

WHEN LOVE IS THE LAW:  
ON THE RAVISHING OF LOL V. STEIN  
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*In this divine ravishing the centuries  
pass by more quickly than the hours.*  
— François Fénelon, *Télémaque* (1699)

In the recent work of Slavoj Žižek, "love" has taken on a politically revolutionary meaning by coming to name the event that breaks with the normal order predicated on a dialectic of Law and Sin (or desire).<sup>1</sup> Though not exclusively, the Christian notion of *agape* functions as the primary source of inspiration for this renewed conceptualization of the unconditional point that goes beyond a given state of affairs. Along similar lines, of course, is the pivotal intervention of Alain Badiou, who argues in favor of, on the one hand, an understanding of love as "evental" and, on the other hand, Saint Paul as the model for any militant ethics. Extrapolating from these two lines of reasoning, it should not be surprising to find *agape* again as the central point around which many other contemporary critiques of ideology have begun to revolve.

Taking a Lacanian step back, however, might give us the opportunity to ask whether the glad tidings of *agape* overlook one crucial "logical" moment. In order to address this question I will make use of one of Lacan's most important texts, "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty,"<sup>2</sup> which has proven to be most inspiring and useful for demonstrating the precise moment of rupture, or what Žižek has qualified as "the act."<sup>3</sup> Returning to this text will hopefully clarify that this moment of love is not exclusively the moment of the act, nor simply the fidelity to a truth, but also the possible moment of being reduced to waste.

In close connection to the problem of love and desire, this moment of being reduced to waste — a certain falling out of the world — has been explored by the twentieth-century mystic Marguerite Duras. While returning to Lacan's article I will thus read it in conjunction with Duras' *The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein*. Lacan himself has focused on Duras' novel in another text, "Homage to Marguerite Duras, on *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*," where the informed reader can discern two allusions to his commentary on Antigone: "splendor" [*éclat*] and "between-two-deaths" [*entre-deux-morts*].<sup>4</sup> Indeed, is Lol V. Stein not as splendid and *apolis*

as Antigone? Is she not “this wounded figure, exiled from things, whom you dare not touch, but who makes you her prey”?<sup>5</sup> Does she not take up the function of beauty, as the last protection against the horror of *jouissance*? The two figures of Antigone and Lol share the distinction of being the main characters of their tragedies, but not without contaminating others with a “leprosy of the heart.”<sup>6</sup> It is therefore possible to raise the question: who, in fact, is the tragic figure? If pressed to answer, one might be tempted to argue that the tragic figure is not Lol, but Jacques Hold (and not Antigone but Creon).<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this lack of clarity prevents the reader from identifying with Lol, and instead implicates one in the triangles that she organizes, whereby one comes to occupy a position that she herself has set in place — her own. While caught within this ambiguity, the reader is made attentive to the temporal unfolding of a structure, and the “place” that a character takes within it. The effect of occupying such an awkward position, for the reader, is not unlike the effects taking place on the narrative itself, most significantly during the crucial scene at the Casino, where Lol loses her fiancé Michael Richardson to the mysterious *femme fatale* Anne-Marie Stretter. It is at this precise point, the superficial or “impotent” changes of the narrative itself, that the drama of Duras’ novel should be located. Lol, I would argue, is not the passive subject of painful events, but rather someone who remains faithful to the place she comes to occupy during the event at the Casino.

Being ravished means being taken away, being displaced, being raptured, being dispossessed. The “of” in *The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein* is not without ambiguities. Is it an objective or subjective genitive? As objective, we could understand “of” as Lol being ravished by the scenes that she witnesses, including both the passively observed encounter between Michael Richardson and Anne-Marie Stretter, as well as the amorous meetings she *actively does not see* between Jacques Hold and Tatiana Karl. If we read “of” as a subjective genitive, this implies that Lol is the one who ravishes others, or is at least the cause of others’ ravishment. Quite clearly, at the level of the narrative, it is Jacques Hold who has been ravished. From this second perspective, the relation between Jacques Hold and Lol is similar in many respects to the relation between female mystics and their confessors, in which the female subject is ravished and the male confessor, for his part, is ravished by this ravishment, only to subsequently attempt to guide her in such ravishment. But this guidance is ambiguous: while based on trust in the divine truth of the mystic inspirations, the confessor often attempts to bring the inspirations into conformity with existing theology. Or, as in the case of Fénelon and Madame Guyon, the male confessor struggles to formulate new theological theses and defend them in relation to an existing tradition.<sup>8</sup>

