

Reflections in a Private "I":
Diagnosing Hardboiled Detective Narrators Through Psychoanalytic Theory

by
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A thesis presented for the B.A. Degree

With Honors in
The Department of English
University of Michigan

Spring 2000

© March 15, 2000

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for my Mother...

Acknowledgements

Obviously there's no way I could have pulled this heist by myself. And if the coppers ever caught up with me and demanded, "Who's responsible for this, buddy?" – then I'd say, "Professor Rei Terada." That's my confession. Because Professor Terada gave me my first taste of the beautiful barroom brawl atmosphere of psychoanalytic theory, she gave me all the right books to read (like she knew what I was up to the whole time), she laughed at my jokes, and she taught me all the tricks of her trade in her two semesters as my thesis advisor. I'll never forget how wonderful I felt when she agreed with me.

And if the coppers worked me over some more, the list of my other conspirators would tumble out: Professor Schoenfelt (they'll be particularly interested in him, the mug who whipped my thesis class into shape for the Big One and who generously read two drafts!) and the rest of my English 492 gang. Then there's Deborah Stineberg, Ryan Hudson, Jennifer Coggan, and all the whole Bab's thesis underworld (Katie Gotham, Leah Dodd, Carrie Burt, and Katherine Devendorf, and Jennifer) – they all held me together during the a pretty wild time. I won't forget that. And then Marc Johnson (the first and only reader in my life), Ryan Hudson, and Christian David Hoard for their generous readings of my thesis.

Then I'd have to remember Sarah Riger and Amy Hayes who were both there since the beginning. They made me a writer. Then all the old pros who helped me figure out how to put these ideas down on paper, especially: Professors Susie Tharu, Guyatri Spivak, David Thomas, John Whittier-Ferguson Tobin Seibers, for all their help in various ways and times during my thesis experience. I truly appreciated this

life-changing experience. Also, I'd thank my English teachers at Lansing Community College (especially Professor Theresa Purvis). After that, I'd thank my family, especially my younger brothers and sister who keep reminding me of how much I loved mysteries when I was a kid. And Jeff, who helped me open my first private detective agency when I was a kid.

And with my final breath, still shackled under the glaring lights of the interrogation room, I'd sit up straight with dignity, and thank the genre of private detective stories and film noir for being there for me – they were asking for it. I'd blame Marc Behm finally, for writing *Eye of the Beholder*, the best book of all about a private dick named "The Eye." He showed me that everybody's crazy and that a little bit of psychoanalysis can make a private detective narrator go BANG.

Abstract

Smoking on a rain-soaked street, his trench coat shadowed by sinister lamplight, the lone private detective tells the story of his amazing case in hardboiled first-person narration. Standing there he seems so smug, so sure of his *self*. From the genre's conception, writers have struggled to drag mystery readers "inside" the perceptions and actions of the private "I." I *suspect* any sense of an inside represented by this special kind of first-person narrator, and my psychoanalytic interrogation of that private "I" will change the way we think about our modern sense of interiority.

Through Dashiell Hammett's novel, The Dain Curse, I introduce the lens of Sigmund Freud's "The Uncanny." This combination help expose the novel's neurotic organization, asking why uncanny elements creep into these stories, disrupting the detective's perceptions – pointing to contemporary critiques of the modern "inside." Next, I turn to Raymond Chandler's novel, The Lady in the Lake. Slavoj Žižek's idea of a "phallic gaze" helps theorize the specific way the private detective's eye can "denature" an otherwise idyllic scene. We see how sophisticated the unique private "I" inside becomes, and how Chandler's private detective copes with uncanny material.

Finally, I examine Ross Macdonald's novel, The Underground Man. Macdonald creates the most sophisticated narrator of all three novels, but the development constantly undermines the memories and perceptions of his characters. How can we know anything about ourselves when inaccessible unconscious thoughts will always corrupt our perceptions? Such questions unhinge the private detective narrator as he stumbles through his dark case, troubling the seemingly flawless sense of a modern "inside" that the genre produces. Here Lacanian revisions of the modern "inside" become valuable evidence. Macdonald's novel points to the ways "normal" subjectivity might work in relationship to this private "I" model.

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Short Titles

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The Eye took some pictures the playground, swarming with children.

He bought an ice cream cone from a vender over by the pavilion.

He snapped a picture of a little girl with a balloon. Christ!

How did God plot the destinies of all these kids?

You! You over there – *you*! You shall compose nine symphonies.

And you shall be a taxi driver and you a mailman and you a private eye.

Marc Behm – The Eye of the Beholder

Introduction: Locating a Private "I"

I begin in fifth grade, consuming detective books like candy. My father shows me Sherlock Holmes, but those stuffy mysteries bore me. Reading Raymond Chandler's The Big Sleep, I meet my first real private detective. I dream of being like *that*. I open an imaginary private detective agency, crouching inside a homemade tent with couch cushion walls and a blanket on top. Watching my family under there, I investigate my home from the artificial darkness. I write pages of scribbled notes about my family, changing their routines into dangerous plots. Under there, I write my own private detective stories. I dream of them hiding in the shadows behind some suspect, of them kicking down a hideout door, waving a gun in each fist. Hiding under there, I write pages and pages to fill up what's missing in my life, trying to hold on to that suspenseful, fluttering-stomach moment when the private eye sneaks into a secret room. I'm shaking with excitement, full of a secret, watching my normal little world; I have this secret that's so big and I don't ever ask why, I'm watching them, I want to write how amazing I feel, like my world might explode...

BANG.

Pitching his second private detective novel The Dain Curse to Knoff publishers, Dashiell Hammett lays out the dream of my thesis:

I want to try adapting the stream of conscious method, conveniently modified to a detective story, carrying the reader along with the [private] detective, showing him everything as it is found, giving him the detective's conclusions as they are reached, letting the conclusion break on both of them together.¹

Just like that, Hammett dreams of a first-person voice, an immediate narration – the first psychologically accurate private detective novel. He dreams of throwing readers inside the violent experiences of the private detective.

Hammett writes of a *hardboiled* world, stories about a bleak world lit up by the violence of his active hero. The private eye doesn't deductively analyze a mystery like Sherlock Holmes, but physically "*breaks*" each case. This form calls for a new kind of psychological perspective for literature, a private "I" narration. So I begin by digging through Hammett's experiment with the private detective narrator. And like the hardboiled genre, I begin with action and the heat of the chase.

Halfway through The Dain Curse, Hammett's unnamed private detective, the Continental Op, questions a suspect who visits the detective's home. The suspect almost tells the Op an important clue, putting the detective inches away from the truth of the case, when suddenly, "The door to my room split open. Floors, walls and ceiling wiggled under, around and over us. There was too much noise to be heard -- a roar that was felt bodily. [My suspect] was carried

away from me, backward ... I was blown the opposite direction.”² Hammett comes closest to stream-of-consciousness here, unexpectedly exploding the Op’s home. The reader is just as surprised as the Op by the bomb.

Despite Hammett’s passive tense that undercuts any sense of present action, the moment by moment narration effectively blasts the surprised reader through the explosion. The Op’s writer-friend, Owen Fitzstephen, catches the brunt of the explosion, staining the room blood red. “I got up and made for my room. Fitzstephen was a mangled pile of flesh and clothing in the center of the floor.”³ The stunned detective focuses on the grotesque spot in the middle of a familiar space. Readers know now that the case is dangerous enough to threaten the Op’s personal life. Hammett forces the reader to view the surprise-event *inside* the Op’s point-of-view – the case literally “breaks” on the reader.

Countless schools of literary criticism examine moments like this one. For instance, the idea of violated private space like the Op’s home attracts Marxist critics. Fredric Jameson’s essay, “The Synoptic Chandler,” explores how specific notions about how private detective novels in the 1940’s and 50’s constructed public and private spaces. But I’m not interested in the social world surrounding the private detective. I’m tracking the *private* detective, private in the sense of personal inwardness. Reversing Jameson’s focus, I investigate how the detective’s “inside” is evoked through first-person narration.⁴

Back in Hammett’s bomb-scene, people also change during the startling explosion. The book revolves around the Op’s protection of the beautiful heiress,

Gabrielle Leggett, doomed to die because of her family's uncanny "Dain Curse"

This *moment* illustrates the effect of the Op's eyes on certain characters.

"Gabrielle was crouching on all fours in bed ... her nightdress was torn at one shoulder. Her green eyes ... were the eyes of an animal gone trap-crazy. Saliva glistened on her chin."⁵ Hammett discovers a sexual charge in the male gaze of the private detective, as the narration highlights the fear and dependence of the female characters. After the Op turns his eyes on the case, he centers on this helpless girl stuck in a world gone mad.

Many feminist theorists concentrate on moments like this one, noticing the way the genre *produced* such degrading representations of women. They examine such helpless female figures as well as the famous and sexually dangerous *femme fatal*. This kind of study began with French film critics like Jacques Siclier.⁶ The work of contemporary theorists like J.P. Telotte focus on how female desire is repressed in the genre.⁷ But this stream of criticism mostly focuses on the representations of certain kinds of characters, ignoring the unique pair of eyes describing the women. While I look at the same moments as these critics, I want to study how the narrator's obsessive voice *produces* these degrading representations.

Finally, this small scene is an interesting narrative pressure point. Hammett's narration shoves the reader through the action at a disorienting pace. The observant Op gives no clues about a bomb until the sudden explosion. Concealing such a suspenseful event reflects a careful narrative consciousness, a

specific way of organizing the Op's experiences. Hammett called his novel "a silly book," and the book is critically regarded as a failure -- yet even so, certain *moments* like the explosion drive breathless readers through his formulaic and convoluted plots.

Structuralism paid close attention to the private detective formula that generated these strange plots. Tzvetan Todorov's famous essay, "Typology of Detective Fiction" helps ground his structuralist theory of literature. Todorov uses the formula of detective fiction as a less complicated model to discover the basic structure behind literary form.⁸ I disagree with any theory that treats detectives as bad-seeds of Literature, for I believe the idea of Literature is bound up in webs of significance as complex as narrative form. I will find new paths to complexities *always* offered in private detective stories. I diagnose the historically ignored perspective of the detective narrator, and the genre's relationship to the canon will not influence my investigation.

