

**Masquerading as One's Self: A Revealing Study of Self-Impersonation in Literature**

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In Oscar Wilde's play, *The Importance of Being Ernest*, Jack, who has pretended for years to be named not Jack but Ernest, suddenly discovers who his true parents are and learns that his name is really Ernest after all. He says to his fiancée, "It is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?" And she replies (no one who has heard Joan Greenwood say the line can ever hear it in any other voice), "I can. For I feel that you are sure to change."<sup>1</sup> This inadvertent truth-telling need not be a joke; it has tragic results in a Japanese story:

A mountain ascetic named Kongo-in disturbed a fox's nap. In revenge, the fox allowed himself to be seen changing into the semblance of Kongo-in by a group of the priests' colleagues. When the fox next appeared to them in the form of Kongo-in, they beat him viciously. Only when he was nearly dead did they realize that he was not the fox at all, but the real Kongo-in.<sup>2</sup>

This is a twist on the story of the boy who called wolf when there was no wolf, so that no one believed him when there really was a wolf. In this tale, there really was a fox, but not masquerading as a human, as people thought. In Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*, the prince's friends, thinking that he is a mad pauper, pretend that he is the king, to tease or humor him, but he really is the king. The Hindu god Krishna, pretending to be a human cow-herd, teases the naked cow-herd girls by making them pretend that he is God--which he is--and forcing them to worship him by raising their cupped heads in a gesture that simultaneously reveres the god and lets the naughty boy see their nakedness.<sup>3</sup> When, in Kleist's play, the god Jupiter impersonates Amphitryon with Amphitryon's wife Alcmena, in the course of his double talk he says, "Pretend that I'm Jupiter."

The mythological texts are fantastic (foxes changing into men) and the psychological texts often seem farfetched (women changing into other women to seduce their own husbands); "How is it possible that he did not recognize his own wife?" we ask. Yet myths often present in a grotesquely exaggerated form situations that are quite common in real life.<sup>4</sup> Though few of us actually put on masks that replicate our faces, it is not uncommon for people to become unrecognizable travesties of themselves, particularly as they age. The recognition of these sad human truths is what fuels the constant recreation of the fantasies of self-impersonation.

Do we, ourselves, always know, consciously, when we are engaging in self-parody? I think not; we often slip carelessly across the permeable boundary between the un-self-conscious self-indulgence of our most idiosyncratic mannerisms and the conscious attempt to give the people who know us, personally or publicly, the version of ourselves that they expect. The literature of self-imitation demonstrates that this is a basic human way of negotiating reality, illusion, identity,

and authenticity. These stories are related loosely by history and even more loosely by human nature. The literary record offers us merely the extreme examples, so exaggerated as to be obvious, of what we common folk do, unconsciously, every day in ways that we do not notice, both because they are more muted and because we are blinded by self-deception. And there are situations in which we are particularly prone to self-imitate; for instance, anyone who dances a tango nowadays is willy-nilly imitating someone else doing the tango; tango-dancers move about within a haze of inverted commas, constantly quoting themselves, situating themselves in the midst of some invisible discourse that they are playing to an invisible audience. Terry Eagleton has remarked, with his postmodern tongue in his impudent cheek, that "self-parody . . . is the closest we can come to authenticity."<sup>5</sup>

People masquerade as themselves all the time; the mythology of self-imitation stretches from ancient India to Hollywood, and prevails in real life as well as in fiction, which is sometimes, contrary to public opinion, stranger than truth. Through a kind of triple-cross or switchback, a person pretends to be someone else pretending to be precisely what he or she is. To take just a few examples from world fiction:

### **Real life: Monsieur d'Eon**

In a case from recorded French history, in the eighteenth century, the Chevalier d'Eon (a friend of Beaumarchais, the author of *The Marriage of Figaro*) turned out to be a man who pretended to be a woman pretending to be a man. This is the story:

Once upon a time, more precisely on October 5, 1728, a child named Charles Geneviève Louis Auguste Andréa Thimothée d'Eon, also known as Charles de Beaumont, was born to a low-ranking nobleman in the town of Tonnerre in Burgundy. The child grew up to have a distinguished career as a diplomat and spy and a captain in the Dragoons, and was honored with the title of Chevalier for his bravery in the Seven Years' War. In 1770, rumors that he was a woman began to circulate in France and England, and in 1776 Louis XVI officially announced that d'Eon was, and had always been, a woman. The Chevalière, as she now became known, left France and lived the rest of her life as a woman in London. When she died, on 21 May, 1810, it was discovered that she was anatomically male.<sup>6</sup>

After d'Eon announced that he was a woman, he insisted that he did not want to wear women's clothing but had the right to wear his Dragoon's uniform. Still wearing men's clothing in France, masquerading as himself, he encouraged people to conjure up the two negatives that cancelled one another out, leaving him as he appeared to be, though regarded as doubly disguised. He was able to project his fantasies upon the people he fooled; he never actually changed anything, but just made other people imagine him differently. In this period of transition, he was a man pretending to be a woman pretending to be a man. Then he dressed in women's clothes, only, he insisted, at the king's insistence, but since he continued to cross-dress when he was in exile in England, with no French king to make him do it, one is inclined to believe that he did protest too much, rather like Br'er Rabbit begging Br'er Fox not to throw him into his beloved briar patch. It was, and still is, widely believed that "he first disguised himself as a woman in Russia in order to gain access to the empress and subsequently 'disguised' himself as a man,"<sup>7</sup> but at least one biographer, Gary Kates, regards his cross-dressing in Russia as a "fantasy."<sup>8</sup> In this experience (or, perhaps, fantasy) of drag in Russia, he was a man pretending to be a woman pretending to be a man pretending to be a woman. Kates points out that if d'Eon went to a cross-dressing ball (and there were many at that time), "he would not have to pose as someone else, but rather, his original self would now be regarded by others as female."<sup>9</sup> But what was this "original self"? As if that were not enough, "At many salons, women began to masquerade as d'Eon, telling risqué stories and flirting with male guests."<sup>10</sup> But what were they masquerading as? Here the mind truly boggles.

