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Translations of the Uncanny

Talk given at the Renaissance Society
in Chicago for B. Ingrid Olson and
Astrid Klein exhibition (Appendix C)

Kate Zambreno

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

at the University of Chicago
5811 South Ellis Avenue
Cobb Hall, 4th Floor
Chicago, IL 60637

773 702 8670
info@renaissancesociety.org
renaissancesociety.org

I Recently the writer Sofia Samatar and I have been engaged in an ongoing conversation on literature and the uncanny. These conversations take place over email, as we send each other scraps of our readings, descriptions of untranslated texts that we wish to read, Internet research tangents, pirated PDFs of theory books, notes and meditations that we are free to borrow or steal, the gmail thread multiplying like a hall of mirrors. These investigations punctuated by much briefer and sometimes nonexistent notes on the drama of domesticity, my new baby, whether or not we should say yes to various academic invitations, complaints about the relative invisibility of our new books that have just been published, or the specific nature of our visibility, the alienating or non-event publishing can feel like. Sometimes we find ourselves reading the identical text at the same exact time, and this discovery has ceased to surprise us. I am never surprised, upon picking up, for instance, Roberto Bolaño's *Antwerp*, to know that Sofia is reading it simultaneously, without either of us mentioning the title yet to each other, or that our texts-in-process bear the same epigraphs from Rilke or Foucault. I knew when I mentioned to Sofia I was thinking of writing an appendix on "definitions or translations of the uncanny" that this was one of her primary fields of research, being a writer and thinker immersed in the ghostly and speculative, and I could only glean from her wisdom. But I had no idea that her interest in the strange and uncertain sensation that we call in English the "uncanny" had stretched lately to encompass not only the idea of the double or notions of reoccurrence but also particularly the question of space. We are both writing an essay on space and the uncanny, at the same time, it turns out, which is a coincidence that has ceased to surprise us. This month Sofia has been working on a scholarly article on a major Sudanese writer, in which she examines ideas of translation and intertextuality as uncanny—like the moment in the novel she has been studying for some time, where the narrator's double begins speaking in perfect English, in the middle of a square.

Her academic article on uncanniness is now entitled “Verticality and Vertigo,” she writes me. As for me, I am simply working on a fragment, this talk that is like a series of footnotes or asides, which attempts to reconsider the various errata and omissions of the book I have just published. Sofia tells me about a book entitled *The Author and his Double*, which circles around classical Arabic literary modes, and concepts of copying, plagiarism, misattribution, and “disappearing and mislaid authors,” she writes. In the classical period, a writer could gift a poem to someone else, and it could be published under someone else’s name. (I wonder, then, if it’s possible, Sofia could write this talk for me, and I could publish it under my name.) Sofia knows this would interest me, as so much of our ongoing conversation over the past year and a half has dealt with varieties of literary disappearance, in the mode of Henri Lefebvre’s *The Missing Pieces*, Enrique Vila-Matas’s *Bartleby & Co*, and the writers that haunt W.G. Sebald. She is interested, she writes me, in “abjection and self-immolation of a literary kind,” which interests me too, as she well knows: the performance of disappearance, the poetics of anonymity. I tell her about my desire to not even publish these appendices, or to publish them in some almost invisible way without an ISBN, and she writes me recently of her dream of publishing a book, under no name, and distributing it freely in public spaces, like train station bathrooms.¹ Of course I think we have some awareness that simultaneous to this shared fantasy we also complain that we have books out now and no one’s reading them, we are not on most of the lists, always this tension between a desire for invisibility, for our works to be read not through our personas or what we have written in the past, and worry over our own ghostliness. For both of us, it is not the visible remnants of the texts we are working on that interest us, these are just the remaining fragments, of the larger works we haven’t written yet, the speculative, possible, yet quixotic, work. Currently, I am working on a series about literature and disappearance that has yet to materialize,

which exists in an archive of various notebooks and boxed drafts and various passionate gmail chains. This journal article Sofia is now writing is but a fragment of a six-book series on literary decadence and dissolution she hopes to write, the research of which is vast and ongoing. Simultaneously with writing this academic article she is collecting notes and quotes for one of the books she's planning in the series, a book on Edgar Allen Poe, and thinking of how she will translate this article from the academic language in which she's now writing it, into yet another book, these potential projects endlessly multiplying so that everything we think about we turn somehow into a potential book, our possible infinite and invisible library. For us there's so much potential and energy in a project that is unfinished, so much to dream into, within all of our notes all the infinite possibility of literature, that is deflated by the actual books and the process of publishing, and the ways our identities and biographies are somehow codified and made to represent our projects. Or, beyond the question of publishing, what we actually write feels in a way a shadow of what we could have written, and so it is in our next book that we can truly transcend. In this way, I think, we both are performing shadow versions of Borges's Symbolist poet Pierre Menard's absurd heroism—the desire, not to write a contemporary version of *Don Quixote*, not to simply translate it into another language, but to somehow give birth to an identical, massive, text, yet possible only in fragments.