My new trail begins with Hammett's experimental narrator, remembering how Hammett failed magnificently. His strange novel lays a foundation to interrogate the genre through almost a century's worth of psychoanalytic theory. Why psychoanalysis? The list of theorists who reference to the genre reads like a line-up of psychoanalytic perpetrators: Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Slavoj Žižek. I trace linkages between these theorists as I map out my case of against narrators that Hammett invented. I follow the contemporary vein of psychoanalysis that owes the most to Lacan, where critics like Žižek use private

detectives as haphazard examples. These theorists use psychoanalysis to *refine* the idea of the modern “inside.”

By piecing together clues, shaping these scattered psychoanalytic ideas to their fullest potential; I find fresh theoretical ground hidden in these familiar, formulaic *moments* that other schools of criticism examine. My strange case resembles an accident scene more than anything, as beautiful as a smash-up between two gods riding intricately carved bicycles across a busy city intersection. I found a genuine crash-site, complete with bodies and wreckage. I will sift through the mess for clues to a profound conversation between psychoanalytic ideas and the private detective that Hammett dreams.⁹

I’ll interrogate four kinds of these specific moments my own way – tracing how the unique perspective of the private “I” narrator at first confirms contemporary theories of the inside, then how my complete case troubles those same ideas. I’ll look at the way three private eyes examine a suspect’s room for clues or corpses, the way they look at people, the way they dream, and finally, the way they arrange the convoluted plot into a narrative that solves the mystery. I *suspect* any sense of an inside represented by a “stream-of-consciousness” style, and my psychoanalytic interrogation of that private “I” will trouble both the modern sense of interiority and its Lacanian revisions.

The bodies and violence-mad ladies await us....

Episode One: The Private Eye Escapes the Uncanny Cult

"...he was talking to the sky."

Since Hammett believes his "silly book" attempts to access the "inside" of the private detective's experience, his private "I" must be my first suspect. My chase begins with the first private detective novelist, staking out his failure that laid the foundation for the other two authors in my investigation.¹⁰ Now I will creep through the world of The Dain Curse, using the psychoanalytic magnifying glass to trouble specific moments in the novel.

The most basic connection between the unique experiences of the private detective and psychoanalysis lies in the textual roots of Curse. Hammett wrote for years in pulp magazines, the medium that produced the first private detective stories as well as gothic horror stories. He pays tribute to the gothic during the first third of his novel. Freud also found the gothic genre evocative, full of ghosts and madness against the familiar backdrop of Victorian morality. Freud studies a story by E.T.A. Hoffman, "The Sandman," a gothic piece with a "quite unparalleled atmosphere of uncanniness."¹¹ Briefly, the story recounts the protagonist Nathaniel's slow descent into madness after discovering his girlfriend is really a mechanical doll. Freud marks Nathaniel's madness at the point where his childhood fright, the Sandman, reappears.¹²

In the same way, Hammett's detective faces another supernatural figure, a villainous cult leader with god-like powers. Freud's theory unfolds nicely alongside a careful study of Hammett's climactic cult scene, pointing towards

how the private detective's narration "sees" other characters as uncanny. In a chapter named simply "God," the Op fights his way through a cult leader's hideout, actively solving the mystery by breaking into unknown rooms. The last room reveals the gothic surprise of the cult leader: "I yanked open [the door]. The altar was glaring white, crystal and silver in an immense beam of blue white light [from the roof] ... white robed, ... he stood so that his bearded face was lifted to the sky ...he was talking to the sky."¹³

Again, the active "I" suspensefully lays out the scene, moving through the open door to focus on the seemingly supernatural leader. The light creates a frightening silhouette, making the Op wonder if he's found the chapter-titled "God." Freud comments on such crossovers of the divine into human affairs: "The question of these secret powers [in Gothic fiction] brings us back to the realm of animism ... the ordinary person sees in them the working of forces hitherto unsuspected in his fellow-man but which at the same time he is dimly aware of in a remote corner of his own being."¹⁴ Gothic fiction exploits traces of primitive belief buried in the modern mind, reminding readers of a primitive world where gods seemed to exert a tangible presence. Hammett plays with these vestiges of belief, evoking the uncanny tone of Gothic fiction to heighten the excitement of the detective story.¹⁵ Like Nathaniel's childhood fear of the Sandman, the Op worries about the unknown influence of the ominous sky.

The violent end of the cult leader touches another vital point in Freud's essay, the line between death and life transgressed by uncanny characters like Nathaniel's mechanical love-object. The Op describes shooting the cult leader

with the same blunt pace of the bomb scene: "I fired. The bullet hit [the cult leader's] cheek. I saw the hole it made ... I worked the automatic's trigger, pumping six more bullets into his face and body. I saw them go in. And he came on steadily."¹⁶ Hammett dramatically pushes the reader into uncanny territory as the first fatal shot fails. The uncanny cult leader creeps like an immortal zombie bent on destroying the Op, an animated thread the same as Nathaniel's robot.

Freud explains this uncanny aspect: "all so-called educated people have ceased to believe...that the dead can become visible as spirits ... [and] their emotional attitude towards their dead, moreover, once a highly dubious and ambiguous one, has been toned down in the higher strata of the mind."¹⁷ Freud forges fascinating territory here, alluding to a shady part of modern consciousness where older superstitions "once" seethed. The gothic revives old fears that death is not final. This intense "emotional attitude" couples effectively with the Continental Op's narration. He abandons the rational approach to his mystery, blasting his way to the solution instead. The bomb and shooting scenes don't make sense until after the smoke clears, a unique obstruction to keep the reader as confused as the Op. In that kind of suspenseful moment, the Op's incoherent thought leaves space to fill with the "primal" response that Freud identified.

Freud's general summary of Gothic fiction resounds deeply in Curse, but also raises doubts that push my thesis towards more specific questions about the "inside." Freud's vague sense of culturally-inherited beliefs functions as a weak

theoretical device, giving little idea of how these ideas interact with contemporary experience of reality. Freud's analysis also ignores how a writer conveys a sense of normal or even uncanny perception for a reader. Specifically he ignores completely the presence of a narrating "I" voice in Hoffman's story, an omission that blurs any sense of *where* in the narrative these uncanny feelings originate.

These flaws also troubled the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan. Lacan sets up two poles of experience – the "Symbolic," containing all aspects of society that are socially processed, understood, and captured in language; and the "Real," all the parts that cannot be understood or put into words, like the afterlife or supernatural appearances. Theorist Mladen Dolar restates Freud's case in terms of Lacan's language: "the different [uncanny] cases have a simple Lacanian common denominator which is the irruption of the Real into "homely" commonly accepted reality."¹⁸ Thus, there is no place in the modern Symbolic to classify figures like god or the immortal cult leader. When the uncanny appears, the "irruption" rocks the "homely" inside with the force of Hammett's bomb. This "irruption," the point where these Real parts of experience hint at the extent of what modern minds do not understand; is *marked* by uncanny elements like ghosts or zombies. Dolar believes that during the Enlightenment, scientific rationality abandoned pre-modern society's "religiously and socially sanctioned place in the Symbolic"¹⁹ for ideas of god, spirits, and death.

In this way, Dolar points to the uncanny's new place in modern minds more directly than Freud, writing "there is a specific dimension of the uncanny that emerges with modernity ... constantly haunt[ing] us from the inside."²⁰ The post-Enlightenment subject produces that sense of an inside. Once the modern individual escapes the confines of religious dependence, a secure, personal space opens inside. All the old religious and superstitious ways of dealing with incomprehensible bits of experience are lost, since the new subject now "sees" the world through the Enlightened lens of scientific rationality. In Lacan's scheme, Freud's vague notion of residual, pre-modern beliefs become uncanny *only after* the Enlightenment. The Symbolic order of the modern inside excludes such supernatural, unscientific material from the modern inside. This reorganization depends on Descartes famous *cogito*, the manifesto of modern subjectivity that will become valuable evidence later.

Freud's "repressed" parts of the pre-modern Symbolic (now relegated to Lacan's Real) are incomprehensible to Enlightened minds, and will always feel threatening to the modern subject – producing uncanny feelings. My investigation has already gleaned tough leads from the wreckage of the Op's exploded home and the supernatural cult leader. Psychoanalysis exposes how the modern mind cannot assign these uncanny sights an orderly place on the inside. Hammett's failure to fully convey such experiences through his private "I" may have more sinister implications. Something in the way the post-Enlightenment mind works may be responsible for this "silly book." Such an

evocative “irruption” of the Real into the Symbolic is vital for understanding both the private “I” of detective novels *and* the modern subject, so I will focus on another moment where the uncanny creeps into narration.

Uncanny Dreams

I return to the bloody scene of the cult hideout as the Op tangles with a gothic ghost in the middle of the night – a place to theorize the way a private detective sees in his dreams. Here the Op falls asleep after a cult member drugs him. He wakes up, but the drug creates a sort of waking-dream, narrated in the Op’s physical language:

The flashlight was heavy in my hand. Hell with it: I let it drop. It hit my foot, puzzling me. Who had touched my foot? ... Not more than three feet away there in the black room, a bright thing like a body, but not like flesh, stood writhing before me ... the thing was like a man ... as fluid and as unresting and as transparent as tidal water.²¹

Grammar and description fail the private eye while he hallucinates the uncanny ghost. The image unfolds haphazardly, as Hammett tries to convey drugged confusion through the dick’s first-person perspective. The Op confuses his gun for another body part, and the ghost paradoxically combines human and inhuman qualities. Indescribable is a valuable synonym for Freud’s uncanny.

Since French has no specific word for “uncanny,” Lacan invented the word *extimité* to describe such frightening material. Dolar explains the term: “All the great philosophical conceptual pairs – essence/appearance, mind/body, subject/object ... can be seen as just so many transcriptions of the division between interiority and exteriority.”²² Lacan combines the French words for interior and exterior, capturing the un-classifiable origins of the uncanny. His word contains paradoxical origins to match the Op’s mumbled description of the ghost.

Since the ghost cannot fit into either a human or inhuman category, I’ll let Lacan’s term do the work – the creature is *extimité*. These crumbling binaries are crucial for untangling the private detective’s unique point-of-view. If “inside” represents the collected and classified personal perceptions of a modern human, then uncanny events are frightening because they are indescribable and threaten the integrity is understood. The ghost cannot come from “inside” the Op. But the uncanny specter has no origin, it is supernatural, excluded from the Enlightened Symbolic; so the object cannot be considered “outside” either. I will diligently follow this kind of paradoxical perception for the rest of my thesis, for it disrupts the distinctions that support the modern sense of a distinguishable inside.