The title of Duras’ text is open to these possible readings, and with the title everything is made present: one person causes/is overwhelmed by ravishment. In this respect *Lol V. Stein* is a turning point in Duras’s *oeuvre* (which eventually leads her to construct one-scene works like *Agatha*, *The Malady of Death*, and *The Man Sitting in the Corridor*). The scene Lol witnesses at

the Casino, which structures the entire novel, is not simply the starting point of a narrative, nor simply its traumatic origin, but has within it the power to render any narrative impossible: like a black hole it absorbs each of the characters and their histories. The scene has an implosive effect, making any attempt at spatial or temporal expansion extremely precarious. It was Foucault who compared the characters in Duras' *révits* to the figures painted by Bacon<sup>9</sup>: rendering the space of a void, or exposing an open mouth, both reveal the disappearing or dissolution of the body.<sup>10</sup>

### LOGICAL TIME

One could use the expression “absence of time” to describe this eternal moment in which Lol is caught. The narrative that follows the scene at the Casino is nothing but the description of this timelessness. What do we mean, however, when we say “timelessness”? Positing an opposition between the presence and absence of time would be much too easy, especially since it would take for granted that we know what “time” is. Lacan, in “Logical Time,” describes three modalities of time: the instant of the glance, the time for comprehending, and the moment of concluding. It would be a mistake to think that one can “be” in one of these moments. As it becomes clear in Lacan's presentation, it is only retroactively, after one has concluded, that it makes sense to differentiate between the three modalities.

To demonstrate this retroactive differentiation of the three modes, Lacan analyses a logical problem.<sup>11</sup> A prison warden can free one of three prisoners, and decides to subject them to a test. He shows them five disks — three white and two black — and tells them that he is going to put one disk on each of their backs. They cannot see which one it is, and are not allowed to communicate in any way with the other prisoners. The first to come to him and tell him what color disk he has on his back will be freed. But the warden adds another condition. The conclusion must be based on logical, and not simply probabilistic reasons. That is, the prisoners cannot just make a lucky guess, but must give sound reasons for why they have come to their conclusion.

The warden proceeds to put a white disk on each prisoner's back. How do they come to the right solution? Let's give the three prisoners names — A, B, and C — and let's adopt A's perspective. A sees two whites, and knows there are five disks in play: three white and two black. If A saw two blacks, then he would know right away that he is white. But A sees two whites. From this situation, nothing can be concluded directly. So, he is forced to make a hypothesis. He supposes that he is black, and then considers what B and C would see, and what kind of hypothesis they would make in this case. If A is black, and if, for example, B supposes that he were black, then C, according to B, would be able to leave immediately, because C would see two blacks. Now, because C does not leave immediately, B should arrive at the conclusion that he is white (supposing A is black). But B also does not leave, thus A is able to conclude that he is white.

The “solution” of this problem, however, can only be qualified as “sophistic,” since, strictly speaking, none of the prisoners can conclude anything concerning their identities (the color of the disk each is wearing on their back) when confronted with two white disks. The logical reasoning is only possible on the basis of an interpretation of the situation. What Lacan calls the *instant of the glance* concerns what one sees at the beginning: two white disks. If the two other prisoners were wearing black disks, then the time to come to a conclusion would indeed only last an instant, “a lightening-flash time, so to speak, being equal to zero.”<sup>12</sup> Since one cannot come to an immediate conclusion, one has to think and make a hypothesis about one’s own identity as it is perceived by the others. Lacan’s major point is that this *time for comprehending* is, in itself, endless and can only be put to an end by making a conclusion. This conclusion is based on a necessary but insufficient logical reasoning. The active intervention by the prisoners consists in understanding the other’s *standing still* as a *hesitation*. This addition to the initial hypothesis (and what can be derived from it) is motivated by an anxiety which seizes the prisoner. This anxiety cannot be attributed to the thought that one could possibly lose the game (and remain imprisoned), but the realization that the entire process of reasoning is based on the other’s standing still. As a consequence, as soon as they move, each one must not only stop thinking, but must understand that a conclusion is no longer possible.<sup>13</sup>