I have been complaining to Sofia for a while about this subterranean labor I've chosen to take on, this project of the appendix, how unnecessary and tangential these texts feel, how agonizing it has been to make the time during this period where I am so consumed, with everything about the baby, constant nursing and her recent separation anxiety, so that everything else in my life, teaching and writing et cetera feels rushed and done in the available pockets of the day. That I work on these appendices, which have been taking the form of talks, in the edges and corners of everything else. I remain drawn to this concept of

the Appendix, an organ that can be removed, also that which is unnecessary and excessive. I'm compelled to keep on circling back to my failures and errata of my attempt at writing this book, now published, even though I'm supposed to be working on a new first-person novel, one in which the narrator has omitted or disfigured certain facts, in order to cross the border from nonfiction into fiction, and to somehow be born anonymous, much like Rilke performs in his journal of Malte Laurids Brigge.² Sofia is of course enthused about the unnecessary, the extraneous, what has been erased.³ We have both complained about the expectation that an author who has written a book is supposed to write essays published online as a form of promotion, dutifully thoughtful pieces of literary history or source inspiration. Perhaps, I mused, these appendices, unpublishable in that they exist as talks, could be grotesqueries of the expected form. Also: perhaps an appendix as a form is uncanny, a doubling and return back to a previous text. I keep on rereading Freud's essay on "The Uncanny," or rather, his essay on "*Das Unheimliche*," which is translated into the English as "The Uncanny," even though this is not the exact equivalent, as in translation there is never an exact equivalent, but a weird double who functions enough like the original, and no more so than for this term, which I am now realizing is almost untranslatable. In the final form of *Book of Mutter*, I excised a passage where I attempted an etymology of the uncanny, or *unheimlich*, connecting it to its root of *Heim*, or home. Although I altered and attempted to correct the passage over several different drafts, as I can see on my desktop, the draft from 2013 differing subtly from that from 2016, when I finally excised the passage. Over these many drafts over several years, I consulted two German translators of my acquaintance, who both told me that my reading of uncanny, as I situated it within the mother's house and in the concept of space, wasn't totally accurate or correct, and so fearing, as always, stupidity, or a bunch of graduate students writing me of my

error, I reactively excised it, although felt compelled enough by this question of translation and space that I kept on returning to it, and altering and adapting it. In the passage's final, or visible, form, I use the word "uncanny," to try to put a word to the strange sensation of feeling my mother as a ghostly presence immediately after her death, as I returned to live with my father in my childhood home, me mimicking her movements, as I folded towels. The nervous sensation I was attempting to describe was not only of the body (me being her mirror and double) but also of the house, feeling the house as this vast space, the ghostliness being within the space. Recently, I was reading through Leonora Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet*, and I wrote down this passage, to share with Sofia later: "Houses are really bodies. We connect ourselves with walls, roofs, and objects just as we hang on to our livers, skeletons, flesh and bloodstream." This recalls for me as well the artist Louise Bourgeois's paintings of the *Femme Maison*, the women with houses for heads, a visual pun that I conjure up in the book. After using the phrase "uncanny," I then attempted, briefly, to locate the translation of *unheimliche* into English as being not only uncanny, but also ghostly, or (of a house) haunted, which is correct. Three years later, in 2016, I went further, into what was then a cursory reading of Freud's essay, probably a second-hand reading on the Internet, and wrote that the primary definition for the antonym for *unheimlich*, or *heimlich*, is "cozy or familiar," but a more arcane definition of *heimlich* is "concealed, secret, private," so that the concept of home is tied up with the concept of what is hidden.