Freud introduces a new term to diagnose such uncanny sights, specifically addressing the specter of the Sandman that haunts Hoffman’s narrator: “these last examples of the uncanny are to be referred to that principle in the mind

which I have called 'omnipotence of thoughts'... the narcissistic overestimation of subjective mental processes ... those other figments of the imagination with which [pre-modern] man strove to withstand the inexorable laws of reality."²³ Freud diagnoses pre-moderns who exaggerated the power of their thoughts. These superstitious ancestors believed in ghosts so much that they "saw" a world of full of spiritual influence. Hammett's gothic story resurrects those beliefs, letting the Op tangle with a ghost. Most importantly, only first-person narration conveys an effective sense of drug-hampered "inside," representing a state where the Op's thoughts seem tangible.

This sense of a *specific* modern mind deepens in Freudian case studies, places where Freud diagnoses a *single* person – revealing a specific (however neurotic) way of seeing, rather than his generalizing claims in "The Uncanny." Freud returns to the principle of "omnipotence of thoughts" in *Ratman*, a case study of an obsessive-compulsive patient. Freud first studies how the Ratman's adult thoughts uniquely "included the afterlife." Ratman's childhood fears that god knew his thoughts matured into an obsession that his adult thoughts harmed his dead father.²⁴ Ratman's neurosis grapples with Lacan's Real. The obsessive wants to understand what happens outside human experience (the afterlife), and shapes a neurotic perspective to cope with that impossible desire.

For these reasons, I propose an obsessive diagnosis for the Op as well. His suspicious brain takes the same liberties when he's hopped-up on drugs, structuring the narrative of the case around physical contact with the uncanny.

Readers must believe him because Hammett traps them in the first person perspective of the Op, *breaking* the case over the reader. Now my case against the private "I" inside comes clear. To understand the uncanny appeal of the bomb-exploded body in the Op's home, the cult leader, or the indescribable ghost, I must carefully pinpoint the weaknesses of the Op's private "I." By carefully using Freud's clues at an individual level (investigating Nathaniel or Ratman, rather than universal "primal" urges) I draw a map of the Op's inside, highlighting the places where the private "I" cannot cope with uncanny material. That caution is important while I examine how the Op finally offers the solution, moving my case towards new private detective suspects.

'You know damned well all this didn't happen'

The way the Continental Op ultimately "sees" the whole mystery opens up Freud's notion of the "compulsion to repeat." This is the last major principle of "The Uncanny" clinching my obsessive-compulsive diagnosis. After escaping the bloody cult, the Op relates the partially- solved mystery to his writer friend, Fitzstephen (the bomb victim). The Op strangely criticizes the sense of the mystery:

'I hope you're not trying to keep all this nonsense straight in your mind. You know damned well all this didn't happen'... 'Then what,' [Fitzstephen] asked looking puzzled, 'did happen?' 'I don't know...

I'm telling you what I saw... To fit with what I saw, [the rest] must have happened very nearly as I've told you.²⁵

The Op lays out the major problem of the obsessive, how to make sense of the uncanny influences torturing your perception. He solves the problem like Ratman, putting all the elements into a nonsensical narrative that hinges on *coincidence*. So far the Op has not performed a single mental feat in the case, he just kicks down doors until he luckily stumbles on Gabrielle and the villain. The Op never says the word "coincidence," even though he collides unexpectedly with the truth in every important every scene.

Freud diagnoses such obsessive thoughts in "The Uncanny," pointing to the "factor of involuntary repetition which surrounds with an uncanny atmosphere what would otherwise be innocent enough, and forces upon [it] the idea of something fateful and inescapable where otherwise we should have spoken of 'chance.'"²⁶ For instance, someone obsessed with their "lucky" number 23 sees it on lotto tickets, girlfriends' phone numbers, and license plates, exercising the compulsion-to-repeat to assign "lucky" meaning to these coincidences. In the same way, the Continental Op stumbles into the cult leader's den, breaks down some doors in a lucky order, and then thinks he's met God! Once the smoke settles after the violent scene, the Op crunches together a confusing array of suspects to explain the story to his writer friend. Like an obsessive, the Op *wants* the *extimité* material to "fit with what I saw."²⁷

To bring these insights to the level of individual perception again, Ratman's disorder illustrates the power of the compulsion-to-repeat. Freud studies the compulsive rituals Ratman designed around coincidences involving his dead father. Freud remarks that "chance may play a role in the formation of a symptom, just as the wording may help in the making of a joke."²⁸ In an obsessive narrative like the one the Op tells Fitzstephen, chance events string together into an ominous whole, a whole so fantastic I couldn't begin to describe it in a thirty-page thesis. The whole solution composed from chance gives the obsessive narration a "punchline" of resolution. Ratman similarly justifies his absurd rituals because he randomly connects them to a memory of his father. Uncanny thoughts about Ratman's dead father or the supernatural cult leader seem absurd to the "normal" mind, and only make sense when the "wording" of their respective obsessive narrators is understood.

Lacanian like Dolar value this complex relationship between the obsessive mind shaping a narrative and coincidences. Dolar writes:

[T]here is the class of phenomena where a series of coincidences and contingent events suddenly starts to signify and take on a fateful meaning ... the source of the uncanny is the reappearance of a part that was necessarily lost with the emergence of the subject -- the point where the [R]eal coincides with the [S]ymbolic ... the lost part destroys reality instead of completing it.²⁹

Dolar points out how the thoughts of private detectives and obsessive-compulsives threaten not just reality, but the way modern individuals think of themselves as agents. The Enlightened ideal of a freethinking subject represses the rituals and mechanisms pre-moderns used to cope with incomprehensible bits of reality. Obsessive minds seize on these *extimité* bits, organizing them into patterns of meaning. Since these bits are impossible to re-organize within the modern subject, they remain as uncanny in the narratives of the Op and Ratman. Both men revive material that threatens "normal" conceptions of interior/exterior mental space.

This threat resounds in Hammett's big BANG, his failure to completely convey the subjectivity of his private dick. Ultimately, Fitzstephen turns out to be the criminal mastermind behind all the murders. Hammett's ironic plot twist leads to some conclusions about his private "I." Hammett biographer Diane Johnson writes, "the villain [is] a novelist who resemble[s] Hammett, 'a long, lean sorrel-haired man of 32.'"³⁰ Hammett situates his own mirror-image strangely within the book that he disliked. Fitzstephen paradoxically serves as the friendly voice of reason in the Op's narrative *and* the surprise murderer. Hammett writes his mirror-image as the menacing Sandman, lurking in the shadows that the Op fears.

The Op curses the cult adventure when telling the story to Fitzstephen, revealing his urge to compensate for *etimité* material: "You know damn well all this didn't happen." The private detective fears the writer, because Fitzstephen

does not believe what the Op saw that violent night. The Op stutters to tell his impossible story, struggling to reconcile the uncanny within the “inside/outside” distinction that maintains traditional subjectivity. Fitzstephen doubts the Op’s “coherent” narrative, and in turn, the *subject* behind the eyes that experienced the uncanny cult. Hammett saw the danger in undermining the Op’s perceptions, blowing up the writer / double / murderer and all his doubts with the bomb. Once the writer-double is eliminated, the mystery can be solved and narrated coherently.

A similar *moment* of solution-narrative can be found in every private detective novel after Curse. This moment serves as the center of my investigation, for the private “I’s” solution makes a metaphor of the “inside” that I critique. In the Op’s case, the mystery (including the uncanny bomb, cult leader, and ghost) only makes sense *after* the private detective says, “I did this, and then...,” uneasily organizing the uncanny scenes and the mystery into a coherent whole. The destruction of Fitzstephen insures that only the private “I” will tell the story. The Op’s inside is secure. I will be more suspicious as Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald continue the tradition of the private detective narrator.

So I leave Hammett / Fitzstephen as I found them in the introduction, crawling through smoking bomb wreckage. I move on to Raymond Chandler who changed the private “I” forever. But like the audience of an old cliffhanger movie-serial, we must wait until the next episode to meet my second suspect ...

Episode Two: The Private Dick Sees Through the Drowning Dream

The Phallic Gaze

After sharing a pint of scotch, private detective Philip Marlowe and his suspect stare into the blue lake miles away from The Lady in the Lake's gritty Los Angeles setting. Raymond Chandler's private "I" has searched fruitlessly for a missing woman until, by chance, his half-drunk suspect notices something in the water. Then Chandler turns on the juice, letting Marlowe's unique voice seize the central image of the novel:

I saw wool, sodden and black, a leather jerkin blacker than ink, a pair of slacks ... I saw a wave of dark blond hair ... hold still for a brief instant as if with calculated effect, and then swirl into a tangle again. ... A swollen pulpy gray mass without features, without eyes without mouth. A blotch of gray dough, a nightmare with human hair on it.³¹

This horrific image springs directly out of Hammett's gothic narration. The body's wavy movements illustrate the uncanny effect of animating dead objects. The corpse's "calculated" movements and slow rise to the surface frightens readers as much as Nathaniel's mechanical girlfriend in Hoffman's tale. Again, these animated motions trace back to the private detective's gaze; each metaphor mediated by Marlowe's repetition of "I saw...." The physical decay of

the corpse bears the gothic traces of living, breathing life that Hammett infused in his ghost image.

Chandler's titled-corpse recalls the Op's overwhelming sense of evil lurking everywhere, but Marlowe's distinct voice multiplies the effect. After forty pages of detective work, Marlowe hasn't produced any clues or fancy mental deductions; but by chance, the suspect beside him reveals a guilty secret. This grisly sight changes how Marlowe views all his previous suspects, since one of them must have lied about the missing-woman that was really murdered. Such a retroactive shift in perspective depends on Freud's compulsion-to-repeat. Marlowe literally stumbles upon the corpse, a lucky "accident" that happens three times in the whole novel. The "mystery" is nothing more than a collection of chance discoveries only connected by Marlowe's lucky pair of eyes.

