke* 527)

replayed as a distribution of the individual across an ideal self and an enacted, actualized self. In sum, the counterfeit, mechanical human becomes a site for the projection of inner conflicts, whether they arise from private despair, interactions with social limits that push against an unbridled self, or encounters with nonhuman others that cannot be psychically subsumed. Although the nonhuman doubles that invade the Romantic literary imagination—e.g. mirror images, phantoms—are, at times, inspirited with agency or by act beyond the human and the code set by its creator(s), the stories they dwell in, ultimately return to the human subject as the relational center, however fragmented or distressed it may be.

Subverting the Subversive Doubling

The doppelgänger, so Dimitris Vardoulakis in *The Doppelgänger: Literature's Philosophy*, “makes possible an ontology of the subject” by “undoing ... the framing of the subject by the opposition between mere presence and absence” (*The Doppelgänger* 2). In different terms, rather than limiting the question of the subject's being to the antithetical being and not being, the *Doppelgänger* expands it by introducing the “function of relationality—the various relations that structure the subject's ontology” (Vardoulakis, *The Doppelgänger* 2). Relationality does not rescue the doubled subject from Fichtean loneliness or narcissism. Quite to the contrary, it “undoes [its] individuality” (Vardoulakis, *The Doppelgänger* 4). However, figured in this manner, the double remains merely a medium through which to witnessing the subject witness himself. What's more, the double, especially in the case of the automaton, denied of its own history or identity, acts simply as a “substance that presents itself to humanity as a blank slate, a tabula rasa, for the inscription of ideal forms” (Ingold, “Materials against Materiality” 3). In this way, it can only sustain the “polarity of mind and matter” (Ingold, “Materials against Materiality” 3). Encounters with this kind of a double do not describe the “corporeal contact” of “the flesh and blood of human bodies ... with materials of other kinds, whether organic or inorganic” (Ingold, “Materials against Materiality” 3). This mechanically constructed double only brings the splitters of “incorporeal minds” (Ingold, “Materials against Materiality” 3) into view, annihilating the *Other* in the process. But what of doubles whose ontological status is already contested, or doubles that can be but are not always the artifices of human making? What about the shadow, the main subject of this inquiry?

As opposed to the automaton, the shadow, in its imaginary or textual (i.e. literary figure) and phenomenal form, also belongs to an exclusive subgroup of doubles that counts only the reflection and the echo as its other members. The phenomenal forms of these doubles

have not been given ontological status in Western metaphysics. We do not have concepts for all their motley unstable forms; they are not a text. They exist in the free spaces of the world of weighty things. They delineate the contours of things for us and lead us down paths and to horizons... [They] captivate the eyes and keep us absorbed in the environment beyond the paths, implements and obstacles, and objectives to which our needs and practical interests attach us. They are glories and menaces that emanate off things. (Lingis 41)

Immaterial, these doubles seem ideally qualified to symbolize the contents of the mind—the spirited other of the dead world of matter. Indeed, the reading of the shadow as the image of the soul is endemic. From Hades, the underworld kingdom of antiquity where souls of the dead drift as shades stripped of their carnal attachments, to the early cinema as the *Kingdom of Shadows* (Gorky), the shadow serves as the image of the elusive, nonsensual, pneumatic excess that sets

the human apart from the nonhuman. For the more prosaic Plato, shadows are falsehoods, poor copies of real bodies. From him, we inherit a suspicion against all images, but shadows in particular. These seductive specters are nothing but

vacuous, degraded, and insubstantial projections that, by a kind of ideological-optical illusion, are mistakenly but unavoidably taken for reality ... they are bodies without souls, or forms without bodies. They are flat and insubstantial, devoid of interiority and substance, unable to express anything beyond themselves. (Shaviro 15)

As Shaviro further argues, images or representations—to which I count shadows (textual or phenomenal)—are thought to be suspect because they cannot

capture the complex textual play of absences and mediations; none can be adequate to the severe demands of dialectical comprehension. The word is the death of the thing, and the falsity of the image is a necessary consequence of the truth of discourse ... Images are false, since they have been separated from the real situations of which they claim to be the representations, as well as from the material conditions in which they have been produced. They are suspect, unreliable, and ‘ideological’, because they presume to subsist in this state of alienation, and even perpetuate it by giving rise to delusive ‘reality effects’. (15)

Here, however I seek to advance an alternate reading of the textual shadow (shadow in texts), not to wholly excise the soul from it, but to shift our attention back to the traces of the phenomenal shadow which refuse to vanish completely in favor of the meaning they are asked to subtend and circulate. Following Shaviro’s lead to an extent, I ask what if it is not *lack* that makes the shadow, whether phenomenal or textual, so “dangerous and disturbing” (16)? What if, in word or image, the object is not “lost or missing, but [instead] never quite lost ... never distant or absent enough. Maurice Blanchot... suggests that the image is not a representational substitute for the object so much as it is—like a cadaver—the material trace or residue of the object’s failure to vanish completely” (Shaviro 16). What if—against common sense that tells us that the phenomenal shadow just is privation, absence, lack, a hole in light—we take up the textual and phenomenal shadow not as a “symptom of lack, but [as] an uncanny, excessive residue of being that subsists when all should be lacking” (Shaviro 16). What if the textual and the phenomenal shadows are uncanny precisely because in them, “all that which *should have* remained hidden” (Freud as cited in Cixous 530, emphasis in the original) comes “unexpectedly, from the world toward the subject” (Cixous 530)? What if we take up the shadow as a *synoptic tableau* of the intersection between the material and the symbolic? What, then, comes forward through the shadow?

James Gibson defines the environment as the collocation of *medium*, which “affords movement and perception ... [*substances*], which include all kinds of more or less solid stuff” and *surfaces*, which, at least as far as perception is concerned, are “where most of the action is” (Ingold, “Materials against Materiality” 5). The phenomenal shadow cannot be counted to any one of these three building units. It is neither medium, nor substance, nor surface. Instead, it emerges as a virtual trace of the interplay between medium, substance, and surface. The shadow, especially after it passes through the three shadow technologies of 1895 (x-ray, cinema, psychoanalysis), becomes a hurdle for various bipolarities of the nineteenth century. Recast as, to some extent, futural, the shadow becomes the figure that perpetually postpones the limits of the exterior and the interior to the horizon (Muñoz). Furthermore, as Gibson’s breakdown of the elements that make up the environment or *Umgebung* illustrates, the shadow, not belonging to

either category but requiring all three for its emergence, highlights collocation and collaboration while interfering with the sequestering or definitive setting apart of individual components. This may seem paradoxical at first, for it is the shadow that sets objects apart by shedding light on the extension of unique bodies in space, their volume, texture, surface—even *locates* them in time. But the shadow is also ultimately relational, for all of these qualities are given in collocation with other objects and under specific conditions. When it comes to time, the shadow is a gnomon of collocation—it gives us time as it emerges from and in the gathering of objects, not necessarily time as a line along which objects and events are arranged. The shadow gives us time and space as relational or relative; as something that “arises from the relations between things,” not something that exists as an “[independent container]” (Harman 143) in which entities are spatially arranged into dots along a timeline. The phenomenal shadow is thus an interface phenomenon, one that does not bring objects into connection but bears witness to their interaction. It is constituted through relation of objects, just as those objects are constituted through their relation themselves. Moreover, it shows the restless dynamism of the interconnection between objects. Ceaselessly moving and transforming, the shadow gives us time not as a quality, a container, but as transformation.

The pursuit of the shadow delivers us things of the world as relational and futural, that is, as dynamic, emergent, never fully constituted but always only in the process of becoming and transformation. The task of this dissertation is, thus, to show how the figure of the shadow in texts (literary, filmic, visual arts) also fulfills the function of an interface; how the shadow acts as a *living film*—to circulate back to Lucretius and cinema—of the perpetual collocation and interaction between objects, and in particular, the human and the nonhuman. If *Enlightenment* encouraged illumination through demythologization and succeeded in bringing the human subject into the center as the masterful subject who gives meaning to the otherwise meaningless nonhuman from which he is also isolated and to which he is superior, the figure of the shadow in the 19th but especially in the 20th century is inscribed with the potential to radically decenter the human. Here, the shadow can be approached as a *film* that captures the nearby and an intimacy between the human and the nonhuman. It emerges as the spectral manifestation of subterranean proximity with the nonhuman and of impermanence. As an image (the focus of the second chapter), the shadow is a simultaneous depiction—the *living film*—of the interdependencies between the medium, substance, and surface, or, as this dissertation highlights, of the interdependencies between the human and the nonhuman. Accordingly, the shadow inheres within the intersectional dimension between the human and the nonhuman. The diversion of the focus, even if ever so slight, from the individual medium, substance, or surface onto the shadow, or, as it is referred to in art theory the *negative space*, the realm between the self-evident key bodies or characters, instantly multiplies the frame of unfolding events and participating agents. To take the shadow into consideration as an entity means to contend with hordes of non-things (things that are to be overlooked, that ostensibly do not matter). This shaded territory in literature, film, and the visual arts sends us on a quest through hybrid geographies—it demands that we heed this substrate of rumored non-things, that we “exercise other modes of travelling through the heterogeneous entanglements of social life that refuse the choice between word and world” (Whatmore 3), to hold on to the “sense ... in which ‘the world kicks back’” (Karen Barad as cited in Whatmore 5). Of course, these dimensions of the shadow do not suddenly emerge at the dawn of the 20th century. They are there all along and can be unearthed in careful reading (for example the new reading engendered through Benjamin’s thought-images discussed in Chapter 2) and the attention to what is otherwise overlooked, to the overfull space in-between

that is paradoxically called *negative*, hollow space. At the turn of the century, however, the capacities of the supposedly empty figure outlined here are magnified through shifts in technology, material practices, and the interrelated, increasingly palpable effects of the certain entry into the anthropocene; the age in which “humans—thanks to our numbers, the burning of fossil fuel, and other related activities—have become a geological agent on the planet ... [an] era ... in which humans act as a main determinant of the environment of the planet” (Chakrabarty 209).

Before fully moving on to adventures in spectral reading and the finer points of the textual shadow, we must also take note of its further denigrative deployments. While this dissertation seeks to primarily highlight the shadow’s recalcitrance and subversive force, it must also take into account that this unruliness has also repeatedly surrendered the shadow to denigration. In its semiotized guise, namely, the shadow is often recruited for racialized, gendered, and sexualized discourses. As Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952):

The torturer is the black man, Satan is black, one talks of shadows, when one is dirty one is black—whether one is thinking of physical dirtiness or of moral dirtiness. It would be astonishing, if the trouble were taken to bring them all together, to see the vast number of expressions that make the black man the equivalent of sin. In Europe, whether concretely or symbolically, the black man stands for the bad side of the character. As long as one cannot understand this fact, one is doomed to talk in circles about the “black problem.” Blackness, darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths, blacken someone’s reputation; and, on the other side, the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical, heavenly joy. A magnificent blond child—how much peace there is in that phrase, how much joy, and above all how much hope! (Fanon 146)

In this undoubtedly abject domain of Western thought and action, however, shadows also amass subterranean, subversive, and substantive criticisms against the axiomatic ennoblement of illumination, light, and whiteness. Critical approaches to denigrations of *darkness* and *shadow* also subsume powerful minoritarian interferences. Within shadows, to appropriate Kristeva,

Looms...abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects. A certainty protects it from the shameful—a certainty of which it is proud holds on to it. But simultaneously, just the same, that impetus, that spasm, that leap is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned. Unflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself (Kristeva 1)

Despite their apparent complexity, shadows, darkness, and blackness became the figures “through which historical, moral, metaphysical, and social fears, problems, and dichotomies could be articulated” and into which majoritarian, “internal conflicts” could be “transferred” (Morrison 55). The attempts to inscribe such figures with definitive, concrete meaning demand that they first be hollowed out of any internal significance or qualities, so that they can disappear in favor of the connotations they are asked to subtend. But these figures exceed apprehension and

maintain excesses that cannot be occupied. If we are to pursue the critical force of the shadow's unruliness in literary, filmic, and artistic articulations without redeeming the widespread denigratory tactics and without becoming guilty of the same subjugation and effacement, we have to interrupt and invert the strategies of the offending discourses. Such an undertaking, however, cannot merely entail the rescuing of the shadow from negativity or even a displacement of negativity from one pole to another—from dark to light. To avoid this fallacy, I rely on queer theory, particularly queer ecology, and pursue the shadow as *queer*; that is, as an “open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning” (Sedgwick 7). Consequently, in the wake of this quest, we will not have apprehended the shadow for “queerness is always on the horizon” (Muñoz 11). To trail the shadow means to, instead, invite in and surrender to its productive transgressions. It means to embark on “linguistic, epistemological, representational, political” (Sedgwick 7), and ontological adventures.

It is furthermore important to note that this approach to the shadow does not seek to rescue it from negativity only to re-inscribe it with other, exclusively human meaning, but to instead point to the enmeshment of the human and the nonhuman. As I set off to show within this project, human and nonhuman fates are entangled and the rescuing of the one must entail the other. Certainly, the denigration of the shadow is attached to the effacement and annihilation of the *Other*, marginalized human. However, it also betrays, or is made possible by the concurrent denigration of the nonhuman object, thing, or phenomenon.

This dissertation seeks to contribute to discussions on the degradation of the human and nonhuman (world, environment) in the field of literary studies. The convergence of these two concerns, demands, as Sedgwick's quote already intimates, revisions in approach to language, notions of representation, epistemology, and ontology. Although they are all very much interrelated, the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to the issue of language and representation. After all, what is the shadow in language or image? What does it gesture to if it gestures at all? Can we even talk about the phenomenal shadow, its excesses beyond human meaning in human language and representation?

Obstructions: Expanses Between the Word and the Shadow

Described as an absence of light or a hole in light, the phenomenal shadow itself encompasses no material contents, nothing that belongs to a discrete object that we could deem the shadow. Considered in this manner, the shadow contains no information; it is illegible. Although it emerges from the choreography of light and its obstacles, the phenomenal shadow is, in some sense, not at all. A hollow projection of a dance, it exhibits the absence of illumination conjured by the affair between a light source and a more or less opaque body. Thus, what we deem the shadow simultaneously does not exist and exists as a “result, as consequence—a consequence that cannot be separated from its premises” (Deleuze 94). The shadow is inherently derivative, a simulcast *film* about the encounter of light, body, and a screen—media, surfaces, and substances. It is a map of privation that, paradoxically, recounts a unique gathering of things. The shadow relates, but only as long as the encounter lasts. It is the insubstantial but nonetheless perceptible, visible, even *sensible* sign—a story of an absence that emerges in the very instance that an opaque object, light, and some form of a ground or screen enter into relation and ends as soon as the relation is terminated. The privation mapped by the shadow is a gesture towards the gathering of elements that engender it. As already noted, to focus on the shadow as absence alone, as merely an immaterial phenomenon, is to miss the collocation, collaboration of elements requisite for its ‘being’.

The shadow's immanently contestable ontological status (is it or is it not?) makes it concurrently a close relative of and a challenge to the ink on the page or the black pixels that interrupt the computer screen's light and make up literary works, as Enzensberger's poem *Schattenwerk* (*Shadow Work*) cited at the opening of this chapter intimates. Not unlike Enzensberger, Derrida—contemplating Mallarmé's work—describes the written word as “cut out like black shadows against a white background, profiles without faces, sketches forever presented askew” (Derrida, *Dissemination* 241). “To write,” so the Mallarmé's lines in question, “the inkstand, crystal as a conscience, within its depths its drop of shadow relative to having something be [...] one does not write luminously on a dark field; the alphabet of stars alone, is thus indicated, sketched out or interrupted; man pursues black on white” (Mallarmé 77). Similarly, in Chamisso's novella *Peter Schlemihl's Miraculous Story* (1814), an opening poem equates the process of writing to the production of shadows, or, in other words, the imbuing of shadows with independent being, existence—a dubious favor returned with the discomfiting flight of existence as shadow.⁷

The intimation of writing as the production of shadow superimposes the uncanniness of the shadow onto the act of communication by script. In this move, in which the ontological status of the shadow is ascribed to the word, the surface of language is hollowed out (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 189). Via the shadow, all worldly content to which it refers is evacuated from the word as it is inscribed with lack or absence. In the realm of such comparisons in which the shadow is reduced to a sign of privation, nothing appears in the word. Something curious, however, nonetheless comes into view through this gesture that maps the privation of the shadow onto the word. Like the phenomenal shadow, the word is a complex map, but unlike the shadow, it is not a *simulcast film* of gatherings. While the phenomenal shadow is the immaterial sign of an unfolding collaboration between media, surfaces, and substances, the word is often a gesture toward a no longer unfolding interaction, an interaction that is not yet taking place but possibly could, even an interaction that might never take place. Put differently: words do not have to coincide with the conditions of their making in order to be, or to be meaningful. However, in this absence of the referent, or, in the word's inability to magically give the thing it takes into language, the word is, again, like the shadow.

There is nothing in the phenomenal shadow that belongs to a discrete thing or object that we can call the shadow. All of the shadow's attributes belong to the relation of the gathered media, substances, and surfaces. The shadow marks the territory in which this gathering is *spectralized* (Žižek, *The Universal Exception* 231). If one were to stress absence in this process, then the shadow would appear as a *film* that simulcasts the instance in which, to re-appropriate Karl Marx, “all that is solid melts into air,” or, in other words, the instance in which “nature, human and inhuman, is ... ‘desubstantialized’, deprived of its impenetrable density” (Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* 435). This, precisely, is also often highlighted as the very process of language—the word—which stands accused of reducing “things and the physicality of the world ... to little more than discursive objects ... of the subjects' cognitive experience” (Olsen 4).

However, the comparison between the word and the phenomenal shadow throws a wrench into this outlining of conversion. It is not that the shadow is empty; it is that it marks the coming into view of the collocation and relation between substance, medium, and surface. The blending of the latter three into an immaterial but perceptible image (the shadow) expands the frame from the commonly recognized agents of interactions—“landscape and artifacts”—to media as well. “The medium” so Ingold, “is not so much an interactant as the very condition of

7. „Die wir dem Schatten *Wesen* sonst verliehen, // Sehen *Wesen* jetzt als *Schatten* sich verliehen” (Chamisso 3)

interaction. It is only because of their suspension in the currents of the medium that things can interact” (Ingold, “Footprints” 126) The phenomenal shadow points to excesses by virtue of privation. Simultaneously, the heterogeneity of the elements that gather in the shadow interferes with the privileging of materiality or immateriality just as its ontologically contestable status sabotages the distinction between the real and the phantasm. These characterizations of the phenomenal shadow are strikingly close to the etymological characterization of the word *thing* as a gathering. As soon as we heed the phenomenal shadow as a *simulcast film* of a gathering, it gives us the “thing as a dynamic form of connection” (Morgan 178). If we privilege dynamic connection when trying to make sense of the comparison of the word with the shadow, then the shadow’s gathering of medium, surface and substance is mapped onto the word as well. Within the boundaries of the phenomenal shadow, *spectralization* commonly attributed to the word, no longer functions as the mere conversion of all that is material into immaterial abstractions of the mind. Instead, we are dealing with a special appearance of the heterogeneous gathering of medium, substance, surface, some of which are material, some immaterial. The emergence of the spectral image is, after all, a multimedia affair. Likening the word to the shadow dresses the former in this ontologically ambiguous cloth of gathering.

Before we can ask the question of what precisely the comparison at hand gathers in the word we must first answer where on the historical spectrum of the shadow’s spectrality it falls. On the one side of the spectrum, we have the shadow as a spectral double that serves as “an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an ‘energetic denial of the power of death’ ... a preservation against the extinction” (Freud, “The Uncanny” 630). Such efforts at self-preservation commonly subsume domination of nature. However, when these efforts become excessive and “run wild” then “pure domination of nature becomes the duty to exterminate” (Adorno, *Notes to Literature, Volume 1* 271). This end of the spectrum is governed by the “installation of the power to split the so-called natural order of things—to sever the shadow from its object” (Kochhar-Lindgren 194). Commencing as an effort to “[liberate] human beings from fear and [install] them as masters” (Horkheimer and Adorno 1), this trajectory culminates in the detonation of atom bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki where “shadows remain burned into the steps and onto walls while their original objects are obliterated, vanished, except for the smudged outline of a trace” (Kochhar-Lindgren 193). In a prophetic statement on the interrelated domination of the human and the inhuman Adorno and Horkheimer write: “the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity” (Horkheimer and Adorno 1). The separation of the object and shadow, accelerated with homicidal stride through the atom bomb, is already prefigured with the shadow technologies of the early (photography) and late (x-ray and cinema) 19th century. In the catalogues of doubles, the shadow can no longer give shelter to the human ego so that it may be preserved. Instead, the shadow gestures beyond and broadcasts a present and a future without the object, without the human.

If the word is like the shadow, then how? What spectrality is at play in this comparison between the word and the shadow? This comparison can be further unraveled if one reverses it so that the shadow is like the word as much as the word is like the shadow. After all, this comparison is a conversation between the terms, a negotiation between the various instances on the spectrum of the shadow’s and the word’s *spectrality*. If we map the word onto the shadow however, the crucial condition of simultaneity of the former is effaced. But this circumstantial surplus of relation in the shadow is significant as it is constitutive for the event itself. The spectral image shadow only emerges in the very instance of a specific, fleeting encounter of media, surfaces, and substances. As soon as one of the elements is altered, the shadow is as well.

If the shadow, like the word, is a reference, then it has to be occupied with the meaning of something outside of itself. Functioning as a sign, it would “be put in place” of something else, a referent. Derrida describes the labor of the reference in relation to the referent in the following terms:

When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. We take or give signs. We signal. The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence. Whether we are concerned with the verbal or the written sign, with the monetary sign, or with electoral delegation and political representation, the circulation of signs defers the moment in which we can encounter the thing itself, make it ours, consume or expend it, touch it, see it, intuit its presence. What I am describing here in order to define it is the classically determined structure of the sign in all the banality of its characteristics—signification as the *différance* of temporization ... According to this classical semiology, the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both secondary and provisional: secondary due to an original and lost presence from which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final and missing presence toward which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation. (Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* 9)

The sign participates in the “disappearance of the sensuous world in its immediate presence, the suppression of this world” (Hegel as cited in Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* 87). But the shadow, as already noted, is inextricably tied to the conditions of its emergence. How then can we still say that the shadow is like the sign? It is an indexical sign as long or as soon we assume that it points toward an object. Perhaps the shadow is like a gesture, a deictic sign, “a contextually bound utterance” (Walsh 157) in the league with words *I, this, there, that, here*, etc. These words “function primarily as a way of *pointing-toward* from within a discursively specific frame of reference” (Walsh 157); pointing toward something that is present. If the shadow is understood as just such a gesture, then it points to the unique coincidence and collaboration of medium, surface, and substance. As a deictic sign, the shadow would thus, to a degree, interrupt the process of desubstantialization. However, crucial for deixis is that it also makes known a “self-positioning ... ‘I’” (Berger and Segarra 8).

Anytime I refer or point to something, the gesture of reference points back to me. As Emile Benveniste has shown, the effect of deixis is to point to the/a subject of enunciation at the very moment that he/she points to an object ... The ‘here it is therefore here I am’ of the deixis links ‘thinking’ to speech. Even if one doesn’t say it, such a statement is implied. This ‘deictic power’ is bound up with linguistic power defined as the power to name. Anytime something is called, and only if it is designated by a name, somebody (a ‘subject’) speaks. (Berger and Segarra 8)

Deixis is, by this definition, reserved for human subjects while their nonhuman others,⁸ “are denied the power to refer to themselves ... , the power to point to the world and to themselves in the same thrust in order to ‘say’: Here I am” (Berger and Segarra 8). The nonhumans engaged in the gathering that engenders the shadow drop out of this understanding of the system of signs and symbols. The deictic expression is a “semiotic event” and constitutes an “act of meaning” (Halliday and Webster 355). However, the emergence of the shadow neither involves the

8. Here the category of nonhumans includes objects, things, animate and inanimate while Berger and Segarra focus chiefly on animals.

constitution of an utterance—it is not occupied with a “plan (intention),” which Bakhtin counts to one of the two components of the utterance (104)—nor does it culminate with the constitution of the speaker. The phenomenal shadow is, in a sense, a reference that does not require a human speaker in order to refer, or a human body with which to intentionally gesture towards a specific referent. There is no language behind the shadow and “[if] there is no language behind the text, it is not a text but a natural (not signifying) phenomenon, for example a complex of natural cries and moans devoid of any linguistic (signifying) repeatability” (Bakhtin 105). If, however, we still insist in deeming the shadow a reference, then it can only be a reference that, while circumventing the human speaker, refers to the constitutive conditions of its being, its emergence from a collaboration of media, surfaces, and substances. In other words, if the shadow must be deictic, then its speakers must be media, surfaces, and substances.

Conventionally, deixis presupposes a human witness who, in bearing witness of an external *other* ultimately bears witness to herself. It includes the bias which, as Lyotard notes, “semioticians retain by way of hypothesis beneath their discourse [...] that the *thing* they speak of can always be treated as a sign” in fact, that “it is ‘what replaces something for someone’” (Lyotard, “Semiotic Sign” 1). In this particularly ego- and anthropocentric view, the human speaking subjects orient themselves towards the things that cannot speak, that are silent, and have no meaning on their own. It is up to the human subject to point to them, name them, and confer meaning upon them. This notion of deixis, which praises the specificity of context, unfortunately foregoes to comment on interaction entirely. Thus, the speaking human subjects effectively remain outside of the context to which they gesture. However, deictic expressions cut through language for the human speaking, gesturing subject is pointing toward something that rests outside, something he/she “can neither state nor replace” (Certeau 281).

