

BOOK REVIEWS

Myths of Today: Essayson Cultural Myth-Criticism [Mitos de hoy: ensayos de mitocrítica cultural] Collected and introduced by José Manuel Losada, Logos VerlagBerlinGmbH 2016. ISBN: 978-3-8325-4239-9

The volume *Myths of Today* is divided into two different sections; the first comprises articles by eight different researchers; the second including Prof. Losada's lengthy article "Los mundos del mito" ["The Worlds of Myth"]. In his introduction Dr. Losada explains the main concern of the book: the study and importance of Cultural Myth-Criticism: a way of studying myths in our present-day environment and cultural contexts that includes their significance in contemporary social development.

As mentioned, the first part includes a collection of well-documented studies in modern day re-reading of myths, tracing and identifying them in contemporary literature and art forms. The second part studies in depth the implications of a contemporary socio-cultural approach to mythology. In this sense, it describes the reception of such phenomena in a world of growing skepticism and continuous denial of myths. Thus, it helps guide the reader through the inquiry into how, and more importantly, why, do the myths keep reappearing in a recurrent manner in contemporary societies. It seems convenient to comment first on this second part of the volume since it embraces the whole concept of the actual approach on contemporary mythology to which the first part is a collection of examples.

"The worlds of myth" ["Los mundos del mito"] is a very interesting study on the apparently opposite concepts of immanence and transcendence applied to myths. I say apparently because what the essay will show us is the synthesis, in a sort of Hegelian way, of both concepts. This synthesis becomes necessary to develop the whole Myth-Critical approach to mythology in contemporary expressions of art and culture. Along these lines, the author explains thoroughly the historical and, of course, philosophical difference between the logic of immanence and the logic of transcendence; the opposition between movement and stillness, change and sameness. Moving within these categories, he refers to the different philosophical approaches in the course of history, beginning with a general approximation to idealism via Schelling, the existentialist take on immanence via Camus, and so on. Regarding transcendence Dr. Losada focuses on the way ontological transcendence evolves into sacred transcendence, elucidating his points with examples from classic and contemporary sources. The evolution of the aforementioned concepts does not stop there. The author takes them one step further to their epitome in "academic immanence," that is, the actualization, realization and comprehension of the contemporary "act of mythology," and to the cosmic transcendence that offers a remarkable explanation of the updated forms of contemporary myths by way of examples from the story of *Tristan und Isolde* to cinematographic production *The Matrix*.

Returning to the first half of the volume, the collection of essays offers re-readings and re-writings of the persistent cultural value of myths, focusing on the last two centuries.

"A myth for the children of today: Dante's trip in the Divine Comedy" ["Un mito para los niños de hoy: el viaje de Dante en la *Divina Comedia*"] by Rosa Affatodeals with different versions of Dante's work, particularly those adapted for children, in order to provide clear archetypal references explored through the unconscious, originated in the interpretation of the Italian text as a state of dreams and provider of mythical universal references.

Antonella Lipscomb's "Jean Cocteau: the Tracian Poet of the 20th-century" ["Jean Cocteau o el Poeta de Tracia del siglo XX"] tackles the interpretation of Cocteau's famous series of movies known as the *Orphic Trilogy*, by using the synthesis of the Poet's Myth as a result of combining The Phoenix and Orpheus. This synthesis, that has become a common-place archetypal reference, finds a renewal in Lipscomb's essay and provides a myth-critical approach to the movies.

"Myth Mosaic: Macunaíma" ["Mosaico de mitos: Macunaíma"] by Cláudia Malheiros Munhoz is a piece that brings together and gives sense to myths from three radically different mythologies: The Greek, The Brazilian and the African. By handling the figure of Macunaíma as the anti-hero, or the hero that avoids fulfilling his destiny as a mythological being, the article provides a glance at Brazilian actual mythological development as a mixture of the three cultural backgrounds mentioned.

Adrián Menéndez de la Cuesta's "*L'été* de Albert Camus. Una lectura mitocrítica" explores the mythical undercurrent in Camus' collection of essays called *L'été*. Using Theseus as an argumentative thread, the author evinces the mythical hero as the means with which Camus talks about contemporary Europe and provides a frame in which to expose some of the main arguments of the ethical response that he proposes.

"Cyborg: the posthuman myth" ["Cíborg: el mitoposthumano"] by Anamaría Gallinal deals with a question that has haunted mankind since ancient times: the ghost in the machine, namely the relationship between conscience, mind, and soul in a being that might be created by man. From the early Rabbis' golems to the all-seeing I.A.'s, the idea of the replica of the human spirit has troubled us all. In this article, the authoress explores the figure of the cyborg in relation to a possible post-humanism.