The importance of the analysis of this sophism resides in the specific way that time, identity, and intersubjectivity are thought together. Lacan’s thesis is that one can only acquire an identity through a decisive subjective act based on the introduction of time into an intersubjective dynamics. This action consists in “pulling a certitude out of anxiety.”<sup>14</sup> The dimension of time is anticipatory: one anticipates a conclusion for which there are no sufficient reasons. It is only the act of conclusion that will make it possible to investigate afterward whether or not the reasoning was sound. The one who does not conclude has nothing to investigate.<sup>15</sup>

## LOL V. STEIN

The resemblances between the game the prisoners have to play and the scene at the Casino in S. Thala are striking.<sup>16</sup> Both situations involve three people, and the *telos* seems to reside in an escape. In the “Logical Time” situation the prisoner supposes him/herself to be black, which is different from the two others, who are white. As we have seen, this supposition is the first step of a reasoning that will create the conditions within which a decisive act can be made (since if one supposed him/herself to be white, like the others, nothing could be deduced). At the same time this supposition brings about anxiety, since if one were *really* black the others have to make one fewer suppositions. This is why Lacan gives the following account of the act: “*I hasten to declare myself white, so that these whites, whom I consider this way, do not precede me in recognizing*

*themselves for what they are.* We have here the *assertion about oneself* through which the subject concludes the logical movement in the making of a *judgment*. The very return of the movement of comprehending, before which the temporal instance that objectively sustains it has vacillated, continues on in the subject in reflection. This instance reemerges for him therein in the subjective mode of a *time of lagging behind* the others in that very movement, logically presenting itself as the urgency of the *moment of concluding*.<sup>17</sup> The act (as the moment of concluding) comes down to making a performative declaration: identifying oneself with a signifier. It is this act that puts an end to the time for comprehending, effectively grounding sense and meaning. If one misses the moment of concluding then the time for comprehending is reduced to its initial moment of the hypothesis concerning how the others see me — a black object under their gaze. The initial hypothesis links me *qua* object to the gaze of the others, but delinks me from them *qua* subject, for I am what they are not.

It is this moment of the initial hypothesis that Lol appears to be caught. From the moment that Anne-Marie Stretter enters the Casino, Lol is ravished, and everything else loses significance — to the extent that even in regard to Michael Richardson, her fiancé, Lol can state, “from the first moment that woman walked into the room I ceased to love [him]” (126). We have seen how the starting point, of finding oneself opposite two others, returns just before the last moment, the moment of concluding. The anxiety evoked in being the object of two others, which is the anxiety of being left behind<sup>18</sup> — like a “dead dog on the beach at high noon, this hole of flesh” — could potentially propel one to make a decision.<sup>19</sup> This decision requires the making of an *anticipatory* identification with a signifier.<sup>20</sup> One could say that this identification is an *imagined* identity based on an *intersubjective* dynamics. Lol appears to be aware of this possibility but does not know how to make use of it, as when she says: “I have plenty of time, oh, how long it is” (19). Or, for instance, when Michael Richardson and Anne-Marie Stretter are about to leave, Lol tries to convince them to stay longer, since “it wasn’t late it was only the early summer dawn that made it seem later than it really was” (12). She has the infinite time of one who is convinced of the absence of the single word, the one signifier, which could represent her in a symbolic universe. She never ceases to await the arrival of this signifier. What was effectively revealed in one moment casts a shadow on Lol that is longer than life. As the narrator<sup>21</sup> describes it:

Again it begins: the windows closed, sealed, the ball immured in its nocturnal light, would have contained all three of them, and they alone. Lol is positive of that: together they would have been saved from the advent of another day, of one more day at least. What would have happened? Lol does not probe very deeply into the unknown into which this moment opens. She has no memory, not even an imaginary one, she has not the faintest notion of this unknown. But what she does believe is that she must enter it, that that was what she had to do, that it would always have meant, for her mind as well as her body, both their greatest pain and their greatest joy, so commingled as to be undefinable, a single entity but

unnamable for lack of a word. I like to believe — since I love her — that if Lol is silent in her daily life it is because, for a split second, she believed that this word might exist. Since it does not, she remains silent. It would have been an absence-word, a hole-word, whose center would have been hollowed out into a hole, the kind of hole in which all other words would have been buried. It would have been impossible to utter it, but it would have been made to reverberate. (38)

This absence of the word, a signifier that would represent Lol in a symbolic universe, coincides with a radical detachment from all others. As Lol says to Jacques Hold: “When I say that I no longer loved him, I mean to say that you have no idea to what lengths one can go in the absence of love” (126-127).

## LOVE

Thus far analogies have been made between “Logical Time” and *Lol V. Stein*: an intersubjective triangular scheme, time as a logical factor, and the event as a *prior* and necessary condition for any subjectivity. This has allowed us to highlight an essential point in the logic of reasoning that is presented in “Logical Time”: a subjectivity is only gained through “inventing” or “jumping to” a subjective position from out of an object position. At the moment I presuppose a reasoning in an other, and thus secretly identify myself with this other, I will be confronted with an initial hypothesis — my difference from the other. This difference is not only factual, but is fully implied in the logical process that unfolds, and it is on the basis of this difference that the others can come to a decision and leave me behind. The drama does not consist in being left behind, then, but in the fact that one is left behind as an object. Even further, this object in the drama is effectively a non-object to the extent that in order for it to truly be an object one needs the gaze of others.<sup>22</sup> An exchange between Jacques Hold and Lol testifies to this: “‘For ten years I’ve been under the impression that there were only three people left: the two of them, and me.’ I ask again: ‘What is it you wanted?’ With precisely the same hesitation as before, the same interval of silence, she replies: ‘To see them’” (96).

This triangular dynamic leads to an impossible position, which in its very impossibility is the only way of arriving at a subjectivation. Lacan’s publication of “Logical Time,” and his frequent return to it throughout his *oeuvre*, stems from the underlying question of how such a subjectivation is possible, and how it is possible for one to think, or conceptualize its occurrence. It was in the 1950s that Lacan emphasized the necessary condition of a symbolic order. Briefly put, the intervention of the symbolic castrates the object from itself, leaving the “itself” only to be found in the interval between the elements that constitute this order. Despite this “solution”<sup>23</sup> the question still remains whether it is final, or even sufficient.

Readers familiar with Lacan's *Seminar VIII, Le transfert*, will have noticed that what is at stake in the subjectifying of an object position that is explicated both in "Logical Time" and *Lol V. Stein* is similar to what Lacan calls the miracle of love. To explain love, Lacan makes use of what he names "a metaphor of love." Metaphor, in this instance, should be understood in the loose sense as "the use of an image." In a rare moment in Lacan's teaching he tells us a "myth," as he calls it, in order to illustrate an aspect of his theory. This myth is as follows:

This hand — which extends its gesture of awaiting, attracting, and stirring toward the fruit, the rose, and the bush suddenly enflamed — is closely tied to the maturation of the fruit, the beauty of the flower, and the enflaming of the bush. But when the hand has gone far enough in this movement of awaiting, attracting, and stirring, and a hand comes out of the fruit, the flower, and the bush, and stretches itself toward your hand, at that moment it is your hand that freezes in the closed plenitude of the fruit, the opening of the flower, and the explosion of a hand that enflames — well, what produces itself there is love.<sup>24</sup>