Chandler sees this awareness of "malignant fate" as part of Hammett's hardboiled legacy. Chandler defends the private detective genre against the Sherlock Holmes-style detective story in a famous essay, "The Simple Art of Murder": "All this [classical detective formula] (and for Hammett too) is for me not quite enough ... [our] world is not a very fragrant world, but it is the world you live in, and certain writers with tough minds and a cool spirit can make very interesting and even amusing patterns out of it."³² For Chandler, the girl's murder becomes a fatalistic symbol of "our" mad and dangerous world. He believes such a symbolic connection between "our" reality and the private detective's reality depends on how the narrators organize the violence.³³

These notes paraphrase Freud's diagnosis of a superstitious number or word, the way the compulsion-to-repeat weights coincidences as "malignant fate." The genre's most famous private "I's" suffer from the same neurosis! But already my second suspect has a more sophisticated sense of an "inside" than the Op. Chandler's spaces hold frightening corpses, undoubtedly uncanny material, but they lack the supernatural origins of the Op's material. Chandler strives to create a more realistic version of "our" world to contain his private "I." New interrogation tools are needed to cope with this new kind of setting. Theorist Slavoj Žižek hones Freud's notion of the uncanny to a fine point more suited for examining Marlowe's private "I."

Žižek notices within Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* a technique he calls the "phallic montage," the way the film's protagonist sees a simple but ominous change in a country setting: "a perfectly 'natural' and 'familiar' situation is denatured, becomes 'uncanny' ... as soon as we add to it a small, supplementary feature, a detail that 'does not belong' ... within the frame of the idyllic scene."³⁴ Žižek's account of the camera's "eye" captures each sentence of Marlowe's narration. Marlowe slowly reveals the monstrous bottom of the beautiful scene. Each "I saw..." assembles the full horror of the corpse, gradually revealing "phallic" bits of uncanny material "sticking out" of the country scene. As Marlowe describes the corpse's "wool jerkin" and "wave of blond hair," his gaze paces the *extimité* evidence suspensefully and *sparingly*. So perhaps his old nickname "private dick" is more than appropriate.

Now Freud's uncanny finds a new context, placed *inside* the eyes and brains of a specific person, rather than relegated to some universal reservoir of primal fears. These fears still feed the uncanny, but Žižek focuses on the more important *medium* that channels these uncanny energies: the first-person narrator that Freud ignored in "The Sandman." I dub such textual equivalents to Hitchcock's montage the phallic *gaze*. Chandler masters the art of delivering uncanny details to his readers, using the careful phallic gaze, rather than Hammett's haphazard imagery. Such focus points back to a place where Freud keeps his analysis focused on one mind, the therapy narrative of Ratman.

"I was far down in the depths": Dreamed Responsibility

My second suspect narrator, Marlowe, sees and organizes the uncanny corpse in the lake – a major new clue that Hammett never offers. Hammett's Op cannot narrate the dreamed-up ghosts or the supernatural aura of the cult leader, because his private "I" lacks the phallic gaze that suspensefully processes such uncanny material. Žižek turns up a hot new clue, locating the uncanny material within a specific kind of gaze, on the inside. I've suspected the private "I" inside from the beginning, and with Žižek's help, I can look at Marlowe's most interior state – his dreams. As with the Op, Ratman's dream-structured language works well with the dreams of private dicks. Chandler integrates dream imagery in reality more cleverly than Hammett, a skill Ratman would envy.

After drinking heavily again, Marlowe falls asleep and dreams of the corpse: "I dreamed I was far down in the depths of icy green water with a corpse under my arm ... as I was about to burst from lack of air the corpse came alive ... rolling over and over in the water spinning its long hair."³⁵ Chandler lets the omnipotence-of-thoughts mechanism go crazy, the dream animating Marlowe's memory of the corpse. Marlowe's phallic gaze zooms straight on the uncanny corpse, as undead as Hammett's cult leader.

More importantly, this dream strengthens the inside/outside perceptual distinction that Hammett struggles with. The dream takes place "far down in the depths," literally submerging Marlowe in the dark water – the element that hid the violent murder by "outside" forces. A new distinction springs up, solidifying Marlowe's sense of an inside. In the abnormal perception of sleep (his eyes closed, half-drunk, and vulnerable) the *extimité* threat increases to nightmare proportions as the corpse is fully revealed. But when Marlowe wakes up, readers find greater reassurance in his awake-sight. There, Marlowe holds faith in his interiority, the coherency "inside" the man who sees and collects clues.

The dream also swells with Marlowe's oppressive sense of responsibility in the case. The web of corpse-coincidences around Marlowe translates into guilt in the dream, as Marlowe drags the dead girl underwater. The "malignant fate" surrounding his quest turns threatening while he sleeps. Such a neurotic idea of responsibility always catches Freud's attention. Ratman also had problems

coping with responsibility, as Freud records: “obsessional neurotics ... turn their thoughts by preference to those subjects upon which ... our knowledge and judgements must necessarily remain open to doubt. The chief subjects of this kind are paternity, length of life, life after death, and memory.”³⁶

To avoid his overriding doubts, Ratman constructs bizarre rituals and superstitions in hopes of controlling the uncontrollable. Marlowe’s nightmares express superstitious responsibility for the corpse. Memory makes the most dramatic issue here, since Marlowe’s case depends on doubting his crooked suspects’ memories to find the killer’s trail. In dreams, Marlowe doubts even his own innocence. Ratman worries over *very act* of remembering, an act that turns outside perceptions into internal memories. Any sense of a self depends on coherent organization of memories, and *extimité* destroys Ratman’s sense of coherent interiority.

Since Marlowe is the narrator, he must have a strong sense of interiority to escape Ratman’s plight. However, Žižek offers another angle on this obsessive dreaming, describing Philip Marlowe’s formula: “All [Marlowe’s] effort is directed toward clarifying the contours of the trap into which he has fallen ... [that] poses a threat to his very identity as a subject. ...[He is] an active hero caught in a nightmarish game whose real stakes escape him.”³⁷ Marlowe’s compulsion-to-repeat turns the murder case into a fate-lined nightmare where he bears coincidental responsibility for the murders, his defective “efforts” spoiling his sense of freedom and identity. Questions of “normal” subjectivity

are rarely phrased in terms like “trap” or “game,” because the detective’s actions and ultimately correct thinking *should* be enough to trust his freedom as a subject. I need another dream to examine this question.

Just before the “game” ends, Marlowe gets knocked-out and wakes up to find a woman suspect brutally murdered – unleashing his dream doubts into reality. Marlowe stares at a framed advertisement for a vacation place: “Beyond the [picture’s] beach a curving bay was bluer than any bay has any right to be. It was flecked and dotted with arching white sails ... across the bottom of the picture was printed in large capitals SEE THE FRENCH RIVERA BY THE BLUE TRAIN.”³⁸ The shocking plot-twists of the corpse and the possibility that Marlowe might be framed for this murder combine to heighten the claustrophobic sense of Žižek’s unknown “contours.” But as soon as he awakens, Marlowe’s gaze pauses on an advertisement’s exaggeration of the French Rivera. Stark capital letters and his cynical narration quickly delineate the fantasy. Marlowe’s internal perceptions are solid, while the “outside” contains a poster fantasy and uncanny dreams.

This is the heart of Žižek’s “game”: “the detective ... undergoes a kind of ‘loss of reality,’ finds himself in a dreamlike world.”³⁹ Like the Op, Marlowe doubts what he sees in the bloody room. Again, Ratman’s anxiety over “universal doubts” (of memory, of the afterlife, or...) corrupts the narrative. This climatic moment even weaves Marlowe’s superstitions into the scene, as he gets knocked-out and still wakes up to find another body. The failure of his

subjectivity leaves readers in nail-biting anticipation of the eventual solution, wondering what happened while he was unconscious. The general meaning of the case, the identity of the body on the bed, or why Marlowe can't remember – all these problems *will be solved* eventually by his diligent subjectivity.

Marlowe's cynicism reassures that his now conscious perceptions will *eventually* reorganize the impossible events in a coherent way, that the interior/exterior distinctions will soon be sorted out. This new clue recalls Hammett's difficulties in writing a coherent private "I" stream-of-consciousness style. The Op's hallucination of the cult-hideout ghost stages an uneasy collision between dream (inside material) and the outside world. The ghost is troublesome *extimité*, material separate from the solution of the mystery and the Op's inside organization. Marlowe on the other hand, dissects the outside world with his phallic gaze, ultimately reorganizing the dream and real world into a coherent whole. Once he discovers what really happened while he was dreaming, the stronger desire for *solution* will hide the uncanny material.

"Everything else flows from it"

The questions raised in the hotel bedroom lead to another pressure point shared among my three novels: how the detective sees the conclusion of the case, writing out the narrative of what the case *means*. The case "breaks" a few minutes before Marlowe gets knocked-out, as a beautiful woman points a gun at him. Marlowe talks, "I never liked this scene. Murderer produces gun, points same at detective. Murderer tells detective the whole sad story, with the idea of

shooting him at the end of it ... the gods don't like this scene either. They always manage to spoil it."⁴⁰ With self-reflexive cynicism, Marlowe identifies the formula that produced his character, believing in a new kind of fate. He trusts a force that pushes him along on his quest, and like Mallory's knights, god is on his side.

Ratman's obsessive formations help to understand Marlowe's reluctant private detective subjectivity, as the detective organizes the case. Twice Marlowe makes vital remarks about the shape of the case, confiding the case to reasonable outsiders (like the Op's writer-friend). One voice criticizes Marlowe: "I think I can understand your detective instinct to tie everything that happens together in one compact knot, but don't let it run away with you. Life isn't like that at all – not life as I have known it."⁴¹ The criticism is fair, since Marlowe's obsessions buck against reality the same way as the Op's, birthing equally confusing resolutions. But in this novel-world, Marlowe's solution is always right in the end, and he tells it straight: "that's what I call a real coincidence. It can't be anything else but, but it's basic, fundamental. Everything else flows from it."⁴²

These two quotes present two crucial conceptual images for the obsessive mind, the knot and the unifying center touching all the disparate parts of the mind's experience. Marlowe places that point outside of himself, making it the unknown goal of the mystery – the whole time ignoring the most important

center. All the seemingly disconnected parts of the mystery only have one thing in common. They only make sense when Marlowe *is present*.