Carmen Gómez and Elena Blanch offer a very interesting idea of homeland in the chapter entitled "The mythologization of the nation in European numismatics since the creation of the Euro" ["La mitologización de la patria en la numismática europea desde la creación del euro"]. They provide an analysis of how the imagery of the currency not only makes reference to each individual nation's myths, but also becomes part of a greater European mythology.

"Myth, order and transgression: the map of the humanized animal" ["Mito, orden y transgresión: la gráfica del animal humanizado"] is a chapter where Manuel Álvarez Junco offers a reflection on the relation between myths and the way that human communities have developed through the ages, including present day societies. Using comics and animation, he describes how humankind has related to animals as a way to mock its own origin, or its ignorance regarding such origin.

Mercedes Aguirre closes this first half of the book with “Mythological and literary gardens in Homer and other modern testimonies”[“Jardinesmitológicos y literarios en Homero y otros testimonios modernos”]. It is a beautiful journey through real and unreal ancestral gardens in ancient Greece as described by Homer; mythological locations where fabulous beings, gods and humans found lust or love. The essay also tells the reader about the characters that appear in such accounts, such as the statues found in *Jardin du Luxemburg* in Paris, including references to paradisiac gardens across diverse mythical cultures, and exploring their relation to the biblical Eden.

All things considered *Myths of Today* is an indispensable volume for anyone whose seeks a first glance, through the particular examples of the first part, as well as a deeper understanding from the theoretical essay that follows on *The World of Myths*.

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Review of *Myths in Crisis. The Crisis of Myth* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), volume edited by José Manuel Losada and Antonella Lipscomb

In the early 21st century, myths are back (if they ever went away). This is probably due to the way they contribute to explain the world in a synthetic way and, also, because they may have contributed to balance the pessimistic *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere. In effect, myth-criticism – a term coined by Gilbert Durand (*Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, 1960) to describe what is nowadays a much wider field – has raised enormous interest in recent years, particularly among scholars who analyze the way human desire is dealt with, nostalgically, in literary and artistic manifestations.

José Manuel Losada and Antonella Lipscomb, co-editors of works such as *Mito e Interdisciplinarietà (Myth and Interdisciplinarity 2013)*, offer a multilingual collection of critical essays (in English, French and Spanish), entitled *Myths in Crisis. The Crisis of Myth*, centered on discussing the crisis of ancient, medieval and modern myths. This is an impressive volume, not only in terms of the quantity and rigor of the papers included, but also in their comprehensive perspective. It presents an up-to-date response to an increasingly demand to dissect the oxymoronic concepts of eternal myth and temporary crisis. The adaptation of myths, their unlikely death and their more than probable rebirth should be added to the collective unconscious and the immortal nature of Jungian archetypes (Carl Gustav Jung and Karl Kerényi, *L'essence de la mythologie*, 1980).

As José Manuel Losada indicates in his introductory chapter, “The Structure of Myth and the Typology of its Crisis”, myths are less fragile than they seem. Even if their mythemes – the unchanging motifs that Lévi-Strauss (“The Structural Study of Myth”, 1955) set at their basis – are altered, reversed, largely modified or omitted, their disappearance is not at all common. The three types of crisis analyzed include the following: firstly, the modification of some of the myth's constitutive elements, as

demonstrated by the easily recognizable Biblical angels in such films as *Michael* (Nora Ephron, 1996) and *The Preacher's Wife* (Penny Marshall, 1996); secondly, the still recognizable changing process from Ovid's Pygmalion to the contemporary *El Señor de Pigmalión (Gentleman of Pigmalion 1921)* by Jacinto Grau, or the Grail's mytheme from its original text by Chrétien de Troyes (c. 1180) to Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989); and, thirdly, the demythologizing transformation from the myth of Prometheus to the Matrix cinematic universe.

This fascinating scenario of literary and artistic myths and of their survival offers a global picture of what currently constitutes myth-criticism. Moreover, the interest in the collection is stirred by the ambiguous concept of crisis which permeates the articles, a selection of 30 texts reviewed by an international board of experts and the editors.

The volume, with the logical variety of definitions and approaches to myth, is divided into three parts which, in turn, consist of four sections each. These include articles written in English, French and Spanish dealing mainly, but not only, with literary and cinematographic texts, preceded by a preface by Losada where he presents the main issues addressed by each article.