Two moments are discernible. First, the hand that stretches out toward the object changes the object in a surprising way, becoming mature, beautiful, or enflamed. In this moment the attractive qualities of the object become clearer, and one could even say they are created by the hand that reaches — which, as one can imagine, makes the hand even more eager to hold the fruit in its palm. The second moment is more difficult to discern. At first sight it looks as if one hand stretches out for an object and, along its path, encounters another hand. This would suggest that love consists of a desire for an object that humanizes itself. Love, if this were true, would be the meeting of two hands. Lacan warns his audience, however, that he is not talking about what happens when two hands meet, rather he is describing when and where love takes place. The *moment* of love, according to Lacan, is not in the meeting of the two hands, but the moment when out of the fruit, the flower, the bush, a hand *rises*. As we will see, Lacan's idea of love is contrary to any idea that takes it as something that happens between "equal partners" for whom love would be, simultaneously, the effect as well the cause that makes it possible for an amorous meeting to take place. According to Lacan, in love there must be a fundamental *disparity* at work.<sup>25</sup>

Lacan constructs this short parable amidst his reading and analysis of Plato's *Symposium*. In order to explain love he adopts the Greek terminology of *eromenos* (the beloved) and *erastes* (the lover), given that "love" is at the root of both words, which nicely parallels his double understanding of the term. The *eromenos* is the one confronted with the Other's desire, who positions himself and is positioned by another as a beautiful object. From this perspective, one could equate *eromenos* with Lacan's idea of narcissistic love. The beloved is the one who, in thinking of himself as lovable, interprets the Other's desire, thus reducing love to an infantile stage of wanting to be loved. Things get more interesting, however, when we follow what Lacan has to say about the

*erastes*. Strictly speaking, the *erastes* is not this desiring Other (to whom I can position myself as the beloved object) but the one who can emerge only after first being placed in the position of the beloved. This is what Lacan calls the miracle of love: that someone who is positioned as the object of desire for the Other is able to subjectify this object position and desire in return.

### TRINITY

The status of this object position can now be questioned. In *Seminar XX*, Lacan returns to his argument in “Logical Time” during his discussion of the work of Richard de Saint Victor, a twelfth-century mystic and theologian.<sup>26</sup> In his *De Trinitate*, Richard de Saint-Victor asks the question whether God needs to be thought as one or as a trinity. Starting from the thesis that love is an essential aspect of God and that love always concerns an other,<sup>27</sup> he believes there must be a second divine being who would be worthy of this divine love, namely the Son. The Son, insofar as he too is a divine being, must love God in return. This relation sounds like a perfect dyad, but according to Saint Victor this love can only be qualified as *pleasing*, but not as *perfected*. Perfect love — and, it must be emphasized, divine love cannot be but perfect — implies that one wants to share the love one receives from the other. If the Son receives divine love from God, his own love can be pleasing when it loves God in return. His love, however, is perfected when the love that he receives is shared. According to Saint Victor, one needs a third person, namely a *condilectus* (a co-loved), that comes to be identified as the Holy Spirit. When Lacan refers to this passage in Saint Victor’s work he emphasizes that this third term, the Holy Spirit, is not a subject but an object — more precisely, an object *a*. This object *a* is necessary insofar as it is the one factor that functions as the condition of possibility for the love relation between the One and the Other.

In the moment of falling in love, the fantasmatic support for the lack-of-being (the desire that one effectively is) is temporarily suspended, as one is placed in the position of the object of desire for the Other. The metaphor of love *qua* creative act is a response that pulls one out of that object position — that is, through our very lack. One needs two operations for this to occur. First, it is necessary to fantasize what that object position could, in fact, be. Second, one needs to castrate (or bar) oneself from that position.<sup>28</sup> Lol V. Stein, as we have seen, is caught in an endless inquiry concerning this object position. After the eventful night at the Casino she slumbers for years, until she meets her old friend Tatiana Karl and her secret lover, Jacques Hold. Whereas Lol was fascinated by Anne-Marie Stretter’s black dress, or more precisely what it envelopes, Lol later becomes attached to watching the secret meetings between Tatiana and Jacques. What now intrigues her is Tatiana’s nudity “under her black hair.” Parallel to the infinite quest to know what one is in the desire of the Other, Lol is convinced that one word is missing. This lack, however, is not to be understood as pointing toward a signifier that could name what it means to be desired. Rather, the only effect the missing signifier would have is the separation of her from such an object position.