Such mind-boggling organization begs for *Ratman's* therapeutic insights. Freud explains the obsessive thought through the idea of a sentence containing ellipses, the root of an obsessive disorder, why Ratman thinks:

“If I marry the lady, some misfortune will befall my father in the next world.” If we insert intermediate [thoughts] which have been skipped ... we would get the following train of thought: “If my father were alive, he would be furious over my design of marrying the lady as he was in the scene in my childhood, so that I should fly into a rage with him once more and wish him every possible evil.”⁴³

The whole middle of Ratman's reasoning disappears under censoring ellipses when he thinks an obsessive thought. His faith in the power of his thoughts does the rest, and he is suddenly convinced: ‘I think bad things and bad things happen.’ Marlowe's dark faith when facing the gun-waving woman is a wonderful example, putting the weight of responsibility in an unseen world of hardboiled fate, ignoring his own agency in the situation. When Marlowe's obsessive construction hides beneath ellipses, it's easy for him (and his readers) to say: “I think about this case, and bad things happen to my suspects.” Both

Ratman and Marlowe repress analytic awareness of their mental situations, making their thoughts seem potent and dangerous in reality.

This comes clearer when Marlowe tries to blame himself for the murders halfway through the book, making his dream-responsibility overt; "It's only Marlowe finding another body. He does it rather well ... Murder-a-day Marlowe."⁴⁴ His sarcasm barely contains his hysterical, natural reaction to finding a dead body. Perhaps the excluded text, hidden by obsessive ellipses might read this, after analysis: "My suspect was important and dangerous. I can't solve this case yet, so I couldn't stop this murder. I must be an active hero as I always have, until I stumble across the murderer." But all readers get from Marlowe is the *result* of his active heroism; a complicated arrangement of bodies that only he can decipher. If these in-between thoughts are censored, then the case seems a compact knot at the end. Marlowe *himself* secretly organizes Žižek's uncanny "trap" of private "I" narration.

I believe these ellipses are the most necessary narrative device of private detective novels. Without the foreclosure of in-between thoughts, the plot loses the immediacy of Chandler's motto for Marlowe, "I think and act quickly ... the case happens how I think." Telling the story this way represses the stiff genre formula beneath the novel, the textual delay that keeps the case from being solved too quickly. Ratman's thought pattern works like a crazed narrative engine, keeping a suspenseful immediacy in Marlowe's experience. That crucial

kind of subjectivity evokes the uncanny edges of Marlowe's world, forcing the reader to see with obsessive eyes.

Lady in the Lake

Examining how Marlowe sees people within the case will weave Zizek and Freud's ideas together, moving my case towards the final suspect. I only investigate how Marlowe sees one person; the gun waving woman that ends up dead, tangled within Marlowe's compact "knot." Marlowe's investigation begins by searching for her after she abandons her husband. Until the hotel room, Mildred Haviland is missing "known" only through the memories of others. An old lover introduces her: "Smart, smooth and no good. She had a way with men. She could make them crawl over her shoes."⁴⁵ Mildred has seduced almost every one of Marlowe's male suspects, and her promiscuities ultimately lead to her murder in the hotel room. Marlowe's investigation uncovers her trail of false names, random relationships, and secret marriages. Her twisted life makes it impossible to find the truth of the mystery.

Zizek explains the appeal of such luscious characters, the deadly beauties that the French dubbed "*femme fatale*": "She who ruins the lives of men and is at the same time victim of her own lust for enjoyment, obsessed by a desire for power, who endlessly manipulates her partners ... we can never be quite sure if she enjoys or suffers or is herself the victim of manipulation."⁴⁶ Such characters first hold evocative power over the reader because they are free. Mildred's desires for power and money surface in violent ways. Her twisted career reflects

a casual sexuality that breaks all the social rules for expressing desire.

Ultimately, her life calls into question all the memories of Marlowe's suspects.

And many of those suspects lie to protect her.

But Before I fit Mildred into my larger case, I'll review my file this far.

Marlowe's phallic gaze successfully organizes the uncanny lake scene, his crazy dreams, and ultimately the narrative of the mystery. Hammett's failed attempt at stream-of-consciousness narration could not control uncanny material as well as Chandler's method. Hammett's failure warranted my initial investigation of the private "I" inside. But now, Chandler seems to have solved the problem, recognizing a special gaze that originates *inside* and locates uncanny evidence. The figure of Mildred threatens Marlowe's more coherent narrative. Her pure desires distort the memories of Marlowe's male suspects that she duped. Freud called memories one of Ratman's most crucial points of "universal doubt," so she disrupts Marlowe's obsessive case. Mildred's influence on the plot explodes in the novel's most uncanny scene where the *femme fatal* comes back to life.

Through a series of complicated twists, Marlowe discovers that Mildred murdered his first suspect's wife (the lucky man drinking scotch with Marlowe back by the lake) and assumed her identity to cover up the murder. No one notices that the "Lady in the Lake" is really alive, that the murderous *femme fatal* secretly drove the entire novel by faking her own death.

In a menacing scene, Marlowe describes his first encounter with the armed and "undead" Mildred in the hotel room: "the girl crossed her ankles ... and

looked at me under long beaded lashes ... it was a quiet, secret face.”⁴⁷ Her dark beauty and refined appearance reinforce the made-up power of a woman confidant of her sexuality. Her “secret face” increases the threatening power of her unknown desires. That tantalizing secret completes Zizek’s definition of *femme fatal*, since Marlowe can’t understand her ultimate motivation, or who “manipulates” her. His phallic gaze cannot fit her character into the overall solution-narrative.⁴⁸

This has implications for my investigation of private “I” insides. Mildred must die so Marlowe can solve the case. She dies, as easily as Fitzstephen. Marlowe tells his story at the end, explaining like the Op in a way that maintains a sturdy sense of his inside. My last private “I” suspect lacks that security, and we can see just how tangled up the dream of an inside gets from here. Just wait for the final episode...

Episode Three: The Private “I” Finds the Fire on the Inside

“...going against nature”

BANG.

My thesis began with that sound, an uncanny explosion shaking the Continental Op’s home. My thesis ends with a fire threatening a new detective’s whole world. Ross Macdonald’s The Underground Man features Lew Archer, the most fully developed and problematic private “I” subjectivity so far.⁴⁹ Archer tangles with the case of a rich family, finding their adult son who disappeared during a giant forest fire that consumes the outlying regions of Los Angeles. Archer reminds the reader of the ominous fire as he drives to the family’s cabin near the burning forest: “We were approaching the head of the canyon. The smell of burning grew stronger in my nostrils. I felt as though we were going against nature.”⁵⁰ Even though Archer’s case has failed so far, his phallic gaze notices the uncontrollable destruction raging at the edge of the horizon, foreboding violence.

These flames carry the symbolic weight of Chandler’s and Hammett’s sense of fate, pushing Archer “against nature,” against the normal self-organization of inside/outside; all to find the novel’s first body. A quick review of all three uncanny leads will highlight this change for my case against the private “I.” Hammett’s ghost in the cult hideout and Chandler’s corpse in the lake are equally frightening events. The respective narrators solve their cases, finally re-organizing these uncanny sights into a story. But Macdonald’s fire is

ongoing and *out of Archer's control*. His private "I" cannot contain this *extimité* material as easily as the Op or Marlowe, justifying my case against the modern idea of a stable self. My valuable new lead promises to disrupt all that Archer sees during his case.

How Archer sees a scene, the cabin specifically, illustrates the same fate-dripped suspense as his forefathers in detective fiction: "we came to an opening in the trees. Smoke was still rising from the charred branches ... [T]here was a hole in the ground ... reluctantly I looked down into the hole. In its shallow depth a man's body lay curled like a fetus ... [with] dirt stuffed [in] his open mouth and clung to his eyes."⁵¹ The phallic gaze and narration have never been so seamlessly blended, the way fire-fate marks the tree over the murdered body. Macdonald carefully pauses over the "denatured" spot in the bloody hole, *just before* dragging the reader up close to the claustrophobic corpse-image of the titled "underground man." Archer's is "reluctant" to go "against nature" and visit the unexpected murder scene, recalling the omnipotence-of-thoughts that haunted Marlowe. Archer almost blames the crime on his physical presence in the scene, weighted by the burden of fate burning up the forest.

Archer's reluctance also points to a more valuable site of study, the danger the private detective poses to subjectivity. Archer is the first detective who is *afraid to see* the *extimité* his phallic gaze will expose. Archer suspensefully searches another suspect's house later, flushing out this new sense of danger lurking behind how the detective sees. "I turned off the kitchen light ... The

house was silent ... I felt a physical anxiety close to nausea.”⁵² And then Archer finds yet another body, but we’ve seen enough bodies by now, I think. His “anxiety” is something new, however – why is Archer chicken? The narrative tension Macdonald inherits from similar suspenseful scenes in Chandler and Hammett decays into near hysteria as Archer nears the phallic point this scene. Žižek’s special phallic gaze has an overwhelming side that he never fully develops.

In another paper examining Martin Scorsese’s remake of the classic *film noir*, *Cape Fear*, Žižek notices the danger in over-concentration on the point of *extimité*. He criticizes Scorsese for exaggerating the uncanny threat of the original, letting the phallic spot overwhelms the narrative, rather than subtly disturb it, as in Hitchcock’s work. “Although [Scorsese’s] reading may appear ‘deeper’ than the allegedly ‘superficial’ reduction of the force of evil to an external threat, what gets lost is precisely the remainder of an outside.”⁵³ If, as Scorsese directs, the uncanny threat appears *within* the conflicts of a “normal” family threatened by *Cape Fear*’s villain; then the original movie’s sense of an idyllic family life “inside” is lost. The “deeper” reading locates complicated emotional pain *within all* the characters, crushing the distinctions of inside/outside that the *extimité* stain menaces.

In the same way, Archer ends up feeling nausea and dread of his burned-out world, never noticing the idyllic pieces of a scene that Chandler always included. Archer gives no sense of a glittering pure lake corrupted by an

uncanny corpse murdered by *outside* forces. In the book, Cogito and the Unconscious, Dolar carries this argument into Descartes' *cogito*, the manifesto of modern subjectivity. He questions how modern minds believe in a subject (a person with inside/outside clearly delineated) who says, "I think therefore I am," when the uncanny disrupts conscious perception with unconscious pain. As Dolar reveals, Freud's unconscious always menaces the idyllic inside where the modern subject is located. But the threat to subjectivity does not come from the outside, rather it is *extimité*, an un-located place, neither inside nor outside. The subject cannot know unconscious material by definition, but the unconscious influences the subject. With this new model, to say "I think" is impossible. It seems that Cartesian subject will always be paralyzed by these repressed, impossible-to-know thoughts. This highlights the importance of the uncanny in understanding Lacanian revision of the Cartesian subjectivity model, a change *originating* within Freud's unconscious.