Deictic expressions, when directed toward external others (human or nonhuman) point toward “inaccessible [realms], a felt something beyond the reach of words” (Walsh 150). This is “a mute but vigorous gesturing toward an inchoate blankness” (Walsh 151). This is a nod toward the end language and the end of the speaking, gesturing human subject. It is a gesture toward something that is beyond the reach. In these observations, deixis is recuperated as “the moment when language seems to touch ground” (Doane 93). It brings into view the interface between a speaking subject and the media, surfaces, and substances she or he is immersed in, or, more succinctly, they call attention to the interface between language and the external world. Deictic expressions “undergird our sense of copresence, of the givenness of objects, and of the immediacy of the spatial-temporal world in which speech takes place” (Hanks 191). Deixis also “takes away all power from the sovereign willfulness [*Willkür*] with which a given [individual] articulates” (Kittler, *The Truth of the Technological World* 38). The co-presence of the deictic expression and the external agent dissolves, for an instance, the arbitrariness that governs the connection between the sign and the signified and installs immediacy, directness. Power, or agency, is suddenly redistributed. It is no longer in the hands of the human speaker alone, but also belongs, in some form, to the object or place that hails and reorients her.

Deictics can also not be counted to the world of indexes “because they do not produce any physical changes to the environment outside the sender ... no object is created or otherwise affected physically by being pointed at with a finger” (Sadowski 95). What is special to deictic expressions, is the orientation of the human subject towards and in the environment in which this form of “direct, contiguous communication” (Sadowski 96) happens. Deictics, furthermore do not “in any way physical alter the indicated place (as in *here*) or object (as in *that*)”. In other words, nothing is added to what is already there. They are, in this sense, empty and, like the

shadow, ontologically contested, or “ontological nothings” (Walsh); they are *somethings* that are nothing but nonetheless are. Deixis, is thus, not yet inhabited with signification but rather pull, draw, and tension. It is still “before signification” (Lyotard, “Presentation” 76), before the “*mise en signe*.” In the process of signification, “the thing is hollowed out, becomes a substitute: it replaces the ‘information’ for that someone who is the addressee” (Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy* 43). Deictic expressions, on the other hand, designate instead. That is to say, they designate “(without signifying)” something as simply “being there” (Lyotard, *Que Peindre?* 289), here and now.

The phenomenal shadow is not a deictic expression per se, but it partakes in a similar dance as a pointing gesture. Like the gesture, it does not place a discrete new object into the scene or change the gathered elements. Instead, it is a sign of a change catalyzed by a particular encounter of elements. More specifically, it is a ‘sign’ of the changes brought about in a specific collection of mutually constituting media, surfaces, and substances. The deictic gesture is not much different in that it locates the gesturing human subject in a particular here and now and indicates a change in her path, her locatedness in an environment composed of media, surfaces, and substances. Even more, the pointing gesture indicates a change in the subject that is brought about through an interaction not with language but something still exterior to language and signification—her environment. In that interim instance of pointing, the object has not yet been substituted for an external meaning; it has not been enveloped in discourse that ultimately obscures it and that, as previously discussed, can only point to the subject. The object of the gesture does not yet make sense to the subject, it is not yet *for* the subject—it simply *is*.

So what then do we gain from the comparison between the shadow and the word when the written word places something in the place of something absent while the shadow remains an ontological nothing? What can come of this comparison, when in terms of language the shadow can at best be considered a kind of anonymous deictic expression in which no human subject speaks, no one gestures, no meaning is exchanged except the mere attestation of something being here and now? Deictics and shadows are comparable in that they are the results of convergences; that they manifest where different systems interact and mutually constitute or structure one another. To map this shadow onto the written word does something quite counterintuitive. It maps not necessarily privation onto the word, but returns to it the gesture, the space of convergence, or the interface. The written word as shadow, then, gestures to the conditions of its own making: the ink, the paper, the pixels on a computer screen, the table, the room and so on. It wants to say: one does not write in an empty space, on an empty ground. Unlike “common language” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*) the word as shadow is no longer an interface between humans but opens up to the nonhuman as well.

The comparison between the word and the shadow makes the word concurrently material, by gesturing to the material conditions of its making, and immaterial, by suspending the substitution between the word as a reference and its referent. This interruption subsumed in the comparison between the shadow and the word is precisely the interruption Blanchot ascribes to literature. The comparison between the shadow and the word, demands that we take into account the material conditions of the making of meaning and interrupts the work of exchange with which it is commonly tasked. Unlike the literary word, the “common word” functions like “a currency of exchange” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 29). It promises and delivers the unhindered and direct commercial access to things. This pretense is subtended by the accompanying assumption that we can count on things because they are inherently docile, knowable, and that they are wholly exhausted through the concepts assigned to them. For Blanchot, the “common

word” belongs to a linguistic system that “contents itself with naming an object,” thereby giving “us the picture of it” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 31). This is a “crude language, that function of easy and representative medium of exchange” (*The Work of Fire* 31). It participates in the act of representing the world as object for the subject. It is, in other words, just another tool in the toolbox for the modernist conquest of the world as picture. To conquer the world as picture means to “relate it to oneself, to the one representing it, and to force it back into this relationship to oneself as the normative realm. Wherever this happens, man ‘gets into picture’ in precedence over whatever is” (Heidegger, *The Age of the World Picture* 131–132). In other words, through such representational uses of language, humans ascend to their place at the center and fashion themselves as “that being upon which all that is, is grounded” (Heidegger, “*The Age of the World Picture*” 132). In the process, “the alien, uncanny, and seemingly incommensurable is reduced to the compass of the familiar and manageable” while “man establishes and orients himself in a world conceived as, in principle, the reach of his [sic.] mastery” (Fóti 67). Thus replaced and conquered, things suffer “injurious neglect” (“*The Turning*” 45)—a condition in which “thing, as thing, [is] unsafeguarded, truthless” (Heidegger, “*The Turning*” 49).

The word as shadow’s twin, on the other hand, obstructs the workings of a language that “has to do with the reality of things only commercially” (Mallarmé, as cited by Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 33). What Blanchot deems ordinary language, is a system of substitutions propelled by the assumption that things are fixed, fully present, and fully accessible to human consciousness. In this ordinary language, the word is supposed to function like a “passive expression on the surface of the [passive] world” (Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus* 33). Speaking in this language “we gain control over things with satisfying ease” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 322). The comparison of the shadow and the word suspend the “ordinary connectedness” (Mallarmé, as cited in Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 34) of the word and object and “[creates] a distance, an emptiness between things and their name” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 64). Literature is thus marked by the contingent emptying of the real—but this is just a transitional non-realism, one that interrupts the human’s “mastery of things” through the “possession of words” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 322).

Literary language, in which the word is like a shadow, is also the very “movement through which whatever disappears keeps appearing. When it names something, whatever it designates is abolished; but whatever is abolished is also sustained, and the thing has found a refuge (in the being which is the word) rather than a threat” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 329). The comparison of the word and the shadow highlights the potentiality of literature to interrupt the conquest of the thing through language and, even more, to bring language into the rank of the thing. For Blanchot, literary language, like all language, cannot access what rests outside of it. However, it is special in that it—by foregrounding language itself—discloses the seemingly simple fact that “words are things too, [...] a kind of nature” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 327). When words, for a blink of an eye even, no longer gesture to objects external to them, their materiality comes to play, they become like shadows, gesturing to the conditions of their making.

[Language], abandoning the sense, the meaning which was all it wanted to be, tries to become senseless. Everything physical takes precedence: rhythm, weight, mass, shape, and then the paper on which one writes, the trail of the ink, the book. Yes, happily language is a thing: it is a written thing, of bark, a sliver of rock, a fragment of day in which the reality of the earth continues to exist. The word acts out not as an ideal force but as an obscure power, as an incantation that coerces things, makes them *really* present

outside of themselves [...] And in this way language insists on playing its own game, without man who created it. (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 327–328)

As a thing, language possesses the properties of things, and things, so Blanchot, “can change if they have to, sometimes they stop being what they are—they remain hostile, unavailable, inaccessible” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 325). As a thing, language is more transient, inconsistent than the ideas it is asked to communicate. What’s more, attached to the thingliness of language is the subterranean autonomy of language, which effectively removes the human author from the center of creation. Literature is the stage on which language “speaks *itself* and writes *itself*” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 41). In literature, an “impersonal, inhuman” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 336) and, I would add, illegible, voice speaks along. Here, language is no longer a text. It emerges as a thing that “surpasses us” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 42) possesses agency and propulsion of its own. It acts beyond us. This quality of “autonomous subsistence” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 42) ascribed to language as a thing, however, applies as well to the things that language cannot contain. This, then is, how literary language “sustains” things and becomes a “refuge” for them (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 329).

Put into the service to communication, language supports the circulation of ideas and goods. In this ordinary context, it effaces the particularity of the external thing it names and circulates abstraction in its stead. As Blanchot writes, “[for] me to be able to say, ‘This woman,’ I must somehow take her flesh-and-blood reality away from her, cause her to be absent, annihilate her” (Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 322). To designate “this woman” one reaches for a word that can now mean this, now another woman. The linguistic exchange of a specific referent for a reference that subtends the circulation of meaning necessitates the effacement of the thing, or rather, the human and the nonhuman alike. Language as a thing lives at a distance from other things. For Blanchot, literary language, in which language irrupts as a thing, has the potential to unveil the insurmountable withdrawal that is perpetually unfolding between things. As a thing among things, language is ecologically complex. The deployment of language as a medium for the exchange of information privileges concepts or abstractions and obfuscates the medium and the thing (thing and thing, actually). In communicating, we are placed at a distance not only from things, but also from language itself. The paradox here rests in the very fact that language also subtends the circulation of things and their concurrent effacement in the circulation of capital. To reiterate, ordinary language “has to do with the reality of things only commercially” (Mallarmé, as cited by Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* 33). Against language as capital and the effacement of things, literary language, so Blanchot hopes, can bring into view the thingliness of words and impede with the circulation of information that effaces the human and the nonhuman alike.

The comparison that maps the shadow onto the word thus discloses the word’s inherent, subterranean brokenness. Under the veneer of communication, we forget that language does not correspond with things external to it, but only with itself. In literature, language fails as a thing *of use for* the human (a tool for exchange) and signals its inaccessible, invisible activity beyond and without the human. The comparison that extends the uncanniness of the shadow to the word thus concurrently foregrounds the inaccessibility of the word as a thing and the inaccessibility of the thing to language. In ordinary, commercial usage, language is a tool we do not notice, at least as long as it functions or serves us properly. In literary texts, which interfere with its communicative uses, language becomes “obtrusive,” a broken tool of which we suddenly have to take note. Language as a thing is perpetually caught in a state of simultaneous brokenness and intactness.

Through the comparison of the word and the shadow, the thingness of the word itself, its materiality comes into view. Simultaneously, by removing the thing from the reach of the word, the autonomy of the thing is emphasized. Paradoxically, the sense of hollowness dissipates in this comparison. It is not that the word or the shadow are hollow, they are instead ecologically complex interfaces—overfull. In literature, the word has the potential to come forward as a thing and to thus join the ranks of illegible text by enacting the failure to substitute for external things. The legible word, which substitutes for an external referent, participates in the reduction of “the alien, uncanny, and seemingly incommensurable ... to the compass of the familiar and manageable;” it puts the world into the “reach of [human] mastery” (Fóti 67). Literature thus, like the shadow, presents us with two texts: one that is foreign, illegible, and one that is all too common, familiar.

Chapter 2

Collecting Shadows, Collecting Surfaces: Walter Benjamin's Dialectical Image

To Collect

How wonderful are those beings who, undeterred, read even what is not readable; read what never was written; who authoritatively bind what is ambiguous, and who even find paths in the eternal dark. (Hofmannsthal 44)⁹

To grasp an item that has outlived or is about to outlive its use, an ephemeral object that already is or is just about to become waste, an object in ruins, holds for Benjamin nothing less than the potential to “explode the continuum of history” (W. Benjamin, “Eduard Fuchs” 468). On their way to being discontinued or forgotten, these objects integrate for the collector—the consummate historical materialist (W. Benjamin, “Eduard Fuchs” 466)—not only the past but also the future. Through this future, or more precisely, the history unfolding after the object [*Nachgeschichte*], even the “antecedent history” of the object becomes “recognizable as undergoing constant transformation” (W. Benjamin, “Eduard Fuchs” 467). In the act of collecting, the “afterlife” of the object, its “pulse” becomes tangible in the present moment (W. Benjamin, “Eduard Fuchs” 468). These thus still restless objects have the potential to teach the collector that “their function tends to outlast the creator and leave behind [the creator’s] intentions” (W. Benjamin, “Eduard Fuchs” 467). A curious passivity is at play everywhere in Benjamin’s act of collecting. Not only do the objects of collections continue to perform beyond the human who made them, and in ways not anticipated, they are also “obtrusive” (Stifter as cited in W. Benjamin, “Karl Kraus” 366) and, in a sense, participate in their collecting. On her quest, the collector does not necessarily grasp and safeguard the objects out of her own choosing, but is also hailed by them, having heard a “voice, unmediated, as it emanates from or as it is roused by the things one sees or feels in one’s proximity.”¹⁰ A conversation of sorts between the human and the nonhuman, between the object as an artifact of human use and an object before and beyond human use accompanies the act of collecting in Benjamin’s work.

By facilitating, through the act of collecting, a conversation between the object of human history and a thing that concurrently rests outside of or beyond human history, the collector, as a historical materialist tests the ultimately “destructive” (“Eduard Fuchs” 474) and “positivist ... separation established between the natural sciences and humanities” (W. Benjamin, “Eduard Fuchs” 475). To collect, the collector must transgress against this disciplinary entrenchment for, as long as he is caught in it, he can have “little interest either in himself and his own existence, or in the mere existence of things, [and can feel] things only in their relationships, above all where these meet in events—and only in this moment become united, substantial, and alive” (W. Benjamin, “Karl Kraus” 362). Under these circumstances, man [sic] can only become aware of

9. The last lines spoken by Death in Hofmannsthal’s *The Fool and Death*, also loosely cited—and perhaps more importantly for the parameters of this chapter—by Benjamin in the *Arcades Project* in the *Flâneur* section as: “To read what was never written” (*The Arcades Project* 416). [„Wie wundervoll sind diese Wesen/Die, was nicht deutbar, dennoch deuten, /Was nie geschrieben wurde, lesen/Verworrenes beherrschend binden / Und Wege noch im Ewig-Dunklen finden.“ (Hofmannsthal 44)]. These lines also appear in *Über das Ästhetische Vermögen*.

10. „die Stimme, wie sie unmittelbar ausgeht oder erweckt wird von den Dingen, die man sieht oder die man in ihrer Gegenwart fühlt.“ (Kimmich 13, *translation mine*)

things when he encounters them in a cultural contexts or when, in other words, they are made meaningful through a specific cultural context. He can only become interested in commodities, that is, in things reduced to their use value, utterly alienated from the conditions of their emergence. The labor of the collector, however, unfolds at the very edges of such specificity. It disrupts the “dialectical oppositions or force-fields at whose frontier the commodity is forged—subject and object, history and nature, consciousness and material being” (Pensky 188).

The unique task of the collector as a historical materialist becomes perhaps clearer when one considers Benjamin’s conceptualizations of history. In the ninth thesis on the philosophy of history, Walter Benjamin describes Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novum*. The painting

shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* 257)

Benjamin’s angel gazes upon history as a relentlessly growing pile of debris—seemingly the single product of civilization. His urge to linger and repair “what has been smashed” is no match for the violent “storm of progress [*Fortschritt*]” that “propels him into the future to which his back is turned” (W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* 257). History, in this image, is simply the accumulation of waste. Through the eyes of the nonhuman—the angel—we see the history of civilization as a hopelessly growing pile of debris in which ruinous commodities—nonhuman things “deadened” by “objectifying thought [and] reifying subjectivity” (Huhn 5)—mingle with the human dead. In several of the remaining theses, Benjamin aligns the plight of the human and the nonhuman, the laborer and the commodity.

In a devious, “imperialist” turn, “technology betrays humanity” (W. Benjamin, “Einbahnstraße” 147) and labor becomes “tantamount to the exploitation of nature, which is contrasted to the exploitation of the proletariat with naïve self-satisfaction ... To [this] corrupted concept of labor belongs, as its logical complement, that nature which, as Dietzgen put it, ‘is there gratis [for free]’” (W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* 259). Technology, which should be tasked with the “control of the relationship between humanity and nature” is, in imperialism, “tasked with the domination of nature” (W. Benjamin, “Einbahnstraße” 147). Benjamin entwines the fates of the human and the nonhuman in the rubble of history and on the factory floor. For Adorno and Horkheimer too, the denigration of the nonhuman necessarily subsumes the denigration of the human for, eventually, the “world domination over nature turns against the thinking subject itself” (20). Benjamin’s assault on this corrupt basis for labor and technology gains a nearly prophetic dimension when the favorable “consequences” of a “beneficent division of social labor,” so “sensibly” described by Fourier—“ice would be removed from the polar cap; saltwater from the sea would no longer taste salty” (W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* 259)—are, today, nothing less than the portents of global warming. What we deem the Anthropocene—the period of marked human influence on the global climate—is imperialism’s dream come true, a consequence of a sustained exploitation of and domination over the human and nonhuman alike.

However, what does the historical materialist, or the collector, have to do with this cataclysmic maelstrom of waste-driven history? For Benjamin, the answer is simply: everything. Her labor must counter the destructive notion of progress by interfering with the reduction of the nonhuman to “nothing but abstract material, which has no other property than to be the substrate” for human practices (Horkheimer and Adorno 20). She must take on the “concept of the progress of the human race in history” itself, as this concept, so Benjamin, “is not to be separated from the concept of its progression through a homogenous and empty time” (W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* 260). Historicism—historical materialism’s other—conceives of time as “a homogenous and empty time” and fills it up with a “mass of data” (W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* 262). Its task is to, by unearthing these buried and thus unchanging facts, “[give] the ‘eternal’ picture of the past ... a universal history” (W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* 262). For the historicist, time is like an empty receptacle, a timeline dotted with events. Past is an accumulation of events that can no longer undergo changes; that can potentially be excavated and grasped in their entirety. The historical materialist, however, must oppose any notion of homogenous or empty time; in fact, she must strive to “explode the continuum of history” (W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* 262). The enigmatic dialectical image, also called the thought-image, is her ally in this endeavor.

These thought-images, and Benjamin’s deployment of the shadow within them, are the subject of this chapter. The phenomenal shadow, like a *non plus ultra* fluxus performance or a visual installation that can only be witnessed, that can neither be traded, nor sold, nor collected, presents an interesting dilemma for the collector and makes a curious confederate in the work of a historical materialist. Focusing primarily on the thought-image *Kurze Schatten* (*Short Shadows*) and Benjamin’s theories of language, this chapter explores the shadow’s role in bringing about the programmatic *Stillstand*—“the arrest of thoughts” (W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 475 [N 10a,3]) so that thinking might become something else or somehow different.

To Collect Surfaces

As illustrated in Chapter 1, in working with the shadow, this dissertation takes up an often-approached figure and attempts to read it not merely as a “reworking of historic motives” but as a “transgression against the basis of modern communication and understanding” (Kimmich 13, *emphasis added*). Rather than dismissing the anachronistically independent, paradoxically lively, or somehow absurd shadows in modern literature and film as merely nostalgically “enchanted” or “magical” (Kimmich 30), this dissertation approaches them as “illegible and vibrant” (Kimmich 33). The foregrounded condition of illegibility, that is, the positioning outside of a legible text or the withdrawal from access via classification, appears at odds with man’s unceasing desire to “read what cannot be read, to unambiguously bind what is perplexing and paradoxical” (Benjamin and Hofmannsthal).¹¹ This “illegibility of things” is not only perplexing because it indicates a failure of signification but also because it “displaces the distribution of power” so that “[where] once the reading and interpreting human stood—who also read and interpreted the things [...]—now stand the human and the vibrant things who must share one world” (Kimmich 33). These literary articulations of the shadow deal in unsettled

11. (Hofmannsthal 44) The last lines spoken by Death in Hofmannsthal’s *The Fool and Death*, also loosely cited—and perhaps more importantly for the parameters of this chapter—by Benjamin in the *Arcades Project* in the *Flâneur* section as: “To read what was never written” (*The Arcades Project* 416) These lines also appear in *Über das Ästhetische Vermögen*.

hierarchies, subterranean critiques of human mastery over the nonhuman that warrant particular attention and demand redirections in theories of reading.

One could certainly “bind” the ambiguous shadows in Benjamin’s *Kurze Schatten* to particular symbolic frameworks, excavate the historical conditions of their emergence, and one will undoubtedly uncover important details. However, one will not address the sudden transgression against the shadow’s place in the communicative order as “subservient material” (Einstein 171) or its role as a blank screen for the projection of human fantasies, nor will one take note of the potent revolt against the “falsehood of things as a still-life” (Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Konstruktion Des Ästhetischen* 65). As the task of this chapter is to approach the shadow woven into the fabric of Benjamin’s thought image, I will, in this reading, assume the “Sisyphean task” of the collector and attempt to “divest” the shadow of its “commodity character” (W. Benjamin, “Paris” 39). The focus on illegibility is an attempt to inhabit the role of the collector and to accommodate the complex network of plural temporalities in Benjamin’s thought-image. Illegibility, as Jack Halberstam asserts, is a matter of autonomy, an assertion of inaccessibility, while “legibility” is a “condition of manipulation” (James C. Scott as cited in Halberstam 10). To contend with illegibility while concurrently trying to uphold it, reading must “lose its way in territories of failure” (Halberstam 25).

However, how does one embark on adventures in illegibility while engaging the work of a much-studied writer who thematized and emphasized legibility and, particularly, the legibility of what cannot be read? For Benjamin, legibility or, more precisely readability (*Lesbarkeit*) is not to be confused with the reading of the written text, of words as references that substitute for referents, but extends to “other cultural ‘texts’: to the topography of the city, to architecture, interiors, objects, fashions, and so on” (Weigel 37). This *Lesbarkeit* is not a “discursive,” literal kind of reading, wherein, in order to read, one must “process the signs without noticing them” (Pic and Alloa, *translation mine*). Best described as “constellational” this non-literal reading “never condenses into a lexicon, one can never exhaustively specify its spelling rules, but one can show relations which, if not secret or invisible, have at least remained unnoticed” (Pic and Alloa). This kind of reading will be at issue throughout this chapter as we engage with Benjamin’s thought-image. It will bring us back to Mallarmé’s shadow, which we touched upon in the previous chapter—“the inkstand, crystal as a conscience, within its depths its drop of shadow relative to having something be [...] one does not write luminously on a dark field; the alphabet of stars alone, is thus indicated, sketched out or interrupted; man pursues black on white” (Mallarmé 77)—because the new reading Benjamin advocates is a “be-starred ... act of reading [that] places everything seemingly self-evident into question” (Pic and Alloa). This is not a “deterministic” kind of reading that seeks to “decipher” an omnipresent, secret “code” behind things (Pic and Alloa). It is a kind of reading that, on the one hand, “extends an unrestrained sensibility to all that which is rendered insignificant in capitalism” (Pic and Alloa); that, in other words, takes note of all of that which is supposed to perform or labor efficiently but quietly in the background and thus remains overlooked, invisible, and forgotten. On the other, it must “liberate itself from a naïve sentimentality and push forward toward an anatomy of the society in a Marxist sense” (Pic and Alloa). This reading must perform across the bipolarity that locates the human and the nonhuman in discrete spheres; across the disciplinary culture-nature divide. It must at once wrestle away the things from their reduction to a mere instrumental existence and it must take account of the development of that instrumentalization. When the legibility of things is decoupled from their circulation as goods, a new kind of readability can emerge, if only for a brief moment. It wrests the laboring human and nonhuman from forgetting and frames them in a

new kind of sociality. Writing about the stamp, for example—the institution that sustains the shipping of private or public ideas and goods through public means, an object that is marked by ubiquity already in name (reproduction by pattern)—Walter Benjamin foregrounds “the physiognomy of things” (Adorno, “Benjamin’s Einbahnstrasse” 323). Underneath all conventions; underneath the surface of human drama played out in letters of love, friendship, or commerce, the stamp swarms with forgotten life that carries on whether or not it performs its function as postage.