The double double cross-dress, or sexual switch back, explains how d'Eon got away with it. Apparently, as long as no one with any status in Paris had any knowledge of d'Eon's male anatomy (and the strange thing is that no one, apparently, did), he was safe from accusations or rumors from people who had known him in the provinces. (Half of his names are girls' names, but the French *do* that). Well, his mother lied for him, and he must have been extraordinarily discrete about his private life, but the truth was that he set it up in such a way that he could not lose. People later remarked, with surprising surprise, that he had actually looked more feminine in his uniform than he did later in a dress. Like the fools in the tale of the Emperor's new clothes, who persuaded themselves and one another that they didn't see the Emperor's nude body, the French courtiers imagined that d'Eon's invisible nude body was what he told them it was and discounted what they actually saw. The Chevalier created a social fiction which no one dared to challenge. Even when he later cross-dressed and "behaved in an unabashedly masculine fashion," so that people remarked that d'Eon "still seems more like a man than a woman,"<sup>11</sup> even when they noticed that the Chevalière shaved, had a beard, a voice, and a chest like a man, and urinated standing up,<sup>12</sup> still they went along with it. Kates sums up the situation well:

What is amazing about the reactions of Boswell and Walpole is that they did not follow their instincts and declare that d'Eon was actually a man dressed as a woman. Rather, despite what they perceived, they identified d'Eon as an Amazon, a thoroughly masculinized woman. They assumed female in what they could *not* see; they perceived male in what they could see. To them, d'Eon was anatomically female, but socially a man.<sup>13</sup>

In fact, he was anatomically male, but socially female. Politics, too, supported the masquerade. D'Eon was a spy for many years, living what Kates calls a double life<sup>14</sup> and I would call a double double life, as "spy and diplomat, as man and woman." As a spy he knew how to be what later came to be called, appropriately, a "double penetration agent," like Guy Burgess. In London, too, he played into the scenario of political double entendre: an article published in England referred to him as "this amphibious being, male in London, female in Paris,"<sup>15</sup> while a piece of doggerel in Paris argued that it was believed (presumably in France) that he was male, but England declared him to be female, a little girl.<sup>16</sup> Each nation feminized the other, and blamed the transvestism, like syphilis, on the other.

This is a story out of history but about fantasy, sexual fantasy, and d'Eon's autobiography is a masterpiece of that genre. At times his life reads like a French comedy, and there is much irony in the fact that one of the players in this drama was Pierre-Augustin Beaumarchais, the author of "The Marriage of Figaro," the play that was the basis of Mozart's opera. Beaumarchais not only thought that d'Eon was a woman but spread the rumor that he and d'Eon were in love and contemplating marriage and, later, that d'Eon was trying to marry him.<sup>17</sup> Most significantly, Beaumarchais negotiated the document in which Louis XVI announced that d'Eon was a woman.<sup>18</sup> But the true genre of the work of art that d'Eon made of his life was not slapstick or opera buffo, but myth. D'Eon "created the mythology of his birth and childhood [and] invented the fable" of the cross-dressing in Russia; "What he needed, then, was an explanation--a myth--derived from an imaginary childhood."<sup>19</sup> The story he told was the widespread tale of a girl whose impoverished parents made her dress as a boy.<sup>20</sup> This is a myth in the classical sense of the word--a story that has been told, and retold, for many centuries in many cultures:

[A]ccording to d'Eon, his father squandered whatever he found in his wife's dowry, and by the mid-1720's was in debt up to his ears. The way out of debt, it turned out, was to have a son. Françoise's family will stipulated that a large inheritance of some 400 louis would go to the d'Eon family only if Françoise had a son. . . . Although born female, the new infant was to be raised from the start as a boy . . . Thus according to d'Eon, he was born female, but he never knew what it was like to exist as a girl because from the first breath his family raised him as a son.<sup>21</sup>

But of course, none of this was "true." Even the least suspicious of hermeneuts can see that d'Eon was projecting onto other people (his mother and two other women) his own fantasy of self-

recreation. There is an overlap between the acknowledged fiction of the autobiography and the brazened-out fiction of the life. D'Eon's autobiography is a fairy tale in more ways than one, and there are other fairy tales like it. Indeed, the central image of d'Eon's androgyny was recognized as mythical even at that time; in September 1777, a London magazine had a picture of d'Eon "with a kind of gender line running vertically down the middle of his body,"<sup>22</sup> just like the depiction of sacred androgynes in India.

Myth or history, the Chevalier d'Eon's cross-dressing led to the eponym "eonism," coined by Havelock Ellis in 1928 and enshrined in the OED: "Transvestism, esp. by a man. So Error! Unknown switch argument.**Eonist**, one who wears the clothes of the opposite sex." Ellis had written: "It was clearly a typical case of what Hirschfeld later termed 'transvestism' and what I would call 'sexo-aesthetic inversion,' or more simply, 'Eonism.' . . . The Eonist (though sometimes emphatically of the apparent sex) sometimes shows real physical approximations towards the opposite sex."<sup>23</sup> And in 1970 the *Times* of London called the Chevalier "an a-sexual transvestite" and *eonism* nothing but a "minor deviation."<sup>24</sup> After all, he was French. Oddly enough, the victim of another man who pretended to be a woman pretending to be a man was also French: Bernard Boursicot lived for two decades with a Chinese man named Shi Peipu, who persuaded him that he was a woman pretending to be a man.<sup>25</sup> Like d'Eon, Shi Peipu didn't have to do anything different, just tell people to imagine the switch on and the switch back; he never even had to change out of his trousers. The French continue to worry about d'Eon. Jacques Lacan, in his seminar on Poe's "The Purloined Letter," speaking of self-referentiality, remarks, "We generally deem unbecoming such premature publications as the one by which the Chevalier d'Eon put several of his correspondents in a rather pitiful position." The notes do not tell us what the particular publication was,<sup>26</sup> but it may well have been not a document but merely the public statement that he was a woman who had pretended to be a man, the double-back of the male d'Eon masquerading in plain sight like the letter.

### **Film: Total Recall**

The infinite regress in the doubling-backs of the double penetration agent (the English spy who pretended to be a Russian spy pretending to be an English spy) was a running joke in the old "Spy vs. Spy" episodes of *Mad Comics*, and reflected real life practices as well. A sinister example of the principle of doubling-back took place during the Vietnam War, when the United States forces laid mines that would be triggered by motion from only one direction, when the enemy came toward them. The enemy, knowing this, would turn the mines around so that they exploded when the United States forces advanced. The United States forces, knowing this, began to lay the mines facing toward themselves, so that when the enemy turned them around, they would then face toward the enemy.

When people asked Guy Burgess, the notorious double agent, how he seemed to have so much money, he laughed and said, "I'm a Russian agent," so of course no one thought that he was. As Slavoj Žižek remarked of Burgess, "What better cover for someone like me than total indiscretion?" This is, of course, the very Lacanian definition of deception in its specifically human dimension, where we deceive the Other by means of the truth itself." The sheer weight of keeping the secret often forces a spy to tell the truth, but no one believes him, and so the self-impersonation goes on. The locus classicus for this particular form of self-reference is Edgar Allan Poe's story of the letter hidden in plain sight, "The Purloined Letter," a story that drops various hints to the solution of the puzzle (a kind of espionage, political blackmail) in the form of analogies. One analogy is a game played with a map, the object of which is "to find a given word--the name of town, river, state or empire--any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart":

[T]he adept selects such words as stretch, in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other. These, like the over-largely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious; and here the physical oversight is precisely

analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident.<sup>27</sup>

We will return to this story, and its broader implications, in the Conclusion.

