James Bond does not have a real job. The work of Ian Fleming’s fictional British Secret Service agent, through all its various transmogrifications and embodiments as white, male bodies, is only ever that of pleasure, luxury and the avoidance of effort. But Bond’s fluid, flowing, seawater soaked tuxedo is also haunted, shadowed by death and by literary pre-figurations that circumscribe and contradict double-oh-seven’s apparent license to live without responsibility, debt or worry. With SPECTRE (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Anti-Oedipus), Laurence Rickels’s 2013 writings on and around Bond, an exorcism of the many ghosts that haunt so many secret agents in leisure suits is performed through his signature “psychohistorical revaluation of our understanding of media, modernism”\(^1\). Hamlet haunts Rickels’s Bond as Derrida and Freud haunt Rickels himself, as he investigates what it is to mourn the end, to experience trauma and death in the context of a European history in which ends never come, and finishings never finish.

Included here are two documents emerging, in their turn, from the spirits Rickels raises in SPECTRE. The first is a review of SPECTRE by writer and scholar Elisa Santucci-Nitis and the second an interview with Rickels, originally published in a special issue of the Swedish language journal Subaltern (Tidskriften Subaltern) here published in English for the first time.

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Rickels’s Bond, A Review of Laurence Arthur Rickels, SPECTRE
By Elisa Santucci-Nitis

A friend manifested magnetic thinking powers in front of me some days ago. To my astonishment a toothpick jerked in her hand several times, without any possible external influence I could think of but indeed the strength of her concentration. I googled at ease later: “toothpick, magic, trick.” Promptly a video on YouTube revealed the mystery. You won’t find any video on YouTube to help you with the words of Rickels’s SPECTRE, unless, of course, we are not (already) addressing/being-addressed-by the Internet too. Then the problem is bigger than it appeared at first, if you are de facto driven by electronic etymological pixels through layers of information technology. “Networked with all the coordinates of… a small-minded world” (SPECTRE, 9) you might have to taste the weight of orientation and dig underworld currents to lose your way. But you are not lost…
Although James Bond, the subject of Rickels’s study, does not need any introduction, this is one of those books doomed to be presented even before any introduction. Some texts open up their content, drama or story for an easy review, other books, among which this counts, require, or seem to require, the burden of many preemptive and precautionary words addressing methodological remarks and, for the reader, warnings, which are fated in their turn to point to a displaced object, which is not specific to this work; an aside, which threatens to eat up all that is most specific to the text, just to ramble on the why and how of the author’s style. This is, if you look more closely, a condemnation weighing over Rickels’s oeuvre and, to loosen inspection, introduces from the start a great amount of unfairness in any sober account of his SPECTRE. Won’t we ever be done with preliminary considerations and open enough to face the book, as it is, with its observations and conceptual points and point-making trajectories?

As an outcast, SPECTRE is obliged to present documents and papers, almost to prove that it is, after all, a book. It is not granted any readership contract from the beginning and it is well-known that security systems are rather unfair when it comes to allocating their alleged universality. I might pretend that SPECTRE is just a book, and write down a short approximate review and be done with it, but this would imply a great deal of superficiality on my part, which would be ultimately quickly unmasked by your reading experience. The “propagandistic” compromise of accessibility, “supposed to be the free gift that comes with readership” (The Vampire Lectures, xix) is not granted to us this time around. A remark from Rickels’s preface to his Vampire Lectures is certainly all the more fitting in this case: “I believe I never gave in to the desire for paraphrase-o-rama explanations... We always encountered our words and thoughts directly. No explanations, please.” (VL, x)

There is a kid game called “what would you be if you were.” You imagine being an object, concept or person and I have to guess what/who you are, provided that I can only ask “as if” questions such as: “what kind of tree would you be, if you were a tree?” Surprisingly enough one guesses the right answer much sooner than with any yes/no twenty questions. That to say: it might be interesting to think what Bond, James Bond would look like if he were a book. Meanwhile, as we have our guesses, actually this 2013 book by Rickels confronts Ian Fleming’s (but not only his) hero, namely 007, who, in his turn, fights against SPECTRE, the powerful inimical terroristic organization which provides the book with its title or tiles.