Žižek temporarily delays that obstacle, following Descartes' reasoning that such unknowable, un-symbolized parts of reality (Lacan's Real again) must be attached to some organizing, equally unknown force – Descartes' God. Žižek summarizes, "[God is] the opaque, full Other possessing what the subject constitutively lacks."⁵⁴ For once a mysterious god fills in reality's blanks, a complete Cartesian subject is produced, with Lacan's "Real" experience (incomprehensible areas of experience that the *extimité* points towards) loosely symbolized. That is, until the uncanny creeps back to the surface. Dolar

reminds how the Enlightened subject leaves some excess material that cannot fit into the modern Symbolic organization, burying a reservoir of uncanny material *within* the modern subject.⁵⁵

When Macdonald draws the phallic gaze to its most sophisticated intensity, Archer's gaze threatens the idea of that subjectivity itself, crippling that idyllic interior world with unflinching focus on unconscious traumas. Now I must review my previous evidence of Chandler's corpse and Hammett's ghost. These uncanny elements are kept safely outside of the final coherent summaries of their cases. The Op rejects the *extimité* material (telling Fitzstephen, "You know damn well all this didn't happen") and Marlowe hides the corpses in his dreams that are separate from his real-world solution. But I suspect the private "I" inside, and I am convinced these coherent narratives are alibis concealing darker truths about the modern sense of an inside. We will soon see how Archer's dreams lack that same coherency, revealing how my psychoanalytic interrogation picks apart the modern subject's alibi of an inside.

"Brief dream" of an inside

I determine Macdonald's distinctions of interior/exterior by investigating Archer's dreams. One night he is drinking and dreaming, just like good old Marlowe: "I was watching the cogwheels of the universe turning. It resembled, on a large scale, one of those boxes of gears that engineers fool around with ... I seemed to be able to see the whole apparatus at once, and understand [it]."⁵⁶ The whole dream reads like a textbook case of omnipotence-of-thoughts disorder.

Like Ratman, Archer dreams he can control the world with his thoughts, playing with God's machinery with dreamy ease. "I understood" he declares, in a rare show of absolute clarity. In the comfort of dreams, he's sure he glimpses the whole picture, the whole story of the mystery...

But his insight only lasts one small paragraph, illustrating Archer's limited sense of dreaming. "Quiet water lapped at the edge of my attention," Archer notes, snapping out of the brief dream.⁵⁷ He never mentions the dream again. It's almost as if he never dreamed, since the moment of transition (a mere phrase!) is so quick. My case marks the change, remembering Marlowe's dream of the corpse underwater. His nightmare dragged him into the threatening deep water, mimicking the violent forces *outside* of the idyllic lake scene. The dream reinforces Marlowe's faith in his *waking* perceptions, for when he wakes up the *extimité* image of a living corpse remains contained in the dream-world.

Archer finds never that security. He dreams so briefly that the physical world, the lapping waves just outside of his closed eyes, almost mimics the sound of his dream machinery. He cannot wake up and trust his perceptions again like Marlowe, for his dreams offer false insight into the case. His woke-up inside mind lacks Marlowe's clarity. His perceptions are overwhelmed by *extimité*, that material stuck between awake and sleeping perception. The dream ultimately unravels the security Žižek saw in God for the Cartesian subject. Archer's dream of "the cogwheels of the universe" makes temporary explanations for all

the *extimité* material, just like God symbolizes the Real parts of the modern subject's experiences. But the dream ends so quickly that his momentary clarity about "everything" seems as absurd as using toy blocks to construct a church.

After a "Healthy slug of whisky," Archer has an even shorter dream that illustrates another subtle chink in his sense of an inside: "In the dream that took over my sleeping mind I was due to arrive someplace in a very short time. But when I went out to my car it had no wheels, not even a steering wheel. I sat in it like a snail in a shell and watched the night world go by."⁵⁸ This dream-paralysis is not physically threatening, like the Op's hallucinated ghost or Marlowe corpse. Archer is not menaced by outside forces. He just sits by himself in the dark. Just like his physical desire not to see another corpse, he seems content not to move in his dream as well. The language of absence operates here, with "no wheels," "not even a steering wheel," and "night world," all pointing to a new psychoanalytic tool – Lacan's *objet petit a*. The *objet petit a* is another addition to the straight model of Freudian unconscious, a center point for all one's repressed desires, something one lacks but can *never* possess.⁵⁹ The dream points to something missing, a captivating *lack* that Archer cannot discover himself, but the desire is strong enough to push Archer through the mystery. My task for the rest of this thesis is to locate that missing part.

Flawed Reflection

These problems materialize more clearly as I study how Archer sees his suspects with a nearly clinical eye for unconscious desires. With the fresh

memory of Chandler's *femme fatal*, I look to Macdonald's central female character – a beautiful teenaged kidnapper he chases for the entire novel. When Archer finally catches her, he discovers she has been drugged and running from a murderer the whole time – the deadly *femme fatal* turns out to be a victim trying to save the boy she kidnapped. Archer's questions probe her memories, bringing to light unconscious material that changes the whole case: "Her eyes looked through me as if I was made of cloud and she was peering into the night behind me ... [She spoke,] 'It was a dark night. I could see the light moving around in the trees. It was some kind of big machine and made a noise like a monster...,’ she said in her regressive, fairy-tale voice.”⁶⁰ Macdonald gives this character a self-consciously “regressive” voice, the voice of a girl whose ability to say “I think” gets completely overwhelmed by dark memories. Her childish-fear of a “big machine” comes from her viewing the murder of Stanley's father when she was young, witnessing a bulldozer burying the body.

Here the balance between Freud's unconscious and the narrative pace of a private detective novel needs to be examined. Macdonald, in his Freudian zeal, lets a contrived voice tell Archer everything he needs to solve the case. The detective's eye reflects Ratman's “universal doubt” of memories to wreck the stability of the girl's character. Dolar situates such hard-nosed belief in the unconscious *against* the Cartesian *cogito*: “I [subject] don't think in order to be ... In order to be, I have to exclude a knowledge I don't want to know anything about.”⁶¹ Through his exaggerated phallic gaze, Archer reduces his suspect to a

weepy, child-like mess of previously “excluded” memories of a murder that conveniently solves the mystery. Her witness ties together all the dangling ends of the plot. But her flood of threatening, previously concealed material comes from the *inside*, destroying any sense of interior/exterior separation – this material is *extimité*.

The private dick hounds such characters until he finds their unconscious pain seething beneath the surface, marked by *extimité*, the spot he notices with his phallic gaze. In the same way, no one can trust Cartesian subjectivity when unconscious memories gibber madly below the level of consciousness. Can Freud be reconciled with Cartesian subjectivity at all? For now, Dolar and Macdonald answer “NO” as the *femme fatal* gets weepy and collapses as a character. As long as uncanny memories infect the interior/exterior relationship necessary for Cartesian subjectivity, Archer’s phallic gaze will get lost in the *extimité* material. Without this traditional relationship, Archer will lose all his freedom as a subject.

By the original parameters of my thesis, I focus on my suspect narrators’ special way of seeing at three specific moments found in all private detective books. I investigate how they see a suspect’s room (the Op in the cult hideout), the way they see people (Marlowe and the *femme fatal*), or the way they see in dreams (Archer’s universe-machine). My fourth kind of moment, the way the dick arranges the convoluted plot at the conclusion, holds a different position now. When the first three moments are interrogated separately with my

psychoanalytic method, they reveal how shakily constructed the modern notion of the inside really is – closing my case against the suspect private “I.” However, the way the private detective explains the mystery serves as an *alibi* for the Op and Marlowe, escaping the *extimité* threat uncovered during the case. In my third suspect Archer, the girl’s stability as a subject cannot be narrated coherently. This threat will soon infect Archer’s own moment of solution.

This theoretical relationship complicates as I study the body discovered at the beginning of the story. His name was Stanley Waller, a once happily married man with a young son (who later gets kidnapped by the fake *femme fatal*). Stanley’s life makes difficult study since he dies before Archer ever questions him. But when his wife tells his story, he seems a model case for Dolar’s dilemma of the *cogito* and the unconscious: “My husband has been looking for his [missing] father for some time ... and gradually breaking up ... he’s one of those overconfident people who turns out to have no confidence at all.”⁶²

Remembering Macdonald’s idea of the unconscious, the narrative impact of Waller’s quest falls out. Stanley’s idyllic marriage and family life decays as his unconscious wounds from his father’s abandonment fester. All trouble in Archer’s world stems from emotional damage, so naturally this wonderful world collapses as Archer enters the scene. He finds clues in such hidden wounds. As Dolar summarizes it, “the choice of being is the choice of a subject without the unconscious, thus the choice of consciousness, the choice of a ‘normal,’ a

seemingly 'natural' form of subjectivity."⁶³ Thus, Archer taps unconscious desires with his phallic gaze, puncturing the "normal" world that Waller's family once had. Waller's "confidence" in his own identity will also collapse.

While that collapse produces the tension for the entire narrative, Lacanian psychoanalysis goes beyond Macdonald's analysis, finally locating the *lack* responsible for Stanley's collapse. His wife analyzes the situation: "Stanley was looking for his own lost self ... he got more and more wrapped up in searching for his father" as the reason why her marriage ended.⁶⁴ Like Dolar, Macdonald treats "normal" Cartesian subjectivity as a *choice* to ignore the uncanny threat of unconscious material. In the novel, this normal consciousness feels fake as a candy coating hiding the pain that the dick cracks open to see the rotten insides. Dolar calls such identity crisis "the pit of desubjectivation, of turning into the *objet petit a* ... there is a being at stake in consciousness, but which has to remain a 'half-being,' a fake being, given the impossibility to espouse the *objet petit a*."⁶⁵

Stanley's missing father becomes more than a psychic wound with this new framework. Now the father, the *objet petit a*, leaves a central hole in Stanley's identity, a wound repressed by 'normal' subjectivity. Dolar thinks Stanley will never find his father, and that *lack* guarantees Archer's service for years to come. For *every* subject's unconscious contains a lack that can never be filled, a hidden stain exposed under Archer's phallic gaze. Archer will always have another case after he locates that spot in new suspects.