For films about espionage, this scenario is a gift on a silver platter. In *Fives Graves to Cairo* (directed by Billy Wilder, in 1943), the Germans "hide" the marks of the locations of the weapons stores by making them into the most obvious thing: the five letters that stretch across the map of E G Y P T . But espionage in films often is self-imitation squared, for there is always the outer frame of the actor playing the spy. Clive James claimed that Greta Garbo's "idea of a threatening mass movement was too much fan mail," but in *Ninotchka* she "jokes incandescently with actors who are refugees from Hitler pretending to be refugees from Stalin."<sup>28</sup> Thus Garbo the political innocent masqueraded as a Communist, while Jewish refugees (certainly anti-Fascists, probably Communists) masqueraded as anti-Communists. But a double twist occurred during the making of *Dr. Zhivago*, most of which was filmed in 1964 in Spain (they mopped the brows of the actors during the snow scenes, shot in 100 degree weather). For the scene in which the students march down Gorky Street singing the Internationale, the Communist anthem, and are trampled to death by the charging cossacks, they rounded up hundreds of Spanish extras and began to teach them the Internationale. Soon they realized that the extras already *knew* the Internationale. They were old Spanish Civil War fighters, who had long pretended to be loyalists and were now "pretending" to be Communists, singing the song they had sung, a quarter of a century ago, in imitation of the very people they were now imitating—themselves.

Inside the frame, too, self-imitation prevailed. Guy Burgess might have been consciously or unconsciously quoting the scene in Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out* (1947) in which Johnny McQueen (James Mason), the much-hunted leader of the Irish underground, is riding in a taxicab that the police stop at a roadblock; when they ask the cabby (who has not noticed the identity of his fare), "Who's in the back?" "Johnny," jokes the cabby, and the police laugh and wave him on. In *The Sum of All Fears* (2002), a man who is secretly a CIA agent has to break a date with his girlfriend and wonders what to tell her; his senior CIA colleague says, tell her the truth, and he does; he tells her, "I'm actually a CIA agent and I am on my way to Russia on an assignment," and she replies, "Oh, that is so lame." In *Road to Perdition* (2002), a man and his young son rob a series of banks and stop for a meal at a diner; when the waitress asks them what brings them to that part of the country, the boy says, "We're bank robbers," and she smiles. And so forth, and so on.

Enhance this basic spy scenario with the complexities of memory implants in the film mythology of evil science and combine these with body-snatchers, espionage, time-warps, and dream warps and you get *Total Recall* (1990), based on a short story, "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale," by Philip K. Dick. The short story is relatively straightforward: it begins when the protagonist returns from what he thought was a dream of a trip to Mars, but he soon finds that it was real. He tells his wife, "I have both memory-tracks grafted inside my head; one is real and one isn't but I can't tell which is which. . . . Just tell me and make it absolute; I did go or I didn't--tell me which one.' *But they may have altered your memory-track also*, he realized." And so on, in an infinite regress of double-backs. In order to divert the impulse from his memory of the trip to Mars, his handlers offer to let him live out his "most expansive daydream," and his first wish is predictable: "Women. Thousands of them, like Don Juan himself. An interplanetary playboy--a mistress in every city on Earth, Luna and Mars." He gives that up, out of exhaustion, but when they hypnotize him they find out that the Don Juan scenario is not, in fact, his fantasy, but his real history. . . . And there the story ends.

The plan to let him live out, again, what he thinks is a fantasy and his evil handlers know is a reality is expanded in the film (violent enough to have been called *Totaled Recall*, and to have been satirized in the zany violence of Schwarzenegger's *True Lies*), which begins with a vacation ad that offers the ultimate Ego Trip: "You can buy the memory of your ideal vacation, cheaper and safer than the real thing, without the lost luggage, lousy weather, and crooked taxidrivers. With ReCALL, everything is *perfect*." Perfection in this case includes choosing a new identity to

enjoy the trip, "because what is always the same on all vacations is you--you're the same." But this time, the alternative identity the hero chooses turns out to return him to a real self he has forgotten about, an Ego Trip with a difference:

A man named Douglas Quaid (Arnold Schwarzenegger) kept dreaming that he had been on Mars, with a beautiful brunette, though he knew he had never been on Mars and he was married to a beautiful blond named Lori (Sharon Stone). He told the dream to Lori, who kept asking him about the brunette. He went to an agency called Rekall that promised to implant in his brain the false memory of a glorious two-week vacation as a secret agent on Mars. When they asked him what sort of exotic woman he wanted to have his adventure with, he chose a heterosexual brunette, athletic, sleazy *and* demure. "41 A," they decided. But as they strapped him into an implant chair and the process began, they realized that he really *had* been a secret agent on Mars, with the brunette, and that the Agency had erased his memory of all that. Now, in a panic, they themselves erased the memory that he had ever been to Rekall. They released him, dazed, and on the way home, he killed a group of men who attacked him.

When he told Lori what had happened, she tried to persuade him that the people at Rekall had disturbed his mind and inspired paranoid delusions. But when he showed her the blood on his hands and asked, "You call this a delusion?" she tried to kill him. When he put her gun to her head she told him she was not his wife, that their marriage was just a "memory implant" six weeks old. When he protested, "Our wedding, falling in love, my job--just an implant by the Agency?" she insisted, "Your whole life is just a dream. The job is real." "Then who the hell am I?" he demanded. "Beats me," she replied. "I just work here." Men came to get him, but he knocked her out and fled. The Agency man who arrived on the scene kissed Lori, who was actually *his* wife, and the head of the Agency told him to take Quaid alive, for a re-implant.

The man whom Quaid had been on Mars had pre-recorded messages for him that he now found and began to follow. He was given a mechanism which produced a videotape of his Martian double instructing him. It began: "Howdy, Stranger. This is Hauser. If things have gone wrong, I'm talking to myself . . . Whatever your name is, get ready for the big surprise: You are not you. You are me." Hauser told Quaid that he had worked for Mars intelligence, the Agency, until he met a woman, realized he had been on the wrong side, and defected. And he told Quaid to get to Mars.

Quaid followed the trail on Mars to a brunette woman named Melina (Rachel Ticotin), a member of the resistance movement, and when he saw her he stared as if he half recognized her; she, of course, recognized him, called him Hauser, and was furious with him for having disappeared from her life. Quaid protested that he had lost his memory, that he had forgotten that he loved her. He asked her to help him remember, but when he mentioned that he had a wife her fury returned and she threw him out.