The first four theoretical studies discuss the key points: the crisis of myths outlined in Losada's introduction and in Robert A. Segal's paper, “The Challenge to Myth from Religion”, as well as a crisis of concepts and terminology, as described in Del Prado's and Klik's chapters. Segal points out how the previous incompatibility between religious and scientific explanations was reconciled in the 20th and 21st centuries through three strategies. To start with, by re-characterizing the function of religion and myth, as Rudolf Bultmann does, and interpreting myth existentialism from a religious point of view; furthermore, as Mircea Eliade suggested, by elevating secular stories to religious myths, on the one hand, with examples such as the mythologization of George Washington as father of the USA; and on the other hand, by turning religious myths into secular ones, as in Albert Camus's interpretation of Sisyphus myth, turning pity to admiration in the hands of secular readers.

Articles three and four attempt to clarify the often confusing terminology applied to literary myths and the meaning of the word “crisis”. In Del Prado's “Mitos y crisis de mitos: un problema de conceptos y terminología” (“Myths and crisis of Myths: a problem of concepts and terminology”), the author presents a stimulating analysis of the terminological problems that, surprisingly, still surround the concepts of “myth”, “archetype” and “prototype”. Del Prado denies the current critical situation of myths outside the social and existential crises, adding that it will always depend on the meaning of the word “crisis”. Similarly, in “The Crisis of the Notion of Literary Myth in French Literary Studies”, Marcin Klik focuses on the textual nature of literary myths, according to the author, a concept in crisis ever since its birth. He also emphasizes the importance of terminological clarity for constructive academic dialogue, which, after reading the article, seems somehow wishful thinking.

After the review of the theoretical state of the art in what refers myth-criticism, the second is the largest and, probably, most engaging section. It explores the different

crises that have affected ancient, medieval and modern myths in literary and artistic manifestations from a global perspective by taking into account anthropology, ethics, politics and meta-literature as the four dominant traits that characterize cultural myths. The essays dealing with anthropological and psychological issues offer several sources of anxiety and distress – both individual and collective – which have challenged the stability of human identity. Starting from the hybrid figure of Pan, the man-goat, as well as the narrative and visual representation as the origins of its myth, Leon Burnett’s “Panic Attacks: Myth as Critical Intervention” focuses on myths as responses to the crisis of belief in literary tradition; from John Keats and the second half of the nineteenth century, including Elizabeth Barrett Browning or Ivan Turgenev, to twentieth century authors such as T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Pessoa and others. Children’s classics and contemporary films where the twofold derivation of Pan’s name represents the modern condition of a “terrified consciousness”, add to the author’s captivating insights on the different readings of this classical episode, demonstrating not only the richness of the tale and its rewritings. The examples provided show a gradual process of disorientation; the cry as an auditory effect that gradually becomes mute, representing the overwhelming contemporary void.

Individual readings of myths are the main concern of other essays in this section. For instance, Marta Miquel-Baldellou’s “The Myth of Apollo and Daphne as a Metaphor of Personal Crisis in Daphne Du Maurier’s “The Apple Tree””, debates convincingly the intertextual links with the classical myth, highlighting Du Maurier’s marital problems, her ambivalent sexual identity and her menopause. Some essays focus on moral conscience and new ethical meanings for myths. Among these, Rebeca Gualberto evaluates McCarthy’s post-apocalyptic *The Road* (2006) as an after-postmodernist return to humanist ethics which rejects binary oppositions and redeems a man-made mythology in her ““Where you’ve nothing else construct ceremonies out of the air”: The Ethics of McCarthy’s Post-Mythical Apocalypse in *The Road*”. Ben Pestell’s article, “Poetic Re-enchantment in an Age of Crisis: Mortal and Divine Worlds in the Poetry of Alice Oswald”, debates on the possible decay but impossible disappearance of myths using two poems *Dart* and *Memorial* to demonstrate that myth can survive crises by harmonizing opposing principles such as those that separate humanity from nature or from the gods.

Other chapters highlight the sociological extension of myths and their less common side regarding gender issues. Among them, a fascinating critique of competitive patriarchy is carried out by Sanghita Sen and Indrani Mukherjee which deconstructs water myths from India through the legend of Mexican Llorona in Deepa Mehta’s film *Water* (2005). Another female symbol, Antigone, is the center of Giuliano Lozzi’s paper in a re-elaboration of the myth under a queer reading, through the theories of Margaret Susman, Judith Butler, María Zambrano and Luce Irigaray. The myth is contemplated as a representation of the crisis of male western thought.