Stamps are stiff with little numbers, tiny letters, little leaves and eyes. They are cellular tissue in graphic form. It all swarms about and, like lower animals, lives even when cut in pieces. This is why one can make such effective images out of little pieces of stamps that one glues together. But life always has a little mark of decomposition on them, as a sign that it is made up of things that have died off. Their portraits and obscene groupings are full of bodily remains and masses of worms. (Benjamin, as cited in Adorno, “Benjamin’s Einbahnstrasse” 322)

Perhaps paradoxically—especially in light of the example above—Benjamin’s new reading is a reading of surfaces, and this “doubly” so, as it “contests depth and linearity at the same time” (Pic and Alloa). But this superficiality in reading is a function against the fashioning of an “interior” as it is described by Adorno. All the objects arranged therein are

alien from the purpose they represent, bar for the use-value which is engendered within the isolated apartment itself [...] The ‘lamp in the shape of a flower’; the fantasized Orient put together from the lampshade above the crown and the reed carpet; the room as a ship cabin filled with snatched up embellishments from across the ocean—the complete Fata Morgana of ornaments in decline does not receive its meaning from the stuff from which it is made, but from the interior which unites the falsehood of things as still-life. (Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Konstruktion des Ästhetischen* 65)

This “interior” facilitates the encounter with objects as goods only (Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* 59); things that have been deadened and whose noise has been distorted into notes of commercial value. It locks out any sense of the politics of labor, means of production, politics of resource management, and the impact the extraction of particular resources has on the local and global environment and communities. Built on the promise to “fend off what is deadly and vital,” to hold the “impact of coercive forces of the world” at bay (Einstein 170), this interior disguises the objectification of the human and the nonhuman alike.

Benjamin’s thought-images, however, are positioned at a threshold beyond which “‘things’ are no longer passively waiting for a concept, theory, or sovereign subject to arrange them in ordered ranks of objecthood” (Mitchell 112). In these images, “‘The Thing’ rears its head—a rough beast or...repressed returnee, an obdurate materiality, a stumbling block, and an object lesson” (Mitchell 112). What is at stake in recognizing this subterranean rebellion or activity of the thing—or at least the suspicion that it is not wholly apprehended through concepts, that it is recalcitrant and possesses an indeterminable legibility—is nothing less than the fate of “humankind” (Einstein 170). The entanglement of human and nonhuman fates is also, as previously mentioned, at work in Benjamin’s, Adorno’s, and Horkheimer’s texts. In Carl Einstein’s words, which are a kind of sharpening of the rhetoric concerning the human and the nonhuman, a revolutionary “de-reification, destruction of the object” must take place, so “that humankind may be saved” (Einstein and Haxthausen 140). Specifically, objects as “preserve jars ... “[media] for passive thinking, the hooks for mnemotechnic” (Einstein and Haxthausen 141),

objects that are colonized by and reduced to human meaning or their function as tools in the cultural context must be destroyed. We must bid adieu then, so Einstein, to the defeated objects on the interior (Adorno), colonized with commercial value. Benjamin's thought-images lose a handle on such objects.

To be fair, we may never entirely leave behind this "interior"—that is also not quite the point here. We must instead divert our attention to the ruinous state of that interior and let in the suspicion that the thing it envelops somehow acts upon it, revolts against it, leaves it behind, and persists with or without it. What follows here, is a discussion of instances of the shadow and its involvement with things in revolt in Benjamin's work. We will, in particular, emphasize the illegibility, or rather a new kind of reading, catalyzed through the figure of the shadow in Benjamin's thought image *Kurze Schatten*.

To Collect Shadows

Kurze Schatten. Wenn es gegen Mittag geht, sind die Schatten nur noch die schwarzen, scharfen Ränder am Fuß der Dinge und in Bereitschaft, lautlos, unversehens, in ihren Bau, in ihr Geheimnis sich zurückzuziehen. Dann ist, in ihrer gedrängten, geduckten Fülle, die Stunde Zarathustras gekommen, des Denkers im „Lebensmittag,” im „Sommergarten.” Denn die Erkenntnis umreißt wie die Sonne auf der Höhe ihrer Bahn die Dinge am strengsten. (W. Benjamin, „Denkbilder: Kurze Schatten (II)” 425)

[Short Shadows. Right towards noon, shadows are merely the black, sharp edges at the foot of things, and poised to—soundlessly and unnoticeably—withdraw into their burrow, into their secret. Then, in its pressing, crouched fullness, the hour of Zarathustra has arrived; the hour of the thinker in “life’s noon,” in the “summer garden” For, like the sun, perception outlines things most intensely at the meridian of its path. (translation mine)]

If we leap into this thought-image via Adorno, then we have to anticipate that it is there to vex us, to trouble us and to stage a “philosophical mugging,” to “strike sparks through a kind of intellectual short-circuiting that casts a sudden light on the familiar and perhaps sets it on fire” (Adorno, “Benjamin’s Einbahnstrasse” 322). Thought-images “are scribbled picture-puzzles, parabolic evocations of something that cannot be said in words,” that seeks to put “[thought into motion], because thought in its traditional conceptual form seems rigid, conventional, and outmoded (Adorno, “Benjamin’s Einbahnstrasse” 322). Thus mugged and burned we have to take on this fiery interference “literally and objectively,” (Adorno, “Benjamin’s Einbahnstrasse” 323) to engage in that kind of new reading that overlooks the self-evident and reads the surface “topographically,” not discursively (Pic and Alloa). Taking on the role of a “gambler,” we must engage in “thought [that] renounces all semblance of the security of intellectual organization, renounces deduction, induction, and conclusion, and delivers itself over to luck and the risk of betting on experience and striking something essential” (Adorno, “Benjamin’s Einbahnstrasse” 323).

Adorno entrusts the thought image with the discontinuation of the axiomatic; a request obviously made by many, but for the purposes of this inquiry most prominently by Benjamin’s contemporary, Einstein (who also shares the tragic fate of suicide with Benjamin on the French-Spanish border in 1940). For Einstein, the tearing away of things from the axiomatic or automatic, habitual perception is equated with nothing less than the rescuing of the human. One

can surely make a similar claim of Benjamin's dissent and inscribe it, even more forcefully, with this call to deterritorialization—a becoming transient, diasporic “perpetually restless, perpetually moving” (W. Benjamin, “Die Wiederkehr des Flaneurs” 196).

If we are then to lose footing in reading thought images, we must busy ourselves with Benjamin's vibrant, collaborative objects as they escape the grammar of docility and inertia and, not only return our gaze, but occasion it, glance at us, work with us, for “we see only what looks at us. We can do only what we can't help” (Franz Hessel as cited in W. Benjamin, “Die Wiederkehr des Flaneurs” 194). Again and again, Benjamin's objects are released from passivity; are looking at us, winking, blinking, squinting. Though there is no mention of gazes in *Short Shadows*, we are nonetheless plunged into a text in which things and their shadows possess an uncommon agency.

When noon approaches, the shadows of this dialectical image are readied to retreat into their constructs; their burrows; their dens. This first sentence already sets off a sequence of short-circuits. The retreat into their dens, their burrows, their constructs, makes shadows into builders, architects, or owners. In deeming the things burrows or dens, Benjamin shifts the hollowness or privation commonly associated with the phenomenal shadow onto the things that cast them. In this flare-up of an intellectual short-circuit, the shadows appear as the builders of the very constructs that occasion and project, that is, in a sense, build them. To take up this opening sentence means to contend with the paradox that emerges from the clash between simultaneity (the shadows acting as builders and constructs of the constructs) and infinity (the provocation of the infinitely looped “which came first, the shadows or the dens?” question). The beginning of Benjamin's thought image thus recoils like an ouroboros, a serpent devouring its own tail. At the entrance to the text, we are met with an obstruction we cannot resolve.

The paradox that welcomes us into the thought image overlaps the already overtasked *either/or* with the *and*. We are simultaneously burdened with swaying back and forth between the *either* and the *or* (only one can be the case but which?) while also enduring the impossibly static condition of the *and* (the shadows construct the constructs AND the constructs construct the shadows). We are swaying back and forth under its dialectical demands (movement) and uneasily resting with the image (static). The thinking of or through this paradox calls for “oscillating between the *either* and the *or*, an oscillation in time, but, since it goes nowhere so to speak, it is timeless. It has no tenses of past and future, for the oscillations in their composite are static” (Merrell 40). This paradoxically restless arrest, however, is nothing less than the very condition of the dialectical image:

To thinking belongs the movement as well as the arrest of thoughts. Where thinking comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions—there the dialectical image appears. It is the caesura in the movement of thought. Its position is naturally not an arbitrary one. It is to be found, in a word, where the tension between dialectical opposites is the greatest. [N 10a,3] (W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 475)

The progression of short circuits moves on ruthlessly as the first one is immediately followed up with another when the shadows withdraw into “*their secret*.” While it is unclear whether the “secret” inscribes the dens, their construction, the shadows' being, or something else altogether, it places the shadows' activity just out of reach. They withdraw and labor or dwell in secret. The reader has neither a path nor footing. The time of the shadow is the time of the unruly thing.

On the first look, the withdrawal of the shadow appears as the event tasked with the reclamation of all matters lost. The zenith of *Erkenntnis* neighs, the hour in which shadow surfaces are reduced to boundaries of objects, only present as lines that—as it appears for now—

fix the limits of things and separate them into clearly defined entities with their sets of distinct qualities. The movement of the shadow from expanse to contour is the time of the taming of the thing. In other words: the zenith of perception is achieved at the nadir of the shadow. However, this reading is interrupted by the very technique of the dialectical image which, by the time the promise of a zenith of cognition is formulated, has arrested and made impossible the process of sharply outlining the very categories at work (shadow, cognition, perception, things). All is set aflutter. In setting up this interplay of time, light, shadows, and *Erkenntnis*, Benjamin diffuses and complicates agency to such an extent that any attempt at reading the unfolding of the text as a chain of causes and effects is undermined.

The state of concurrent movement and arrest brought about in the dialectical image, points towards the operation of a peculiar causality. A causality that can subsume a state simultaneously marked by movement and stillness without tending towards succession or their mutual assimilation in a new term is a function in line of a “certain nonsynthesis” (W. Benjamin, “Coming Philosophy” 104). This nonsynthesis, so Friedlander, “can be understood in terms of polarization that brings together extremes without synthesizing them into a unity” (233). The progression toward noon, the zenith of *Erkenntnis*, is marked by an evasion of the linear replacement of one term with another that seems to concur with the path of nonsynthesis. This, as of yet unnamed causality, which orients *Erkenntnis* and works within the dialectical image, allows for the evasion of the linear replacement of one concept with another (thus provoking an arrest in thought), and consequently arranges said concepts in an equally nonlinear fashion (thus provoking an arrest in time). Instead of synthesis, the dialectical image, like the arcade, “intermingles and interbreeds” elements “as promiscuously” as “in the most tangled of dreams” (*The Arcades Project* 827 [A°,5]), unraveling “secret ... indeterminate [affinities] ... strange rapport and primordial relatedness” (W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 827 [A°,4-5]).

In pursuit of a “revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past” (W. Benjamin, “On the Concept of History” 396), this causality at work in the dialectical image accommodates the forgotten nonhuman and provokes a cessation that could reconfigure the “the present as now-time shot through with splinters of messianic time” (W. Benjamin, “On the Concept of History” 397). This messianic incursion that will “not change the world by force but rather repair it just ever so slightly” (W. Benjamin, “Franz Kafka” 432) holds the revolutionary potential to liberate what is oppressed (human and nonhuman alike) and to fight against the conditions that facilitate oppression.

As in Einstein’s work, this revolutionary instance is contingent upon the retrieval of objects from oppressive conditions of forgetting, effacement, and distortion (W. Benjamin, “Franz Kafka” 431). A political embroilment of the state of the human and the nonhuman comes into view here, espousing a dire need to turn towards the object so that the “things in our hands [can] be equals, comrades, and not these black and mournful slaves as they are here” (Kiaer 193). This startling amplification of the structural entanglement between human and nonhuman fates, here undertaken via Rodchenko, a Russian Constructivist/ Productivist and reader of Einstein’s texts (Strother 8) also foregrounds the stark racialization of the nonhuman maintained by axiomatic conceptualizations. Rodchenko’s disquieted entangling of human and nonhuman fates highlights the fact that we are not dealing with “templatic zones of undifferentiated matter, but [...] in fact complexly racialized and indeed humanized notions” (Chen 7). The nonhuman context is often constructed as “a feminized counterpoint to masculinized ‘culture’” but it is also, as Mel Y. Chen asserts and as is visible in Rodchenko’s words, “a complexly differentiated site, gendered, racialized, and sexualized in ways that are not consistent or predictable” (Chen 17).

Put simply, it is not merely that the human and nonhuman are entwined but that oppressed humans and nonhumans are allied. While not entirely rid of the bias outlined by Mel Y. Chan, Benjamin's thought-images attempt to forge alliances between the affected oppressed humans and nonhumans to perform a correction on objectifying promote advocacy on behalf of both across differences. They participate in this transformation only under the injunction that mutual assimilation is bracketed out by manufacturing conditions of non-synthesis. To accommodate these conditions of nonsynthesis, a kind of "nomadic intersection of difference" (Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* 207), this new reading must permeable to various states of disidentification: "the disidentification from established references... comforting values of identities ... dominant representational and even self-representational practices" (Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*). This can only happen if what is expressionless (*das Ausdruckslose*)—that which cannot speak or that which has been brought to silence—can break in and interrupt the flow of discursive reading, effacing any sense of totality. Where the expressionless comes to speech, symbols lose their faces, their identity, are beheaded, reduced to mere torsos (W. Benjamin, "Goethes Wahlverwandschaften" 181). This new *readability* then, reconfigures the workings of language itself by bracketing out the familiarity with the letter, the recognizability of the word. In order to explore this dimension of the thought-image, we must turn to Benjamin's theory of language.

Trans-lating Shadows

For Benjamin, "there is no event or thing neither in animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language, for it is in the nature of each one to communicate its mental contents. This use of the word 'language' is in no way metaphorical" (W. Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" 62). If all that *is* partakes in language, then all that *is* also partakes in translation. There is, in fact, no way of knowing things but through translation: "The language of things can pass into the language of knowledge and name only through translation—so many translations, so many languages" (W. Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" 70–71). Translation of the language of things into the language of the human "is removal from one language into another through a continuum of transformations. Translation passes through continua of transformation, not abstract areas of identity and similarity" (W. Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" 70–71). Objects are thus not merely passive material assimilated into human language via translation, but active participants in the process. Indeed, no translation is possible without their contribution. It is the objects—the lamp, the mountain, the fox, the shadow—that communicate themselves to man first, for if they did not, "how should he be able to name them?" (W. Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" 64). Objects, silent as they are, communicate themselves to man and to "one another only through a more or less material community" (W. Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" 64). Every language—and thus the language of things as well—"can be considered a translation of all the others" (W. Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" 70).

Benjamin's theory of language, much like his thought-images, builds down the distinction between subject and object, reader and agent (Weigel 16). Everything is caught in a state of mutual translation. The forgetting of this mutualness of translation as a condition of all being and the resulting attempts to assimilate things into human language contributes to a language turned "away from things," that is, its transformation into a language of "means," a collection of suddenly purposive words, "*mere* [signs];" a language "enslaved" in purposes of mediatedness, of communication, of "prattle" (Kierkegaard, as cited in W. Benjamin, "On

Language as Such and on the Language of Man” 71). The demands on human language to mediate what it cannot mediate (anything external to it) are accompanied “by the enslavement of things” (W. Benjamin, “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” 72). With that, a surprisingly anti-subjective quality surfaces in Benjamin’s theory of language as it calls for an interruption of communication. The inter-subjective program of language under the tutelage of which it is asked to mediate what it cannot is the bane and occasion for his critique. Language, itself a thing, is as withdrawn as every object it is asked to deliver.

Short Shadows opens up not only with shadows and things that refuse servitude by withdrawing into the efficacy of an inoperable causality of an *and* of superposition¹²—the shadow as concurrently occupying the position of the builder and the built. In such instances of superposition, “every truth points manifestly to its opposite, and this state of affairs explains the existence of doubt. Truth becomes something living; it lives solely in the rhythm by which statement and counterstatement displace each other in order to think each other” (W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 418). In the thought-image, we thus encounter the shadows and everything they beset, make or that makes them, in suspense, on a bridge toward transfiguration, in a frenzy of translation. Without falling prey to synthesis, everything is just about to pass from one state into another, into a transitional or rather transversal self. In the time leading up to noon shadows beset things. This is a scene of things wrapped in things, wrapped in things. As noon approaches, this besetting is gradually reduced to a minimum and with it mediation, or so it seems, as well. This nearly shadowless zenith is also, coincidentally, the zenith of *Erkenntnis*. Is this a Benjaminian fulfillment of a clear as day Platonic ideal? Not quite. In the following, the road to repudiation is taken via Nietzsche, Heidegger and, of course, Benjamin as the three productively converge and diverge in Zarathustra’s noon.

Noontime, which bathes everything in light and banishes the indefinite shadows to definite outlines at the foot of things, is the hour of no one less than Nietzsche’s Zarathustra. With this citational incursion, *Short Shadows* amplifies the task of trans-lation (*Über-setzung*), or the task of trans-versing, the condition of collaborative emergence via non-synthesis. While noontime is the hour of transfiguration, Zarathustra is the man of transition; the “emerging transman” (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken* 64). This unconventional reading of the *Übermensch* is emboldened by Rickels’ assertion that the “German word for the work of translation, *Übersetzen*, points toward the translation of the *Übermensch* as ‘transhuman’, a translation grounded in ambiguities inherent in the related word or prefixes *over* and *über*” (Rickels 59). The transhuman is “strictly speaking, the form of man the transitioning man is transitioning into. Zarathustra himself is not yet the transhuman, but rather the first human in transit towards the transhuman; the emerging transhuman” (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken* 64). He is a “bridge” (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken* 64).

Wherever we turn in this image, the brink of trans-ness is programmatic. The transhuman and the thought-image act in a similar space of nonteleological causation or transit, opening up a rift between an inaccessible (expressionless) and an operable state (discursively legible). The hour of noon in Nietzsche’s text is also the last hour of the last man just prior to transition or, as Heidegger would have it, it is still the hour of the contemporary man (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken* 61). This man “makes everything small. His kind is ineradicable, like the flea beetle, the

12. Superposition as a term denoting a doubling of states without mutual annihilation appears on several occasions in Benjamin’s *Arcades Project*. There, he pushes through to the scientific interpretation of superpositions via the explorations of similitude: “The appearances of superposition, of overlap, which come with hashish may be grasped through the concept of similitude. When we say that one face is similar to another, we mean that certain features of this second face appear to us in the first, without the latter’s ceasing to be what it has been.” (W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 418, [M1a,1])

last human lives longest. ‘We invented happiness’ – say the last human beings, blinking” (Nietzsche 10). While last men busy themselves with blinking—a reflex Benjamin equally ascribes to things—Heidegger asks: “What is the art of imagination with which last men busy themselves?” (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken* 78–79). Unsurprisingly, the answer is blinking: an action refining imagination and cognition marked by the contractual narrowing of the field of *Erkenntnis* and the subsequent forgetting of the contingency and the processes that lead to, legitimize, and authenticate such reduction itself.

What is the art of imagination with which last men busy themselves? The last men blink. What does that mean? The German word “*blinken*” is related to “gleaming,” “shining,” and “semblance.” To blink means to emphasize and combine an appearance with a semblance, and to establish this setup as valid; however, with the mutual and tacit agreement to not further pursue any of that which has been thus combined. Blinking is therefore the agreed upon (though in the end no longer in need of such a contract) combination of the qualitative and contingent surfaces and fronts of all things as exclusively valid and binding—a setup in accordance with which the human conducts and evaluates everything. (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken* 78–79)¹³

In Heidegger’s reading of Zarathustra’s noon, the last man of the world bathed in light is the embodiment of legislated forgetting—Benjamin’s nightmare. If we entangle Benjamin and Heidegger, this description details a process that reduces cognition to the bondage of language and things via: a) the forgetting of (collaborative) translation as a pervasive condition of being, b) the forgetting of the impossibility of the immediate access to objects, and c) the conceptualization and deployment of language as a means for communication (thus the forgetting of language as a thing). To oversimplify the situation for an instance: if read via Heidegger, the apparent retreat of the shadow spells disaster. With the shadow, the zone of transition and translation through which anything enters a text or any relation is increasingly obliterated.

The overlapping of the height of *Erkenntnis* with the effacement of the zone of relatedness and mediatedness, and, concurrently, with the possibility of messianic cessation, returns us to the thought-image as an expulsion from sequential, dichotomic setups. Reading the thought-image calls for an abandoning of the mechanistic tracing of a text, image, or a piece, and admitting in the unruly causality, the uneasy condition of non-synthesizing superposition. The overlapping of the opening for the messianic with something akin to the failure of ‘his/her/their’ arrival, the coincidence of a fantasy and a nightmare, is programmatic for the thought-image. It must refuse the construction of a heightened, precious place, or a privileged, singular opening for messianic cessation. Benjamin is, after all, a writer of the everyday and the ephemeral—to illustrate that we must not think any further than the arcade—and thus, a flattening of the loci for such incursions must take place. Any moment, any place, all of any everyday must be a possible gate. As he writes elsewhere, “we infiltrate the mysterious only to the degree that we find it in the everyday, thanks to a dialectical optic which recognizes the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as the everyday” (W. Benjamin, “Der Surrealismus” 302). The dialectical image must thus perform a unique trick. It must, on the one hand, provoke cessations everywhere, and

13. „Welches ist die Art des Vorstellens, worin sich die letzten Menschen aufhalten? Die letzten Menschen blinzeln. Was heißt das? »Blinzeln« hängt zusammen mit »blinken«, »glänzen«, »scheinen«. Blinzeln - das heißt: ein Scheinen und einen Anschein zuspähen und zustellen, auf welchen Anschein man sich als etwas Gültiges verabredet und zwar mit dem wechselseitigen, gar nicht ausdrücklich abgesprochenen Einverständnis, all dem so Zugestellten nicht weiter nachzugehen. Blinzeln: das verabredete und schließlich der Abrede gar nicht mehr bedürftige Sich-zu-stellen der gegenständlichen und zuständlichen Ober und Vorderflächen von allem als des allein Gültigen und Geltenden, womit der Mensch alles betreibt und abschätzt.“ (Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken* 78–79)

on the other hand, it must build down such instances, potentiate their failure, and insist on their everydayness. Everything in the dialectical image oscillates, transiting from one position to another, in a moment of convergence without synthesis, without assimilation.

Trans-shadows in Trans-noons

In order to grasp the collaborative force of the shadow and the object's place in language in Benjamin's work, we must engage his theories of translation and language and their relation to representation; that is, the anti-representationalism that underlines them. When Benjamin declares that the similarity at work in language is one of nonsensuous semblances,¹⁴ he rejects notions of "[analogies] based on resemblance" (Massumi 123). This rejection targets the confusion of resemblances with causal relationships (things that look alike must somehow be directly related), which routinely accompanies notions of representation. The crux of Benjamin's discontent is the misconception that (mechanistic) causalities link sensuous semblances. His qualms with the reduction of semblance to sensuous similarity are, above all, political. This applies most explicitly to the construction of communities on the basis of sensuous semblances.

The negation of sensuous content in Benjamin's term alludes to a hollowed out semblance, a "semblance in which nothing appears" (Massumi 104), a shadow, for example, or "a semblance behind which nothing hides," a "fata morgana" (W. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* 831). In preliminary remarks to *Analogy and Relationship*, Benjamin makes a move to distinguish analogy from semblance. The two are not identical and, moreover, "[analogy] is probably a metaphoric semblance, that is; a semblance of relations" (W. Benjamin, "Analogie Und Verwandschaft" 43). Analogy, for Benjamin, is non-sensuous and irreconcilable with sensuous resemblance.

The sensuous experience of the word "storm" does not resemble what happens in the sky; any more than the sight of a dancing body resembles a downpour, or an undulation of hands, a billowing of clouds. [...] It is their nonsensuous similarity. It is their analogy. The nonsensuous similarity is a being of analogy occurring in the in-between event of the two component events coming [...] together. (Massumi 123)

Nonsensuous semblance is a semblance in relation. It follows the pattern of the joining of elements in the metaphor. It is thus located in the (implied) hyphen that joins the elements gathered the '–' of the metaphor. Bringing Ortega and Benjamin together might seem misguided at first, considering that the latter, in an instance of geo-political prejudice, deemed the former "provincial" (W. Benjamin, *Selected Writings* 288). However, it pays to ignore this contempt, in part because it is utterly misplaced, but predominantly because their connection of metaphor and sensuous semblance is so well aligned. In metaphors, so Ortega, "we find a coincidence between two things that is more profound and decisive than any mere resemblance," for the "metaphor is not [...] the mutual assimilation of real qualities" (Ortega y Gasset 141).

The joining via metaphor does not yield a semblance, assimilation of one element into another, or even a derivable third (Benjamin and Tarnowski 208): it yields something *new*. More precisely, such joining does not take place in a predictable way but is new every time. The revolutionary potential of Benjamin's assertion of non-sensuous semblance as a mode of relation enacted most overtly in the metaphor, but broadly speaking in all of language—most explicitly in

14. „Der Hinweis auf den astrologischen Bereich mag einen ersten Anhaltspunkt für das gewähren, was unter dem Begriff einer unsinnlichen Ähnlichkeit zu verstehen ist. In unserem Dasein findet sich zwar nicht mehr, was einmal möglich machte, von einer solchen Ähnlichkeit zu sprechen, vor allem: sie hervorzurufen. Jedoch auch wir besitzen einen Kanon, nach dem das, was unsinnliche Ähnlichkeit bedeutet, sich einer Klärung näher führen läßt. Und dieser Kanon ist die Sprache.“ (W. Benjamin, "Über das mimetische Vermögen" 211)

writing¹⁵—rests a) in its emphasis on “changes–differencings” (Massumi 108) as opposed to perpetually escalating demands of sameness as the motivation for the construction of communities. The foregrounding of the hyphen zone where the “metaphor makes its assertion of [the elements’] fundamental identity, and with equal force an assertion of their fundamental nonidentity [...] pushes us into another world where this identification is apparently possible” (Ortega y Gasset 143–144). Benjamin’s concept of nonsensuous semblance serves as a corrective principle that advances relationships without sensuous semblance: without reflection. A vast hope to hang on a hyphen.