Lori appeared and tried to persuade him that the Martian episode was all a dream. but Melina appeared and killed Lori. As Quaid and Melina ran away together, she said that the leader of the movement was going to enable Quaid to remember things from the period when he was Hauser, "like that you love me." "I don't need him for that," he replied, and kissed her. When he told the leader that he wanted to remember in order to be himself again, he was told, "You are what you do. A man is defined by his actions, not his memories." In the final battle, Quaid and Melina were captured and put into memory-erasing chairs for a moment until Quaid got them out. "Are you still you?" he asked her, as they fled. "I don't know," she replied. He kissed her, and smiled. At the end, when Quaid had saved Mars, Melina remarked, "I can't believe it. It's like a dream." "I just had a terrible thought," said Quaid. "What if it *is* a dream?" "Then kiss me quick, before you wake up," she said. He did.

When Quaid manufactures the secret agent scenario, he is unconsciously drawing upon his memory, masquerading as himself. (Hauser's eyebrows are a little gentler than Quaid's, and his face more relaxed and intelligent, but he has the same faint Austrian accent). From the standpoint of Melina, Quaid behaves very much like medieval cads, who "forget" their life with a

woman in one place (Melina, the brunette, on Mars) when they meet a woman in another place (Lori, the blond, on earth). (From the standpoint of the film-going public, the blond and brunette are the usual semiotic signifiers of two different mental worlds—the blond, especially when she is Sharon Stone, representing the evil world.)

When Quaid argues that it is mere coincidence that he dreamed of being a secret agent and then turned out to be a secret agent, the man from *Recall* says, "Brunette, athletic, sleazy *and* demure. Just as you specified. Is that coincidence?" In this he attempts to dehumanize Melina even as the *Recall* people had reduced her to a grotesque bra size (41 A). Yet Quaid retorts that the brunette was real because he had dreamed of her even before he went to *Recall*, because he had had an image of her in his mind before the people at *Recall* asked him to choose the woman he wanted to be with on Mars. His two women are jealous of one another, even though each regards the other as part of a dream. "I can't believe you're jealous of a dream," he protests to Lori, but of course that is the very essence of sexual fantasy. He also points out to his wife that he doesn't know the name of the brunette in his apparent fantasy and that, although he dreams about her every night, he's always back in the morning. This prompts the first of a series of sexual reality tests: "I'll give you something to dream about," Lori says, seductively, and seduces him. But even when he decides that the blond is unreal, the brunette must still prove that she is real. This is achieved through a series of kisses, each of which validates some level of memory and truth.

There are various other sorts of physical proofs (such as the blood on his hands, echoes of *Lady MacBeth*—though this time it is *real* blood), but all prove, as usual, inconclusive. Other approaches to the sexual mythology of self-imitation imply that reality inheres both in the body and in the fantasy, both in the brunette and in the blond, or that the multiple partners in adultery, or promiscuity, may be the physical parallel to split personality or multiple minds. But a Hollywood film demands one straightforward answer—ambiguity doesn't play well in a drive-in—, and the final vote argues subtly and persuasively for the body (Arnold Schwarzenegger's body, after all: how real can you get?) rather than the mind as the true record of human memory and identity. In a way, *Total Recall* is a naively realistic film after all: where you might think there was room for multiple identities, it all turns out to be a simple case of amnesia. The naiveté lies in the reduction of the moral issues to a binary choice—*which was real?*—and giving one answer: it was the body, it was the brunette. The body wins out as the rock-bottom test of what is real, but the ultimate assertion—*I am X*—springs from the hero's moral choice: Quaid wonders who are the good guys and who the bad guys, and in particular, he wonders if his old double, Hauser, whom he cannot remember, was good or evil: the head of the Agency tells Quaid that Hauser had not, in fact, defected, but had only pretended to do so in order to infiltrate the resistance movement for the Agency (another triple back). The choice of who he is is therefore in part a choice of who he wants to be, and that choice is dictated by the moral quality of the man in question (Hauser/Quaid)—though the key to that quality reverts back to the quality of the woman. The choice of the gorgeous brunette inspires him to make the right choice of moral sides; in the end, she is the most persuasive reality of all. The real you, and the better you, is the one that has not only the better-looking woman but the woman playing on the right team.

The poignancy of these science fiction films derives, in part, from a conventional situation: for most of the film, the hero is all alone, doubting his own perception against the testimony of all the rest of the world—until he gets an ally, usually a girl who is in love with him. He may be in danger of losing his mind, but he feels that he can trust his body, and his body trusts the girl. *Total Recall* deconstructs this scenario at first, providing the hero with two different girls validating two different scenarios, but when one girl wins out and kills the other, we end up in the familiar scenario after all. Brain-washing both plays upon and advances the assumption that the mind is the brain, and the brain is vulnerable, mutable; better to trust the body, the good old Norman Rockwell body.

What do we learn about memory from these American films? Given the Cartesian underpinnings of the culture that spawned Hollywood, a culture which confidently places the memory in the

mind, it is at first surprising to see Hollywood arguing so romantically for the opposite point of view. It is even more surprising to find science fiction movies, with their emphasis on the memory as a part not merely of the mind but of the body viewed as an entirely automatic machine, asserting the romantic view of memory and affirming the power of the memory of love to transcend the mind. But our surprise begins to fade when we realize that Descartes was shouted down by other voices in Hollywood in the years in which these films were made.

The emphasis on the body as the locus of memory was fueled by the strand of anti-intellectualism that was deeply imbedded in the Hollywood dream factory, together with the equally apple-pie American trust in the practical, embodied world, in materialism. The pervasive eroticism of Hollywood is, moreover, committed to a world-view that always points us toward sex as the fixed thing that keeps the world in order, or, failing that, makes it go 'round. Memory, one of the props of that world, must therefore be held in the thrall of the body. Although the basic philosophical choices remain limited, science fiction films show us more "scientific" functions of self-imitation, and the new twists unsettle our (Christian or Hindu) assumption that the mind owns the body, that we are our minds no matter what body we happen to be occupying at the moment. In films about scientifically altered memory, it appears that the body owns the mind.

### **Nature Imitating Art Imitating Nature**

The cliché that "Nature imitates art" already conceals an implication of self-imitation, for the ironic punch comes from our assumption that art imitates nature; what the cliché is saying, therefore, is that nature is itself already an imitation of the imitation of nature by art. A notorious example of this phenomenon is what has been called "the Werther effect."<sup>29</sup> In 1774, Goethe was inspired, by the suicide of K.W. Jerusalem and his own frustrated passion for Charlotte Buff, to write a novel (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*), in which Werther commits suicide because of his frustrated passion for Charlotte. The novel became a sensation; the two figures were portrayed on bread boxes and Meissen porcelain; and "all over Europe large numbers of young people committed suicide with a copy of the book clutched in their hands or buried in their pockets."<sup>30</sup> Goethe eventually said he wished he could destroy his creation,<sup>31</sup> but it had become *real* now, and out of his control as a work of art. In our day, the closest parallel is found not in high art but in journalism: lurid crimes are reported in lurid tabloids, inspiring copy-cats to commit lurid crimes that only a journalist could have cooked up.