The thing is, I realize now, I was not wrong, in my reading of Freud's essay, which contains within his first part, of his three-part meditation on strangeness and uncertainty, his extensive etymology of *unheimliche* in German and English. Perhaps I should not have excised the passage so easily, or tortured it under this rhythm of disappearing and emergence. Sofia wrote this to me as well, when I originally told

her I was thinking of writing an appendix entitled “Translations of the Uncanny,” or “Definitions of the Uncanny,” I couldn’t figure out which, regarding this excised passage, that now exists in the invisible archive. Freud’s own essay, she wrote, is so experimental and unsure, how could these German translators be so certain, when his essay is actually about uncertainty? I read through the emailed chain with my most recent translator friend, a writer living in Spain who has translated the first, novella-length book of Marianne Fritz’s magnum opus, an Austrian writer whose work is described as untranslatable, whose works in fact became less and less decipherable, more huge and momentous, and he pointed not to Freud but to Grimm’s dictionary, and the vagueness of an exact etymology within the *Heim* entry, which led me last week on to another unnecessary research and notetaking tangent on the Grimm brothers, who were near but not exact twins, and how one married and the other didn’t, but they both lived with the one’s wife, and how they set about this extensive and passionate enterprise of an exhaustive German dictionary, finished long after their death, all while being exiled from various academic environments and cities because of the political climate, and leaving the dictionary unfinished, after one died, and the other mourned, while still continuing this slow task, I forgot which one, I only remember that the final entry of the last brother was *Früchte*, or Fruit, which I found an appealing anecdote that I’d store to use later.

I felt that since the etymology was uncertain, I should excise my passage, but in fact I now realize that the uncanny is an ambivalent space, and so is Freud’s text on it. As Sofia writes me, encouragingly, there is a lot of space, in terms of thinking through this space of my own essay. “What makes space uncanny—the mother’s house—and how is the uncanny itself, the term, a space?” she writes me. And so I have felt again compelled to return to this space of the uncanny, much like Freud returned to his essay on the uncanny, after years of putting it away in a drawer, much like my text itself was in a drawer, for years,

such as in the gap between 2013 and 2016. I trace through the uncertain movements of Freud's essay, and Hélène Cixous's essay "Fictions and its Phantoms," in which she produces a close reading of Freud's essay, a sort of translation, his weird essay that she wonderfully describes as a "strange theoretical novel." Of course I also send Sofia this essay on Cixous, which she's read before, this doubling close reading of Freud, much like Freud's close reading of E.T.A. Hoffman's "The Sandman" in the second section of "The Uncanny." The space of Freud's essay is itself a labyrinth, as Cixous writes, as he wanders uncertainly and ambivalently through his reading of the uncanny. He sets about to disprove an originary essay on the psychology of the uncanny, that uncanniness comes from uncertainty in real-life. The space of the word uncanny, an unsettling word in its uncertainty, an uncertain reading, a sort of vertiginous movement that Freud traces, which returns back to itself. How can a paragraph or a page be a labyrinth, a puzzle, an uncanny valley. Ultimately in this first part he shows that what is familiar and intimate, what is of the house, collapses into its opposite, the strange, the unfamiliar, the haunted. "For us the most interesting fact to emerge from this long excerpt is that among the various shades of meaning that are recorded for the word *heimlich* there is one in which it merges with its formal antonym, *unheimlich*, so that what is called *heimlich* becomes *unheimlich*." This concludes Part I of Freud on the uncanny, and the first part of this talk, my reading of an essay on anxiety within my own essay of anxiety.

II Sofia writes to me that the only mention of space she can think of in Freud's essay on the uncanny, when we first begin discussing it, is the passage in the red-light district, which is Freud attempting to illuminate the repetition of the same thing, this other phenomenon that can initiate an uncanny sensation. In a rare first-person aside, Freud remembers wandering around the empty and unfamiliar streets of an Italian town, in what feels like a dream, repeatedly getting lost, until finding himself in a red-light district, which he kept on returning to, like in a maze or labyrinth, which seized him with an anxious feeling. In this same page, which Cixous reads as itself a winding labyrinth, us getting lost, "the corner of some street or paragraph," the sentences a street, the paragraph a haunted quarter, Freud compares that same unsettling feeling with groping around a dark, unfamiliar room and colliding with the same piece of furniture. When reading this, I think about the first story in Borges's *Labyrinths*, the Borges narrator's discovery of the province Uqbar with Adolfo Bioy Cesares, one night at dinner, through an encyclopedia and a mirror: "The mirror troubled the depths of a corridor in a country house..." Borges's characterization of mirrors as monstrous, I read about on Google Books, a set of interviews with Borges in Indiana at 80, a passage I then send to Sofia: "I always stood in fear of mirrors. When I was a little boy, there was something awful at my house. In my room we had three full-length mirrors. Then also the furniture was of mahogany, and that made a kind of dark mirror, like the mirrors to be found in Saint Paul's epistle. I stood in fear of them, but being a child I did not dare say anything. So every night I was confronted by three or four images of myself. I felt that to be really awful." When writing my book of the mother, I wanted to think of the text like a house, maybe a haunted house, the house of the mother, of the repressed. Could each paragraph or page be like moving into a series of rooms, refracted and reflected with mirrors, getting lost, constantly returning. How can an essay be like a haunted house, a labyrinth or puzzle. In the book on my