Benjamin’s shadow figures into the discussion on non-sensuous semblances in two ways. Firstly, the phenomenal shadow acts as an event of nonsensuous semblance, and, secondly, we can approach the retreat of the shadow in the thought-image—the instance of overlap between shadows and things at noon—as a hyphen event. For Wittgenstein, the shadow is a portrait that does not depend on sensuous similarity. It is charged with a “[capacity] of representing things as in fact they are not” (Wittgenstein 32). Shadows are pictures, but not by way of similarity: “similarity does not explain the shadow” (Wittgenstein and Lee 32). It is thus crucial that the shadow is not taken up as a sensuously similar double, but as an object disclosing features of its organization via non-sensuous semblance. Certainly, the shadow’s projectedness activates notions of representation, but upon even the slightest inquiry, they are immediately hollowed out. Benjamin interrupts the notion of a shadow as a sensuous copy doubly: once by embroiling it in the causality of non-synthesis and, again, by making it a shadow of a burrow (*Bau* indicates construct and burrow, den), something already hollowed out, subterranean, already without tangible sensuous content. Taking up the shadow as sensuous semblance means passing up the confrontation with an event in which differences coincide and become (non-sensuously) related. Conversely, the insistence on non-sensuous semblance treats the shadow as the reflection’s dialectical other, an archive of what the mirror forgets.

Why then, if the shadow is so salient, would Benjamin animate it towards near-disappearance? The answer takes us back to the metaphor. In this dialectical image, noon constitutes the hyphen, or—the term deployed by Benjamin—the threshold, *Schwelle*. If one were to diagram the instance of noon, when the shadow, object, and sun form a constellation aligning along a vertical central axis, one would trace a hyphen of kind through them, thereby mapping an un-measurable instance spent at a threshold. Approaching Heidegger in poetic etymology, Benjamin writes of the threshold that it “must be carefully distinguished from a boundary. A *Schwelle* ‘threshold’ is a zone. Transformation, [transit], wave action are in the word *schwellen*, *swell*, and etymology ought not to overlook these senses” (W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 494). This threshold or hyphen is a zone that animates everything caught in it into a state of transit. The axis of noon cutting through the collaborating agents stands as a kind of metaphor’s metaphor, a heliotrope (Derrida and Moore) doubly opening up the zone of the threshold, the entrance point for Benjamin’s Messiah. Although expressed in terms of time (noon) and space (alignment), this axis constitutes a discontinuation of both and cannot be measured in either.

This instant is nothing more than the temporally elusive “mystical *Augenblick*, blink of an eye.” This is the “*Augenblick* of birth” lasting no longer than “Nu;” (W. Benjamin, “Erste Fassung: Lehre Vom Ähnlichen” 206) an idiomatic expression denoting something most akin to

15. “It is therefore non-sensuous similarity which not only creates the connection between the spoken word and what is meant; but also the connection between what is written and what is meant, as well as that between the spoken and the written word. And each time in a completely new, original and underivable way.” (Benjamin and Tarnowski 67) Also: “[along] with language, writing has [...] become an archive of non-sensuous similarities or non-sensuous correspondences.” (Benjamin and Tarnowski 68)

in no time at all. This non-temporal duration is also allotted to the grasping of the non-sensuously similar. It happens in a flash. For Plato, too, the *Augenblick* is a paradox, “a transition” that does not take place in time (Jaspers 95). The difficulty of assigning a temporality to the threshold stems from—as Liska insists via Agamben—the *Augenblick*’s break with temporal continuity and the constitution of “an abstract [location] of discontinuity” (Liska 209). From Plato to Kierkegaard, to Jaspers, Heidegger, and Benjamin, the *Augenblick* emerges as a disturbance of continuity, a transition neither traversing space nor time. What it lets in as hope or terror, however, differs from author to author.

The threshold organizing non-sensuous semblances that flare up in an *Augenblick* is a caesura. The only possible position in the threshold is that of the interfaced, collaborative *diaspora*. This is the instance that gathers differences and foregoes the proliferation of sameness. When Benjamin writes that the “sense for sameness in the world has so increased that, by means of reproduction, it extracts sameness even from what is unique” (W. Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Reproducibility” 105), he is firstly lamenting the pervasiveness of a consciousness only capable of binding like with like, and secondly, the lack of conditions that potentiate pursuits of the alternate, non-sensuous semblances and gathering of differencings.

Although often theorized as a gap, a *Leerstelle*, this zone is not an up-for-grabs territory that must be filled in, colonized with human meaning. As theories of lacunae argue, a sudden cessation of language breaks in at the threshold. But this must not equal a general lack, or specifically a lack of language. It is “more than the inability or disinclination to communicate” (W. Benjamin, “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” 73). For Benjamin, the opening toward the messianic at the threshold is an encounter with language as an unruly object outside of purposiveness, liberated from its “enslavement [...] in prattle” (W. Benjamin, “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” 72). In other words, it is not that we find ourselves without language, but rather that our access to purposive language is suspended. This is a multiplied failure: a failure of the instrumentalization of language and a failure of instrumentalization through language. At the threshold, words shake off the function of “mere signs” and cannot be asked to communicate externally (something other than themselves). They rebel against their resignation to mediation, their effacement for the sake of absent referents (the speaker, ultimately).

In order to illustrate the fact that this zone is not empty but brimming with the force, movement, rhythm of translation, we must first refine our understanding of communication. To this end, and to recuperate notions of *partitioning*, *sharing with*, which Benjamin’s *communication* subsumes, Weber circulates the term *impart* (*Mitteilung*). This accesses the delineation of what is impart-able in language from what is communicated in language.

Language for Benjamin

is (immediately) the ability or the capacity to impart without recourse to anything else. Impart here entails [...] a process of partitioning, of parceling out ‘oneself’, thereby becoming something else. [...] Therefore the impartable cannot be simply equated with that which is actually communicated or the act of communication itself. The latter are acts or processes that actually take place, or that could take place, once and for all. The impartable, by contrast, has another mode of being, another dynamic, which consists in its transformation, its becoming-other. (Weber 44)

At the threshold, we are surrendered to the *Augenblick* of the impartable, which necessitates disidentification, and propelled from access to the “intermediate [position] as mediation and as a means” (Weber 47). *In no time* we are barred from access to the communicative language of

overnaming, which “reduces expression of other languages to its own terms, silencing them and refusing to open itself to transformation” (Caygill 19). The language closed off to the co-labor of other languages speaks only by adapting everything in its path to utility.¹⁶ At the threshold, we are displaced from a language that, in its greatest error

ceases to translate, that is, to ‘pass through continua of transformations’ and begins to inscribe, that is, create ‘designations’ or Zeichen. The result is the silencing of the languages of nature, their reduction to mute lament, and the madness of overnaming or designating names. By forcing the expression of other languages into its own measure, human language reduces them to itself [...] The result is a work of translation which identifies or reduces the other to the same, a reduction which Benjamin opposes with a view of translation as the transformation of the limits of identity through the encounter with alterity. (Caygill 20)

It is thus insufficient to reduce the threshold to a gap, for it is populated with imparting, wherein language “[takes] leave of itself in order to transpose a part of that self elsewhere, thereby altering it” (Weber 47). What is suspended for an instant at the threshold is, very specifically, is the trafficking of sameness, while, concurrently, alterity and the relating of differencing via non-sensuous semblances proliferate.

In *Short Shadows*, the threshold emerges at the moment when, for an *Augenblick*, “perception [*Erkenntnis*] outlines things most intensely at the meridian of its path.” *Erkenntnis* is thus associated with becoming *other* via the act of imparting: a *becoming diasporic*. Everything that propels the trafficking of sameness is seemingly suspended in the stream of Benjamin’s “dissolving non-integrative dialectics of explosive convergence or coincidence” (Weber 49). But the flash only “ignites” in an instant, leaving us with nothing concrete, for the ‘image’ which emerges is one that embodies the alternative to synthesis (integration or assimilation), that is the “non-synthesis of two concepts in another” (W. Benjamin, “Coming Philosophy” 104). In the wake of such cessation, we are left with ‘images’ that subsume the condition of the threshold and are therefore, per Weber, “never simply ‘there’, nor do they establish a new continuum” (Weber 50). Here, where nothing ‘concrete’ emerges, Benjamin’s *-abilities* (e.g. *translat-ability*) are potentiated and collaboration forcefully foregrounded. In fact, I would go as far as to argue that the suffix *ability* measures the admittance of the expressionless [*das Ausdruckslose*] that otherwise remains imperceptible.

Benjamin’s commitment to the political force of the threshold, the interruption of the proliferation of sameness, is in no way subtle. It pervades much of his work. Where once I would have qualified Benjamin as a thinker of the paradox, I would now deem him a thinker of the threshold. I would even go further and deem the threshold a site of queering. This zone continually provokes the “unhinging of certainties and the systematic disturbing of the familiar” (Giffney and Hird 4). To *queer* means to perpetually withdraw from classification and instrumentalization. It is an unceasing process, perpetually futural (Muñoz):

Queerness is an ideality. [...] Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house. [...] Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing. Often we can glimpse the worlds proposed and promised by queerness in the realm of the aesthetic. [...] Both the ornamental and the

16. An appropriation of Adorno’s statement that “communication is the adaptation of spirit to utility, with the result that spirit is made a commodity among the rest; and what today is called meaning participates in this disaster.” (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 96)

quotidian can contain a map of utopia that is queerness. [...] Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world. (Muñoz 1)

The threshold is a zone of disidentifying translation. It is not exclusively a translation from one human language into another, but a translation of one language into another—and the territory of languages is vast in Benjamin’s work (W. Benjamin, “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” 62). It is, furthermore, not a unilateral process of assimilation. Instead, it is a zone of mutual activation and collaboration, for, “if the lamp and the mountain and the fox did not communicate themselves to man, how should he be able to name them?” (W. Benjamin, “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” 62). Translation is the collaborative trace of encounters between human and nonhuman others, which is engendered by and engenders “strange strangers” (Morton 275). It unceasingly stands guard against total assimilation. This strange stranger “whose strangeness is forever strange ... cannot be tamed or rationalized away” (Morton 275). Derived from Derrida’s *l’arrivant*, and thus from Benjamin’s *weak* messiah, the strange stranger calls

into question ... all the distinctive signs of a prior identity, beginning with the very border that delineated a legitimate home and assured lineage, names and language, nations, families and genealogies. The absolute arrivant does not yet have a name or an identity. It is not an invader or an occupier, nor is it a colonizer, even if it can also become one. This is why [it is called] the arrivant, and not someone or something that arrives, a subject, a person, an individual or a living thing. ... It is not even a foreigner identified as a member of a foreign, determined community. (Derrida, *Aporias* 34)

“The strange stranger is not only strange, but strangely so. They could be us. They are us” (Morton 275).

In order to grasp the radical potential of Benjamin’s notion of translation we have to include the territories it potentiates. Commenting on it in the realm of human language exclusively is reductive, and possibly misses the point altogether. The human and the nonhuman are all Benjamin’s critical collaborators. Accordingly, this chapter marks an attempt to expand the reading of Benjamin via the shadow, which, as discussed, figures doubly in the opening of the zone of translation: once as a figure of non-sensuous semblance and secondly as a figure of the threshold in the constellation of high noon, which I am here tempted to call *queering* noon. The exclusion of collaborative translation is equally responsible for the “enslavement” of things and the proliferation of sameness, which, in the context of human communities, produces margins of otherness, perpetually offering them up to sacrifice. Both trajectories belong to the same kind of *Erkenntnis*, which the dialectical image attempts to obstruct. *Short Shadows* closes with a constellation hailed as the zenith of *Erkenntnis*. However, at this threshold of queering a reoriented *Erkenntnis* emerges. This *Erkenntnis* is a force of collaborative translation trafficking alterity. What Benjamin thus offers up at the threshold, is an unruly catalyst by which margins are not absorbed or assimilated, but which instead generates the experience of marginality as a constitutive experience of the everyday, always new, always unpredictable, never to become majoritarian, without an endpoint. The proliferation of the threshold via dialectical images is thus radical: these are performances that bring about the cessation of assimilative practices of knowing and cognizing and offer up *Erkenntnis* as translation, as a *queering* powerhouse.

Chapter 3

Nosferatu's Horror: Early Cinema's Fugitive Shadows



Fig. 2. Nosferatu cameo in *SpongeBob SquarePants Graveyard Shift*. First aired in 2002

Trans(medial) Horror?

A scene of nightmares and a pop culture farce: a silhouetted projection ascends the stairs, creeps deliberately across the texture of foyer walls, the flat topography of its outlines merging with the shadow architecture of parallel railing rods, its distorted limbs arranged in sly anticipation. All shadow, it lingers for an instance as it arrives at a door, then elongated, gnarled fingers of the towering projection reach for the doorknob. Inside of the room, the shadow of Nosferatu's hand is cast onto Ellen who is dressed in white like an empty screen. Gliding between her thighs and to her chest, the shadow hand spasms and clenches her heart as she convulses in ecstasy or horror (or both). Moving about and acting independently, wandering through the frame alone as if though unleashed from any point of origin, Nosferatu's notorious shadow still haunts the memory of cinema, many a Halloween party, online meme generators, and, apparently, cartoons.

On some level, this *Symphony of Horrors* is a travelogue of a projection released from all origins. The film's orchestration of horror draws its force from Nosferatu's transgression against the romantic attachment to a sense of authenticity, origin, and unity. Geographically speaking, Graf Orlok's hails from *Transylvania*, which is, thanks to a distorted map, presented as a mysterious location at a vague distance somewhere East. This is a space of beyond (*trans*)—specifically, a space or land beyond the forest (*silva*). As an archetypal landscape in the western medieval tradition, the forest marks a space for “setting off,” a space that sets off a “transition period ... from one state to another” or, more precisely, from “nature to culture,” from “madman to knight” (Saunders xii). Etymologically, the word forest “appears to originate from the Latin *foris* ‘outside,’” (Saunders 1). While the medieval forest sets off a transition toward a higher, more exalted, heroic, spiritual self and returns the reborn individual—albeit as an embodied ideal—Graf Orlok's *Transylvania* functions as a doubled beyond, a realm on the other side of a transformation toward a state that remains outside and cannot be incorporated or assimilated. Here, werewolves and vampires haunt the landscape and, abstaining from pairings that unite sexes across the binary divide, create families, communities by infectious bite. Sinking their teeth into victims indiscriminately, they beget children through any given combination of sexes or even species. Their reproduction is communicable and their birth concurrently a rebirth by mutation and a death. These undead wanderers supplant the holy domesticity of the fecund female mother and male father, and although gorging on blood, also suspend the possibility of *jus sanguinis*—right of blood—one of the foundational principles of modern nation states. To be born of Nosferatu means to be born into the outside, to be born out of, expelled from any national or cultural context. No notion of the originary sticks to this figure or its progeny. They are Nosferatu's children and thereby like Nosferatu only in as far as they cannot thirst for a return to an authentic, originary prior. The “vampire undoes the family tree and its genealogical method” (Haraway, *Modest-Witness* 231).

It is not an accident that Nosferatu most commonly unleashes his campaigns of evil upon the newly engaged (Schmidt 224) or, as is the case in Murnau's film, the newlyweds Hutter and Ellen. According to Willhelm Schmidt's entry on Rumanian folklore, Nosferatu “is either the illegitimate product of the union between two individuals who are born out of wedlock, or the unfortunate spirit of a vampire's victim who can transform into a dog, cat, toad, frog, louse, flea, bedbug — in short, anything” (Schmidt 224).¹⁷ Nosferatu's birth and legacy are thus a continued transgression against the institution of marriage, a central building block of modern nation states. “Radiating outward, the structure of marriage organizes community life and facilitates the government's grasp on the populace” (Cott 3). This institution

has had tremendous consequences for men's and women's citizenship as well as for their private lives. Men and women take up their public roles of husbands and wives along with the private joys and duties ... Molding individuals' self-understanding, opportunities, and constraints, marriage uniquely and powerfully influences the way differences between the sexes are conveyed and symbolized. So far as it is a public institution, it is the vehicle through which the apparatus of state can shape gender roles.

17. „Hieran reihe ich den Vampyr – nosferatu. Es ist dies die uneheliche Frucht zweier unehelich Gezeugter oder der unselige Geist eines durch Vampyre Getöteten der als Hund, Katze, Kröte, Frosch, Laus, Floh, Wanze, kurz in jeder Gestalt erscheinen kann und wie der altslavische und böhmische Blkodlak, Vukodlak oder polnische Mora und russische Kikimora als Incubus oder Succubus — zburatorul — namentlich bei Neuverlobten sein böses Wesen treibt. Was hierüber vor mehr als hundert Jahren geglaubt und zur Abwehr geübt wurde, ist noch heute wahr, und es dürfte kaum ein Dorf geben, welches nicht im Stande wäre Selbsterlebtes oder doch Gehörtes mit der festen Überzeugung der Wahrheit vorzubringen“ (Schmidt 224). (See also Hogg).

... [Marriage] has also been instrumental in articulating and structuring distinctions grouped under the name of 'race'. (Cott 3–4)

Trough the legitimization of some unions and incrimination of others (Cott 4), the institution of marriage has been central in administering gender, race, and citizenship in modern nation-states. In 1913, for example, nearly a decade before the making of Murnau's film, mixed-marriage bans emerge "restricting the rights of German men to marry and pass on the rights of German citizenship to their wives and children on racial grounds [in] an attempt to assert race as a legal category in defining citizenship" (Campt 45). Similar laws put into action across Western Europe and in the United States, move the battle over nationhood and national boundaries into the bedroom in efforts to defend the "national ... raced body" which was "made vulnerable through the female body as the conduit of racial pollution" (Campt 45).

Nosferatu, however, as a double infringement against matrimony (born out of wedlock to parents who are illegitimate themselves), poses an acute threat to such administration of nationhood. What's more, his transgressions against nationally sanctioned matrimony play out equally on male and female bodies, suspending their ability to "take up their public roles of husbands and wives" (Cott 3). While the state's blood thirst polices and guards bipolarities (man/woman, inside/outside, domestic/foreign, pure/impure), Nosferatu's blood thirst effaces them. His allies—interspecial or hybrid species (werewolves), the living dead, neither fully plant nor fully beast (Venus flytraps)—are anarchic bodies hostile to the maintenance of such boundaries. To be bitten and begotten by Nosferatu, to somehow join his legions, means to be propelled outside of the "origin story in the 'Western', humanist sense," which "depends on the myth of original unity, fullness, bliss and terror, represented by the phallic mother from whom all humans must separate, the task of individual development and of history" (Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 105). Vampires "invoke by their simple existence the disruption of classificatory schemata that calls traditional identity formation into question" (Stone 183). "Vampires make categories travel" (Haraway, *Modest-Witness* 80). Via the shadow, as this chapter will show, Nosferatu's multivalent transgressions are orchestrated into horror in Murnau's symphony. But what registers as horror here also maintains Nosferatu through time and media, though with an important loss of dread as Nosferatu's incorporation into the nonhuman world of SpongeBob Squarepants illustrates.



Fig. 3. User generated Internet memes.

In Murnau's 1922 film, the itinerant specter from the East acquires agency—the power to act upon its environment, to open doors, enter spaces, seduce, hypnotize, to be rapt or in throes, to willfully transgress boundaries and borders. A veritable undead, Graf Orlok even survives transitions through media and, as a mischievous or naïve time traveller from the cinematic past, moves the light switch off and on in a cartoon, interfering with the broadcast by seemingly powering down the screen and sweeping up the animated characters into a black-out. A bygone technology interacts with and interrupts a new one and is, unexpectedly but in a myriad of ways, robbed of its pastness. For a moment at least, the technologies' shared dependence on projection is revealed, the shadowy figure is transferred into an updated format and integrated into a contemporary narrative. However, the blackout caused by Nosferatu is also one of the driving elements of the *SpongeBob Squarepants Graveyard Shift* episode and depends on the concurrent maintenance of the figure's monochrome, grainy, historical patina—its palpable pastness—and the presumed innocuousness of an eclipsed cinematic technology. In this semi-update into the 'noughties', Nosferatu retains his affinity for the shade, which is now attainable at the flick of a switch, but loses his fright factor and is merely a guileless monster whose discovery is accompanied by a cheery lap steel guitar theme (Take that, symphony of horrors!). Eighty years later, Graf Orlok turns into a harmless, unwitting prankster as his appearance retrieves the episode from the slasher-cartoon territory into the gentle, warm, tropical waters. The sight of Nosferatu is a relief. It is, after all, *just* Nosferatu.

This consoling embrace of a historically vilified figure that has, as one meme reminds, been scaring children since 1922, is more than just a function of slapstick. One could certainly consider it a failure of the figure's efficacy or a sign of its outdatedness and unsuccessful time travel. However, one must also consider the converse. Nosferatu's sudden harmlessness can be contributed to his very relevance and taken as a sign of the fact that he time-travels rather well, but that the fears of the *Other* once attached to him do not. The horror either shifts elsewhere or fails with aplomb when the terror experienced from the foreignness of his exteriority, the infectious effacement of discernible origin and relation by kinship, and his compulsive transgression against various boundaries, proves to be misguided. Pursuing this alternate route, I suggest that this small, humorous gesture brazenly flaunts and answers the simple, though subversive questions of "Who is afraid of Nosferatu?" and "Why?" with "No one" and "We don't know why anyone would be!" *SpongeBob Squarepants*, so Jack Halberstam,

more than most animated series for children reminds us that children resist ready-made meaning, ignore heavy-handed morality, and pay careful attention to details in a film that most adults might pass over. Most animated films for children are antihumanist, antinormative, multigendered, and full of wild forms of sociality. Their antihumanism springs from both the predominance of nonhuman creatures and the refusal of individualism that is inscribed into the collective form of art making that goes on at an animation campus like DreamWorks and Pixar. The antinormative nature of animated film, as I suggested earlier, arises out of the wacky juxtapositions found in animated worlds between bodies, groups, and environments. (Halberstam 181)

In the episode with Nosferatu's cameo, Squidward, unhappy with his boss's greedy decision to keep the *Krusty Krab* open nonstop, tells *SpongeBob* a slasher story in order to diminish his unrivaled enthusiasm for 24/7 workweeks. As the story goes, a ghost of a former disgruntled, now wicked, undead fry-cook with a tongue twisting moniker—the Hash-Slinging Slasher—who in one day first loses his arm in a job related incident, replaces it with a rusty

spatula, is run over by a bus, and then fired at his own funeral, returns to vengefully haunt the *Krusty Krab* every Tuesday night. Three signs announce his appearance: the flickering of the lights, the phone ringing without a caller answering, and, finally, the arrival of a ghost bus with the vengeful Slasher. To SpongeBob and Squidward's horror, all three signs materialize. However, the spatula-armed silhouette that gets off the bus turns out to merely be an eager job applicant who brought his own tool of the trade. He also confesses to calling and hanging up. When subsequently the source of the flickering light is discovered—Nosferatu!—all terror is dispelled. In SpongeBob's world, Nosferatu's post- or non-humanness is no cause for terror. SpongeBob's children know something we do not.

A brief archaeology of the shadow

The revamping of Nosferatu concurrently harvests the materiality of the shadowy figure and quells the denigratory conventions attached to it. But how precisely can we speak of the materiality of a projected figure? Moreover, is there something about the conceptualizations of this figure's 'materiality' that contributes to its return and drift through time and media? What aspects propel this figure's perseverance beyond its manipulation and deployment in *A Symphony of Horror*? What aspects of the material's allure, presumed pliability, classification, or, the failure thereof, lend themselves so well to the filmic recruitment of this figure in the first place? To answer these questions, we will journey through a brief archeology of the shadow, focusing on the limits and conventions of its manipulability, its recalcitrance, irrepressible excesses that return again and again, as well as the concepts that seek to determine its functions.

Mentions of material evoke the manipulation of a substance, a thing, object, phenomenon, or an event even. After all, material is *matter for something* and *someone*. All talk of materiality alludes to processes and conditions of its instrumentalization, or, in other words, the politics of its circulation in services of humans. As Joshua Pollard explains, the term materiality is used to address "how the material character of the world is comprehended, appropriated, and involved in human projects" (as cited in Ingold, *Bringing Things Back to Life* 8). The material world is apprehended as a "brute materiality" that is "*passively* subservient to human designs (Ingold, *Bringing Things Back to Life* 8). This conversion of matter to material hinges on the entrenched effacement of the life of things outside of the human, cultural use-centered context. Against the presumed rigidity of the material world, Pollard "points out that material things, like people, are processes, and that their real agency lies precisely in the fact that 'they cannot always be captured and contained'" (Ingold, *Bringing Things Back to Life* 8). We do not commonly focus on the resistance of the material to its reductions to utility (for the human) or on the surpluses that interfere with or exceed the efficient use of materials. Such observations are usually reserved for business reports on productivity and resource management. In this chapter, however, the task is to traverse this very territory of excesses and unruliness of Nosferatu's shadow, or, more precisely, the shadow as the medium of film. Although the shadow, of course, is immaterial, it is nonetheless put to use as material with unexpected and ungovernable results. I argue that the shadow's recalcitrance and the "flow of processes" that define its being maintain this specter in circulation.