Lol's investigation can now be understood as a quest for divinity and pure love. As soon as Anne-Marie Stretter enters the scene with Michael Richardson, Lol is able to take up the position of the object *a* that is necessary to install a relation between the three of them. Just as in the prisoner's sophism, where one of the prisoners thinks of himself as radically different from the others, he is still needed in order to allow the others to relate to one another. This position leaves two options: either one remains in that object position, and is left behind, or one joins the others by leaving the position behind. The first option remains within the (divine) infinity of the time for comprehending, but comes upon an obstacle when encountering the finitude of the others (the fact that they will leave, and act as if time is not infinite). In the second option, one embraces finitude by subjectifying this infinity. To assume finitude requires the operations of separation and castration: abandoning one's position as object, one must subject oneself to an order in which one can only persist as a lack-of-being.

Reading Lacan through *Lol V. Stein* demonstrates how the most problematic moment, the moment of concluding, is made present in the logic of love. Love consists in the switching of position, from the *object* to the *subject* of desire. This is why love cannot exist without a loss: in order "to give what one does not have" one must invent what one *could be* in the desire of the Other, and thus lose what one "really" is. To love is to desire *with* this loss. Lol reveals that in order for this work of mourning to be possible there must be a basic, unjustifiable, belief in a point of identification. To love is to question this point, realizing that one can only perform its existence.

## CONCLUSION

I hope to have shown how an obscure, "third" position of objective waste is inherent to any "miracle of love." In order to do something *with* this object position one must perform an anticipatory identification with an element, a signifier, from an existing symbolic order. In addition, what Lol V. Stein shows us is that remaining faithful to this object position is possible. What we cannot learn from Lol is her mystical dereliction, or her way of escaping the "hold" of Jacques Hold's understanding. Nor can we come to know how she was able to experiment with "love" in such a way that she turned the notion of a "love relation" into a ridiculous oxymoron, effectively qualifying it as "true" in contradistinction to the normal, married, adulterous couples that surround her. What we can learn from Lol is that her position is a logical and necessary moment in any love-event. If we consider the formal structure of this love as equivalent to any "true" political act, it is Lol who forces us to ask these final questions: Where is the object in the "act"? Is it to be found *as* the militant who, in a tragic way, is exploited by an obscure desiring Other? Is it to be found *as* "the Jew" (Rom. 11) who functions as the necessary exclusion to the positing of a universal, Pauline truth?<sup>29</sup>