A friend of mine recently discovered how beautiful it is to have a long-view perspective along the corridor while sitting on the toilet, certainly if you have to kill a lot of time on it. 007 would be “a clean and mean machine whose relationship to his interiority is covered by the double-0 icon, which in certain countries signifies the public restroom.” (S, 18) If it is not a corridor, it might be a tube and this interiority is certainly well-sense-surrounded. In I-tube, remember, “you only live twice.” Listing the potential vampires and hence those “bound to come back” (VL, 3) in his V Lectures, Rickels notes: “To die in childbirth bonds motherhood to vampiric return; to die pre-baptism puts baby in the rebound position... The stillborn illegitimate offspring of parents, who were in their own time bastards too, are bound to spring back.” (VL, 4) This is the “bouncing-ball style” (VL, 2) of the release/attachment to the bond. When referring to “the traumatic era from which Fleming initially derives the Bond” (S, 15), the main character of novels and films gets an article and is spread out as an underground name of non/thing/relation, or rather, it is this very non/thing which obtains entrance, invited, in the very family name of the hero. Thus we learn from the first introductory pages that the case of James Bond is also the case of the (capitalized, decapitating) Bond. The doubling Bond, 00-7, which springs back, might also be the methodological grasp of a bounded original jump (Ursprung). In the origin was the Bond...

“Was enthalten denn die Blätter? / Tod ist gleich das erste Wort, / Das ich finde [...] / Hier steht: in der Stille; hier: Würde; hier: heischt; und hier: Streben; / Und hier: sterb’ ich, fährt es fort. / Doch was zweifl’ ich? Schon belehren / Mich die Falten des Papiers, / Die, entfaltend solchen Frevel, / Auf einander sich beziehen. / Flur, auf dem grünem Teppich, / Laß mich sie zusammen fügen! [Calderón]”*

In the Origin of the German Trauerspiel, Benjamin adds to this quote a remark:
“Die Worte erweisen sich noch in ihrer Vereinzelung verhängnisvoll. Ja man ist versucht zu sagen, schon die Tatsache, daß sie, so vereinzelt, noch etwas bedeuten, gibt dem Bedeutungsrest, der ihnen verblieb, etwas Drohendes… Das Barock hat in die deutsche Rechtschreibung die Majuskel eingebürgert.”** (GS, I, 1, 382)

If that’s the case, we should find the origin of Rickels’s Bond (or the bond) in the XVII (secular) saeculo domini, on the turf of Germany, or, more precisely, in the pageants from Germany-to-the-Elizabethan-stage and back, even more precisely: in “the Hamlet mourning pageant on the turf of proper restoration and transmission of the legacy.” (S, 117) Adding a further game to Greenaway’s collection in Drowning by Numbers, there seems to be hide-and-seek played out on the above mentioned stage, turf or Flur – with its “free-for-all” (S, 78) end result.

We know how the story goes: God took a rib from Adam and created Woman. The apple came only afterwards, not Adam’s apple, but Eve’s. Thus, Eva, biting Adam’s throat, numbers among the first vampires, who put his wisdom into her quotation fangs (VL, 63). With James Bond’s cleaning apparatus – roomboy – we are already fighting against technology’s toothing, tot-ing, as the vampire grew out of proportions. The passage from wisdom to knowledge, from narrative to the text, is also the history of lost paradise, the paradise which has still to be correctly buried: an allegorical vision. Rickels seems to counter Nietzsche precisely on a second level reading of his gay science: no civilization has ever been grounded on the fear of hell or one’s own death: life began before/at the dead/end/others, after this paradise’s improper burial. Thus, there would be no myth in the beginning, but an “allegory of perfection” in the origin (S, 58) – to the extent that “What gets passed on between the slabs of mourned dead… is the allegory of Hamlet” (S, 117), that is, in other words, what “cannot be handed down” (see S, 114) – here the Biss (bliss/bite): ‘Because ‘uncertainty as to the goodness of a good object’ can slip out of the best supported cleavage, the bad conscience exists with its vampiric bites of conscience (Gewissensbisse).’” (S, 58) The moment which gets out-of-joint but in-Bond is precisely this impasse: “The inner world, like the crypt it modifies, does transmit, but without interpersonalization… One man’s irretrievable loss is his unlikely heir’s ghost of a chance.” (S, 114)