mother, my book of ghosts where I attempted to conjure up the sense of anxiety, or uncertainty, which I now know, or think I know, to be the province of the uncanny, this ambivalent space, I thought of Louise Bourgeois's *Cells* as well, her salvaged architectural spaces, filled with mirrors, her sculptures, clothing and objects, these sites of psychoanalytic dread and anxiety, of the childhood home. How a paragraph could be a series of rooms with mirrors and different objects. The studio or cell as a labyrinth, a site of experimentation. Two other strange punctures of the first-person in Freud's essay: an aside in which he tells us that he was flipping through a pulp magazine and read a horror story that he found badly written yet unsettling, thinking through literature as the most ideal country of the uncanny, and a footnote, attached to his writing on the uncanny effect of the double, when Freud remembers being in the sleeping compartment of a train, when the mirror of the adjacent toilet swings open, as the train lurches, and Freud is surprised to see an elderly man in a dressing gown and a cap staring at him, only to finally piece together that the intruder was in fact his own image, an anecdote mirroring one found in a book by an E. Mach. "I can still recall that I found his appearance thoroughly unpleasant," Freud writes. "Hence, instead of being frightened by our 'doubles,' both Mach and I simply failed to recognize them. Or was the displeasure we felt at seeing these unexpected images of ourselves perhaps a vestige of the archaic reaction to the 'double' as something uncanny?"⁴

III It makes sense that the third part, and final section, of this talk, mirroring Freud's three-part meditation on strangeness and uncertainty, would be thinking through doubling and space and the work of two artists whose works are so occupied with layers, text, perception, and ambivalence. It makes sense because Freud's essay is, as he announces in the first line, an "aesthetic investigation," extending off of Edmund Burke's work on the sublime, thinking through the specific class of the frightening that he calls uncanny, work that is strange and filled with anxiety. I like the idea of thinking about art that produces weird and uncertain sensations, as opposed to thinking merely about beauty, which feels more closed, some pretense at coherence.

There is something uncanny I think to walking around the space of this exhibit, the space shared by these two artists, mirroring or perhaps refracting each other in this proximity. How strange that can feel, to share a space or perception. A "temporarily shared subjecthood," B. Ingrid Olson wishes for in an interview, of the relationship between the viewer and her work, so the artist and myself. The hall of mirrors, I share a space with them, thinking through their works, the viewer occupies their space, they occupy each others. Their eyes become our eyes.⁵

While staring at these images on my computer screen, trying to imagine them in a physical space through virtual space, I flip through a chapter book on insect spatiality and psychotic space in a book by Elizabeth Grosz. Did you know that some insects perform a mimesis that is actually grotesque and self-destructive? An insect camouflaged as a leaf can be cannibalized by another mistaking it for a leaf. The blurring and confusing of viewer with environment. The subject is unable to locate itself in space. Binaries collapse: inside and outside, mind and body, self and other.

If B. Ingrid Olson envisions the studio space and frame of the photograph as a place of mirrors and abstraction, Astrid Klein finds these depths within her collage works. Repetitive and mirrored as a

dream. The paranoia of the shadowy and dreamlike dogs against the brick wall in Klein's wall piece, the exterior street brought interior (Freud's red light district?).