Shadowy Phenomenologies of the Invisible

On film and in its variously mediated afterlife, Nosferatu's shadow is—to repurpose Jeffrey Jerome Cohen—

embedded within networks of agency in which what [it] can and cannot do—where [it] may and may not move, what [it desires] and what [it] can achieve—is simultaneously constrained and enabled by other actors within that reticulation: humans, [cameras, sets,] intensities of heat and light. No single component of this web is detachable as a lonely actor. The whole meshwork pulses with movement because of the reaction chains that it enables, augments, and is often transformed by. (Cohen, “Stories of Stone” 60)

Shadow is enmeshment. Or, rather, the shadow is an interface, a *Schauplatz* of human and nonhuman enmeshment. The experience of terror in Murnau's film does not merely hinge on the disquieting choreography of Nosferatu's foreignness, grotesqueness, or surges of suspense and anxiety: it feeds, instead, on the unfixable, elusive nature of the shadow itself.

If, on our entrance into the film, we linger with the title—*Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens* in German—we may be compelled to stray from the common translation. In German, the word *Grauen* concurrently alludes to the shudder one experiences in instances of fright but also to “being grey, becoming grey ... appearing grey ... a grey, dreary, unclear, blurring color effect caused by certain weather conditions that can, however, also stick to inanimate objects, especially when these are caught in a dreary and colorless atmosphere” (Grimm and Grimm). The etymological entanglement of the words *shudder* and *gray*, so Frank Heidermanns, goes back to the “grey color of the wolf” (Heidermanns 259). As a metonymic color, grey also simply designated the wolf as the Grey—*der Graue* (Schmitthenner 163). A grey, shadowy atmosphere thus sticks to the title of this film and doubles it as a symphony of greys or greying and a symphony of shudders. This shudder in the face of horror is, so Adorno, a “primordial” (*Aesthetic Theory* 79) “memento of the liquidation of the I, which, shaken, perceives its own limitedness and finitude” (*Aesthetic Theory* 245). To shudder, in other words, means to experience the shattering of the contained subjectivity in midst of the “irruption of objectivity into subjective consciousness” (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 245). The playful superimposition of the shudder and the greys, then, reframes the film as a symphony of the “intense [shudders] that “[register] the painful liquidation of the ego in modernity” (Jay 356) brought on by the encounter with the shadowy, grey realm of this film.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the shadowy range of greys plays a constitutive role in the three contemporaneously emerging “phenomenologies of the inside: psychoanalysis, X-ray, and cinema” (Lippit, *Atomic Light* 58). All three “haunt” the year 1895 and “seek to expose, retrospectively, the depths of the psyche, body, and movement of life” (Lippit, *Atomic Light* 58). While cinema orchestrates animated afterimages in shadow, X-rays pierce through layers of flesh to leave a shadowy imprint of the skeleton like a photograph from one's grave, and in psychoanalysis the shadow is implicated in the obscured processes of identification. All three technologies work with a shadow that, on the one hand, implicates a subject but also ultimately blots out any notion of its fixity from by acting clandestinely beyond it. The quality of this effacement is perhaps best explained through Freud's attempts at “[developing] a theory of identification” or, more precisely, at “understanding how the apparent boundaries of the self are

actually permeable, how the apparently isolated subject constantly assimilates into what is outside itself” (J. Benjamin 79) via the shadow:

An object-choice, an attachment of the libido to a particular person had at one time existed; then, [...] the object-relationship was shattered. [...] But the free libido was not displaced onto another object; it was withdrawn into the ego. There, however, it was not employed in any unspecified way, but served to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification. (Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” 586)

For Jessica Benjamin, this means that “the ego is not really dependent on self-constituting, but is actually made up of the objects it assimilates” (J. Benjamin 79). All three shadow techniques of the invisible point toward excesses that act beyond, in tandem with, or within human subjects. Psychoanalysis confronts the image of a seemingly distinct, autonomous individual with the notion of a permeable assemblage that is acted upon by—and incorporates—various external entities, some human and some nonhuman. The individual is bilaterally “ex-centered” as the

dividing line between subject (of seeing, of representation, of knowledge) and the world of objects coincides with a part of the subject passing onto the side of objects, thus introducing a fundamental asymmetry in the subject-object relationship. In other words, the subject finds itself on the opposite side of objects or things only insofar as there is a ‘thing from the subject’ that dwells among these objects or things, a fragmentary remainder of subjectivity dissolved into the ‘stuff of the world. (Zupančič 105)

Three technologies penetrate through the exterior only to arrive at a shadow. The quest for the distinct subject uncovers instead a shadow-like distribution across a landscape of anonymous nonhumans and humans. It is no great wonder then that, in this year, “brain, body, mind, and soul appear to orbit in a specular constellation that blurs the distinctions between each form of interiority. The material and the immaterial, anatomical and spiritual, psychic and organic aspects of human interiority are confused” (Lippit, *Atomic Light* 57). Like psychoanalysis, X-rays and film allude to the agency of objects beyond the human (e.g. filmic shadows act beyond the bodies of the actors, sometimes films outlive their directors and context) and the agency of the *other* within the self. Born nearly 27 years later, Nosferatu is a creature of this shadow or *greying*.

The arrival at the shadow beyond the human object is so startling because this phenomenon is so unruly and ungraspable. Shadows are a virtual interface that discloses the unceasing human enmeshment with the nonhuman. Associated with appearances to such a degree that it is vilified as a mere trick, falsity, deceptive shine (Plato), the shadow is a figure of exteriority, of surface. By paradoxically binding the shadow (Greek *skiá*) to the word shine, etymology hauls it to the surface as well. The three “phenomenologies” of the invisible, thus bring about the collapse of the distinction between interior and the exterior by locating a seemingly radically exterior phenomenon in the interior.

The X-ray projects the body's interiority outward until it reaches a screen. The anatomic light of the X-ray *exscribes* the body, irradiates and projects it on an exterior surface. Its destination always the screen, the X-ray...[abolishes] all distinction between surface and depth, demonstrating that all interior spaces are equally superficial, that all depth is only latent surface." (Lippit, *Atomic Light* 48)

The shadow as *exscribed* interiority, even when fixed on a screen, remains ambiguous. Uncovering the surface where intimate depths should be is made all the more disturbing by the shadow's conspicuous recalcitrance to categorization and even more so by its immanently collaborative existence—the fact of its projectedness and dependence upon the collaboration of surface, media, and substance (the environment needed for its appearance). Put succinctly: to encounter the shadow at the interior means to encounter ambiguous assemblages of constitutive *Others* where an independent self should be. The shadowy exscription of the interior recasts the inscrutable depths of the human subject as a "strange stranger" (Morton).

These three shadow technologies, on the one hand, facilitate the encounter with the self as *Other*. On the other, however, their assistance in achieving human mastery over an increasingly demystified, scrutinized, or irradiated nonhuman (and human) leads to the fulfillment of a perverse Enlightenment fantasy. The latter path bears witness to the actualization of Enlightenment as totalitarianism (Adorno and Horkheimer as cited in Lippit, *Atomic Light* 42) whose ethos is "the mastery of nature" (Lippit, *Atomic Light* 42). This conquest "requires a seeing subject" who has the "view of the entire world from outside. From another world" (Lippit, *Atomic Light* 42). In other words, this conquest is spearheaded by a human who is located somewhere outside of the nonhuman world—outside of the context of 'nature'. The discovery of X-rays in particular, however, makes the maintenance of the human outside of the nonhuman world tenuous at best as

'the surface of the body, its demarcation from the world, is dissolved' ... No longer inside nor out, within nor without, body and world form a heterogeneous one. You are in the world, the world is in you. The X-ray can be seen as an image of you and the world, an image forged in the collapse of the surface that separates the two" (Lippit, *Atomic Light* 43).

Failing to recognize the unfeasibility of the limit that keeps the nonhuman at a distance and to accordingly "humiliate" (Morton 265) himself, the human subject "[unleashes] the absolute radiance" against itself and the nonhuman alike,

enveloping [himself] in a searing light. The Enlightenment subject had become the focus of its own penetrating look, susceptible to the 'self-destructive' force that Horkheimer and Adorno identified as Enlightenment practice. One year before the atomic irradiation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they warned: 'The fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant'. (Lippit, *Atomic Light* 43)

This cataclysmic trajectory toward the total, atomic irradiation is (was) potentiated by the unceasing insistence on human mastery over the nonhuman and the persistence of the Cartesian dualism. The latter of the two was instrumental in the legitimization of the former because a culture valorizing the notion of a sealed off cognitive, immaterial realm that transcends the nonhuman stickiness, slime, and baseness of the body, must insist on limits that keep the two

apart and reason in control. Under the auspices of such frameworks, marginalized human bodies and the nonhuman alike are converted into “nothing but abstract material, which has no other property than to be the substrate” (Horkheimer and Adorno 20) for human practices of systematization.

As intimated at the onset of the preceding paragraph, the three shadowy phenomenologies also force the dissolution of the Cartesian subject and the encounter with the self as shadow, a heterogeneous, collaborative assemblage—a “strange stranger” (Morton 265). At the point of impact of these phenomenologies, though not for the first time in history, a “humiliating descent toward what is rather abstractly called ‘the Earth’” (Morton 265) was potentiated but largely rejected. All three phenomenologies held lessons of humans as “decentered beings” (Morton 265), of the self as *Other*, of ourselves as “strange strangers” (Morton). This uncanny, strange stranger—Timothy Morton’s reworking of Derrida’s *arrivant*—is a “being whose being we can’t predict, whose arrival is utterly unexpected to boot. The strange stranger is not only strange, but strangely so. They could be us. They are us” (Morton 275). With Morton’s modification, the nonhuman is explicitly added to Derrida’s *arrivant*, who “surprises the host” and calls

into question ... all the distinctive signs of a prior identity, beginning with the very border that delineated a legitimate home and assured lineage, names and language, nations, families and genealogies. The absolute *arrivant* does not yet have a name or an identity. It is not an invader or an occupier, nor is it a colonizer, even if it can also become one. This is why [it is called] the *arrivant*, and not someone or something that arrives, a subject, a person, an individual or a living thing ... It is not even a foreigner identified as a member of a foreign, determined community. (Derrida, *Aporias* 34)

We thus return to *Nosferatu*, the uncanny shadow itinerant from Transylvania (the beyond beyond). Considered in the constellation of the phenomenologies of the invisible as outlined here, *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* can be read either as an orchestrated horror of the human *Other* or as a horror of the dissolution of the Enlightenment subject into an *Other* that is, to appropriate Jose Muñoz, “always on the horizon” (Muñoz 11). I am interested in pursuing the latter possibility. The fact that the potential breakdown of the Enlightenment subject issues forth from the technologically facilitated encounter with the nonhuman warrants further exploration. In the following, I will thus pursue this trajectory by evaluation facets of *Nosferatu*’s posthumanness. The film is then read as the orchestration of the Enlightenment or Gothic subject’s anxiety of being *posted*, that is, of being propelled to a horizon, a beyond *beyond*.

The Horror of Greying: From Maxim Gorky to *Nosferatu*

The posthuman base note of Murnau’s symphony is the shadow—in early cinema, an afterimage that outlives the human and acts beyond it. Its collaborated (non)being ontological ambiguity (is it or is it not?) belong to the forces that withdraw it from the domain of legibility. As is true of most things, the shadow cannot be exhausted through a definition. What distinguishes it further, however, is its particular ability to push us into a negative spiral wherein we compulsively produce catalogues of what the shadow is not, of what it lacks, of the classes to which it does not belong.

Concerning shadows we only know that they—when considered within the categories of solid bodies—do not exist, or are, in the least, not solid bodies. They belong to the world of bodies, as long as this world is illuminated, but are themselves not bodies. They belong to the world of light, but only as holes in light. They are “almost” or “almost not”; they are concurrently visible and more than mere hallucinations; they are thus “somehow”. They are a matter of something almost-not-being. They are components of projections. Shadows are thrown.¹⁸

This ambiguous territory is the territory of early cinema, for the shadow is immanently proto-filmic. Or, to paraphrase Maxim Gorky’s review of a Lumière film program from 1897: the shadow is film or film is shadow and both are terrifying.

Last night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows. If you only knew how strange it is to be there. It is a world without sound, without color. Everything there—the earth, the trees, the people, the water and the air—is dipped in monotonous grey. Grey rays of sun across the grey sky, grey eyes in grey faces, and the leaves of the trees are ashen grey. It is no life but its shadow, it is not motion but its soundless spectre. ... It is terrifying to see, but it is the movement of shadows, only of shadows. Curses and ghosts, the evil spirits that have cast entire cities into eternal sleep, come to mind and you feel as though Merlin’s vicious trick is being enacted before you. (Leyda 407–408)

For Gorky, film needs no orchestration beyond the shadow to qualify as a symphony of horrors. In filmic shadow, the scenes of everyday life are simply petrifying. But if the filmic shadow already instills fear and tugs at anxieties, why push it even further as Murnau does with *Nosferatu*? Is the shadow Gorky fears the same shadow as *Nosferatu*’s shadow, or is there something that distinguishes them? Do these horrors coincide?

Despite the novelty of the filmic medium, Gorky’s fear of the shadow is rather startling for the proto-filmic qualities of the shadow are already inextricably folded into the corpus of Western art and history of representation. None of the supposedly terrifying details outlined in this excerpt are new. Neither the animated shadow nor the shadow that survives the removal of its object is a new phenomenon in 1897. One must not even look far to encounter the animated shadow; it is, after all the intimate and permanent companion of all more or less opaque bodies, whether human or nonhuman. Besides, shadow puppet plays and shadow theatre are ancient story telling and entertainment techniques while the magic lantern and traveling phantasmagoria¹⁹ shows had been around since at least the 17th century. Magic lanterns, unlike the *camera obscura*—which was already explained in principle by Aristotle (Kittler, *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures* 1999 51)—even made movement on the screen through the illumination of a “horizontal row of painted glass plates ... one after the other (almost like film)” (Kittler, *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures* 1999 80). Animation that relied on illustrations rather than the shadow was also long familiar through the zoetrope and its successor praxinoscope, as well as

18. „Wir wissen von den Schatten nur, dass sie gedacht in Kategorien von Körpern, nicht existieren oder zumindest keine festen Körper sind. Sie gehören zur Körperwelt, sofern diese beleuchtet wird, aber sie sind selber keine Körper. Sie gehören zur Lichtwelt, aber als Löcher des Lichts ... Sie sind „beinahe“ oder „fast nicht“; sie sind gleichwohl sichtbar und mehr als bloße Halluzinationen; also sind sie „irgendwie“. Es handelt sich um etwas fast nicht Seiendes. Sie sind Bestandteile von Projektionen: Schatten werden geworfen.“ (Wolf 111)

19. “Phantasmagoria: 1802, name of a ‘magic lantern’ exhibition brought to London in 1802 by Parisian showman Paul de Philipstal, the name an alteration of French *phantasmagorie*, said to have been coined 1801 by French dramatist Louis-Sébastien Mercier as though to mean ‘crowd of phantoms’, from Greek *phantasma* ‘image, phantom, apparition’ + second element probably a French form of Greek *agora* ‘assembly’ (but this may have been chosen more for the dramatic sound than any literal sense). Transferred meaning ‘shifting scene of many elements’ is attested from 1822.” (“Online Etymology Dictionary”)

flipbooks, Victorian thaumatropes, and the phenakistoscope. The moving image and the image in shadow alone could not have been the sources of Gorky's terror.

If we then claim the fixed shadow's enduring beyond the bodies that occasion it as the culprit of Gorky's nightmare, we must confront two prominent moments in Western history: the invention of painting according to Pliny the Elder and Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*. Both of these instances are premised on proto-filmic techniques of projection and work with a shadow that either persists after the departure of its object and the conditions that engender it, or a shadow that, as Plato's chained cave dwellers believe, is already the object itself and not merely its lesser, projected phantom. These iconic narratives exploit the targeted projection of the shadow on the wall via a light source—a flame or the flicker of a candle—as well as the imminent removal or the presumed lack of the shadow's source. In *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder describes the moment of lovingly tracing the outline of a departing lover's shadow as a way to stave off his impending absence, as the instance in which painting and sculptural arts are born.

We have no certain knowledge as to the commencement of the art of painting, nor does this enquiry fall under our consideration. . . . all agree that it originated in tracing lines around the human shadow. The first stage of art, they say, was this, the second stage being the employment of single colours; a process known as 'monachromaton.' (Elder 228–229)

Butades, a potter of Sicyon, was the first who invented, at Corinth, the art of modeling portraits in the earth which he used for his trade. It was through his daughter that he made the discovery; who, being deeply in love with a young man about to depart on a long journey traced the profile of his face, as thrown upon the wall by the light of the lamp. Upon seeing this, her father filled in the outline, by compressing clay upon the surface, and so made a face in relief, which he then hardened by fire along with other articles of pottery. (Elder 283)

The attempt to fix a shadow through the history of Western art is already inscribed with the anticipation of the object's removal. In fact, in this originary myth, the impending loss of the object is the very cause for the attempt to preserve its shadow like a souvenir. Considering this long tradition of the objectless shadow implies that Gorky's horror cannot stem from its already mundane animation or the absence of its object. Something else must have joined the two to escalate the dismay. While the absence of sound and color are repeatedly identified as the two especially disconcerting effects, they are merely the harbingers of a far greater loss. The Kingdom of Shadows is futural, a world of lifeless afterimages of the human, of "the end of history" (Lippit, "Phantographics" 143) and "cities [cast] into eternal sleep," (Leyda 408) in short, a world after or without the living human.

This mute, grey life finally begins to disturb and depress you. It seems as though it carries a warning, fraught with a vague but sinister meaning that makes your heart grow faint. You are forgetting where you are. Strange imaginings invade your mind and your consciousness begins to wane and grow dim. . . . But suddenly alongside of you, a gay chatter and a provoking laughter of a woman is heard. . . . and you remember you are at Aumont's. (Leyda 408)

Gorky's agonizing premonition plunges all early cinema, starting with the everyday scenes of city life, into the genre of horror. This sense of a cataclysmic discontinuation of humanity and the spitefully persisting agency of objects (film) issue forth from the captured shadow. And this is what crucially distinguishes early film from the outlining of the lover's shadow. In tracing the projected silhouette, the young woman traces her loss and desire. A souvenir of love and longing, the outline left behind is wholly occupied with meaning so thoroughly legible as an individual placeholder. To be sure, it too, is a *memento mori*, a remembrance in anticipation of loss, but it is contained to the loss of an individual. These frozen outlines, weather flat or in relief, cannot stave off the death of the dear departing one, but they are asked to contain the love, the *libido*, attached to him or her. These shadow outlines cannot hold anything of the beloved but that which the one left behind sought to give of her/himself. In its new motionlessness, the blocked-in space on the wall, and later the lump of clay pressed into it, is converted into a legible sign that blankets everything that subtends it with meaning. Here, death is complete, for it is not only the death of a dear one that is held fast but also the death of the shadow as it is frantically filled in with what it cannot hold.

Gorky's terror, on the other hand, is provoked by the very experience of illegibility that accompanies the filmic shadow. This terror is made that much worse by the fact that the shadow's agency is decoupled from its object and that it, suddenly freed, continues to act beyond this object and, more startlingly, beyond the human. In Gorky's account of the overpowering greyness, the shadow is akin to "an element [that] rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces [him]" (26) or, like an "accident [that] pricks [him] (but also bruises [him], is poignant to [him])" (Barthes 27). While this experience of shock—*punctum*—is a potentiality Barthes ascribes to photography in opposition to film, a claim to its eruption from the flux of early celluloid can and should nonetheless be made. *Punctum*, so Barthes, cannot dot film frames because they pass too quickly to deliver such a blow, for "[one does] not have time: in front of the screen, [one is] not free to shut [one's] eyes; otherwise, opening them again, [one] would not discover the same image; [one] is constrained to a continuous voracity; a host of other qualities, but not *pensiveness*" (Barthes 55). To be pricked means to be addressed by an object that doesn't dissolve or vanish in favor of the 'intended' meaning of a scene or the coded referent. *Punctum* is the address by an object that has seized to be a "sign" and has become a "thing itself" (Barthes 49). The shock and wounding then issue forth from the sudden illegibility, which, in turn, is triggered by the exit of an object from the order of meaning staged by the image as a whole, and its flight into potentiality that exceeds the role originally ascribed to it in the order of a scene. It is the object whose unruliness continues to address and haunt after one closes one's eyes and looks away. But this, even though not in the realm of photography, is Gorky's experience: the foregrounding of a shadow that cannot be wholly apprehended or arrested with meaning and thus gestures toward the potential futural void. While early cinema, unlike a photograph, may not permit one to linger, look away, and return to the same scene to attend to the addressing object's injurious excess of being, an addressing object withstands the maelstrom of scenes nonetheless: the shadow, early cinema's fugitive *object*. Put simply, in early cinema—Gorky's Kingdom of Shadows—the shadow emerges as the *punctum*. If one heeds its address, one is confronted with human finitude and the time after finitude (Barthes 94). Early cinema's shadow is a prosthesis that reaches into an "anterior future of which death is the stake" (Barthes 96).

However, "death" has to be qualified further here, for it is not precisely death, but the shadow that is at stake in Gorky's vision of the future induced via cinematic encounter. The cessation Gorky experiences certainly includes the loss of a particular kind of liveliness, but it

also extends forcefully to a sense of deterritorialization, de-familiarization. As a wound, void, hole, the *punctum* opens up a space of loss, which in Gorky's review is marked by an experience of confusion or of forgetting where or when he is. He is only called back to reality and reminded that he is at Aumont's upon hearing audible, legible voices. Surrendering this instance to a claim of forgetting would sell the *punctum* short, for this is not a mere matter of failure to remember or correctly situate oneself: it is a disorientation brought about through an encounter with alterity, with the *Other*. The *Other* Gorky encounters in the *punctum* is the human as shade. More precisely, he encounters himself as a shadow other and thereby "becomes the spectator of [his] own loss" (Lippit, "Phantographics" 147). The experience of *punctum* is quintessentially incorporative—it is, after all a puncturing, a cut, or penetration by a foreign body—and issues forth concurrently from the subject and the image. As Barthes writes: "it is what [one] adds to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there*." The *punctum* is thus a wounding interface "that eludes rationalization" in which the nonhuman pierces the human. It is "the unassimilable, foreign accident which returns to wound the spectator" (Lippit, "Phantographics" 146). With this transgression, we replay a collapse of interiority and exteriority we already traced in the technologies of X-ray and psychoanalysis. We dwell so long with Gorky's fear filled review because it so ardently outlines the process by which, through film, the subject is dethroned as a delineated, lone agent and is propelled into an unassimilable beyond that concurrently includes an anterior future without the human and an anterior future as a shadowy

Other. As is the case with X-Ray and psychoanalysis, "the filmic image marks the event of transformation, the subtle shift in presence from subject to shade" (Lippit, "Phantographics" 142). This, too is the very warning that introduces the *Symphony of Horror*, but with a built in paradox, for it is not film that will cause "the images of life to pale into shadows" (see Fig. 2) but the very utterance of the name "Nosferatu" (Murnau). Before we can heed the warning, however, we have unwittingly fallen into a trap, for no sooner than the intertitle can inform us of the silent film's embargo on our voices, the symphony has already slyly compelled us to utter the name.

"Nosferatu" flashes up in large letters and we are asked: "Doesn't this word sound to you like the midnight call of a dead bird?" But who, other than we ourselves has sounded it out in the silence of the film? The trap closes. We are implicated. And more. Not only have we opened ourselves to the transformation into shade: we are the film. The imminent "spectral dreams" leap from "[our hearts] and feed on [our] blood." In the dark of the early cinema, agency

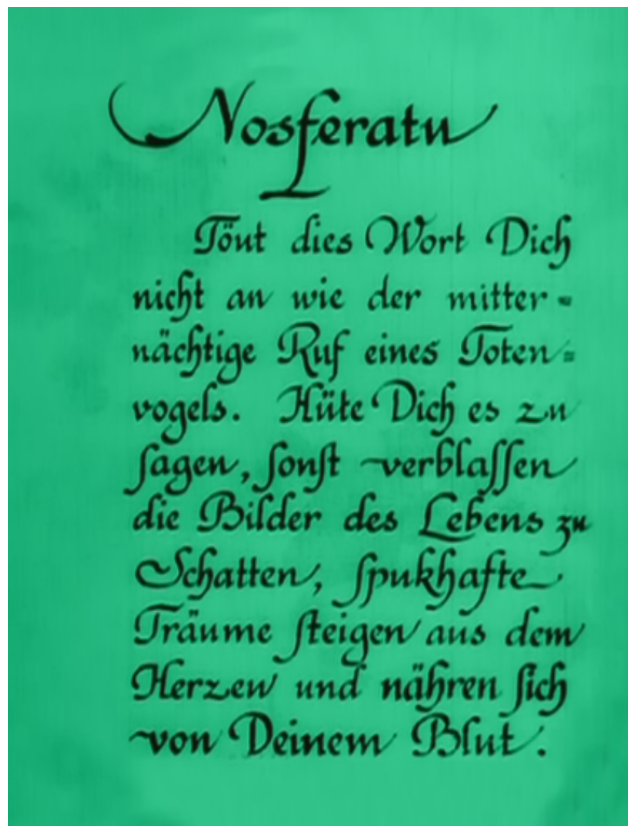


Fig. 4. "Nosferatu: Doesn't this word sound to you like the midnight call of a dead bird? Be wary of saying it or else the images of life will fade to shadow and spectral dreams will leap out of the heart and feed on your blood."

issues forth from within us when we are pricked from without. The *punctum* is the bite by vampire, and the vampire—just like in X-Ray and psychoanalysis—is the shadow ruin of the Enlightenment subject. Infected by shadow and remade as its progeny, we have been propelled to an ever-withdrawing horizon, a beyond *beyond*.