Rickels distinguishes a double insight – “the double barrel clarity that Bond originally carved and shot…” (S, 87) – in the Freudian motif of the horde and the killing of the primal father. The death of the primal father, the premier mournable death, returns twice – we only live twice: a first time as the unwished third, mark of a distance, which says: you are not mother, you are not you(r body); a second time, as the possibility of a killing, of a wish: annihilate the third, re-become the one. This double step, ratifying unmournability first, and mournability second, is the un/mournability Bond of the line of descent. “But then there was Caspar” – Ian Fleming’s son, who shares birth-year with the Bond enterprise, who “notwithstanding the difference in spelling, however, … is the American cartoon ghost” (S, 115) and therefore is – “the friendly or lonely ghost who made it inside the very transmission of the inner world without first filling the father’s shoes on the outside.” Rickels concludes: “He inscribes himself within a mourning process revalorized, for example, as a magical car transmission rather than an inheritance of the Bond.” (S, 118) The improperly buried paradise, abyss of “father’s single occupancy and bequest” (S, 118) has been read through by the Nietzsche-Klein lineage, which occasionally is also Rickels’s only self-Biss (no fangs) on his own corpus in SPECTRE. He im/properly quotes himself:

“The reversal of values picks up the lack: the bad comes to be treated as good enough, while omnipotence must be viewed as evil, as annihilating. My bad cannot become my evil. The good cannot be let go. We are all poorly constituted on impact with the loss of a loved one.” (S, 28 and VR, 331: “We are all bad, poorly constituted, when encountering an unmournable loss.”)

Magical car transmission would run its own eternal circle leaving off destinal – rather intestinal – fatal – rather fetal – handing over, for the ghost of a chance.

Yet, before James Bond and his bodybildung skills and guiles, up-to-date Odysseus of technotrauma seas, the Hungarian countess, Elisabeth Báthory, might help us out – in VL (12-14). Rickels retells the hi/story of this countess who, after discovering the rejuvenating powers of maids’ blood, becomes a
serial vampire. On the occasion, he stresses that “the narcissism that holds on to the body cannot but grow uncanny. That is why it is forced to split off from itself and release the emergency projection of the body as machine.” (VL, 13) If you are you and can no longer be you, then you need to be you – somehow. Wish! Wish! There is no price for this ‘somehow.’ Bury! Bury! “History-long and society-wide” (The Case of California, 1), the body is bound, measured-up, sense-surrounded, in transit, technologized. Lost Paradise could be a video game. But, before rebounding back to SPECTRE, and the erasure of colonial pretensions in the others’ bites, let’s hold a bit longer to the machine, before back-to-Germany and the Allegory of History, let’s consider another automaton, Báthory’s. I quote at length:

“One method, as documented by the court records of the time, was to put a terrified naked girl in a narrow iron cage furnished with pointed nails turned inward, hanging it from the ceiling and sitting beneath it enjoying the rain of blood that came down’ (Masters, 87). But the body cage, which puts the skeleton on the outside, or this automatic sprinkler, which externalizes the blood that no longer flows inward, gets new and improved in the Countess’s machine maid that is a specific kind of maid, a ‘made in Germany.’ Please hold on to this origin of the automaton sliding into woman’s place; it is an origin that lies in advanced stages of the vampiric impulse of mass murder…” (VL, 13, 14)

Twice, allegorically and technologically, we are led back to Germany: made in Germany – yet the passage occurs over a translation: “Mourning came into translation when Hamlet entered German letters, then psychoanalysis.” (S, 76) The Anglo-American, German SPECTRE mourning alliance “falls within the transmission of Shakespeare’s haunted mourning text unto globalization.” (S, 76) The turf of the vanquished re-turns, so Rickels turns the key:

“In Shakespeare’s day, English-speaking people set sail on the power of the spirit or ghost become word… Between two sunken eras, that of the German attempt to seize a place in the sun and that of the British Empire on which the sun never set, the Anglo-American alliance divides the work of the past.” (S, 77)

But, if not entirely the Elizabethan era, the British Empire did set: “Fleming introduced SPECTRE on the brink of the expansion of Anglo-American mass-media culture going global, often following out the stretch marks of the receding British Empire.” (S, 78) The allegorical and technical means get once more bound together along the motif of expansion, “history-long and society-wide” up to the coming present:

“Spirits of the dead are the first representatives of new velocities of production and transmission at ‘the speed of thought.’ But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the enslavement of the dead, who obey the telecommand of one’s wishes, does not compare in efficiency (given the outsourcing demands of Empire) to putting slaves to work in the spot of interchangeability that they were in with spooks.” (S, 65)

The case of Bond gets imbedded in his new affairs, neither necessarily blond nor women – home sweet home presents its oikos (VL, 27): an economy at Derrida’s table, where “Freudian and Marxian takes on what is at stake alternate as each other’s concealment – of their common but double origin or identification.” (VL, 270) The circulation system lying at the problematical core seems to exchange capital and commodities for ghosts and spooks, with no rest or arrest. Back to the origin (and completion) of allegory, Rickels remarks:

“In Hamlet, the stage was set to sail out to colonize a new maritime empire, which will turn the other or new world into narcissistic supplies for the old one, a transfer mediated only by the ghostliness of slave labor. Slave narratives stacking up in the archives of the unread are constitutively ghost narratives. Every slave narrative begins: I am dead.” (S, 65)

Yet there is a difference. Between the “hazards of the sea” (Rickels is quoting Fleming) of the “pirate industry”/“seafaring efforts of the British Empire crowds,” (S, 64) internally/eternally (SPECTRE’s through-out refrain) foundering books and vanquished narratives in the oceanic depths on the one hand, and the doubling of WWI into WWII on the other hand, there is all the distance of allegory gone metonymical – exploiting/extolling the last paradox. It’s the submarine but also spatial world of SPECTRE inhabiting this crossover. Looping on the switch from WWI to WWII, Rickels observes:
“While the shell shock victims of WWI introduced into psychoanalytic theory the upward mobilization of doubling (on contact with traumatization), the victims of Nazi persecution brought home the doubling of trauma to a point of no return – no return on the investment in loss’s deposit, the point beyond or before metaphor and substitution.” (S, 120, 121)

Ian Fleming’s career-long and franchise-wide conflict on the charge of plagiarism around SPECTRE echoes the meridian of Paul Celan. “In between... Cromwell’s England and the mid-nineteenth-century mob scene..., the guillotine had amalgamated itself to the printing press: what failed as machine succeeded as media technology.” (VL, 266) “Shot by shot” Báthory’s world approaches the multimedia re-current age. An accent fell on Paul Célan, and if the processes of restitution of an accident might push a ghost into shape, an accent falls harsher than the blade of the guillotine. We abandoned metaphorical realms for metonymical wor(l)ding – turned allegorical.

The ghostliness of allegorical conjurations (Derrida, the spectre of a name, signs the allegorical interpretative turn on page 73, erasing previous signatures) which might have driven the unaccountability of slave/dead narratives, as a commodity first draft of circulation and spoil, is metonymically encrypted in the wounds of post, recreational time – not after Christ but post WWII. The allegorically conjured ghost (SPECTRE) eventually releases the metonymically conceived allegory of Casper/Caspar: son and friendly ghost. Rickels made a slip: “From here to California” (S, 111). Is it a solution or still the end-solution (on the other end-coast)? The location of “here” on presumably German turf brings us back to the ambivalent Bond’s relation to Germany, where the process of integration is still on the run. We are heeding Jürgenson’s recorder and its excavations: on the “magnetic tape, one of the breakthrough inventions of engineering in the Third Reich” (S, 83) we hear Jewish dead talking; Goebbels, Göring, Hitler, Churchill are also speaking. We hear ghost voices. “Bond/Hamlet can show allegiance only to the figure of the ghost” (S, 106) while the integration experiment is on: the transmutation of circulation into disposable substitution. The tube or Flur might even have a view. Another, certainly melancholic, allegory from the thirties, if not located in Germany, then it is France, recites: “27.

Juli 1932. Hôtel du Petit Parc 6, Impasse Villermont, 6 – Nice... Ein impasse mit vue sur le parc – was könnte zauberhafter das emplacement eines Sterbezimmers umschreiben?”*** (Benjamin, GB, 27 July 1932) Similarly Bond knows “deep down, that love from Mary Goodnight, or from any other woman, was not enough for him. It would be like taking ‘a room with a view.’ For James Bond, the same view would always pall.” (S, 107) The funereal pall with which Rickels brings the thread back on the track never ceases carrying over the dead, as planets such as “Pallas” arise to science fiction mourning realms and balls roll and bounce further.