Most importantly, this model reveals that subjectivity is not a simple choice between unconscious or *cogito*. The incomplete subject of Cartesian *cogito* lacks the same *objet petit a* at the center of the unconscious. Macdonald cannot show Stanley's happy family life before the corruption of the outside (remember how Scorsese's remake of *Cape Fear* showed a dysfunctional family, rather than an idyllic life corrupted by the villain), precisely because his private dick only sees the lack, the spot that normal subjectivity covers-up. The uncanny fire always raging out of *Archer's* control exaggerates how unconscious pain menaces traditional subjectivity.

Now Lacan's *extimité* is all the private detective sees, and the careful distinction that Chandler and Hammett maintained between interior/exterior collapses in *Archer's* suspects. Here my thesis case comes clear, remembering how Hammett and Chandler protect their detectives' sense of an inside. The Op's final explanation of the case secures his private "I's" stability, destroying the doubting Fitzstephen in the big BANG. Marlowe's phallic gaze ultimately tames the uncanny, once he wakes up and sees the solution. But *Archer's* phallic gaze collapses the secure insides of Stanley and the kidnapping girl. If his suspects cannot be subjects, then the *reflection* of that instability hurts *Archer's* sense of an inside (remember his nauseous reaction to the case). *Archer's* solution-narrative points to weaknesses in the subjectivity of all his characters, his own private "I" included. Dolar's interrogation of the *cogito* exposes the "pit of desubjectification," an excessive immersion in

incomprehensible *extimité*. Archer's yet-unseen solution, his alibi of an inside, will crumble under my case against the private "I."

Underground Men

Bearing the powerful *objet petit a* in minds, I finish with Archer's solution-narrative, a tangled composite of coincidences beyond anything a private dick ever narrated. In the climatic scene, Archer finds Stanley's father's decades-old corpse buried *beneath* the place where Stanley died. This prompts Archer to notice the scenery with his unique gaze: "smoke hung like twilight in the sky ... stormclouds were moving down from the northeast ... It looked like a day of change."⁶⁶ The list of coincidences leading up to this moment reads like Ratman's diary: the father buried in the same place as the son, foreboding stormclouds exchanging places with the fate-full fire, Archer present at all the murder spots, and finally, Archer bringing the mystery back to same place where Stanley's father-quest began.

Archer's fierce phallic gaze drags every narrative thread together to a single spot, the site of the original murder. The *lack* of a father in Stanley's life gets magnified under Archer's gaze, the double murder site becoming the novel's narrative *objet petit a* – the underground *men*, two suspects taking the truth of the case to their graves. Finally, I notice Archer's sadness at Stanley's failed quest. Macdonald draws another laborious symbolic conclusion, paralleling Stanley and Archer in the same kind of obsessive quest. Macdonald worries about the impossible quest for the *objet petit a* destroying Archer as well. As

seen in Archer's dreams, his nausea comes from his fear of his own centrality in the narrative, watching characters die under his gaze.

Macdonald winds his novel so tightly that these coincidences carry more symbolic weight than in Hammett or Chandler. Zizek analyzes such a violent phallic gaze with the *objet petit a* in mind. He concludes his *film noir* essay mentioned earlier with this analysis:

Noir narrative is that of the shift of *desire* into *drive* ... desire is that very force that compels us to progress infinitely from one signifier to another in hope of attaining the ultimate signifier ... drive is not 'progressive' but rather 'regressive,' bound to circulate endlessly around some fixed point of attraction, immobilized by its power of fascination ... [the *noir* hero] occupies [this] position witnessing ... the almost submarine succession of events in which he remains trapped.⁶⁷

Stanley and Archer tangle up with the same *objet petit a* of fascination, and Archer turns up body after body, paralyzed by his disgust of the world shaped by his gaze. Macdonald's "fascinating" organization sweeps the readers off their feet, but Archer lacks the sense of accomplishment that Hammett and Chandler's heroes found. This important sense of organization points to something beyond Macdonald's simple "choice" of Freudian unconscious over the

cogito. His private detective gets trapped by the *objet petit a*, the tool that Dolar situates *in between* Freud and Descartes.

This point needs Ross Macdonald once more, since he realized that his plots were thicker than those of his predecessors, challenging me to find out why: “I can think of few more complex critical enterprises than disentangling the mind and life of a first-person detective story writer from the mask of his private detective narrator.”⁶⁸ Macdonald’s literary aspirations surface a bit too clearly here, since the whole essay explains how Archer’s adventures are drenched with scenery and emotional wounds from Macdonald’s life. The author’s hidden pain compounds the complexity of the dick’s gaze. Macdonald believes his “deeper” reading justifies a place in Literature. But Macdonald’s hard-nosed Freudian unconscious stance represses the important part of his statement. The unique subjectivity of the dick, however produced, ultimately pokes holes in the idea of subjectivity (for readers and writers and detectives alike). *Thus*, I find critical interest in *how* (and not by whom) that contradictory subjectivity was produced.

I forgive Macdonald for foreclosing my thesis, but as I near my breathless conclusion, I’ll lay my last clues on the table, unraveling Macdonald’s mask and his hard line unconscious stance in one shot. In an essay about another novel *The Galton Case* (a book strangely resembling Underground), Macdonald reveals how his father left him when he was about Stanley’s son’s age.⁶⁹ With that revelation, he psychoanalyzes how that unconscious wound influences his narrative structure: “I like the repeated exile of Oedipus, the crucial events of

my novel seem to happen at least twice. Tom is a son who appears to kill a “father,” thus setting the whole story into circular motion.”⁷⁰ Through the formula of coincidence-bound murders that Hammett and Chandler so relentlessly followed, Macdonald bares his personal wounds under Archer’s eyes.

Wearing the mask of Archer, Macdonald re-produces the classical Freudian model of unconscious desire against his father’s formative childhood role – dancing readers around and around his personal point of obsession. This illustrates Lacan’s final secret, that the unconscious holds both *extimité* and the central lack that drives us. We cannot allow Macdonald to say that the unconscious cripples the subject, not with such a giant *lack* looming before us.

Conclusion: Locating a Little Boy

Macdonald may wear the mask of Archer, but Archer seeks a little boy resembling Macdonald all the way through Underground Man; the true *objet petit a* of the novel is Macdonald himself! First, the perfect final image from the mystery, when Archer almost saves the little boy from the clutches of the fake *femme fatale*: “She was holding the small boy against her, with one arm curled around his head and her hand over his mouth. He lay still beside her. Even his round blue eyes were perfectly still.”⁷¹ Stanley’s son sits captive, his eerie eyes meeting Archer’s gaze. Macdonald applies his unconscious notion of symbolism, showing the little boy threatened the same way as he was by the psychic wounds of his father’s abandonment.

The boy’s plight unfolds with suspenseful motion (a few seconds later a bad guy knocks Archer unconscious), coupled with the hypnotic freezing power that Žižek saw in the *objet petit a*. Macdonald himself uses the mask of Archer to endlessly circle around this scared little boy, the lack that can never be filled *in his own life*. The mask of Archer keeps the loop going, gives the illusion of motion at the end. The rain comes to wash away the symbolic fire, and eventually Archer will save the boy. But now, there the boy is, the novel’s *objet petit a* staring right back at the phallic gaze that produced him. The story comes to a momentary stop.

Žižek pushes into the heart of this moment, finally revealing Lacan's powerful attempt to settle the *cogito* within the Freudian framework, rather than abandoning the idea of Cartesian subjectivity that I critique:

For Lacan, the Cartesian subject, of course, is not aware of his active participation in his own victimization ... the unconscious truth of the subject's conscious experience of being a mere passive victim of circumstances ... [T]he subject attributed to the Freudian unconscious, is precisely [an] empty point of self-relating."⁷²

Žižek shows how Ross Macdonald's private "I" reflects the problem of subjectivity. All three private "I's" feel in fate a sense of increasing "victimization." They turn mysteries into strings of coincidence connected by an *objet petit a*, reducing violent action into passive circles that Žižek saw in *film noir* protagonists. For the Op the Dain Curse is the supernatural lack of coherence behind the mystery. Marlowe's *objet petit a* is the "Lady in the Lake," his always-silent, murdered witness. Macdonald completes this development, desiring the "Underground Man," the little boy's murdered father.

And nowhere is that *objet petit a* more visible than in Underground, where a little boy with Macdonald's eyes stares back at Archer. Macdonald tries to disguise the dick's emptiness by focusing on the physical and symbolic presence of unconscious wounds that only Archer can see, but in this moment I see much

more. The dick's specific subjectivity models the corruption and complexity behind the *idea of a subject*. In Dolar, the unconscious is the site where subjectivity is generated, as the subject circles the *objet petit a*, looking to fill an impossible lack with repetitious action. Like Macdonald staring at himself through Archer's eyes, Western subjects are passive. The modern subject is a walking contradiction that must repeat over and over "I think..." to fill the lack on the inside. The fearful attraction of that universal, empty revelation drives readers into the next formula private detective novel, haunted by the bare glimpses they find there about the truth of subjectivity.

✓
Zizek theorizes a reflective conclusion, "Therefore, what a multitude of actual phenomena (fragmentary phenomenal experiences) point toward, is the phenomenon itself, the construct of a continuous 'stream of consciousness,' a theater, a screen in our mind in which the mind directly perceives itself."⁷³

Locating the *cogito* within the unconscious is not a choice, as Macdonald likes to believe. The dick's gaze taps the dark parts of experience (Freud's "universal doubts"), pulling them tightly around an *objet petit a*. Readers of detective stories and modern subjects alike endlessly repeat the pattern, wanting to stare into the eyes of a scared little child that reflects a composite image of our own wounded consciousness – a screen in the Cartesian theater. Like the dick, subjects only "know" themselves from the empty center of the unconscious.

Macdonald reproduces this complex idea of subjectivity with uncanny accuracy. His composite private "I," containing "multitudes" of other detectives

from a half-century old formula, as well as voices from his personal past, is a spectacular re-construction of the subject that his Freudian stance would reject; a continuous “stream” of unconscious voices flowing together, as in Žižek’s pun on the meaning of “stream-of-consciousness.” We end where Hammett began, writing, “I want to try adapting the stream-of-conscious method, conveniently modified to a detective story”⁷⁴ We are all readers, who gaze into the unconscious with the bloody gaze of the private dick, making a composite identity out of fragments retrieved from the burning emptiness at the core of our unknown selves.