A *Symphony of Horror* thus begins with the orchestration of the viewer's death and her passing into shade. Infectious like Nosferatu's bite, the film creates legions of shadows. With this opening gesture, the origin and source of the film are immediately obfuscated, for it is the film itself that reincarnates its own viewer as a shade and her ghost-dreaming-heart as the projector. Once again, inside and outside are tangled up in an impossible dance, cycling beyond their purported finitudes as shadows, collaborating in and on a film. The viewer is concurrently the maker, actor, and observer of the *Kingdom of Shadows*, a world after the human. This *Kingdom* however, is truly *transylvanian*, an inassimilable *beyond* beyond. Leaping from a shadow-heart-projector, it is made up of shadowy specters that possess no substantial sensuous origin. Wrapped up into this *Kingdom* as a shade, the human is suddenly transposed into a *beyond* beyond and confronted either with her posthuman *Other* or with herself as a subject whose Enlightenment finitudes are blasted to ruins and cannot be recovered.

A Symphony of Thresholds



Fig. 5

Murnau's *Symphony of Horror* unleashes something that Gorky's account already points to—something that undermines the exclusively narrative functionality of the filmic and photographic medium. It facilitates the encounter with the recalcitrance or subterranean autonomy of the shadow—one of the very essential instruments of film. In other words, this horror is an orchestration of the unruliness of its medium. This last statement is, of course riddled with seeming paradoxes. If the shadow is deemed a medium, it is precisely because it

is no longer unruly but instead manipulated and converted into a tool that can be put to use for the attainment of specific effects. In its guise as medium, its being is entirely colonized by the function to which it is subjugated. As medium, the shadow is only that which is orchestrated and fulfills a function for the human. The only point at which it is released from that function is when it is broken. But how does one break a shadow? In cinema and photography, the shadow would appear in that brokenness when it exceeds or fails the function. Since the shadow seems unbreakable, all errors on celluloid are attributed to processing of film, failure of the recording or projecting equipment or human error. Here, however, I nonetheless argue that Murnau's film deals in broken shadows. Here, the shadow is no longer a thoroughly manipulated and mastered

tool. As on another occasion in this essay, I return to the title for guidance in the answer to this blatant discrepancy. The word *Symphony* in the film's title is attached to the organization of a dimension inaccessible to silent film—sound—and so its very deployment discloses, even celebrates an inherent failure. It introduces the film as an orchestration of the failures to orchestrate. And herein lies its terror. Failure blankets the shadow as well: the very medium cinema purportedly masters. In cinema, the shadow *works* as long as it retreats into its assigned

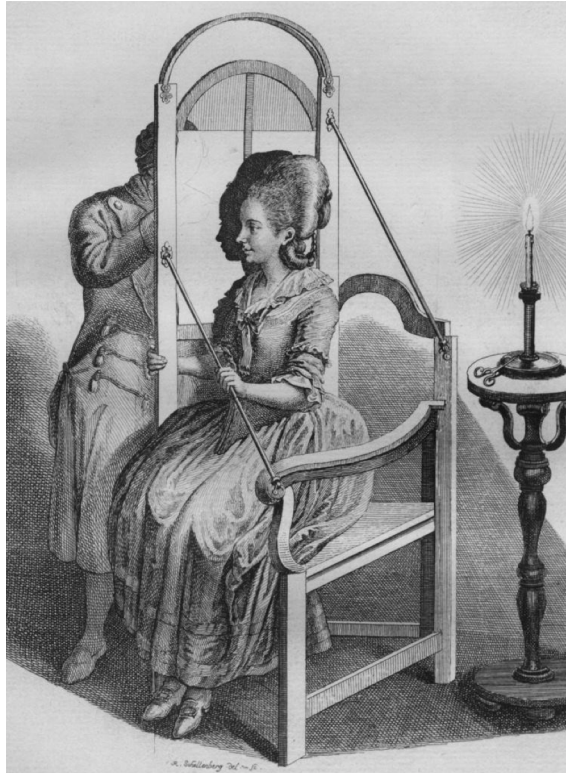


Fig. 6. Lavater's silhouette apparatus.

function and becomes merely the unobtrusive substrate, a reference that pushes beyond itself and fills the screen with stories, objects, bodies, faces, and their animated trajectories. The shadow, foregrounded in Murnau's film, is thus many times over removed from the luminous surface of the screen on which the significant events unfold that fix the viewer's gaze. Just as actress's virtuosity is measured by her ability to disappear behind the character she plays, to seduce the audience to attend the film but then to orchestrate her forgetting in the stream of the film's narrative, the shadow's effectiveness is measured by its foregrounding of the referents and the forgetting of the shadow. In the following, I will focus on the failure of the shadow to fade into the efficacy of an instrument.

The orchestration of the beyond beyond through the deterritorializing, unruly shadow does not only coincide with Nosferatu's westward journey. We find the shadow already at *home* framed within another threshold figure the first time we encounter Ellen. In a scene at the very

beginning of the film, shot from the outside looking in, we see Ellen at the window. She is teasing a kitten that is perched in a planter overflowing with flowers. Right behind her, in the interior of her private, living space that is swathed in flower-patterned wallpaper, we see a portrait flanked by framed silhouettes. These anonymous profiles that seem to establish a vague family lineage are also reminiscent of Johann Caspar Lavater's silhouettes. As a champion of the questionable school of physiognomy, Lavater believed that one could read the nature of a person's essential, moral character from the outlined shadow of his or her profile. The line of the profile became a legible language of nature that deposited, in the flatness of the shadow, a lexicon of the inherent but invisible, divine features of the human soul and character. This *true*, natural but invisible face, hidden behind the everyday mask of fleshy details and lost in the cartography of a lived life recorded in wrinkles, could be divined through a person's shadow. Through this reading of nature, Lavater promised to divulge the secrets of one's the essential interiority. To capture the silhouette, Lavater made use of a simple 'apparatus' (Fig. 5). The person who wanted to have their soul brought to the surface, needed only to sit as still as possible in a chair next to a candle, with their profile turned to a translucent screen that resembled a window with the curtains drawn or a "confessional" (Stoichita 164). The physiognomist would stand behind the screen and trace the shadowy profile of a person moved out of sight in order to

truly come into view. The features and expressions, movement and gestures had to be suppressed so that the physiognomist could capture out their innermost, obscured motives and drives. While the face was riddled with noise, the shadow was deemed legible, albeit not as a shadow but as a placeholder, a cipher for something more meaningful. Like a priest, who “listens to the anonymous voice which comes to him filtered, and without body, from the other side of the grille” (Stoichita 164), the physiognomist would “listen” to the “secrets of the soul” spilled by the outline.

Shades are the weakest, most vapid, but at the same time, when the light is at the proper distance, and falls properly on the countenance to take the profile accurately, the truest representation that can be given of man. — The weakest, for it is not positive, it is only something negative, only the boundary line of half the countenance. The truest, because it is the immediate expression of nature, such as not the ablest painter is capable of drawing, by hand, after nature. What can be less the image of a living man than a shade? Yet how full of speech! Little gold, but the purest... Shades collect the distracted attention, confine it to an outline, and thus render the observation more simple, easy, and precise. (Lavater, as cited in Stoichita 157) This art of reading the shadow, which became nothing less than a “craze” (214), filled, so Hans Blumenberg, a contemporary “*Zeichenbedarf [a need for signs]*” (Blumenberg 202). It answered a call to the romanticization of the world (Blumenberg 254). For reading enthusiasts of physiognomy, the shadow formed a cipher in the book of nature. Curiously, it is not the face that is deemed legible, despite the pervasive sense that faces are read (Blumenberg 35), but the shadow. “Vapid,” unlike the overfull face and gesture that partake in conventions of communication, the shadow is where nature makes itself immediately legible.

The procession of a painted portrait of a family member, framed silhouettes, and a filmic portrait of Ellen not only establishes a family lineage but also a history of the engagement with the human face, image, and nature. The display of images is a battlefield over the legibility of nature, human psyche, and the human’s place in the world. According to Tom Gunning,

[Lavater was] directly responsible for the increased popularity of the silhouette as a mode of representation. Not only did the silhouette accurately capture the facial profile so important in Lavater’s method, its indexical process of production--directly tracing the shadow of its subject--announced the importance of new visual technologies in sciences of observation, directly anticipating photography.” (Gunning 4)

The filmic framing of Ellen, the silhouettes, and the portrait string together a chain of visual technologies, “theories of face recognition” (Blumenberg 214), and orientations in and toward *nature*. Ellen’s chambers, or, more specifically, her body, is nothing less than a battleground where the world of a fixed, universally legible nature inhabited by the Gothic subject is plunged into a world with shifting boundaries; a world of a less and less legible nature. While Lavater could read the shadow ciphers in the book of nature, Murnau’s film releases them from such legibility, replaces Lavater’s silhouette with Nosferatu’s shadow. Poised at her window, Ellen is caught at a threshold and in the line of fire. And we appropriately encounter her at the window, in which “the Romantics found a potent symbol for the experience of standing on the threshold between an interior and the outside world. The juxtaposition of the close familiarity of a room



Fig. 7. Nosferatu's shadow climbing the stairs.



Fig. 8. Ellen, sleepwalking.

and the uncertain, often idealized vision of what lies beyond was immediately recognized as a metaphor for unfulfilled longing” (Rewald 3).

In this scene, the camera never affords us a look through Ellen’s window. We never get to glance over her shoulder or look out of the window from her point of view. Her gaze is fixed on the kitten, she never looks up and lets her gaze get lost in the world outside. When she retreats into the room and sits down to work on her embroidery, we see the bedroom in the background. The bed covered with white linens is doubled in the mirror. Here only, are we afforded a view outside through the window and see two ruinous, crooked buildings with gaping black windows. These images of virtuous domesticity are also among the last ones we will see in the film: Ellen’s bedroom, the window with the crooked buildings, an embroidered cushion. In this idyllic scene, the first parallel is established between Ellen and Nosferatu. If Nosferatu bites, Ellen stitches. This connection set up between the monstrous *Other* and iconic, albeit unattributed and unpaid (Lamb)

feminine labor is startling, but it is not the only one. It is a subversive subtext in an otherwise pious scene where Ellen is working on her embroidery, an art which, as all other women’s creative work “was identified with nature and nurture...[and] conflated with their procreative capacity...considered an extension of their womanliness” (Parker 22). As the film progresses, Ellen’s and Nosferatu’s mysterious bond is reinforced. From correspondences in bodily poise and language (Figures 6 and 7), to seeming telepathic communication (Figures 8 and 9), Ellen and Nosferatu are linked. By aligning the woman who is kept in her Biedermeier home, and who, when she looks at the streets from her window can only see men on the streets of Wisborg (Vacche 172)—with the Nosferatu, the shadowy *Other*, Murnau sets up a contrast to, or accentuates an obstacle to the drive for control and the mastery of nature. Wisborg, the manicured town where flowers only grow in planters or designated garden areas, where women live and die confined to the home where they are kept in a “state of perpetual childhood” (Lamb), and animals appear only as endearing entertainment or tied up beasts of burden; a town build on the presumption of the fixed nature of things—whether these things are shadows, the nonhuman, or women—is threatened by the subterranean autonomy and unruly excesses of that which it gainsays. Under the veneer of conformity, confinement, control, and mastery, there lives something that can no longer be held at bay.

Ellen’s sensibilities are deterritorializing even before Nosferatu enters the scene. She experiences the manicured environment, culture, and the economies of love and gift exchange of her *Biedermeier* community as murderous (Figure 10). It would be easy to dismiss Ellen as a figure that replicates Romanticist conventions, in which women and nature collude as reason’s other (Rigby 10), but by aligning Ellen with the shadowy Nosferatu, the subversive force of this otherwise problematic cliché surfaces. In Romanticism, the Cartesian dichotomy of mind and



Fig. 9. Ellen screams out just as Graf Orlok is hovering over sleeping Hutter somewhere in Transylvania.



Fig. 10. Graf Orlok, as if though hearing Ellen's scream, turns around and retreats, leaving Hutter unaware of his visit.

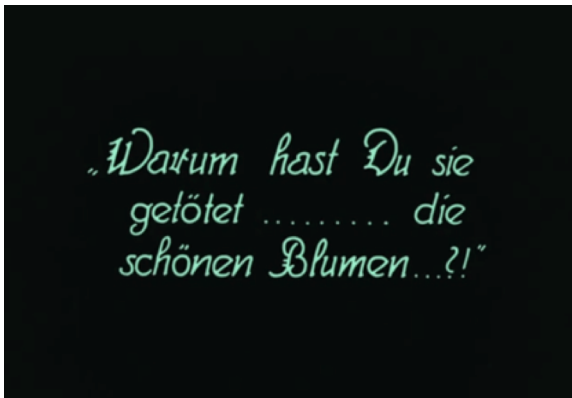


Fig. 11. “Why have you killed them the beautiful flowers?!”

body is mapped onto nature and, thus, “the idealized version of nature is associated with the human mind or spirit, while the debased version of nature is associated with the human body” (Alaimo, “Displacing Darwin and Descartes The Bodily Transgressions of Fielding Burke, Octavia Butler, and Linda Hogan” 50). This bipolarity also apportions gender and race, aligning the idealized whiteness, maleness, and reason against the debased femininity and color. As Stacy Alaimo further argues, “nature [is] mapped by mind/body dichotomies that are coded by gender and race, associating women and people of color with abject bodily resources” (Alaimo, “Displacing Darwin and Descartes The Bodily Transgressions of Fielding Burke, Octavia Butler, and Linda Hogan” 50). However, precisely from this abjectness issues revolt as it “offers a potent site for contestation and transformation” (Alaimo, “Displacing Darwin and Descartes The Bodily Transgressions of Fielding Burke, Octavia Butler, and Linda Hogan” 51). Drawn into one another’s orbit, Ellen and Nosferatu occupy “indeterminable [positions]” carrying the potential “to upset the frameworks by which ... binary pairs are considered” (Elizabeth Grosz, as cited in Alaimo, “Displacing Darwin and Descartes The Bodily Transgressions of Fielding Burke, Octavia Butler, and Linda Hogan” 51).

Nosferatu, the *trans* figure that does not transition into an assimilable being—the beyond *beyond* figure—is, like Ellen, liminal. Human/nonhuman, material/immaterial, man/woman, organic/inorganic are all binaries that cannot accommodate Nosferatu on either end of their spectrum. In as far as he participates in the exchange of goods and capital, he is human, but his appetites and features deem him monstrous. He shares a fantastical world with werewolves and is a primal “entity related to or in touch with ... various

animals” (Vacche 187). At best, we can say of Nosferatu that he is interspecial. When doctor Bulwer, a “Paracelsian” demonstrating the microscopic gaze to his students, deems the Venus flytrap and the freshwater polyp²⁰ vampiric, Nosferatu is placed on the threshold between animal and plant life. After all of the (human) members of the crew on the ship *Empusa* that’s bringing Nosferatu to Wisborg die by plague or by bite, Nosferatu takes control of the ship and it is as if

20. In the context of Romanticism, the polyp was “thought to be a zoophyte, that is, an animal with plant-like characteristics” (Faflak and Wright 362).

though he interfaces with the vessel to steer it. His “*Todesatem*” (breath of death) propels the



Fig. 12.

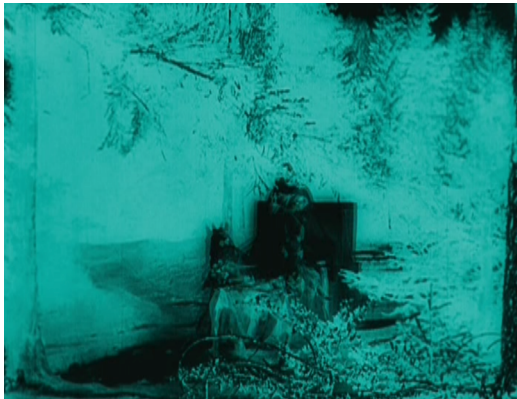


Fig. 13.

ship. Again, Nosferatu’s boundaries are obscured as he enters into some kind of a prosthetic bond with the ship. He indiscriminately feeds on the blood of men and women alike, and his first encounter with Hutter has “more homoerotic than commercial import” (Vacche 189). Bulwer’s comparison between the vampire and the polyp plays up the vampire’s asexual reproduction and the mystery of regeneration. Finally, Nosferatu also traverses between materiality and immateriality; sometimes embodied, sometimes turning invisible, sometimes appearing as all shadow. Nosferatu is a *queering* figure and his infectiously “indeterminable position” propels him and the infected victims out of legibility or fixed, classifiable existences. The horror of Nosferatu’s shadowy being rests precisely in this *queering* illegibility. “More shadow than substance” he “exposes the insubstantiality of the barriers that differentiate men from women, death from life” (Auerbach 183), the human from the nonhuman, the organic from the inorganic, and threatens to dissolve the polarizing sensibilities of the conservative town that can sustain itself only by sacrificing or excluding the *Other*.

The orchestration of these transgressions issues through the shadow. As often noted, Nosferatu

stands in for the filmic medium itself. More precisely, Nosferatu is the double of the filmic medium and also the very creature thereof. In Murnau’s silent *Symphonie* the shadow is a modeling device, the medium, and doubly a double: a double of things and a double of film. Unlike his predecessors—the vampires hailing from folk narratives or from the pages of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*—Nosferatu not only casts a shadow, he doubles the shadow. Even his body perpetually clad in a silhouette-like appearance is also already inscribed with the characteristic of a shadow. Clothed entirely in a black that at times absorbs all detail he is a silhouette, which is a

type of shadow, an occluding of light. By definition it refers either to the shadow of an object or figure projected by a light source onto a flat surface, such as a wall, or to the outline of the object or figure itself when it is obscured by being strongly lit from behind (what the French call *à contre jour*). (Forgione 490–491)

Even in instances in which the shadow and its object do not overlap to form the impression of a silhouette, the shadow takes over. When Nosferatu and his shadow coincide on the screen, within the same frame (Figure 11), their distinct peripheries fade into forgetting. One apparition permeates the other to such an extent that a border delineating them from each other can no longer be ascertained. Nosferatu’s body is always concurrently modeled by and is the shadow. In the final scenes when Ellen gives herself to Nosferatu, lures him into death and sacrifices herself, Ellen never directs her gaze towards a possible source of the shadow looming perhaps outside of

the frame but rather at the shadow as if there were no object casting it into the room and onto her body, as if the shadow acted from its own accord. This direction of the gaze towards the shadow emphasizes the status of the shadow as a projection that is divorced from a concrete object. On the one hand, through this removal of the concrete origin of the shadow, the filmic shadow now motions to itself, or rather the medium of its arrest—celluloid, camera, projector, screen. The very first time we encounter Nosferatu, or the first time Hutter encounters Nosferatu, coincides with the foregrounding of the medium and the downplaying of the actors embodying the characters. As Hutter and the vampire pass through the woods in carriage, the moving images are inverted and the film suddenly projected onto the screen in negative (Figure 11). In this instance of the inverted, negative image, the material of film is projected onto the screen: the celluloid before the light passes through it to create an image. The intriguing element of these particular moments is not, however just the staging of the material film strip on the screen, but also the paradoxical emphasis and diminishment of another elementary medium of film itself: the light. As the light floods the areas that otherwise produce the shadow, it becomes impossible to focus on the narrative fiction of film over the fiction of the staged medium. Concurrently, by shining a light onto the vast regions that are normally blocked by the shadow, this inversion highlights the predominance of the shadow in the material of cinema. Gleamingly white in the negative, the trees that, to Lotte Eisner, appear as “carcasses of prehistoric beasts” (Eisner 105), are otherwise the shadow areas that build the skeleton or the scaffolding of the filmic medium. Nosferatu’s appearance on the screen interrupts the filmic illusion that depends on the forgetting of the substrate media in other manners as well. For example, in insisting on recording some of Nosferatu’s appearances in one-stop-one motion, Murnau also impedes with the illusion of film by revealing the fact of film as a construct of propelled static images. In the presence of Nosferatu, film is revealed as material, as an assembly of moving still photographs.

In one move, or rather a set of Nosferatu’s jerky movements, Murnau foregrounds the labor of the nonhuman material of film and touches upon the history of cinema if only to release the captured objects from the stillness inflicted upon them through its predecessor: the photograph. The self-reflexive history of the medium is played up from the very beginning of the film as the “great dying” connected to the arrival of Nosferatu in Wisborg is set in 1938. (We should also keep in mind that the entire story is relayed to us from the grave, through the writings of an individual whose identity is marked by three crosses.) “Instead of setting his vampire film in England, at the end of the century, close to the birth of the cinema, Murnau moves the action to Germany and backward in time to 1838—which is to say, during the Biedermeier period, one year before the official birth of photography (1839)” (Vacche 182). Note, however, that the year of the “invention of photography” in question here, is contested, as some sources cite the year 1838 as the birth year of photography, and the year 1839 as the date of its publicization. The year 1838 is often cited as the year the first known photograph of man is taken, although this common description is technically a misnomer, for there are two men that are accidentally captured: the man having his shoes shined and the man doing the work (Figure 12). They are captured in a kind of merged silhouette—the first photograph of men is a photograph of their partially blurred and conjoined shadows. As Daguerre set up his camera and proceeded to take a picture, he very likely expected to see nothing but the unmoved objects, the architecture, the streets, and the suddenly fixed nature that filled the selected frame, for he was aware that the apparatus he depended on had an uncanny defect which caused it to ignore the commotion of the scene unfolding before it.

Samuel Morse, commenting on his own viewing of one of Daguerre's photographs of the Boulevard du Temple, affirmed [these] limitations: 'objects moving are not impressed. The boulevard so constantly filled with a moving throng of pedestrians and carriages, was perfectly solitary, except an individual who was having his boots brushed. His feet were compelled, of course, to be stationary for some time, one being on the box of the bootblack, and the other on the ground. Consequently, his boots and legs are well defined, but he is without body or head, because these were in motion.' (Batchen 136)



Fig. 14. Daguerre, Louis-Jacques-Mande. *View of the Boulevard Du Temple, Paris*. 1838. Digital Library Federation Academic Image Cooperative

However, wherever Murnau gestures to photography and painting (Vacche), he breaks with the stillness and uncanny conversion into *dead nature*—as still lives are called in my native tongue (Bosnian)—of everything that comes before the viewfinder of the camera or is inserted (or inserts itself) into the frame. The film commences with a break or at least a desire to break with this deadening tradition already at the very beginning, when Ellen's condemns the gift of picked flowers as their murder. The *Symphonie* orchestrates an uprising of objects from the stillness induced by painting or photography. With the liminal figure, Nosferatu, at the helm, poised between the human and the nonhuman, the animate and the inanimate, gates open as if by an invisible hand, coffins move on their own. As Lotte Eisner notes,

Murnau used the obsession with inanimate objects much better than many fanatics of Expressionism. In the haunted hold of the sailing vessel in which all the sailors have been struck down by death, the empty hammock of the dead sailor goes on gently swinging. Or

again, stripping down the details to the very minimum, Murnau shows nothing but the reflection of the sustained, monotonous swinging of a suspended lamp in the deserted captain's cabin. (Eisner 105)

The arrival of Nosferatu and the associated conditions of the indeterminacy or general unruliness of the inanimate and animate in the harbor of the *Biedermeier* town, “a culture of the quiet and orderly interior, posed as a snapshot of eternity” (Walker 232), is disruptive, to say the least. Walker’s description of the *Biedermeier* period in terms of a photograph allows us to reframe Nosferatu’s arrival as follows: As Nosferatu, the double of film, sails into Wisbog, he is also sailing into a photograph. For the *Biedermeier* home, the photograph

opened up possibilities for the mechanical reproduction of reality, [contributing] to the fascination of history and representations of the past. The home thus became a small cosmos where representations of the world in the form of indoor plants, birds, landscape paintings, family portraits, valuable books, and collectibles helped to situate people's lives in wider webs of meaning. (Knorpp 12)



Fig. 15.