There is as little need of retelling any James Bond summary plot as Hamlet’s. As far as the latter is concerned, and as far as Trauerspiel is a German play, SPECTRE’s last shot tells us that: rather than Hamlet having any success (Erfolg) in avenging the father, the very fact of this ghostly re-curring or following (erfolgen), i.e. the allegory of Hamlet, represents precisely not the heritage of the name (it will be Fortinbras), rather it is the medium for its slow-motion crossing to the next generation – skipping one: the medium, the ghost, identifying “with the ghostliness transmitting him.” (S, 118)

Rickels signs off his SPECTRE speaking against the echo inhabiting the readers and recurring in their head the whole time (“I am Bond, James Bond”) – with the trick of plagiarism (improper burial) or reattribution: “I am dead, Horatio . . . Horatio, I am dead.” (S, 118) But this time, and “if it is not this time, it will be the next,” (S, 118) Hamlet junior is talking and authoring, in the beginning, the statement and text (the absence of the narrative) to follow.

Notes on Rickels’s Bond By Elisa Santucci-Nitis

* “What do these pieces of paper [or: leaves] contain? / Death is suddenly the first word / I find [...] / Here it says: in secret; here: / Honor; here: duty and here: appropriate; / And here: should I die, it goes on. / Then: what is my hesitation about? / The folds of the paper, / which unfold deceit, / Already warn me, / Weaving with one another. / Meadow [or: corridor], on your green carpet, / Let me bind them together!”
The Spanish original is however quite different from the German translation and therefore from mine, which refers to the German. The original uncut quote goes: “Vislumbra el contenido por sus palabras claves: / Dize a parte desta suerte: / Muerte es la primer razon / que he hallado; [honor contiene / esta; Mariene aqui / se escribe: Cielos, valedme, / que dizen mucho en tres vozes / Mariene, honor y muerte.] / Secreto aqui, aqui respeto: / servicio aqui, aqui conviene, / y aqui, muero yo, prosigue: / Mas què dudo? Yà me advierten / los doblezes del papel, / adonde están los doblezes, / llamendose unos a otros. / Se, o prado, lamina verde, / en que, ajustandolos, lea.”

** “Still in their isolations, the words prove to be fateful. Indeed one is tempted to say: already the fact that, so singled out, they still mean something, casts on the remnant meaning, which hangs on, sth threatening... The Baroque has naturalized the majuscule in ruling German orthography.”

*** “Hôtel du Petit Parc 6, Impasse Villermont, 6 – Nice... An impasse with a view over the park – what could more magically paraphrase the location of a death chamber?” Benjamin also refers to a Sterbezimmerchen (“small death chamber” echoing “death fairy tale”).


SUBALTERN INTERVIEW by Erik Erlanson and Peter Henning

EE & PH: Mourning seems to have been an interest of yours since quite an early age. Wikipedia talks about an independent study on prevented mourning from as early as 1974. Would you like to tell us something about how you came upon this subject in the first place?

LR: My formative teen years coincided with the escalating movement of protest against the Vietnam War. With the first reports of posttraumatic stress disorder in Vietnam Vets, traumatic neurosis was proving to be the “defective cornerstone” of the edifice of defense, of closing ranks, and collecting oneself. For the Vietnam War the model of service used was the one-year tour of duty, largely in order to avoid the development of psychological symptoms. The soldier was focused on his own survival and death. The notion of the buddy system so important in WWII and the Korean War was viewed in the meantime as an invitation to traumatic symptom formation, at the latest in the likely event your buddy died. In a collection of essays on traumatic neurosis in survivors of Nazi concentration camps, one contribution underscored the pathogenic impact of the prevention of any kind of observance of mourning in the camp situation. I wrote my senior honors thesis on this topic (in 1972).

I would later return to the military-technological setting and its special experimental conditions, which established a new norm on the border to mental illness for adjustment not only to the situation of combat but also to innovations in technologization. But at that time I was mainly struck by the abandonment of the questions surrounding mourning in every discipline with the sole exception of psychoanalysis.
Philosophy addressed death, even a death of one’s own, and dismissed being grief-stuck on the deceased as wrongheaded. But Freud alone showed empathic interest in our relationship to the dead, their ongoing haunting influence, and how they could be put to rest only together with that part of ourselves that had identified with the departed, belonged to and was already with the goner.