Nature often imitates art in the plastic arts. Escher's famous image of the hand (surely Dürer's hand?) drawing the hand that is drawing it is a marvelous visualization of this insight. Artistic forms often produce self-imitating illusions: in Euripides' *Alcestis*, Herakles says to Admetus, "I'll make an image of your wife for you," but then he actually produces the real wife; so, too, in Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale*, what is said to be a statue of Hermione turns out to be the real Hermione, just as, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, the "fake" Hero turns out to be the real Hero pretending to be the fake Hero. These representations of women are replaced by the women they pretend to be representing, but some myths argue that people began as statues and then were brought to life, so that any statue is ultimately a self-imitation.<sup>32</sup>

### **Appointment in Samsara**

The inexorable drive toward self-impersonation, the concept of self that cannot be escaped even by people who try to be someone else, flows like a red thread through many of these stories. It is well expressed in an Orientalist parable based on an ancient Arab tale (though one not included in the *Nights*),<sup>33</sup> a tale that was retold by Somerset Maugham in his play *Sheppey* (1933) and cited, a year later, by John O'Hara in a novel to which he gave the title, *Appointment in Samarra*. The story goes like this:

[Death speaks:] There was a merchant in Baghdad who sent his servant to market to buy provisions and in a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, and said, Master, just now when I was in the marketplace I was jostled by a woman in the crowd and when I turned I saw it was Death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture. Now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city and avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me. The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant mounted it, and he dug his spurs in its flanks and as fast as the horse could gallop he went. Then the merchant went down to the marketplace and he saw me standing in the crowd and he came to me and said, Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning? That was not a threatening gesture, I said, it was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad, for I had an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.

The phrase has come to signify the inevitability of death, but there are also other appointments from which we flee in vain, other selves from which we try, futilely, to escape as Alice tried to get out of Looking-Glass house, only to find that every path that seemed to lead out into the garden in fact brought her back into the door of the house.

In our stories, this particular brand of fatalism argues that the hope of getting away from oneself (the face-lift delusion) is always doomed to failure. Thomas Wolfe was wrong; in this sense, at least, you cannot help but go home again. T. S. Eliot got it right when he said, in "East Coker," "In my end is my beginning. . . . In my beginning is my end."<sup>34</sup> Oedipus learned this lesson the hard way: the prediction about his mother and father made him run away . . . to his mother and father. These stories tell us not merely that we can't run away from some impersonal fate, some malevolent gods, some old ladies snipping threads up in Zeus's heaven or a veiled woman who makes a sign to us across a crowded marketplace; but that we cannot run away from ourselves, from the people we are now; we cannot become someone else. When we have a chance to pretend, to become someone else, we still end up as the selves we were, reinventing the same wheel—the wheel that is the metaphor that Hindus and Buddhists use for the process of reincarnation, the cycle of *samsara*. This relentless wheel rolls, Juggernautlike, over the hopes held out by the current trend of re-invention, plastic surgery, therapy, self-help programs, 12-step programs, change your nose, transform your life, get a life. These less optimistic texts, by contrast, do not necessarily imply that no one can ever change; people try, and some succeed, all the time in these tales. But there is a deep, strong undercurrent pulling against it, and you cannot step twice into that same river. As F. Scott Fitzgerald says at the end of *The Great Gatsby*, "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

There are, however, several positive variants of the myth of self-imitation that challenge the fatalism of the appointment in Samsara.

**[1]** The first piece of good news is that each of us is already a lot of people, that we have all these people inside us. And so, when, failing to be the other person we hoped to change into, we return to our default position, we find a different form of ourself, a different one of our many selves. We are indeed imprisoned in our self, but it is very big prison. When we put on a mask we have a choice, like Lon Chaney, of a thousand faces, and in a very real sense they are all our own. There are limits: we cannot, perhaps, choose to be Einstein or Marilyn Monroe. There are people who believe we can only choose to be Jekyll or Hyde, but I think there is a little more wiggle room in there.

**[2]** The second variant of the good news is that the mask may prove to be more real than the face, the surface more real than the depth. Some stories locate another, more precious self in the mask itself. William Butler Yeats may have had such stories in mind when he wrote, "There is always a living face behind the mask. . . . I think that all happiness depends on the energy to assume the mask of some other self; that all joyous or creative life is a re-birth as something not oneself, something which has no memory and is created in a moment and perpetually renewed."<sup>35</sup> The postmodern exaltation of the copy over the supposed original had already found

a delightful expression in Oscar Wilde, who often played upon the paradoxical doubling-back of appearance and reality (as in the case of Ernest, the man who meant to lie but accidentally told the truth). Lord Henry, in the *Picture of Dorian Gray*, remarks, "It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible." In other words, things *are* the way they seem, only more so (or, as the case may be, less so). This insight was turned on its head by a woman in a novel by Peter de Vries; when the narrator remarks to her that a particular man "has a lot more depth," she replies "Only on the surface. Deep down, he's shallow."<sup>36</sup> Later, another character in the de Vries book expands upon this theme; when one person remarks, "Hubert thinks everything is affection; he takes nothing at face value," another replies, "But nothing can be taken at face value. Least of all pure naturalness. That's the ultimate affection. It's the attempt to cover our masks with a bare face."<sup>37</sup> De Vries and Wilde may have been inspired by Nietzsche, who remarked that all that is deep loves the mask, needs a mask,<sup>38</sup> and who praised the Greeks for knowing how to "stop courageously at the surface, the fold, the skin, to adore appearance, to believe in forms, tones, words, in the whole Olympus of appearance. Those Greeks were superficial--*out of profundity*."<sup>39</sup> Lord Henry's *bon mot* introduces the premise that the surface—in this case, the mask—is the real image, the face beneath it the false image. On the interpersonal level, this tells us that the normal social face is a mask; the mask over that face is the truth beneath the mask.

**[3]** Mary Ann Doane glosses the passage in Nietzsche for us in a way that opens up another permutation: "Deception, far from distorting truth, operates a double negation by, as Derrida will point out in another context, concealing the secret that there is no secret."<sup>40</sup> This is a third variant, a third bit of good news: sometimes the mask turns out to have been the same as the face all along. Others, too, have capitalized upon this counter-intuitive intuition. Groucho Marx, in *Duck Soup*, remarked, "Chicolini may look like an idiot and talk like an idiot, but don't let that fool you: he *is* an idiot." Sir Rudolf Bing (tyrannical director of the Metropolitan Opera for many years) stole this line when he remarked of himself, "Don't be misled; behind that cold, austere, severe exterior, there beats a heart of stone."<sup>41</sup> There are particular times when conscious self-imitation comes in very handy indeed. A person will often imitate herself after a trauma which is like a death, when she feels as if she had become a different person and tries to keep going by pretending to be who she was, through a kind of Stanislavski approach, method-acting, trying to behave as she knows she used to behave, until she can remember how it actually feels to be who she is. This works for stage-acting, too. A Balinese dancer who works with masks once told me that the face inside the mask must be the same as the mask; the dancer has to generate the emotion within himself and project it through the mask. A mask must reveal the face concealed by the face of the mask.