This relationship to nature via the photograph epitomizes what Heidegger later deemed the “conquest of the world as a picture” (Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture”), or “the conquest of the world as commodity” (Giblett and Tolonen). “Mechanically objective,” the photograph allowed one to linger with the *true* image of nature made up of the innocuous “spring, babbling brooks and young goats leaping boisterously” (Lindenpütz 188). The photograph facilitated a new kind of domestication of nature. Taken without “interference” as was argued in the early nineteenth century, nature could be, for the

first time in history, truly “[witnessed virtually]” in the home. We get a glimpse of the *Biedermeier* domesticated nature in the film when, at the very beginning, Hutter commits a faux-pas by picking flowers from the garden for his young wife (Fig. 13). In this garden, the plants are cultivated into walls, “endowing [it] with an indoor quality” (Finney 305). While “nature produced monstrous vegetative growth and vigorous variety through free mating” the *Biedermeier* garden

[brought] greater harmony between the order of culture and the chaos of nature... Culture generated a form of the garden and the careful selective breeding of separate varieties within a species... The *Biedermeier* gardeners sought a form wherein the separate plants could realize their natural qualities and create a cosmological picture of nature that reflected their class values. (Rotenberg, “*Biedermeier* Garden” 161)

The *Biedermeier* “gardens of domesticity” tamed the Romantic “gardens of liberty” (Rotenberg, “Landscape and Power” 140). The “beauty of nature” could now be celebrated only when

“invoked through human device and design” (Rotenberg, “Biedermeier Garden” 162). The chaos of nature had to bow before the contemporary human *Kunstwollen*, which sought to bring nature to “fuller perfection” (Rotenberg, “Biedermeier Garden” 161).

Nosferatu, then, is the snake in the *Biedermeier* garden. The rats and pestilence that trail him are the heralds of a monstrous nature that cannot be tamed, domesticated, or assimilated into a familiar interior. Concurrently shadow and substance, human and nonhuman, utterly indeterminate, Nosferatu’s arrival intensifies the *Biedermeier* retreat into the interior. Whereas, before his arrival, we at least saw men freely wandering the streets, we now only see town officials clad in black moving from door to door, counting the dead, while the population is quarantined. The bourgeoisie of Wisborg has to wake up “to the horrified realization that there is no protective environmental blanket” (Buell 36). Now, every individual had to live with the fear that the pestilence could already be within the walls of their domicile; that it could be in them; that the sanitized “snug bastions of bourgeois domesticity” could be “suffused with noxious lethal vapors” There is “no refuge from toxic penetration” (Buell 36).

Nosferatu’s arrival ushers in the time of unruly things, wild corporality, and encroaching waste, or, in short, a world beyond human control, and foregrounds the fiction of the interior as the space of retreat implodes from the boundaries of the town to the domicile to the self. This abrupt shrinking of boundaries amplified the “emerging physiognomy of the modern space. Its characteristic feature is the consistent compartmentalization and fragmentation of space into discrete components with sharp edges and clearly delineated contours” (el-Khoury 12). However, even the final, hallowed boundary to the exterior—the body—ultimately fails in maintaining a hermetically sealed off interior the *Biedermeier* sought. Before the invasion by the abject *Other* and the spread of the plague, the human body is merely present as an artifice, as a consuming machine. We see that the human (male) body is dressed (scenes of Hutter preening), washed with soap, and that it eats. The boundary of the human skin otherwise seems impermeable. Only once the shadow figure appears is this boundary transgressed: the body bleeds, desires, and is porous to contaminants. The traffic of substances across the boundaries of the body, the domicile, and the town can no longer be regulated. The plague-afflicted body is mired in its own irrepressible corporeality—its stench, oozing, bleeding, deformation, and decay.

There, are however, as noted earlier, other allied unruly bodies within the city before Nosferatu’s arrival. Ellen is one of them. As the bloodthirsty Count threatens Hutter, Ellen is plagued by a sudden onset of somnambulism, nightmares, and “sexual” desire for the vampire. Dr. Bulwer diagnoses her sleepwalking on the “balcony, at a liminal point between the safety of the bedroom and the darkness of the night, the home and the void” (Vacche 193) as the result of “blood congestion.” This diagnosis belongs to the pathologization of the female body that is characteristic for much of the 19th century (Vostral 22). Blood congestion often referred to a disturbance in a woman’s sexual desires, that is, an inconvenient manifestation of sexual desire that was itself pathological as “[sexual] appetite was considered one of the chief symptoms of moral insanity in women; it was subject to severe sanctions and was regarded as abnormal or pathological” (Showalter 231). Blood congestion was thought to arise when the brain, which functioned as an “interface between intellectual activity and the body,” became overworked through “strong or persistent excitement in a state of arousal” (Hunze 65, translation mine). The exhaustion of the brain would manifest through various “bodily and psychological symptoms” (Hunze 65, translation mine).²¹ The vampire, then, gets Ellen’s blood pumping. As many have

21. „Indem das Gehirn die Schnittstelle zwischen Geistestätigkeit und Körper bildet, gerät es bei zu starker oder anhaltender Anstrengung in einen Reizzustand, es kommt zu Blutkongestionen im Kopf und das Gehirn erschöpft sich schließlich durch Überreizung. Diese

remarked, Ellen's "sacrifice" to the vampire at the end of the film suggests that perhaps the marriage between Hutter and Ellen remained unconsummated for it takes an innocent (*sündlos*) woman to destroy Nosferatu. Their loving but not passionate marriage is, as *queer* readings of the film suggest, only consummated in a triangle of displaced desire: "the homoerotic metaphor at the heart of vampirism between Hutter and Nosferatu" is "displaced onto Ellen" (Vacche 190).

The relayed alliance between the human and the nonhuman—between Ellen, Nosferatu, and Hutter—reframes the *Other* as not only a figure outside of the national boundaries (as discussed at the beginning, Nosferatu's *Transylvania* is only vaguely related to the familiar geographical entity), but as an indeterminable figure that might even be familiar. The spread of plague, in a way, converts the town into a community of witnesses to an otherwise private suffering under the repressive, exclusive conventions. As the virus transgresses all boundaries and is shared between the human and the nonhuman, the ideal, sanitized *Biedermeier* domesticity comes into view as always already disturbed, eternally porous. The threatening, infected, even monstrous *Other* is suddenly no longer external but uncomfortably close; it might be a friend, a neighbor, even oneself.

As Angela Connolly argues, the horror film orchestrates terror

to increase social cohesion in two different ways: a conservative way in which the terror serves to increase fear of difference, leading to expulsion of the 'other', as for example in the witch panics that infected Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries; and a progressive way in which the terror serves to cancel the differentiation between subject and object, thus increasing our awareness of our own negativity, limits and finitude, and decreasing fear of difference. (Connolly 216–217)

The arrival of the ultimately indeterminable Nosferatu converts *Biedermeier* Wisborg into concurrently a community of monsters and victims among whom we can count women, anyone with *queer* desires, the mentally ill (Knock), and the infected. But this is not really a transformation; it is merely an amplification of common conditions. The complexity of Murnau's *Symphonie* makes it nearly impossible to discern where this "transformation" leads. The shadowy Nosferatu, is a prolific double, doubling the technology of film itself, the indeterminable *Others* (humans and nonhumans beyond the rigid, conventional binaries), and, per Connolly the Jungian Shadow, a "dark, unknown part of the personality that lies in the unconscious... 'the sinister and frightful brother, our own flesh-and-blood counterpart (Connolly 413). For Jung, the archetype "Shadow...encloses within itself not only man's experience of moral and radical evil but also his experience of difference and otherness'" (Connolly 413). After Ellen passionately sacrifices herself to the shadow, after the monstrous shadow, like the shadow of cinema, is vanquished when the lights come on, and after the plague leaves the town, what precisely is transformed? The camera never returns to the street to give us an impression of the town liberated from the epidemic. We see Hutter draped over the his wife's lifeless body (for the first time in the film he shares the bed with her), and Dr. Bulwer, who slowly edges forward, covers the doorframe to the bedroom with his body, looks ahead, and walking slowly as if though on the edges of a stage, breaks the fourth wall and leers accusingly at the viewers located elsewhere and elsewhere. After an intertitle publicizes the end of the plague, we see ruins, but never again the domesticized idyll we encountered at the beginning of the film.

manifestiert sich durch verschiedene körperliche Symptome (Schwäche der Verdauung, Verstopfung, Schwindel), aber auch durch psychische Symptome, die somit als Resultat der organisch-funktionellen Schädigung des Gehirns verstanden werden.“ (Hunze 65)

The orchestration and multiplication of the shadow produces terror on different levels. Whether we interrogate the film as an instance of abject, uncanny, or sublime terror (Connolly 413), for example, and argue if psychological transformation in the audience or characters is foreclosed or can take place via identification or difference, we have to reckon with the most apparent change which registers in the shadow. From the beginning to the end of the film, we move from the shadow as an unnoticeable substrate of the narrative, to its foregrounding, and, finally, its renewed fading into medium. As the mere medium that sustains the fiction of film, the shadow is obedient and legible. The condition for this readability, which is essentially the ability to overlook the shadow in favor of referent, is maintained as long as the shadow continues to function clandestinely as a medium. The drama, here still exclusively human, thus unfolds elsewhere. The Lavater-ian profiles exhibited on the walls of Ellen and Hutter's *Biedermeier* abode, double this obedient shadow. By introducing the shadowy figure Nosferatu, Murnau multiplies the film. A narrative about "voyage as a kind of a tightrope walk" (Corrigan 124) ceases to revolve around just human drama and instead also zeroes in on the shadow itself and on the shadow as the medium that sustains the human drama and the film. Put differently, the shadow of film now simultaneously performs and fails. While this kind of shadow that concurrently surfaces as itself, as a modeling device, and as a reference, is widespread in early cinema, in Murnau's *Symphony*, it gains independence, unruliness, and exceeds its manipulation and conversion to medium. By obfuscating the objects that cast the shadow and thus foregrounding the shadow itself and the material conditions of film, as in the final scene with Ellen, the human actor in the guise of Nosferatu's is also removed from the scene. Here, the medium and the shadow seem to conspire and act alone. They act beyond and without the human. More even, by engaging with Ellen and Hutter, they act upon the human. Film, the nonhuman technology, acts upon the human. The *Symphony* thus, among so many other things, also thematizes the entanglement of human and nonhuman drama. Frame for frame, the human and the nonhuman share the stage and act upon one another. The cinema screen is a hybrid territory, an interface in which, in shadow, the human and the nonhuman appear as equally significant cinematic subjects. Just as there is no retreat from the nonhuman outside in this film, there is also no passive nonhuman backdrop against which the action of human drama can unfold. The final image of ruins perched on the edge of a cliff propels the film beyond the human, into Gorky's vision of cinema as a world without the human. Heeding the shadow that is to be overlooked so that the film as a narrative of human drama can be witnessed, casts a light on the materiality and entanglement of bodies, human and nonhuman alike, the lives and workings of things for, against, and beyond the human. This screening of the nonhuman does not overlook the human, but rather reestablishes the intersectionality of the human and the nonhuman, of technology and ecology with an eye to the orchestration of gender, sexuality, race, and the lives and species of nonhuman things and creatures. The mutivalence of the *Symphony*, this multiplying intersectionality, is what keeps the film in circulation, without loss of critical content.

Chapter 4

In Expectation of Illumination, Instead of Seeing I am Seen: X-ray Vision, the Human, and the Nonhuman

Biographies of Things

Admittedly, the title of this chapter reads like a description of a turn of the century machine haunted by Hildegard von Bingen's ghost. While a reasonable set-up for a b-rated ghost-buster flick, it is not on the agenda here. Instead, this chapter investigates how changes in technologies of seeing register in literary works, or rather in one particular work: Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg*. As in the previous three chapters, in question are specifically the three shadow technologies: film, psychoanalysis, and radiology. Subsequently, I set these literary traces of x-rays against Dr. Robert Janker's controversial, lethal, and undoubtedly cruel x-ray cinematography. By intersecting, comparing, and contrasting these two texts, I hope to explore the contributions literary studies can make to the understanding of visibility, materiality, ecological complexities of emerging technologies—in short, the broader ecological implications, politics, and the conflicts such shadow technologies engender, subtend, or suspend. Although Thomas Mann's and Janker's texts neither emerge simultaneously nor are historically linked with one another, their combination nonetheless offers a glimpse of an "*ecology of the visual*," giving us a sense of how the "co-constitution of visibility and materiality is in constant dynamic process and situated within networks, hierarchies and discourses of power" (Rose and Tolia-Kelly 4). This perhaps somewhat unconventional pairing of texts across genres, disciplines, and time allows a more nuanced approach to the question of what is made visible through shadow technologies—in this chapter, specifically x-ray technology. The subtleties of interpretation in what becomes available to *vision* bear witness to the fact that, as Rose Gillian, and Divya Tolia-Kelly argue,

Matter can be temporally and spatially unfixed, so that not only can the proverbial Proustian madeleines be evoked through the scent, touch...sound and aesthetics of materials, but the sensory affordances of materials can also incorporate a pluralistic account of reactions and interpretations that link to *histories, memories and ecologies of seeing*, feeling and perceiving. (Rose and Tolia-Kelly 5, emphasis in original)

What comes into view through this irreverent but not entirely far-fetched pairing is, on the one hand, the mutability of *affordances*²² and, on the other, the entanglement of nonhuman things and human practices. This chapter, much like the preceding chapters, continues to explore how the materiality of a technology—this time radiology—and its artifacts shapes and constrains uses and discourses. By pairing two texts that in some way make use of x-ray technology and x-ray cinematography, this chapter pursues the plasticity and limits of these media and the practices and discourses entangled with them. It addresses diverse and diverging descriptions of the possibilities and constraints of the materiality of x-ray technology and its artifacts. While, as the

²² The concept of *affordances* can be found in many contexts, but here it is used in the sense introduced by James Gibson. For him, "affordances do not emerge from social interactions or cognitive processes. Rather they are inherent in the standing relationships between material properties of an artifact and the physical attributes of an actor within ecological psychology" (Linberg and Lyytinen 43)

chapter progresses, a case for this combination of texts will be made, it is also, in part, guided by Lara Farina's call to a methodology of "perverse pairings" (Farina 36) of texts and contexts. This practice of reading, of sticking texts together not because they are historically connected but because they have, for one or another, "stuck" with us, "conjures the possibility of a deeply queer being in time" (Farina 35).

A number of things can happen when [texts] meet other texts; explanation of one by the other is only one of these things. Let's aim for perverse pairings, so that we can feel what happens when they/we come together. Let's feel our way around this "we," this pronoun that is already like a party where the lights have gone out. Let's find out if we can forge new pleasures by feeling ourselves stuck. (Farina 36)

In taking up these two texts, we are engaging with a literary text on the one hand, and an educational film on the other. Both deal in images and shadows, though in quite different ways. Before I move on to the finer details of these distinctions, I will address the question of the image. For W.J.T. Mitchell, images are "complex assemblages of virtual, material, and symbolic elements" (Mitchell xiii). Images are, in other words, nonhuman materials that are explicitly entangled with the human, that act on the human. Much like Murnau's film discussed in the previous chapter, images are concurrently nonhuman and human. They are inscribed with human meaning that exceeds them but they also act beyond that meaning and purpose. Images "exist beyond the text" and outside of "human structures of meaning" (Blackwell 33) and are concurrently substantial (*materiality*) and inspirited, or immaterial (*indexicality*). Whether we inherit images in the form of pictures, written texts, or film, we are faced with not only with imaginary or two-dimensional things but rather with things that also exist "materially in the world, as chemical deposits on paper, as images mounted on a multitude of different sized shaped, coloured and decorated cards" (Edwards and Hart 1) as somehow scribbled down notes or printed materials, as images moved and projected by other means. To take up an image thus means to engage something that is

enmeshed with subjective, embodied and sensuous interactions. These characteristics cannot be reduced to an abstract status as a commodity, nor to a set of meanings or ideologies that take the image as their pretext. Instead, they occupy spaces, move into different spaces, following lines of passage and usage that project them through the world. (Edwards and Hart 1)

The image is thus intersectional and builds an interface between worlds—a world as we know it, as it is legible to us, as it is exchanged and used by us, as well as a thing that exceeds that world and knowledge, as a thing that acts upon it in unpredictable, inconspicuous, sometimes transgressive ways. Images are, other words, at once objects and things. As things, they withdraw from human access, they are unpredictable, illegible; their being can neither be grasped nor exhausted through perception or cognition. However, it is precisely this guise by which they "project...into the viewer's space" (Edwards and Hart 2). In the guise of things, so W.J.T. Mitchell, images "[signal] the moment when the object becomes the *Other*, when the sardine can look back, when the mute idol speaks, when the subject experiences the object as uncanny." Material images or pictures thus broadcast the Janus-face structure of world or the fact that all things have the potential to carry two faces: object and thing. As objects, they are reified, commodified and build the docile, predictable, passive backdrop on which the human drama

unfolds, but every now and then they erupt from this passivity and come into view as unwieldy, obdurate things. Things interfere with our regimes of knowing by demonstrating their inherent excesses, surpluses of being that cannot be contained within conventional categories. This chapter then continues the project of thinking through and with literary and filmic texts about nonhuman things not as “stage settings for human actions and meanings, but instead [as] integral to them” (Edwards and Hart 4). The biography of things—here of x-ray cinematography, x-ray technology, and x-ray images, human and nonhuman bodies—attained through this chapter’s “perverse pairings” (Farina 36), characterizes these things as “social actors” and insists that they are not significant because of their “meanings...*per se*...but their social effects as they construct and influence the field of social action in ways that would not have occurred if they did not exist, or...if they did not exist in this or that specific format” (Edwards and Hart 4).

The Visible Invisible

The perverse pairing of Mann’s and Junker’s texts is actually not all that perverse. It may be unconventional at most, but if, as Stacy Alaimo writes, “poetry and science are both ‘languages’, with ‘roots’ that ‘spread through our tissue,’” they both also struggle with attempts to “make the invisible visible, the unknown known, the material sensible. Although science is needed to make the illness,” or, in Junker’s case the interior organs visible, the literary text can “[reveal] how the X-ray technology” renders the human “invisible” as her interior organs “[become discrete objects] of inquiry” (Alaimo, *Bodily Natures* 53). Both texts are involved with the mattering of bodies in light of emerging or newly scientifically reconfigured invisibilities and visibilities. However, while the scientific text engenders manifold economies of the invisible in order to render something that is out of sight visible and to thus make it available to inquiry and classification, the literary text makes the proliferated and emerging invisibilities that would otherwise remain invisible available to scrutiny. In the process of imaging the otherwise invisible insides of a body, Junker’s scientific, educational x-ray films orchestrate an invisible technology and in the process render invisible the irradiated human and nonhuman subjects. Thomas Mann’s literary text, however, carries the potential to foreground the various levels of making visible and invisible subsumed in x-ray technology.

Both texts write visibilities and invisibilities with x-rays, which “were...the first invisible substances generated by scientists to profoundly affect human perception” (Kevles 53). Despite of their often unpredictable “path of destruction” (Kevles 53), these highly volatile rays promised to expose the interior of living things while leaving them intact. Glimpses of the interior that could once only be attained by dissection or vivisection were now liberated of the gross materiality, stench,²³ and ephemerality of the body; the blood and guts were cleansed of their slimy temporality by technology. For the champions of x-ray technology, who were at first still unaware of the lethal potential of radiation, this orchestration of invisibility that brought what is out of sight into view still unequivocally signaled progress (Kevles 53). X-ray’s predecessor technology, photography, could capture the visible world, freeze it without extinguishing it for prolonged observation, but it could not “[penetrate] opaque objects,” to showcase “hidden

²³ „Vielmehr war sie getragen und ausgebildet von der auf unbekannte Art zur Wollust erwachten Substanz, der organischen, verwesend-wesenden Materie selbst, dem riechenden Fleische.“ (T. Mann 382) [*“Rather was it conveyed and shaped by the somehow awakened voluptuousness of matter, of the organic, dying-living substance itself, the reeking flesh.”* (Mann T. 573)]

[structures]” (Natale 347). These chemically fixed shadows of insides that are hidden out of sight were an instant hit. Within a few years, before the end of the nineteenth century, x-ray technology spread so far beyond laboratories and medical offices that “being X-rayed could be as easy as going to the movies” (Natale 347). By exploring how the two texts in question activate the questions of progress and materiality, visibility and invisibility, as well as the intactness and boundaries of irradiated bodies, this chapter unfolds the complex ecology of this suddenly omnipresent medium’s affordances.

“My God! I See It!”

The journalist H.J.W. Dam, during the only interview Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen granted after the discovery of invisible x-rays, asked a question that appropriately summarized the spectacle and shock of the scientific breakthrough: “Is the invisible visible?” (Natale 345). In the fifth chapter of *Der Zauberberg*, echoes of Dam’s question equally compelled by the sight of the body’s interior reverberate in Castorp’s exclamation: “Mein Gott! Ich Sehe!” (*My God, I see!*). Unfolding in the sanatorium’s x-ray lab, this scene mobilizes a myriad of invisibilities and inabilities. Most significantly, however, the instance of scientific clairvoyance is portrayed as the moment in which the object shifts into its recalcitrant, uncanny *Other*. As the x-rays penetrate and fully irradiate the interior of the human body, we expect them to reveal the otherwise invisible interior as a scientifically objective image. The task of the x-ray as the apparatus of scientific gaze is, after all, the conquest of even the inaccessible recesses of the human body by diagnostic classification. However, as the x-rays inundate the body in Thomas Mann’s *Der Zauberberg*, virtually peeling his skin peeled back, we are brought face to face with an alien thing of nearly Lovecraftian proportions:

...Die Strahlen müßte man erst mal entdecken, die durch so eine Fettschicht gehen...Dies hier ist saubere Arbeit. Sehen Sie das Zwerchfell?“ sagte er und wies mit dem Finger auf den dunklen Bogen, der sich unten im Fenster hob und senkte . . . „Sehen Sie die Buckel hier linkerseits, die Erhöhungen? Das ist die Rippenfellentzündung, die er mit fünfzehn Jahren hatte. Tief atmen!“ kommandierte er. „Tiefer! Ich sage rief!“ Und Joachims Zwerchfell hob sich zitternd, so hoch es konnte, Aufhellung war in den oberen Lungenteilen zu bemerken, aber der Hofrat war nicht befriedigt. „Ungenügend!“ sagte er. „Sehen Sie die Hilusdrüsen? Sehen Sie die Verwachsungen? Sehen Sie die Kavernen hier? Da kommen die Gifte her, die ihn beschwippen.“ Hans Castorps Aufmerksamkeit war in Anspruch genommen von etwas Sackartigem, ungestalt Tierischem, dunkel hinter dem Mittelstamme Sichtbarem, und zwar größtenteils zur Rechten, vom Beschauer aus gesehen,—das sich gleichmäßig ausdehnte und wieder zusammenzog, ein wenig nach Art einer rudernden Qualle. „Sehen Sie sein Herz?“ fragte der Hofrat, indem er abermals die riesige Hand vom Schenkel löste und mit dem Zeigefinger auf das pulsierende Gehänge wies . . . Großer Gott, das war das Herz, Joachims ehrliebendes Herz, was Hans Castorp sah! „Ich sehe dein Herz!“ sagte er mit gepreßter Stimme. (T. Mann 3012–3013)

[...*The rays are yet to be discovered that will go through such layers of fat. This is nice clean work. Do you see the diaphragm?*” he asked, and indicated with his finger the dark arch in the window, that rose and fell. “*Do you see the bulges here on the left side, the little protuberances? That was the inflammation of the pleura he had when he was fifteen*

years old. Breathe deep," he commanded. "Deeper! Deep, I tell you!" And Joachim's diaphragm rose quivering, as high as it could; the upper pans of the lungs could be seen to clear up, but the Hofrat was not satisfied. "Not good enough," he said. "Can you see the hilus glands? Can you see the adhesions? Look at the cavities here, that is where the toxins come from that fuddle him." But Hans Castorp's attention was taken up by something like a bag, a strange, animal shape, darkly visible behind the middle column, or more on the right side of it—the spectator's right. It expanded and contracted regularly, a little after the fashion of a swimming jelly-fish. "Look at his heart," and the Hofrat lifted his huge hand again from his thigh and pointed with his forefinger at the pulsating shadow. Good God, it was the heart, it was Joachim's honour-loving heart, that Hans Castorp saw!" "I am looking at your heart," he said "in a suppressed voice." (Mann T. 453–454)]

In the split second before Castorp's vision receives the didactic corrective by the doctor's gaze that has assimilated the x-ray for diagnostic vision, he sees an image of something vaguely beastly rather than a directly legible physical object. Where the doctor sees a heart, Castorp sees something pouch-like, something formlessly beastly that bears resemblance to a paddling jellyfish. Despite of the fact that the territory he is surveying is clearly staked-off—ostensibly, he knows that he is looking into Joachim's chest, he asked for his permission to do so—Castorp cannot orient himself. Despite of being variously informed of the fact that he is about to gaze into the inside of a person, he is denied or somehow refuses the access to the interior as classifiable image. What he sees is at first "ungestalt," formless or shapeless. Rather than following the map of the body to identify familiar sites he arrives at something that withdraws from representation. Looking into Joachim's chest, at the same territory, in the same moment, aided by the same apparatus, the doctor sees an object where Castorp sees an unidentifiable (some)thing. Instead of the passive object conquered by diagnostic gaze, Castorp discovers an unruly interiority. Perhaps more importantly: on the inside of the human, he discovers something nonhuman. While the doctor sees what he knows—thanks to a vision upgraded through the x-ray—Castorp, simply put, sees what he sees. Moreover, his seeing and the thing he is seeing are both in flux. As the doctor takes diagnostic aim at the heart, Castorp is suddenly exiled from a familiar world of meaningful surfaces and cast into an unfamiliar realm. For him, x-ray vision only colludes with the body that stepped into the foreground and made itself independent by virtue of illness.²⁴ This illuminated body is no longer obedient but willful. Thus, when Castorp follows the doctor and the x-rays into Joachim's interior, he encounters a body that has a life of its own.