Because it signifies that the self is thrown for a loop through the others of identification, the problem of mourning undermines ideologies of intolerance, which are based on self identity. Freud argued that the unconscious doesn’t tolerate the notion of one’s own death: the first time we have to deal with death is when the other goes. It is over the dead other with whom we were close, with whom we identified, that we recognize death.

In my first book I read cases of aberrant mourning, in each case involving crypts wherein the dead were hidden away and preserved and upon which works of literature, philosophy, and science had been written. My most notable case concerned Freud’s encrypted dead brother Julius. In this crypt study, it was his mother, who, unable to acknowledge the loss and mourn, deposited the work of mourning intact and undisclosed in her surviving son Sigmund. Psychoanalysis was written on this crypt.

That Victor Frankenstein, for example, never mourns but struggles with the monstrous symptoms of his refusal isn’t simply a case of failure. Victor’s relationship to the monster is the allegory of Mary Shelley’s relationship to her writing. Melancholia may forsake the work of successful mourning, but it too is work and produces works. The injunction to mourn successfully and speedily find substitutes for the departed may be the ultimate denial of mourning, denial to the departed of memorial observances, denial of love to one’s inner objects of identification.

One’s psychic stability is an inside job: only if the internal representatives of one’s loved ones are secure inside, can one, for lack of a better word, survive. I therefore coined the word unmourning, by analogy with Freud’s the uncanny, to identify my area of inquiry.

EE & PH: These crypts you speak about, why would you say that it is important to expose them? You hint at it above, but what do these cases of aberrant mourning point to at a more comprehensive level? In Aberrations of Mourning, for instance, you connect the project of unmourning to Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of capitalist logic in The Dialectic of Enlightenment.

LR: The Dialectic of Enlightenment is one of the very few philosophical texts that followed Freud in addressing the relationship to the dead in mourning (or unmourning). Adorno can be seen to have stepped away from the more comprehensive level of Marxist interpretation with the advent of National Socialism, which scored triumphs in the media or messages of mass psychology, an area nowhere on the map of Marxism (ideology doesn’t cover it). The “Masse” is capable on its own of momentous happenings, assemblies en masse of replication, even of suicide, but the group does not mourn (public displays of mourning are largely defenses against mourning, often in the mode of denial).

Mourning would then appear to belong to the provenance of the couple. Mass psychology, as Freud understood it, is the dialectic between the group and the couple, between identification unto doubling or suicide and time out for mourning. The couple stands here also for the analytic session.

Jumping ahead, but within the same genealogy, I have come to consider that the process in mourning that Melanie Klein called integration, which is introduced through reparation, will bring mourning to bear globally on the Holocaust only once the prospect of collective mourning breaks the ban of denial, and breaks out of the dialectic sketched above, which is historicizable within a genealogy of media. What is new about the digital media is that all the names, eras, events, advents of history return, indeed as ghosts, but without individual trauma, without their former opposition, and without the analogical scratch or stretch in technical mediation. In the 1990s Derrida considered this new haunting, the return that returns, as the horizon of a politics of deconstruction. (At the same time that Lacanianism implemented the philosophical indifference to mourning within its brand of psychoanalysis, deconstruction offered the second exceptional
philosophy that joined Freud in contemplating our shifting but ongoing relations with the dead.)

I don't have any answers, but it is evident to me that the Middle East "crisis" (which has extended throughout the whole post-WWII era) is the symptom picture closer to the truth than the whole phantasmagoria of the former Cold War opposition. (Footnote: even the Cold War is returning in the midst of all the other returns.)

In Aberrations of Mourning I attempted to rewrite "Western" culture (by metonymy with "German" letters) upon a series of crypts. I discovered the preponderance of encrypted siblings, notably in the case of Freud, but also in the cases of Artaud, Gottfried Keller, Kafka, and Freud's patient the Ratman. (Since my first book I have opened many other related crypts: in H. G. Wells, Oscar Wilde, Warhol, and Elvis Presley, among quite a few others.) By the speculation buoyed up by these crypts I presented a primal scene for a whole history of mediation: childhood was invented via literacy before the high rate of child mortality was lowered through immunization. The ontologized child entered the scene to exit as unmournable loss, a loss very often transferred into a surviving child. Even with the increased chances for survival, children remained shadowed by this primal scene, and imbued with the unmournability and uncanniness of the prospect of their loss. It follows that the relationship to the other unmournable losses, the loss of a mother or older sibling, is carried as child, often as the carrier's twin: every crypt is made to fit inside death cult childhood. I argued that the primal scene of childhood's invention entered the technical media: that at every point of amplification there was a dead child secretly preserved. More recently, Tom McCarthy based his novel C on this psychohistory. I mention this as indication of what attention to crypts is good for: the psychohistorical revaluation of our understanding of media, modernism -- of contemporaneity itself.