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1. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute — or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting for?* (New York: Verso, 2000), 113-130; *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 92-121.
2. Jacques Lacan, “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty: A New Sophism,” trans. Bruce Fink and M. Silver, *Newsletter of the Freudian Field* 2.2 (fall 1988): 4-22.
3. See Dominiek Hoens and Ed Pluth, “What if the Other is Stupid? Badiou and Lacan on ‘Logical Time,’” in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), 182-190.
4. Lacan, “Homage to Marguerite Duras, on *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*,” trans. Peter Connor, in Marguerite Duras, *Marguerite Duras* (San Francisco: City Lights Books), 125, 129. [Translation modified.] This text is notorious for Lacan’s remark that “Duras knows, without me, what I teach” (124). It has been said that upon meeting Duras, Lacan’s introductory exclamation was: “You do not know what you are saying.” It was Michèle Montrelay who brought *The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein* to the attention of Lacan’s group, giving a presentation on the novel in the last session of *Seminar XII*. See Lacan, *Problèmes cruciaux pour la psychanalyse* (1964-1965), unpublished seminar, 23 June 1965. This paper was revised for publication as the first chapter of her *L’ombre et le nom. Sur la féminité* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), 9-23. A very informative chapter on Lacan’s reading of *Lol V. Stein* can be found in Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Jacques Lacan: Psychoanalysis and the Subject of Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 115-134.
5. Lacan, “Homage to Marguerite Duras,” 125.
6. The others are Creon and Jacques Hold, but such leprosy affects the reader as well. Julia Kristeva has warned that “Duras’s books should not be put into the hands of oversensitive readers,” in *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 227. Recall Jacques Hold admitting that, Lol, “has us in her hands.” Marguerite Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Pantheon, 1966), 82. Subsequent references will appear parenthetically within the text.
7. For an interpretation of *Antigone* in which it is argued that Creon is the tragic figure, see Philippe Van Haute, “Antigone. Heldin van de psychoanalyse?” in *De God van denkers en dichters*, ed. G. Berns, Paul Moyaert and Paul Van Tongeren (Meppel: Boom, 1997), 172-191.
8. Fénelon’s theses, for instance, where condemned by Pope Innocent XII in his *Cum alias*, 12 March 1699. For the relation between Fénelon and Madame Guyon, see Jacques Lebrun, *Le pur amour de Platon à Lacan* (Paris, Seuil, 2002), 131-160. One could perhaps argue that Lacan positions himself in a similar relation to Duras.
9. Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits. Tome II, 1970-1975* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 765.
10. Another important shift for Duras are the films she made in the 1970s, which are known for their disjunction of sound and image. This shift was anticipated, in my opinion, by *Lol V. Stein*, which is clearly marked by a preoccupation with visuality – one could even argue that the gazes are the agents of the novel. One should not overlook, however, the importance of the aural. After her illness, Lol gets married. Her highly structured, empty life takes a new turn the moment a couple passes her house, when she hears the woman say, “Dead maybe.” At that moment, the reader is unclear to whom or what this refers, but Lol seems to understand it as a message concerning her own existence. Later on, when

- Lol is speaking of what happened at the Casino, she claims that she heard Michael Richardson and Anne-Marie Stretter saying, “maybe it will kill her.” Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, 28, 95. At that moment, Lol’s friend Tatiana insists that this is impossible, since she was with her the entire night and is certain they were too far away to hear what the couple was saying. But Lol, indeed, seems to hear what others cannot, or do not want to hear. The scene “made” by the visual contains an additional, auditive element that opens it up and refers it to a future. The book version of Duras’ *India Song* is also organized around a scene, between the vice-consul and the same Anne-Marie Stretter, but this scene appears amidst “rumours” (voices that tell the story of their own love, the love stories of others, as well as the comments made by other guests at the party). See *India Song*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Grove Press, 1976). Finally, having watched the film version of *India Song*, there is one element that cannot be forgotten: the vice-consul’s cry.
11. The presentation and interpretation of Lacan’s article borrows from David Blomme and Dominiek Hoens, “Anticipation and Subject: A Commentary on an Early Text by Lacan,” in *Computing Anticipatory Systems: CASYS’99 – Third International Conference*, ed. Daniel Dubois (New York: American Institute of Physics, 2000), 117-123.
  12. Lacan, “Logical Time,” 11.
  13. “Having surpassed the *time for comprehending the moment of concluding*, it is the *moment of concluding the time for comprehending*. Otherwise this time would lose its meaning. It is not, therefore, because of some dramatic contingency, the seriousness of the stakes, or the competitiveness of the game, that time presses; it is owing to the urgency of the logical movement that the subject *precipitates* both his judgement and his departure (“precipitates” in the etymological sense of the verb: headlong), establishing the modulation in which temporal tension is reversed in a move to action [*tendance à l’acte*] manifesting to the others that the subject has concluded.” Ibid., 12-13.
  14. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre X. L’angoisse (1962-1963)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 93. [My translation.]
  15. After the moment of concluding in the prisoner’s sophism (often erroneously referred to as “the prisoner’s dilemma”), when the three of them go to the door, they immediately have to stop again (because the conclusion was based on the standing still of the others). It can be proven, however, that with three prisoners there will be only two halts needed for them to acquire absolute certainty about the color of the disk on their respective backs. In these halts the subjective interpretation of the other’s standing still as a hesitation becomes objectified and is empirically verifiable.
  16. This is not the first time *Lol Stein* has been compared with the prisoner’s sophism. Erik Porge was the first to highlight the expression “count oneself three” [*se compter trois*] in “Homage to Marguerite Duras,” 122. See Porge, *Se compter trois. Le temps logique de Lacan* (Toulous: Erès, 1989), 146-149. More recently, Eric Laurent has discussed *Lol Stein* from a “logical time perspective” in “A Sophism of Courtly Love,” *Lacanian Ink* 20 (2000): 45-61.
  17. Lacan, “Logical Time,” 12.
  18. “Among the many aspects of the Town Beach ball, what fascinates Lol is the end. It is the precise moment when it comes to an end, when dawn arrives with incredible cruelty and separates her from the couple of Michael Richardson and Anne-Marie Stretter, forever, forever.” Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, 36-37.
  19. Ibid., 38. See also Ibid., 174. Asked about Lol, Duras replied that she could show her on screen, but only as hidden, “as when she is lying on the beach like a dead dog, covered in sand.” Marguerite Duras and Michelle Porte, *Les Lieux*