None of my private “I” suspects will get the *objet petit a* they desire. They only move on to the next novel. The next “episode” is an “empty point of self-relating,” a repetition of their *identity* as an unsatisfied private “I.” But his unconscious holds the secret of the modern subject, an empty point that fools us that we are really subjects. We *resolve* ourselves in a lack. The end of my case misses the spectacular violence of a private dick novel’s climax. My suspect private “I” won’t blow up like Hammett’s Fitzstephen and won’t go away like Marlowe’s dream. No, my case ends like Archer’s, dragging my three suspects into one burial place. I stare at the disassembled modern sense of an inside, asking, what remains? I find the repetitious movement of episodic adventures for my thesis case, investigating a private “I” that never existed – the *objet petit a* of my thesis.

But the obsessive rhythm and madness of the hardboiled private "I" (infecting my thesis all along) will come to my service. The Lacanian revision of the modern inside, the collected evidence of my case, will not stand either. In Archer, Žižek's phallic gaze cannot hold the inside/outside distinction. Dolar's reading of *extimité* is also troubled. For the Lacanian revision, while illustrating a complex new location for the *cogito*, the *cogito* is nevertheless *resolved* with *extimité* material in the end.

My case, three "episodes" mediated by scattered pieces of Žižek's impatient theoretical eye, has never been fully *assembled* before. In the Lacanian revision, without the Real (the "root" of uncanny), there is no subject. My case assembles a genealogy of the special private "I" that produces an environment that cannot support the revised subject. I'm staring into the eyes of a little boy infected by the private "I" obsession, unknown to myself. I am not resolved like the Lacanians. I am not resolved...

BANG

...now. I hear that sound now, holding all these thesis pages in my shaky fingers. I remember a little boy too. I investigate the brilliant world I had in my head, hiding in my secret fortress so many years ago. I wrote stories, I still write stories, all since the world went BANG in my head. And I survived then, just like I survived two the hardest semesters of my life making these thesis pages. I still have something

missing, but I hold fast to my pages about the magic world around me, this world I'm seeing. I hide now, writing by myself, just to keep my private detectives in that secret place. They hold me, shaky and surprised and a little scared by the noisy world. They help me make sense of me, and they hold me until the end.

Notes

¹ Diane Johnson, 75.

² Hammett, 251.

³ Hammett, 251.

⁴ The word "inside" may seem a bit over-connotated to use as foundation for this thesis. For the moment, I defer to Barbara Johnson's essay "Metaphor, Metonymy, and Voice in Their Eyes Were Watching God," a good example of how the term can be utilized in theory. Johnson explains, "The opposition between an inside and an outside is a standard way of describing the nature of a rhetorical figure. The vehicle, or surface meaning, is seen as enclosing an inner tenor, or figurative meaning. This relation can be pictured somewhat facetiously as a gilded carriage – the vehicle – containing Luciano Pavarotti, the tenor" (Johnson, World of Difference [Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987], 162.). In this frame, the constructed social world around the private detective (that Marxists focus on) is the "outside." I'm interested in the "inside," the invisible memories, clues, and perceptions of the private detective. The first-person narration conveys these materials, striving to convey the private detective's "inside." The word will play a crucial role in developing my argument, gently easing my discussion into psychoanalytic issues of subjectivity – the science of the "inside."

⁵ Hammett, 251.

⁶ Palmer, 1-25.

⁷ Telotte, 200-235.

⁸ Todorov, 42-52.

⁹ One might ask why I have episodes, and not chapters; or why private detective language spills into my thesis argument. I plead the double meaning of the word "episode." First, the repetitive, driving energy of an "episodic" structure is a valuable tool for a large-scale argument. My final meaning is suspensefully deferred into each new section, and the obligatory "our story thus far..." markers will keep my sense of perspective. Repetition is a key psychoanalytic term for my thesis, and with episodes, my structure *reflects* that part of my argument. And I also need "episode" in the sense of a neurotic *moment*. I will trace neurotic episodes in my narrators, and in a theoretical sense, my exposed mind is always in danger of "contracting" those obsessive symptoms. Maybe my argument is infected by my beloved genre, or maybe the

modern idea of the self has been infected all along. But that insight will also be deferred, just wait for the episodes to come ...

¹⁰ This note marks the beginning of a real-world chronology I will keep “underneath” my thesis proper. While my analysis mostly excludes the biographical or literary reputations of my authors, I will keep the necessary information in these notes. Mainly, I hope to reinforce that I suspect the private “I” and not the author and keep my prose brisk. I have space and liberty down here, giving this information like a *dossier* that a private detective might read during a case. My authors are arranged in chronological order, and a brief map of their biographies lays out the span of time between their respective developments of the private “I.”

¹¹ Freud, “Uncanny,” 133.

¹² Freud, “Uncanny,” 133-140.

¹³ Hammett, 207.

¹⁴ Freud, “Uncanny,” 151.

¹⁵ While Hammett’s writing career began in the pulps, his career ended with a nobler goal. Hammett worked as a real private detective in the 1920’s with the Pinkerton Detective Agency. His writings began as adventurous nostalgia for these days, but Curse marks a change in his career. It was his second novel, published in 1929. His attempt to produce a new literary voice, a “stream-of-consciousness” style for the pulp private detective, reveals his desire for literary acceptance. His rejection of the novel as “a silly book” is the first of many disappointments he experienced in this quest. William Nolan records the frustrated end of his career: “Hammett wanted to write ‘socially significant’ novels, not more crime novels. He resented the label of ‘mystery writer’” (Nolan, The Black Mask Boys [New York: Morrow and Company, 1985], 75-80.). Hammett died after only publishing five novels, all private detective books. His frustrated desire for canonization will echo in my other writers.

¹⁶ Hammett, 208.

¹⁷ Freud, “Uncanny,” 150.

¹⁸ Dolar, “Wedding,” 6.

¹⁹ Dolar, “Wedding Night,” 7.

²⁰ Dolar, “Wedding Night,” 7.

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- ²¹ Hammett, 203.
- ²² Dolar, "Wedding Night," 6.
- ²³ Freud, "Uncanny," 148.
- ²⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Ratman," 34.
- ²⁵ Hammett, 214.
- ²⁶ Freud, "Uncanny," 144.
- ²⁷ Hammett, 214.
- ²⁸ Freud, "Ratman," 67.
- ²⁹ Dolar, "Wedding Night," 15.
- ³⁰ Diane Johnson, 77.
- ³¹ Chandler, Lady, 40.
- ³² Chandler, "Simple," 991.

³³ Chandler's essay helps fit him into my endnote-chronology. Chandler published Lady in 1943, in the middle of his career. Chandler was born to a wealthy family, and lacked Hammett's adventures as a private detective. Like Hammett, he published short detective fiction in the pulps before moving into the novel form. Critic Stephen Knight relates the chronological relationship between my first two writers: "Hammett finished publishing before Chandler started, and they met rarely" (Knight, "A Hard Cheerfulness': An Introduction to Raymond Chandler" in American Crime Fiction, ed. Brian Docherty [New York: St. Martins Press, 1988], p.73). His literary reputation fared much better than Hammett's, as two volumes of the Library of America series are dedicated to Chandler's work.

- ³⁴ Slavoj Zizek, Looking, 88.
- ³⁵ Chandler, Lady, 79.
- ³⁶ Freud, "Ratman," 88.
- ³⁷ Zizek, Looking, 63.

³⁸ Chandler, Lady, 172.

³⁹ ^J Zizek, Looking, 63.

⁴⁰ Chandler, Lady, 170.

⁴¹ Chandler, Lady, 83.

⁴² Chandler, Lady, 150.

⁴³ Freud, "Ratman," 82.

⁴⁴ Chandler, Lady, 94.

⁴⁵ Chandler, Lady, 154.

⁴⁶ ^J Zizek, Looking, 65.

⁴⁷ Chandler, Lady, 165.

⁴⁸ The image of this woman waving a gun makes a powerful statement about the gender-defining power of the phallic gaze. At this crucial standoff in the hotel room, Mildred possesses the height of her narrative power as the ghostly sexual Lady, a menacing murderess and sexual object. That moment she becomes a symbolic victim to the sexual morality imposed on too many women in the private detective novel. Nobody ever looks at the male gaze – why do we need it, what does it mean for male-ness?

⁴⁹ While Macdonald also wrote for the pulps in the 1940s, he found a literary reputation in the 1960s. Underground was published in 1972, after Macdonald had established himself, in the words of Jeffrey Howard Mahan, "as the intellectual's hard-boiled writer" (Mahan, A Long Way From Solving That One [New York: U.P. of America, 1990], 49.). Indeed, Eudora Welty prefaces Self-Portrait, a serious writer with "socially significant" work that Hammett dreamed of. Hammett's thwarted desire for literary acceptance became Macdonald's prize.

⁵⁰ Macdonald, Underground, 30.

⁵¹ Macdonald, Underground, 36.

⁵² Macdonald, Underground, 84.

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- ⁵³ Slavoj Žižek, "Thing," 209.
- ⁵⁴ Žižek, "Thing," 209.
- ⁵⁵ Dolar, "Wedding Night," 7.
- ⁵⁶ Macdonald, Underground, 72.
- ⁵⁷ Macdonald, Underground, 72.
- ⁵⁸ Macdonald, Underground, 108.
- ⁵⁹ Dolar, "Wedding," 7.
- ⁶⁰ Macdonald, Underground, 194.
- ⁶¹ Mladen Dolar, "*Cogito*," 28.
- ⁶² Macdonald, Underground, 15.
- ⁶³ Dolar, "*Cogito*," 28.
- ⁶⁴ Macdonald, Underground, 40.
- ⁶⁵ Dolar, "*Cogito*," 29.
- ⁶⁶ Macdonald, Underground, 216.
- ⁶⁷ Žižek, "Thing," 223.
- ⁶⁸ Macdonald, Self-Portrait, 7.
- ⁶⁹ Macdonald Self-Portrait, 58-9.
- ⁷⁰ Macdonald, Self-Portrait, 59.
- ⁷¹ Macdonald, Underground, 71.
- ⁷² Žižek, "Cartesian," 265.
- ⁷³ Žižek, "Cartesian," 267.
- ⁷⁴ Diane Johnson, 72.

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