EE & PH: You mention the Cold War returning, a topic highly relevant to your book, SPECTRE, a work that deals with a major cultural icon of that era, James Bond. How did you come to interest yourself in Ian Fleming and his Bond novels?

LR: Middle-aged heroes dominated the objective of identification in detective fiction, which took on momentum after WWI. This follows from the wholesale evacuation of youth, of the very concept of youth, through the World Wars. The Teen Age, largely a German invention, was rescued on the other Coast, in California. In the European post-WWII era Bond was a new midlife hero climbing up out of the ruins of the hot war to engage the new menace, the Cold War opposition, in the setting of what we would later refer to as globalization. During the opening season of the Bond, my father was the secret agent and I was by identification Dr. No. Fleming created perfect Oedipal fantasies.

While teaching in California I began to catch up with my own adolescence and commenced a series of lecture courses on B-genres: vampirism, slasher horror, science fiction, fantasy, and the superhero. We took our B-culture with a reading list of works by Freud (and for the superhero course by Nietzsche). Alongside the American superheroes, Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, among others, I included Bond (given his license to kill). The American superhero is bludgeoned by loss in early childhood or early adolescence: super- or trans-humanity consists in overcoming the deficit of traumatic origins (Wonder Woman inherits the traumatic history that her nation carries forward and raises it to consciousness). The evil masterminds keep the relationship to the good object under cover but potentiated by the opposition that never really ends. While Bond also loses both parents in early adolescence, he works through the projected parts of his history until he fits an adult profile of someone who can mourn.

In the Ian Fleming novels I noted that the wars against Germany were still pressing in the wings of the center-staging of the Cold War conflict. What had to be worked through was the ambivalence toward his father, whose death in WWI made a number of options possible for the son, including an interest in German culture abroad. Fleming was able to give his untenable identification with Germany a form with the introduction of SPECTRE as a third power that was parasitic of the super power opposition. He invented this organization for the reformatting of his adventures to fit the medium of cinema, the medium, literally, of projection. Out between screen and audience a ghostly projection could be released, reclaimed, and put to rest.
Fleming built SPECTRE out of all the WWII German-language dead, ranging from the perpetrators to the victims and back again. It is the projection of this underworld that contributed to the process of integration (in the sense of mourning) I mentioned earlier. Beginning with the SPECTRE trilogy, the women Bond spares, spares and wounds, or loses fill out the dead dread father as object of mourning.

EE & PH: Finally, an important question prompted by your particular use of psychoanalysis to approach various cultural phenomena, is how you conceive of the relation between clinical and critical work? You have, as we understand it, also been active in the former area.

LR: Probably every analyst or psychodynamic therapist would acknowledge the transference as the central mystery of the session, since its force can never be conveyed in the words whereby we otherwise theorize Freud’s science. Freud notes that the transference helps the patient let go of the all-out desire for a cure. It is fundamentally a momentum of understanding that is conjugated with regard to its main analogue, mourning, ranging from the terminability of successful treatment to the interminability of analytic reflection.

The tension at the art of my work pushes and pulls between the shorthand of theory and the slow time, the in-session materiality of the transference work. This span of tension also encompasses the allegorical gap out of which what I call endopsychic genealogy can be generated: between the closed system of psychoanalysis and its introjection and projection of current events.

The system is closed only up to a point: it cannot generate all its terms out of itself; in other words it remains constitutively open, albeit on its own terms and turf, to the reality shock of the new. This is particularly evident in the entry of WWI into Freud’s system via the epidemic of traumatic neurosis. As a result, sometimes what psychoanalysis writes about is already inside it. Or in deconstructive terms, it is only possible to address “historical change” from within a discourse network, in which the change must be found inscribed. Anything else is what is called in the teen idiom “history.”