When I look at the photographic compositions of B. Ingrid Olson, that ask how photography can approach performance, can approach sculpture, I think of how mirrors can trouble, dissembling the body into pieces, layering the image through framing and mirroring. Photography as process, performance, action. The artist photographs in a series of mirrors, posing with her own ceramic sculptures, masks, prosthesis. The studio becomes a laboratory, a site of experimentation. References haunt from Freud's essay: eyes, mirrors, dolls, doubles. The self as doll, doppelganger in eerie lighting (Hans Bellmer's *poupées*, Bellmer tying up and photographing Unica Zürn, the private masochist performances of Ana Mendieta and Rudolf Schwarzhogler, the photographs as traces.) Except, with Olson, the body is not limpid, it is taut. More intertextuality: when I look at the Olson image, the legs cut off, I see an echo of Joan Jonas's *Mirror Piece I*, the body as uncanny vessel, Jonas repeating stories from Borges's *Labyrinths*. What are we looking at—four legs, two arms, what.

What am I looking at: this is the strangeness of the work. The project, I think: to abstract the body, to other the self-portrait. "I do not make self-portraits," Olson says in an interview. The female embodied self becomes no longer coherent, no longer easily locatable in space. The self and body as Other, dimensional, fragmented. Can the viewer place this body part, where is it positioned, how is it cut off. This estrangement and intimacy (to be able to reach inside through the face of the plexiglass, into the hollow, and want to touch the image). To obscure, fragment, double. In the space of the gallery, another sort of labyrinth, dimensional. Sculptures at crotch view, eye view.

There's a ghostliness, speaking someone else's image. I am reminded of Borges's 1945 essay "On Dubbing," one of his page-long pieces of film criticism. Someone else's voice comes out of someone

else's representation. In this doubling on the screen, the I is not I. Borges traces the phenomenon of dubbing back to the Holy Trinity, the chimera imagined by the Greeks. Something monstrous, he says, to this false mirror. Another voice implanted, another language—isn't that what I'm asked to do in this talk, to translate? And what is a talk, a performance of text, aware of the body in space, the dimensional? "They devise monsters that combine the famous face of Greta Garbo with the voice of Aldonza Lorenzo. How can we fail to proclaim our admiration for this bleak magic, for these ingenious audio-visual deformations?" Because I am drawn to the tangential lately, I linger on the singular footnote: "More than one spectator will ask himself: Since they are usurping voices, why not faces?"

Why not faces? Is collage ghostly? Faces disembodied, haunting. A collage is a chimera, a strange combination. Like Olson, Klein's works are about perception and estrangement, transforming the familiar and famous image into something unable to be exactly deciphered. The representation of women in cinema and photonovels, two double narratives playing soundless like a dream, the text from elsewhere, hidden, or buried. What am I looking at? Or: What am I reading? The departure for both from representing women, the self-portrait, the recognizable face, into something more abstract, and subtle.

In an interview, B. Ingrid Olson considers her photo compositions as a form of text, as a result of reading: "Something like an ellipsis, or a statement that almost turns into a question...when a footnote is used to expand on a facet of an idea, as a visibly separate explanation, a tangent alongside the primary text." As with Klein, these are readerly artworks, fragments of an infinite library.

It is the invisible or subterranean text, the edges that are most interesting. Like a footnote or tangent tracing through the frame. Fragments of faces, bodies, of texts. The tape running through Astrid Klein's collaged images: the edges, like footnotes or tangents. The

uncanniness of intertextuality. Collaging a process, a practice, like writing, perhaps more like reading. Printed on the tape, tiny type-written words that almost are imperceptible, which remind me of the infinitely small manuscript in which Benjamin worked on The Arcades Project, mimicking Robert Walser's Microscripts, or the repetition of tiny letter forms in Mira Schendel. Klein so aware of type as a face as well. I make connections, ghostly echoes: that the typewriter text from this show is from Arno Schmidt's *Zettel's Traum*, translated as *Bottom's Dream*, a text considered almost impossible to translate because of its form—published originally as a photoset of typewritten pages, the visual aspect of punctuation, three columns, the main narrative, on the other sides quotes, marginalia, tangents. About the German translator of Edgar Allen Poe. A massive text, 1334 pages, and how Klein plays with scale, how tiny her footnotes, how large her wall collages. A novel that is like a collage. I wish often for writing to do what sculpture and collage does. How can writing achieve dimensionality, be aware of space. A paragraph like a frame, a box or a room. Gaps between paragraphs, can one walk around a paragraph.