**[4]** If the normal face is already a mask (good news [2]), then the mask may free the true self, lure it out of its repression, create a safe-house for it to live in; this is good news four. The fantasy is of the right to speak freely, to spill our secrets, to reveal our secret selves. There is a South Indian saying, that you can say anything when you wear a mask over your face. The attendant who demonstrates oxygen masks on airplanes before take-off used to promise, "An attendant will tell you when it is safe to take off your mask"--but no one ever does. For most of us, it is never really safe--or true--to take off the mask. We prefer, rather, merely to glimpse the reality in the mask, in the myth. The particularly hidden or repressed or subversive parts of the self may emerge most easily in a masquerade, which makes accessible parts of experience that are not always available. This is what Henry Abramovitch has called "the transformation of identity through disguise--how we must appear as we are not, in order to become more truly who we are. . . . [The appropriate disguises] allow surface to touch depth."<sup>42</sup> We wear a mask because we feel vulnerable, and, paradoxically, want to attract the one person who will love us without our mask; this is the double bind. We project our best self outside of ourself, trying to present to the world a better self. Upward hypocrisy can be a very good thing. We all need masks; if we always tried always to be one single self, the world would grind to a halt.

**[5]** But what when the mask reveals an unconscious truth? Then to take off the mask might be to get farther from the truth, not nearer. Sometimes the mask is more of the truth than the truth,

because it covers up the conscious lie and reveals the unconscious lie. But when you think you're lying you're actually revealing something, too. The mask also tells the truth, and the confession does actually peel away one layer. What if that false face were to become the real mask? Cicero once argued that people should put on masks and then become their masks.<sup>43</sup> This is the fifth piece of good news, the hope that wearing a mask can change you, not into the mask but into a face that has been transformed by the experience of wearing a mask. A man in Kobo Abe's novel, *The Face of Another*, forced to wear a handsome mask over his hideously deformed face, says: "I prayed for the fairy-tale miracle of awakening one morning to find the mask stuck firmly on my face, to discover it had become my real face. . . . But the miracle, of course, did not happen."<sup>44</sup> It does happen, however, in a whimsical story by Max Beerbohm, "The Happy Hypocrite," which argues that the face, not the mask, undergoes a transformation to make the mask coincide with the face. Here is the plot:

Lord George Hell was wicked. He fell in love with a good woman named Jenny Mere, but she said, "I can never be your wife. I can never be the wife of any man whose face is not saintly. Your face, my Lord, mirrors, it may be, true love for me, but it is even as a mirror long tarnished by the reflection of this world's vanity. . . . That man, whose face is wonderful as are the faces of the saints, to him I will give my true love." Lord Hell went to Mr. Aeneas, the mask-maker, who gave him the mask of a saint -- "spiritual, yet handsome." He had it altered a bit so that it was also "a mirror of true love . . . the mask of a saint who loves dearly." He determined to wear it for the rest of his life. But his old girlfriend, La Gambogi, still recognized him immediately, and called him by name, saying, "I cannot let go so handsome a lover. . . Why, you never looked so lovingly at me in all your life!" He pretended not to know her. Jenny Mere instantly loved him. He told her his name was George Heaven. They married and lived together in a cottage in the woods. After a month, La Gambogi found them; she said to him, "Your wife's mask is even better than yours." She begged him, in front of the astonished and uncomprehending Jenny, to unmask just once for her, to show her the dear face she had so often caressed, the lips that were dear to her. When he refused, she clawed at his face; the mask came off, and his face was revealed: it was, line for line, feature for feature, the same as his mask had been, a saint's face. At first he thought he must still have his former face, and he told Jenny to forget him, but she said, "I am bewildered by your strange words. Why did you woo me under a mask? And why do you imagine I could love you less dearly, seeing your own face?" He looked into her eyes and saw in them the reflection of his own face. He was filled with joy and wonder. She said, "Kiss me with your own lips."

Lord Heaven's misgivings, at the sight of his masked reflection in a steam, express the paradox of self-imitation:

A great shame filled him that he should so cheat the girl he loved. Behind that fair mask there would still be the evil face that had repelled her. Could he be so base as to decoy her into love of that most ingenious deception? He was filled with a great pity for her, with a hatred of himself. And yet, he argued, was the mask indeed a mean trick? Surely it was a secret symbol of his true repentance and of his true love. His face was evil, because his life had been evil. He had seen a gracious girl and of a sudden his very soul had changed. His face alone was the same as it had been. It was not just that his face should be evil still.<sup>45</sup>

This is the face-lift rationale: my face is not my real face. And indeed the mask of Lord Hell-as-Heaven has some of the unfortunate side effects of Botoxin: "the mask could not smile, of course. It was made for a mirror of true love, and it was grave and immobile."<sup>46</sup> There is a danger here, of course; Slavoj Žižek warns that one must distinguish between putting on a mask of what you already are and becoming a mask *you do not intend to become*.<sup>47</sup> These two can blend together, as Pierre Marivaux pointed out: "Deception often leads to being deceived; the trickster is duped because his own reflection blurs: 'I had a mask that hid my face and I no longer knew who I was when I looked at myself in the mirror,' admitted the character Brideron."<sup>48</sup> The belief that by wearing a mask we may become the mask is a significant modification of the more

simplistic paradigm with which the some variants of the tale operate. It is the only one of our five optimistic paradigms that actually allows for intentional self-transformation.

### **The Mask Beneath the Mask**

What does it all mean? We must seek the answer in our texts. Mary McCarthy once said, "It's absolutely useless to look for [the self], you won't find it, but it's possible in some sense to make. I don't mean . . . making a mask . . . but you finally begin . . . to make and to choose the self you want."<sup>49</sup> This nice distinction between self and mask is hard to call. We assume that masquerades lie, and they often do, at least on the surface. Often they tell a deeper truth, that masquerading as yourself reaffirms an enduring self (or selves) inside you, that does not change even if your masquerades, intentional or helpless, make you look different to others. Some stories begin and end with the relatively simple assumption that the mask is false and that the face underneath it is real. Never venturing beyond this first level, these stories give us a happy ending: you find the true self, take off the mask, and All Ends Well. The "real" self at the core is revealed when the many superficial layers are torn away; this is the conventional recognition story. In C. S. Lewis's book for children, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the boy Eustace commits a series of sins and becomes a dragon, a condition he desperately wants to escape from. Aslan, the lion who is God, takes him to a cool pool and tells him to undress. He finds he can peel the skin off, and is delighted until he sees that he still has another dragonskin under that; and another and another. Then Aslan says, "You will have to let me undress you," and he does it and it hurts, this time, but Eustace gets down to his own skin again.<sup>50</sup> And when Salome strips away the last veil, you see the real Salome, the naked Salome.