- de Marguerite Duras* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), 100. [Editor's translation.] The absence of shame indicates that Lol does not take a subjective distance from this sudden appearance of herself *qua* object *a*, incarnated by Anne-Marie Stretter.
20. The identification is "anticipatory" because there is no sufficient ground for it, since it must await the recognition by the Other. Lol seems to be paralyzed by this moment of jumping to a conclusion — her phrases are often unfinished and left in suspension. See Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, 17, 85, 102, 127, 128, 141, 142, 146, 160, 161, 165.
  21. One can later identify Jacques Hold as the narrator: "Tatiana introduces [Pierre] Beugner, her husband, to Lol, and [Jacques] Hold, a friend of theirs — the distance is covered — me." *Ibid.*, 65.
  22. Lol, like prisoner (A), finds herself in the gaze of Michael Richardson (C), which is mediated by Anne-Marie Stretter (B), who was born, as we learn in *India Song*, under the name Anne-Marie Guardi. "Guardi" (*son nom de Venise*) means "to look" (many thanks to John Murphy for pointing this out). When the two leave, Lol does not lose her lover, Michael Richardson, but Michael Richardson and Anne Marie Stretter, resulting in her long illness: "I wasn't there any longer. They took me with them." *Ibid.*, 127.
  23. It is only a "solution," since things become more complex, foremost with respect to the construction of a fantasy.
  24. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre VIII. Le transfert (1960-1961)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 67. [Editor's Translation.]
  25. Whether such disparity — given Lacan's repeated expression of his hope that in love one approaches the other as an object — can be understood in Levinasian terms remains an open question. On "disparity" see Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being: or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981), 90, 192-193.
  26. See Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: Encore: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998), 40.
  27. To keep this divine love for Himself would make God a miser, which should make Him ashamed in front of the "angels and the other beings." The other person involved should engage in this *ménage à trois*, and even desire it, for if they do not this would be considered a "lack of charity" [*defectus caritatis*] and, again, would cause shame. See Richard de Saint-Victor, *La trinité*, trans. Gaston Salet (Paris: Sources Chretiennes, 1969), 176, 197. [My translation.]
  28. Thus the metaphor of love repeats the formula of the fantasy:  $\mathfrak{S} \diamond a$ .
  29. This is not unrelated to the idea that someone must necessarily take up this object position in order to make something happen *elsewhere*. This is, I argue, the ethical and socially relevant meaning of the analytic discourse. See my "Towards a New Perversion," in *Reading Seminar Seventeen*, ed. Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg forthcoming from Duke University Press.