The last section, “Myth and Meta-Literature”, is devoted to the use of mythemes in different authors, and their use to expand classical meaning by retelling. From Claude Simon’s *nouveau roman* (Ian de Toffoli) to the Portuguese poet Sophia de Mello Breyner that Adriana Martins-Frias discusses in her enthralling article. Manel Feijó’s “La

reinención de las figuras mitológicas en la literatura de Julio Cortázar” is self-explanatory in his evaluation of Cortázar’s lifelong fascination and appropriation of mythological figures from *Los reyes* (*The Kings* 1947) to *Las ménades* (*Maenads* 1964), which evidences his literary radical transgression.

The third part of the volume is structured in three sections that analyze the way our material world mythologizes people, characters and nations, creating new myths of immanence to protect itself. The first section, “Mythologizing People”, opens with Ana González-Rivas Fernández’s exploration of Edgar Allan Poe as contemporary hero and antihero. Metka Zupancić’s significant contribution, “Kristeva’s *The Samurai*: “Camouflage of sacredness in a desacralized world””, explores Kristeva’s novel *Les Samurais* (1990) and her ironic critique of mythical patterns or ideologies.

The chapters in the “Mythologizing Characters” section address fictional figures whose personality is ruled by mythical content rather than reality. Alejandra Spagnuolo’s “*Skyfall*” deals with James Bond’s regeneration in Sam Mendes’s episode (2012) and its explicit use of national myths from the Victorian era as pillars of Englishness and salvation. Other mythologized literary references, such as Mme. Bovary, are studied in Patricia Martínez’s essay, “Au-delà du Bovarysme: *Melancholia* de Lars Von Trier”. The author explores boredom and depression as literary pathologies in the Danish film, an apocalyptic *tableau-poème-cinématographique* that offers a utopian reading where the world can only be saved by fantasy.

The final section examines the improbable crisis experienced by those national myths which permeate the cultural material. A national symbol, Marcel Proust, is used by Anja Schwenßen in her “Myth Lost and Found in Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*” to demonstrate the power of myth in the twentieth century as a needed anthropological constant. The author uses three literary examples of mythical speech from Proust’s *Recherche* to produce what she identifies as an irrational mythical thought that speaks to us emotionally. The volume finishes with an enthralling chapter, Naoko Hosokawa’s “Language as Myth: Reinvented Belief in the Spirit of Language in Japan”, where national awareness is emphasized in the myth of the spirit of Japanese language, *kotodama*, which serves ideological purposes as representing the true Japanese-ness. This symbol of enduring Japanese cultural identity has re-invented itself through the centuries; particularly in the 8th century, the 17th century, the Second World War, and from the 1950s to the 1970s. The author explains that this periodical reinterpretation shares its defensive political reaction to foreign influences, and proves the flexibility of myths, capable of maintaining their constant ideological ends.

As a contribution to myth studies, the volume presented here is an splendid contribution, in line with the research started by José Manuel Losada years ago, with the publication of numerous titles such as *Nuevas formas del mito. (New forms of myths* 2015). Together with Antonella Lipscomb, their ambitious, rigorous and attentive work has produced a selection of papers that illustrates the main problems and the different approaches to myths. Obviously there would always be readers who object to the structure of the volume and, more specifically, to some inevitable thematic repetitions in different articles and sections. However, all in all, it should be considered

an extremely valuable twist in the road to the contemporary study of myths, for specialized scholars as for general readers. The balanced content and the wealth of information are a clear asset in a volume that anatomizes some of the hidden aspects of myths' modern collective and private catharses. Accounting for the multifaceted complexities of myths and of their crises constitutes the key strength of such an important contribution to myth-criticism. This is what this volume set out to do, and with great success; producing extremely sound academic criticism, even if it cannot solve all inquiries, leaving the reader to discover some of them.

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Henry Sussman. *Playful Intelligence. Digitizing Tradition*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. 416 pp. isbn: 978-1-47256-882-3

It is a great challenge to do justice to Prof. Sussman's *Playful Intelligence* in the limited space of this review-article. The book is an encyclopaedic, insightful, cross-disciplinary and complex loop that simultaneously frames and deframes modernity in "A sprawling, maddening, jet-lagged, and eminently stunning trip," writes Justin Read (State University of New York) on the back cover. Indeed, in his journey from Kandinsky to Kafka, from Alfred Döblin to Walter Benjamin, or from Jorge Luis Borges to Roberto Bolaño, among other trips, Sussman's interventions encompass critical theory on artistic creativity, idiosyncratic insights from philosophy, cultural studies, as well as cybernetic discourse characteristic of Hofstadter's fusion of dynamic systems theory and Zen. Sussman's languages converge in the applicability of all knowledge to cognitive science and schizoanalysis. The volume's introduction, "Convergence-Zone: Art, Theory, Therapy", sets up the initial conditions of his intermedial genealogy of digital culture, envisioned as therapeutic cognitive practice beyond "configurations of irreducibly linguistic 'wiring'" (5), the physical and the mechanically 'smart' (intelligent self-replication), the analog and the digital.