When flipping through Borges's *Labyrinths*, I come across a strange text that feels like a dream, an uncanny connection. It seems unnecessary to write about this, but I feel compelled, to end with it. All while thinking through this investigation into the uncanny that is an aesthetic investigation—what can double, return, echo—I keep on thinking of the phrase *mise en abyme*, a copy within a copy. André Gide in a journal passage wishes for literature to be like this, fiction within a fiction. Again how can literature yearn towards art, how can image ghost text. If I understand it right, this is what I'm doing here—performing a copy within a copy, a strange and uncertain essay about a strange or uncertain essay. Then I read in one of his short pieces, I think it's a nonfiction piece, I now cannot find it, I only have it paraphrased in my notes—Borges conjures up Velazquez's *Las Meninas*,

the famous *mise en abyme*, the painting within a painting, with the reflection in the mirror at its center, while thinking back to an image on a biscuit tin from Borges's childhood that replicated infinitely, its "vertiginous mystery." Something about this longing towards what he wants to write towards, "the problem of infinity." He quotes Schopenhauer, I write it down here, to think about later, how it relates to all this: that dreaming and wakefulness can be experienced in reading the same pages of a single book—that in wakefulness one reads in a linear way, and in dreaming one skips around and flips, takes strange tangents, falls asleep, wakes up, returns. I wish I had my silver shiny copy of *Labyrinths* in front of me, but I am finishing this appendix in a hurry on a plane to give this talk, as Leo sleeps, her little mouth open, snoring on her father. When we land, I should write Sofia and ask her if she knows the passage. Most likely she is reading it now.

¹ When I send Sofia this talk, she remarks that that morning, in fact, she had mused that the final section of this novel she would never write would be called *Argentina*, “as a sort of sideways nod to *Antwerp*, and a wink toward Knausgaard, who said in an interview that he thought of calling his series *Argentina* instead due to his love of Argentine writers, and of course, as an homage to Borges.”

² I feel I should mention I am plagiarizing here from the beginning of Borges’s story “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” referring to the dinner conversation that Borges is having with Adolfo Bioy Casares. Recently I wrote to Sofia over email (of course, since we’ve never met) of how much I admired the literary friendship between Borges and Bioy Casares, and especially how much Borges invokes him in his fictions that feel like essays. She agreed, although we disagreed who was the Borges in our particular epistolary friendship (of which we each have or have had, I believe, many). She said kindly it was me, but it’s obviously Sofia. Neither of us has read Bioy Casares, both intending to someday, although the day I purchased *Antwerp* from Mast Books, on the Lower East Side, two falls ago, I considered instead the New York Review of Books paperback copy of *The Invention of Morel*, as I had been hoping to read it for some time, as I read somewhere it inspired Alain Resnais’s *Last Year at Marienbad*, a memory film I had some interest in, due to something in my recent past, and also because it has a photograph of Louise Brooks on the cover. The true reason I purchased *Antwerp* is because of the blurb by Bolano himself on the back cover: “the only novel that doesn’t embarrass me.”

³ “Which is what the appendices seem like—like an afterbirth. Some kind of placenta which is, like the appendix, no longer necessary, extra.

What to do with the extra?

It’s a way of continuing past the end. That’s where the question ‘what to do with the appendices’ becomes so compelling, philosophically. Why go past the end? But I think we know, without being able to answer precisely, that there is something very alive and incandescent and yes, richly uncanny, about these leftovers.”

⁴ What leaps out to me, Sofia writes, after I send her this talk: the word “vestigial,” like a vestigial, unexpected feeling, a pain in the gut like an appendix, something archaic, she writes. And I realize, when she writes me this, that I have omitted or was unable to explain during this talk how the concept of the “vestigial” relates to the “uncanny.” That the uncanny in the form of the double, or doppelgänger in literature, is, as Freud notes in this footnoted anecdote, a remnant of infantile narcissism, a return of the repressed. This Freudian concept of the double a precursor to his notion of the death drive, that the child sees multiple versions of the self and feels calmed into immortality (is this why I have answered “death drive” when anyone asks how I have been so productive since giving birth, after several years of inactivity?) Sofia also sends me new research on what is now considered the functions of the appendix. “Amazing to think that this weird ‘useless’ organ has evolved more than 30 times! It’s haunting us,” she writes to me.

⁵ When working on this talk, and when editing it afterwards, when attempting to write this footnote in fact, I soothe the baby by walking her past our mirrored closet, back and forth. I cannot tell yet whether she finds it soothing to see my face above hers, or whether to see her own, or some combination of the two.