Some stories reject the ultimate reality either of the mask or of the face beneath it and move on to other insights. We see in them an implicit belief in a self that is revealed and concealed in complex ways; but we also see glimpses of dual and, occasionally, multiple "authentic" selves. These selves are manipulated by, but also manipulate, self-imitation, self-cuckolding, and an infinite regress of self-references, all connected, all different, each inspiring a different piece of the total narrative puzzle.

Many of our stories seem to assume a mere duality of selves: self versus mask. Some of these dualities are mutual referents of one another, such as two genders, or nature/art, nature/culture, yin and yang; others, however, break open the single theme of identity to reveal an infinite possibility of variations. The polarized variants are fairly easy to play with: Jekyll to Hyde, virgin to whore. It may be, as many have argued, that is natural for human beings to think in twos,<sup>51</sup> but not all important things actually come in twos. Many of our stories deconstruct the toggle-switch model of the self, or the cybernetic on-or-off that makes life seem like a game of ping-pong. Some reveal or suggest a less dualistic, more multiple model of the self. The trickier ones are the multiple selves, the modified selves, the combined selves. Virginia Woolf, in *Orlando* (a name that conjures up the layers of gender reversals in *As You Like It*), wrote of the role of the name in discerning one particular self among many selves:

Then she called hesitatingly, as if the person she wanted might not be there, "Orlando?" For if there are (at a venture) seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once, how many different people are there not--Heaven help us--all having lodgment at one time or another in the human spirit? Some say two thousand and fifty-two. So that it is the most usual thing in the world for a person to call, directly they are alone, Orlando? (if that is one's name) meaning by that, Come, come! I'm sick to death of this particular self. I want another. Hence the astonishing changes we see in our friends. But . . . the selves of which we are built up, one on top of another, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand, have attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions and rights of their own, call them what you will (and for many of these things there is no name) so that one will only come if it is raining, another in a room with green curtains, another when Mrs. Jones is not there, another if you can promise it a glass of wine--and so on; for everybody can multiply from his

own experience the difficult terms which his different selves have made with him--and some are too wildly ridiculous to be mentioned in print at all. . . [Sometimes], for some unaccountable reason, the conscious self, which is the uppermost, and has the power to desire, wishes to be nothing but one self. This is what some people call the true self, and it is, they say, compact of all the selves we have it in us to be; commanded and locked up by the Captain self, the Key self, which amalgamates and controls them all. . . . So she was now darkened, stilled, and become, with the addition of this Orlando, what is called, rightly or wrongly, a single self, a real self. And she fell silent. For it is probable that when people talk aloud the selves (of which there may be more than two thousand) are conscious of the disseverment, and are trying to communicate, but when communication is established they fall silent.<sup>52</sup>

Since we really do have all these masks, personae, selves, within us, how foolish we are to tell lies in order to preserve the one mask that we think is who we really are, and/or who we should be perceived as.

Robert J. Lifton, in *The Protean Self*, posits a multiplicity of selves within us that leads us to identify with other selves that transcend us, selves outside us, so that we are doubly not-one, inside (a multitude) and outside (connected to a multitude).<sup>53</sup> The protean self, moreover, "can draw images from far places and render them its own 'memories.'"<sup>54</sup> So you can steal memories from other places and make them your own. The stories teach us that even when we seem to meet the same self again and again, dove-tailed in among the alternating layers of masks, like the filling in a mille-feuille or a Napoleon, it is not the same self. Even the dualistic toggle, if it happens more than once, destabilizes the dualistic paradigm; Rosalind plucks out one of her selves as Rosalind, and then another as Rosalind-as-Ganymede-as-Rosalind. Rosalind-as-Ganymede-as-Rosalind is bolder, more playful, more confident than Rosalind *tout court* (or Rosalind-as-Rosalind), emboldened both by the double mask and by the level of masculinity embedded in the mediating personality. All selves are not created equal. You may come back to the same line on a point farther on, but all the selves are you. So the trick is to convert the dualistic paradigm into the open-ended, multiple kind, by decentering the conventions of the self, and this is what masquerading does. As Lacan wisely remarked, after a transformative experience you cannot always go back to being who you are, and a great part of your truth is recognized in the alternative state.<sup>55</sup>

The multiple selves are therefore stacked like a deck of cards: we discover one by pushing aside another. There is always a stage, and a self, beyond the one we inhabit at any minute. The selves nest within one another like so many Chinese boxes or Russian dolls or Indian stories<sup>56</sup>; one by one we peel them off, only to discover that the innermost doll is the same as the doll on the outside. Ultimately, we must admit that all the masks are real; the person is not a coconut or a lobster or an oyster, with an outer hulk that must be peeled to release the delicious heart, nor an avocado, where the heart alone is inedible. Nor, as some have suggested, is the self an onion, composed entirely of things you strip off, all edible, but with no center.<sup>57</sup> Onion-soul stories deconstruct the ideal, demonstrating not only that you can't find the real self, but that it doesn't even exist. But other myths tell us that the person is an artichoke--you can eat the leaves, and the heart, too. (Though there always remains the choke, the inedible parts of the personality, that cannot be wedged into any totalizing system. The French say of a person with many lovers, "Il a un coeur d'artichaut."<sup>58</sup>)

As we go deeper and deeper through the alternating layers of masks and faces, we never reach a core; the depilatory process is endless, always shedding a self, as snakes slough their skins, a symbol of rebirth. The infinite artichoke resonates in world mythology. In the great Sanskrit epic, the *Mahabharata*, the villains take the heroine, Draupadi, and drag her into the great assembly hall of the palace, where they attempt to strip her; as they tear away each silk layer, another miraculously appears beneath it, until there is a great pile, and they let her go.<sup>59</sup> In contrast with the tale in which Salome strips down to the real Salome, here, presumably, there are still potentially infinite layers of silk left to go; you will never get to the naked Draupadi. Where lust

revealed Salome, chastity conceals Draupadi. In this vision, the soul is like Draupadi; it's "tortoises all the way down" -- the fabled retort of the informant replying to a question about the foundation of the world (which, he said, rests on a platform that rests on the back of a tortoise, which rests on the back of another tortoise, ad infinitum).<sup>60</sup> Perhaps this tortoise is being chased by Achilles and cannot escape from Zeno's (and Lewis Carroll's<sup>61</sup>) paradox: every time you take off a mask you get halfway closer to a true self, and another and another, but you never reach it because it does not exist. In the hall of mirrors, it's selves all the way down. You never get to the final tortoise, the infinite regress, what Russell Hoban (in *The Mouse and His Child*) called "the last visible dog."