The corporality foregrounded through illness and illuminated by moved, shadowy x-ray images is not a passive, fixed lump of matter but alive and in a perpetual state of flux. Thanks to the new regime of scientific vision, the fleshly opacity has suddenly come into view as translucent. But this cannot be explained away as a case of a dematerialization or inspired denigration of corporeality. Quite to the contrary. Here, where the body should be increasingly conquered and acquiesced by diagnosis, it is all the more unruly. It is, in fact, not that dissimilar from the jellyfish that Castorp sees at the heart of his cousin's body. The new *Lichtanatomie*—

²⁴ "Und nun ist auf so ganz andere Weise sein Körper in den Vordergrund getreten und hat sich selbstständig und wichtig gemacht, nämlich durch Krankheit. Illuminiert ist er und will sich nicht entgiften und solide werden." (T. Mann 248) ["And now his body has come into the foreground in another sense and made itself important and independent of the rest of him—namely, through illness." (Mann T. 370)]

light-anatomy—(T. Mann 309) reconfigures and decentralizes the human body into a translucent, diffuse, amniotic, amorphous entity. As the doctor solemnly confirms, the body is mostly water held together by an “Außenhirn” (external brain) or “Sinnesblatt” (T. Mann 363)—the sense organ that is literally deemed the paper for sensual or significant impressions. Curiously, in this text, the diagnostic, medical, or technical visions is neither radically distinct from nor irreconcilable with the uninitiated, clairvoyant, artistic, or even lyric vision (T. Mann 359).

Es wäre gut, wenn außer dem lyrischen – so, so glaube ich, sagten Sie –, wenn man die Dinge, kurz gesagt, noch unter einem anderen Gesichtswinkel auffaßte, zum Beispiel dem medizinischen. Das ist kolossal zutreffend – entschuldigen Herr Hofrat –, ich meine, es ist darum hervorragend richtig, weil es sich da eigentlich gar nicht um grundverschiedene Verhältnisse und Gesichtswinkel handelt, sondern genaugenommen immer um ein und denselben – bloß um Spielarten davon, ich meine: Schattierungen, ich meine also: Variationen von ein und demselben allgemeinen Interesse, von dem auch die künstlerische Beschäftigung bloß ein Teil und ein Ausdruck ist, wenn ich so sagen darf. (T. Mann 359).

[You said it was good when there was some other relation besides the lyric—I think that was the word you used—the artistic, that is; in short, when one looked at the thing from another point of view—the medical, for example. That’s all so enormously to the point, you know—I do beg your pardon, Herr Hofrat, but what I mean is that it is so exactly and precisely right, because after all it is not a question of any fundamentally different relations or points of view, but at bottom just variations of one and the same, just shadings of it, so to speak, I mean: variations of one and the same universal interest, the artistic impulse itself being a part and a manifestation of it too, if I may say so. (Mann T. 539)]

All of these seemingly distinct gazes—the artistic, lyric, technical, medical—coincide, at least superficially, in the subject: the human. Within the context of Mann’s text, this thoroughly seen, irradiated body seems closer and closer to death. What these regimes of vision variously bring into view, is, on the one hand, the human body as a living and thus dying body. Although the terms with which they express what they behold differ, all of these regimes of vision, washed by the darkness²⁵ and accustomed to x-ray technology, coincide under the overarching banner of “anatomy of the grave” (T. Mann 368) and in their decentralizing effects which collapse distinctions between interiority and exteriority of the body. The opposed polarities are only a mutation away from each other.

Was soll ich Ihnen denn von Ihrem Sinnesblatt erzählen. Das ist Ihr Außenhirn, verstehen Sie, - ontogenetisch ganz desselben Ursprungs wie der Apparat für die Sogenannten höheren Sinnesorgane da oben in Ihrem Schädel: das zentrale Nervensystem, müssen Sie wissen, ist bloß eine leichte Umbildung der äußeren Hautschicht, und bei den niederen Tieren da gibt’s den Unterschied zwischen zentral und peripher überhaupt noch nicht, die riechen und schmecken mit der Haut, müssen Sie sich vorstellen, die haben überhaupt

²⁵ „Erst müssen wir uns mal die Augen mit Finsternis waschen, um so was zu sehen, das ist doch klar.“ (T. Mann 301)

bloß Hautsinnlichkeit, - muß ganz behaglich sei, wenn man sich so hineinversetzt. (T. Mann 364)

[You know, don't you, that it is your outside brain—ontogenetically the same as that apparatus of the so-called higher centres up there in your cranium? The central nervous system is nothing but a modification of the outer skin-layer; among the lower animals the distinction between central and peripheral doesn't exist, they smell and taste with their skin, it is the only sensory organ they have. Must be rather nice—if you can put yourself in their place. (Mann T. 546)]

Under these manifold gazes, the human body is paradoxically liberated from passivity, for even death is deconstructed into a process of transformation in which matter cycles from animate to inanimate, organic to inorganic.²⁶ By placing a nonhuman, gelatinous creature that metamorphoses through several different body shapes in the course of a life cycle at the beating heart of the irradiated human body, Thomas Mann concurrently plays up transformation and forges allegiances between the human and the nonhuman, the animate and the inanimate. Moreover, as the interior of the human body, the pulsating shadow, or, more precisely, the engine of the human body, is likened to a “watery [creature] barely distinguishable from [its] surroundings” (Alaimo, “Jellyfish Science” 140), it is also pushed further out of the reach of classification. Jellyfish, namely, “creatures whose bodies are 95 percent water” and who are thus also called “organized waters...stretch the definition of life itself, as they seem to lack both substance and recognizable organs or features” (Alaimo, “Jellyfish Science” 140). In a salient move, Mann places a creature that is “difficult...for humans to perceive and represent” (Alaimo, “Jellyfish Science” 143) at the equally difficult to perceive interior of the human body.

As Castorp peers through the opaque flesh, a vision of the nonhuman creature takes the place of what ought to be quintessentially human interiority. But this vision is of a creature that is, due to its amorphousness and transparency, indistinguishable from its surroundings and that, in the early photos, surrounded by the dark of the sea, looks much like an inverted x-ray image (see Fig. 14). The diffuseness of the jellyfish afloat in the darkness of the sea reminds of the image of the flesh as it is rendered into transparent shadow by virtue of x-rays (compare figures 14 and 15). But the jellyfish at the heart also resembles shadows in yet another way. Both are difficult to represent and both are equally entangled with their environment. This vision of the jellyfish paddling in the interior, thus also places the x-ray technology and its medium of representation—the shadow—at the heart of the human body. The apprehension of the human body through the transparent shadow of the x-ray image inspires a hybrid anatomy which, by combining the nonhuman and the human, the organic and the inorganic, foregrounds the “intersection of nature and culture, the biological and the social, the inside and the outside, and the human and the nonhuman, to the extent that the idea of discrete entities interacting is beginning to lose its explanatory power” (Blackman 58). What we end up with, in the wake of these diagnosed and lyricized x-ray shadows, is the “assumption of the permeability of boundaries and the inextricable connection of mind with body, human and non-human and biological with social” (Blackman 58). Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, corporeality is

²⁶ „Man fließt auseinander, sozusagen. Bedenken Sie all das Wasser! Und die anderen Ingredienzien sind ohne Leben ja wenig haltbar, sie werden durch die Fäulnis in simplere Verbindungen zerlegt, in anorganische.“ (T. Mann 368) [*“Yes, the movement becomes general, you flow away, so to speak—remember all that water! The remaining constituents are very unstable; without life, they are resolved by putrefaction into simpler combinations, anorganic.” (Mann T. 553)]*

foregrounded right where, by the “powers of the light-ray, the flesh in which [one] walked disintegrated, annihilated, dissolved in vacant mist” (Mann T. 456) where the body’s boundaries are contested as its permeability to anything from radiation to various foreign bodies like, for example, the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, is revealed. At the sanatorium, high above the “flatlands,” the pronounced feverish materiality inaugurates the descent to Earth by spotlighting the unrelenting march to the grave, on the one hand, and the inextricability of the human from her nonhuman environment, on the other.

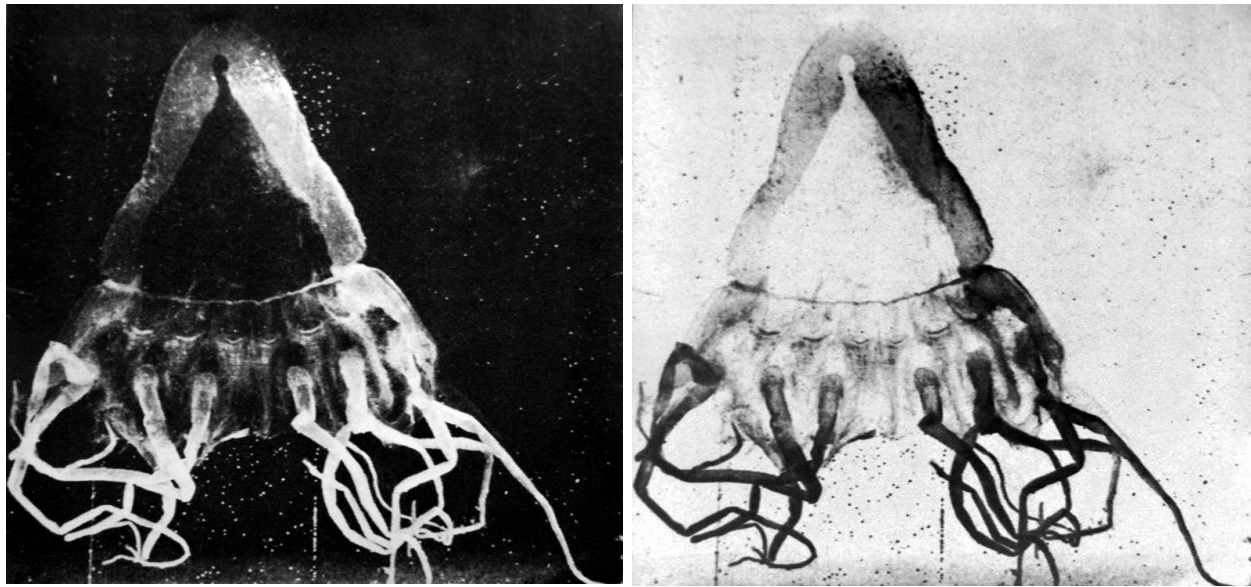


Fig. 16. On the left, a photograph of the jellyfish *Periphyllum*, taken by John Tee-Van on a deep-sea expedition with William Beebe in 1934 (Tee-Van; See also Alaimo, “Jellyfish Science”). On the right, the same image, inverted.

Anatomy of the Grave

The unruly liveliness of the sick body and, more generally, liveliness as the act of dying is further emphasized when the instance of x-ray cinematography, which exposed a jellyfish-like beating heart, is set against the subsequent display of an x-ray image, which is, ostensibly, also a restaging of the famous x-ray Röntgen took of his wife’s hand.

The radiograph of his wife’s hand bones with the ring she was wearing, which Röntgen took before his invention was made public in December 1895, is one of the most famous and reproduced photographic images of the late nineteenth century. Viewing the woman’s bare bones, with the shadow of the ring, would have been an uncanny experience for her contemporaries. As Otto Glasser suggested, ‘to Mrs Röntgen, as to many others later, this experience gave a vague premonition of death’. (Natale 350)

What Otto Glasser assumed of Mrs. Röntgen’s x-ray experience, applies to Hans Castorp as well:

Und Hans Castorp sah, was zu sehen er hatte erwarten müssen, was aber eigentlich dem Menschen zu sehen nicht bestimmt ist, und wovon auch er niemals gedacht hatte, daß ihm bestimmt sein könne, es zu sehen: er sah in sein eigenes Grab. (T. Mann 304).

[And Hans Castorp saw, precisely what he must have expected, but what it is hardly permitted man to see, and what he had never thought it would be vouchsafed him to see: he looked into his own grave. (Mann T. 455)]



Fig. 17. One of the earliest known X-rays taken by Wilhelm Konrad Röntgen, seen Jan. 23, 1896, showing a woman's hand. (AP Photo/American Institute of Physics)

Much like Mrs. Röntgen, Castorp has a ring on his hand as his x-ray is taken:

Das spätere Geschäft der Verwesung sah er vorweggenommen durch die Kraft des Lichtes, das Fleisch, worin er wandelte, zersetzt, vertilgt, zu nichtigem Nebel gelöst, und darin das kleinlich gedrechselte Skelett seiner rechten Hand, um deren oberes Ringfingerglied sein Siegelring, vom Großvater her ihm vermacht, schwarz und lose schwebte: ein hartes Ding dieser Erde, womit der Mensch seinen Leib schmückt, der bestimmt ist, darunter wegzuschmelzen, so daß es frei wird und weiter geht an ein Fleisch, das es seine Weile wieder tragen kann. (T. Mann 304)

[The process of decay was forestalled by the powers of the light-ray, the flesh in which he walked disintegrated, annihilated, dissolved in vacant mist, and there within it was the finely turned skeleton of his own hand, the seal ring he had inherited from his grandfather hanging loose and black on the joint of his ringfinger—a hard, material object, with which man adorns the body that is fated to melt away beneath it, when it passes on to another flesh that can wear it for yet a little while. (Mann T. 456)]

While the cinematic x-ray vision in vivo discloses something living but unruly and formlessly creaturely—nonhuman—at the heart of the human body, the static x-ray image functions like a memento mori by extending the horizon of Castorp’s gaze and allowing him a forbidden glimpse into his own grave. Both regimes of seeing, the moved shadows of x-ray cinematography and static radiograph shadows, have a posthuman effect. X-ray cinematography delivers an unruly corporeality, a hybrid body while the static x-ray uncovers a world after the human. The ring in the radiograph floating above matter whose solidity and impermeability has been compromised by x-ray, confronts us with a time-scale of objects that far exceeds that of humans. The virtually demonstrated persistence of the ring and the transience of the flesh collides “vast reaches of geological time and the temporalities of local human practice” bringing into view the “apparently irresolvable conflict between geological time and human time” (Matz 837). There is an ecologically ominous undercurrent to the realization that objects, things of our making will outlast us all. But the literary trace of the x-ray in this text is even more unsettling than that.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Akira Mizuta Lippit describes x-ray technology in following terms:

The X-ray projects the body’s interiority outward until it reaches a screen. The anatomic light of the X-ray exscribes the body, irradiates and projects it on an exterior surface. Its destination always the screen, the X-ray...[abolishes] all distinction between surface and depth, demonstrating that all interior spaces are equally superficial, that all depth is only latent surface (Lippit, *Atomic Light* 48).

However, for Castorp, the animated shadows of Joachim’s chest as exscribed interiority, even when fixed on a screen, remain ambiguous and vexing: formlessly beastly, an illegible conglomerate of the human and the nonhuman. Uncovering the surface where intimate depths should be is thus made all the more disturbing by this animated shadow’s conspicuous recalcitrance to categorization. Put succinctly: by encountering the formlessly beastly thing, something nonhuman, Castorp encounters an *Other* at the heart of the human self. Through Castorp’s gaze, the x-ray exscription of the interior produces the inscrutable depths of the human subject as a “strange stranger” (Morton). This encounter escalates the fact that X-ray technology already makes the maintenance of a limit that polices the distinction between interiority and exteriority, and keeps the human outside of the nonhuman world tenuous. With the x-ray,

‘the surface of the body, its demarcation from the world, is dissolved’...No longer inside nor out, within nor without, body and world form a heterogeneous one. You are in the world, the world is in you. The X-ray can be seen as an image of you and the world, an image forged in the collapse of the surface that separates the two. (Lippit, *Atomic Light* 43).

The x-ray in the sanatorium takes aim at the body to isolate the foreign body within it and to detect the infection by nonhuman organisms in hopes of eliminating it. That distinction withdraws from access and becomes impossible in Castorp's gaze as the human body comes into view as an obdurate thing.

Pulsating Shadows

The sanatorium x-ray lab builds a unique bridge and contrast to Dr. Robert Janker's controversial, cruel experiments conducted in the 1930s. His film of the alimentary system, for example, combines the recordings of an irradiated human head and an animal body to demonstrate processes of ingestion, digestion, and excretion. Much like Mann's, Janker's collage relies on a hybrid body that brings together the human and the nonhuman. However, the paradoxically moralistic dimension of the film—after all, his subjects die from radiation—explicitly upholds the notions of human apartness and sanctity while maintaining the presumed baseness of the nonhuman. Thus, although the advent of x-ray technology renders all bodies penetrable, indifferently turning their interior inside out, Janker's scientific films ultimately politicize the technological apparatus and pull the skin back over the exposed human bones and organs like a chastity garment.

To demonstrate the functioning of the alimentary system—the processes of ingestion, digestion, and excretion—Dr. Robert Janker's film combines x-ray cinematography of the human and animal bodies. They thus piece together the alimentary system by cutting from images of a human ingesting solids and liquids to the images of animals (cats and rabbits) digesting and excreting. This combination particular combination of human and nonhuman bodies reproduces axiomatic hierarchies of the two, thereby promoting the ennoblement of the mouth and the debasement of the nether regions—specifically the anus. Although the advent of x-rays rendered the entire human body penetrable, this educational film insists on the sanctity of the human mouth in an anthropo-cephalocentric, heteronormative move. The diagnostic, scientific vision is thus anything but sanitized.

By supplementing the disembodied human head with a nonhuman body to complete the alimentary system, Janker's educational film elevates the human head and mouth while simultaneously connecting it with a lower orifice; the anus. This alimentary, sensual connection is thus deemed nonhuman. However, the film's adherence to moralizing classings of the human and nonhuman, oral and anal, reverses the penetration by x-ray.

The mouth is... a break in the surface of the body, a rupture of the skin, a gateway to be guarded with vigilance, under constant risk of violation. It is also, as Kristeva argues, 'the first organ of perception to develop and maintains the nursing infant's first contact with the outside but also with the other.' The child's instinct to engage with the world through inserting objects into its mouth is one of the first to be tamed. As such, the open mouth signifies curiosity, as much as hunger or speech, whilst closed it signifies not simply silence but control, repression, denial of speech. The urge to insert things in the mouth is replaced by the command to exert speech out of it, and what one may put into the mouth comes as much a matter of vigilance as what one may let out. (Kemp 95)

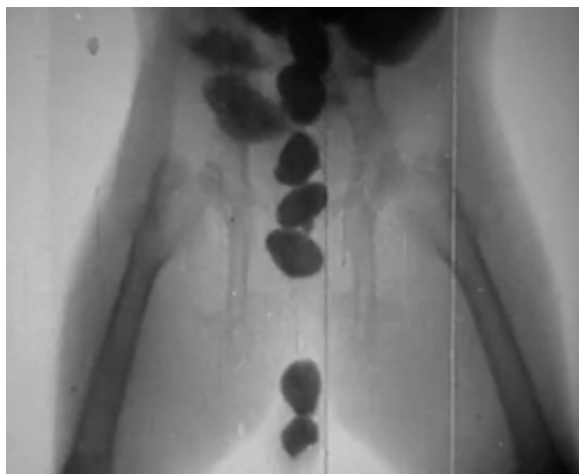
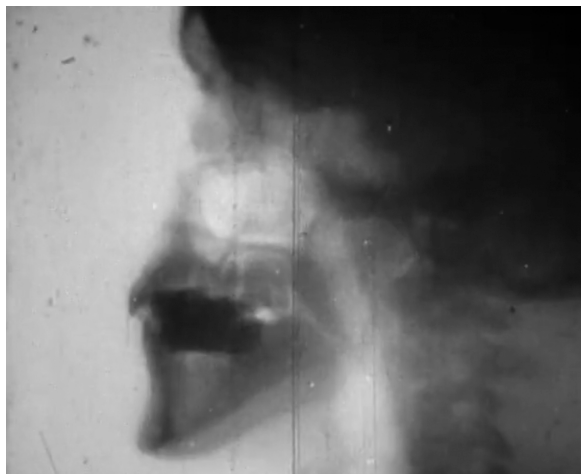


Fig. 18. Stills from Robert Janker's x-ray film of the alimentary system showing the processes of ingestion on the human body and processes of digestion and excretion on animal bodies. (Janker)

As the human body is reduced to the head—all intake, mind, and speech—the hybridization of the body thus set in scene in Janker's x-ray film maintains notions of the dematerialization of the human body and the base materiality of the nonhuman. Castorp's encounter with something akin to x-ray cinematography and radiographs, on the other hand, dissolves the boundary Janker's film so desperately maintains. Despite of the fact that Janker's film establishes a similarity between the human and the nonhuman, it also ultimately classes them into higher—nobler—and lower life forms. This hierarchy is only emphasized when the fact of sacrifice for the sake of the x-ray glimpse into the interior is brought into play.

Dosage measurement was an especially crucial science for researchers trying to combine the techniques of film and X ray. The many images required even for a short strip of film and the brevity of each image's exposure demanded that a very high cumulative level of radiation be used to expose even a short strip of film. The inability to regulate exposure conditions adequately made motion-picture X rays of human subjects a dangerous prospect...If the thrill of the danger accompanied X-ray experiments, X-ray cinematography posed the ultimate thrill...[The] threat of radiation was the price paid for

reinvesting the deathly, bloodless X-ray body with the signifiers of life. The X-ray cinema imbued the pathological image with a hyperreal semblance of movement, depth, blood, and flesh. (Cartwright 130)

The production of the x-ray film thus risked the annihilation of the human and nonhuman subjects it sought to fully bring into view. While the glimpses of the human alimentary system are brief, the animal subjects suffered longer exposure times and fatal doses of radiation. In sum: the design of Janker's experiments privileged the human over the nonhuman on the symbolic and practical levels.

When one sets Janker's against Castorp's x-ray visions, the discrepancy between two humanisms becomes tangible. In a conversation with the doctor, Castorp places the human subject—a shared anthropocentrism—at the heart of the three “adumbrations” (T. Mann 389) of humanist perception (the lyrical, technical, and medical gaze). While this focus may hold for Janker's experiments, it does not for Castorp. For the latter, although privileged on the surface, the human subject is nowhere to be found on closer observation. If Janker's hybrid body protects and upholds the sanctity of the human subject, Castorp's hybrid gaze dissolves it. Wherever we take a closer look for the human, the human disintegrates into vestiges of the nonhuman. Where is the human located in a body composed of inanimate atoms that have somehow brought to life (T. Mann 393)? Where is the human located if it is merely a miniscule unit of the bodies of the “beasts of the Milky Way,” (Mann T. 590)? Infected by x-ray gaze, Castorp's vision can no longer be anchored in a human who is clearly delineated from her nonhuman environment.

Abends gar, wenn der fast gerundete Mond erschien, verzauberte sich die Welt und ward wunderbar, Kristallisches Geflimmer, diamantnes Glitzern herrschte weit und breit. Sehr weiß und Schwarz standen die Wälder. Die dem Monde fernen Himmelsgegenden lagen dunkel, mit Sternen bestickt. Scharfe, genaue und intensive Schatten, die wirklicher und bedeutender schienen als die Dinge selbst, fielen von den Häusern, den Bäumen, den Telegraphenstangen auf die blitzende Fläche...In eisige Reinheit schien die Welt gebannt, ihre natürliche Unsauberkeit zugedeckt und erstarrt im Traum eines phantastischen Todeszaubers. (T. Mann 374)

[In the evening, when the almost full moon appeared, the world lay in enchanted splendour, marvellous. Crystal and diamond it glittered far and wide, the forest stood up very black and white, the quarter of the heavens where the moon was not showed deeply dark, embroidered with stars. On the flashing surface of the snow, shadows, so strong, so sharp and clearly outlined that they seemed almost more real than the objects themselves, fell from houses, trees, and telegraph-poles...The world seemed spellbound in icy purity, its earthly blemishes veiled; it lay fixed in a deathlike, enchanted trance. (Mann T. 562–563)]

Castorp's x-ray gaze spills onto the environment and enchants rather than disenchants it, as one would expect from diagnostic vision. Even inanimate objects, under the innocent, mundane “play of light” that has been reframed through the shadows of x-ray technology, gain a subterranean independence, a mysterious liveliness. They breathe and die, perhaps they glance back too?

Hans Castorp sprach es aus: „So eine Zigarre hat Leben. Sie atmet regelrecht. Zu Hause ließ ich es mir mal einfallen, Maria in einer luftdichten Blechkiste aufzubewahren, um sie vor Feuchtigkeit zu schützen. Wollen Sie glauben, daß Sie starb? Sie kam um und war tot binnen Wochenfrist, - lauter ledrige Leichen.“ (T. Mann 351)

[Hans Castorp expressed it: “A cigar like that is alive—it breathes. Fact. Once, at home, I had the idea of keeping Maria in an air-tight tin box, to protect her from damp. Would you believe it, she died! Inside of a week she perished—nothing but leathery corpses left.” (Mann T. 362–363)]

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