Yet you are always truer without the latest mask; every time you take one off you have less of a conscious lie. So putting on the mask gets you closer to one self and farther from another, not closer to or farther from the true self, which does not exist; and so does taking off the mask. Since every lie covers up a truth, a series of masks passes through a series of lies and truths; perhaps, then, the best bet is to wear as many as possible, and realize that you are wearing them, and try to find out what each one hides and conceals. As you strip away masks, or faces, each time you see more in the hall of looking-glasses (like Salinger's suicidal hero, Seymour Glass)<sup>62</sup>, you know more, even though you do not get any closer to the real face or real self, since there is no such person; you just get to know more and more personae. And so it is a good thing to mask and to unmask. If you just stand there with your unconscious mask on your face, like egg in the saying, you never learn anything about the selves.

What if it's appearances all the way down?<sup>63</sup> What if both the alternating selves and the masks are simply appearances? This would mean that the clever wife really is the mistress because fantasy and desire make her so, that in some sense the Brahmin's daughter is indeed the exotic courtesan, Helena really is Diana—if for no other reason than because they appear in their erring husbands' minds to be so. The stories with the double twist bring you back to the position where you don't seem to have a mask, which is where most people think they are all the time. But the memory of the double journey out and in, unsettling the assumption that you are either masked or unmasked, reminds you that you are never unmasked, never at rest, and opens the possibility of multiple selves, the infinite regress of infinite self-discovery.

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## Footnotes for "Masquerading as One's Self: A Revealing Study of Self-Impersonation in Literature"

By Wendy Doniger (University of Chicago)

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Ernest*, 506. Joan Greenwood appeared in the 1952 film version directed by Anthony Asquith.

<sup>2</sup> Kunio Yanagida, "Japanese Folk Tales," 30-31.

<sup>3</sup> *Bhagavata Purana*, with the commentary of Sridhara (Benares: Pandita Pustakalaya, 1972), 10.22.1-28; O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths: A Sourcebook, translated from the Sanskrit* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1975), 228-231.

<sup>4</sup> Doniger, *The Bedtrick*, 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Terry Eagleton, "Maybe he made it up," 3

<sup>6</sup> Gary Kates, *Monsieur d'Eon Is a Woman*.

<sup>7</sup> Cynthia Cox, *The enigma of the age*, cited by John P. Muller and William J.

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Richardson, "Notes on Lacan," 93.

<sup>8</sup> Kates, 67.

<sup>9</sup> Kates, 75.

<sup>10</sup> Kates, 257.

<sup>11</sup> Kates, 256.

<sup>12</sup> Kates, 38.

<sup>13</sup> Kates, 256.

<sup>14</sup> Kates, 67.

<sup>15</sup> Kates, 37.

<sup>16</sup> Kates, 44-5.

<sup>17</sup> Kates, 220, 223, 257.

<sup>18</sup> Kates, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Kates, 221, 47.

<sup>20</sup> The same story was told by Shi Pei and about Richard Strauss/Hugo von Hofmannsthal's heroine Zdenka/o; Doniger, *The Bedtrick*, 340-42, 370. It was also told in ancient India about Amba/Shikhandin and Ila; Doniger, *Splitting the Difference*, 271-8, 281-6.

<sup>21</sup> Kates, 47-8.

<sup>22</sup> Kates, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, VII. i. 10 and 12.

<sup>24</sup> *The Times* of London, 5 September, 1970, 8/4.

<sup>25</sup> Doniger, *The Bedtrick*, 369-72.

<sup>26</sup> "The Chevalier d'Eon was Charles de Beaumont (1728-1810), an officer and spy of Louis XV stationed at the courts of Russia and London." Lacan, cited by John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, "Notes on Lacan," 93.

<sup>27</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, "The Purloined Letter," 20.

<sup>28</sup> Clive James, "Say thank you," reviewing Maria DiBattista's *Fast-Talking Dames*, in the *London Review of Books*, May 2002, 24.

<sup>29</sup> John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero*, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Kaufmann, *Without Guilt and Justice*, 161.

<sup>31</sup> Stuart Pratt Atkins, *The Testament of Werther in Poetry and Drama*, 2.

<sup>32</sup> Wendy Doniger, *Splitting the Difference*, 73-77; Pliny, *Natural History*, 160.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights*, 195.

<sup>34</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, "East Coker—1940." "In my end is my beginning" was also the motto of Mary Queen of Scots.

<sup>35</sup> William Butler Yeats, *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats*, 340-41.

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<sup>36</sup> Peter de Vries, *The Tunnel of Love*, 35. I'm grateful to Robin Burgess for chasing down this quotation for me.

<sup>37</sup> de Vries, *The Tunnel of Love*, 114.

<sup>38</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, #40.

<sup>39</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 38.

<sup>40</sup> Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, 57.

<sup>41</sup> Obituary for Rudolf Bing, *The New York Times*, September 3, 1997, D25.

<sup>42</sup> Henry Abramovitch, "Turning Inside Out," 1 and 7.

<sup>43</sup> Cicero, "On Duties."

<sup>44</sup> Kobo Abe, *The Face of Another*, 210.

<sup>45</sup> Max Beerbohm, "The Happy hypocrite," 37-8.

<sup>46</sup> Beerbohm, "The Happy hypocrite," 47.

<sup>47</sup> Zizek, "How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?," 28-9.

<sup>48</sup> P. Marivaux, *Télémaque travesty* (Paris, 1972, 772), cited by Melchior-Bonnet, 176.

<sup>49</sup> Cited as the frontispiece to Robert J. Lifton's *The Protean Self*.

<sup>50</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 96.

<sup>51</sup> Geoffrey Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy*; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*.

<sup>52</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, 200-201, 204.

<sup>53</sup> Robert J. Lifton, *The Protean Self*, 226.

<sup>54</sup> Lifton, *The Protean Self*, 230.

<sup>55</sup> Lacan, "The Split Between the Eye and the Gaze," 76.

<sup>56</sup> Or, as often as not, Indian dolls, or Russian-American dolls. The sexual doll metaphor came to life in the *New York Times*, Monday, January 18, 1999, which reported on a new set of nested dolls: President Clinton, Monica Lewinsky, Paula Jones, Hilary Clinton, and a saxophone. In that order.

<sup>57</sup> A program on British television, "Spitting Image," during the Thatcher regime once showed a Nancy Reagan puppet, who pulled off one mask after another until she had no head at all.

<sup>58</sup> I'm grateful to Marina Warner for this fact; personal communication, London, October 10, 2002.

<sup>59</sup> *Mahabharata* 2.61.

<sup>60</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 28-29.

<sup>61</sup> Lewis Carroll, "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles," *Mind* 4, No. 14 (April 1895), 278-280.

<sup>62</sup> J. D. Salinger, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish."

<sup>63</sup> From Lorraine Daston's remarks, Einstein Forum, December 9, 1997

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