The volume draws on a multitude of scholarly benchmarks such as Anthony Wilden's *System and Structure* (1972; translator of Lacan's *The Language of the Self* 1968), Douglas R. Hofstadter's *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (1979), Jacques Derrida's deconstructions, particularly influential in the Yale School following his affiliation with the university in the late 1970s, and a "virtual landscape of Marxian-Freudian *assemblages*," (17) borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, among others. Sussman returns to these (and other) pivotal points or attractor zones, drawing meaning from a multiplicity of intertextual and interdisciplinary languages, conjured up in various parts of the volume, making them converge, eventually, in a sort of healing Zen *kōan*. Thus, the volume opens up a wide geography of convergence zones which, in turn, unveil imposed categories, power divisions, and constraints within academic disciplines and established art forms. Ultimately, the discussion seeks to heal the cultural wounds and knowledge divides that too narrowly categorized accounts have provoked.

Sussman makes his way along the margins of a "treasury of *idées reçues*, identified for better or worse, as the enduring concepts (ideas, paradigms, *épistèmes*) configuring the Great Tradition" (14), and a crowd, a host of cultural phenomena that constitute a trans-historical allegorical "conceptual operating system" (16); a Wordsworth-like path which, he goes on to show, forks in various space-time directions and at various levels of fractal interpretation, only to return to the *West-östlicher Divan*, critical attractor zones of singularity, isomorphism or resonance that articulate this complex multi-cultural, multi-layered, yet consistent, narrative.

Although Sussman acknowledges the impact of romantic sensibility in characterizing the conditions of immediacy and immersion that have eventually led to interactivity and the self-sustained "addiction to the virtual states of everyday life" (21), the author turns to the performative "platforms" of 20th-century modernism in order to conform a syntax of close and distant readings, exegesis and meta-commentary, analog and digital organizations that ultimately help envision human "playful intelligence" as a Faustian spirit equal to a therapeutic drive.

In chapter one, Sussman enters Wassily Kandinsky's visual space, a forbidden interstitial *khōra* zone which, rather than collapsing into analog substance and memory-stores, "opens up horizons of improvisation," (61), grammars of colors, shapes and textures (63), digital windows to the world that become the symptomatic matrix of a proto-cybernetic sensibility. Moving from the visual to the literary, chapter two situates Franz Kafka's reading of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamzov* in *The Trial* (*Der Prozess*) as a digital parable with key operating principles which generate "doublebinds, at the semantic level, out of double-entendre," turning "architectural scenery and internalized disputation into generators in a permutational aesthetics," and heightening "legal persecution and incarceration by means of closed architecture and spurious argumentation." (89) To Sussman, "each of these telling and transformative moments in Kafka's literary inscription *marshals allegory in the service of digital organization and processing*. (100; emphasis in the original) He goes on to describe these elements as "linguistic ambiguity (polysemy), recursion in plot-development, strategic coincidences and concurrences in theme, atmosphere, and setting, and the open ended multiplicity of plausible inferences," (103) as he moves towards Kafka's animal parable "Der Bau" (The Burrow) in the following chapter. These two chapters engage alterity as an operating language, bringing to the fore the cybernetic dimensions of Kafka's stylistic innovations, "outside of all bounds," "in a state of open-ended expansion" (136).

In the following chapter, Sussman turns to Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and frames Döblin's city in a dialogue with James Joyce's Dublin in *Ulysses*, both envisioned as "hubs of urban transaction" (140), "systems-nexus" and "atmospheric generators" (142) of "urban introjections" characteristic of many modernist locations. The chapter also revisits the arcades of Proust and Walter Benjamin's *Das Passagen-Werk*, ultimately tracing a nomadic topology of social and individual identities-in-the-making, at the banks of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. The lyric modulation and musical tempo present in these sites accompany Sussman's introjections almost as a chorus, an anticipatory instrumental tag to be pursued in the following

chapter, “Theory on the Fly: Critical Synthesis under Conditions of Material Pirating and Borrowed Time”. Here Sussman traces a feedback loop to improvise upon Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project*, including a number of consonant “Convolutés K-N” (170) that encompass the epigrammatic Wittgenstein-like tempo of a chapter where the dialogue with Baudelaire, Marx and Engels, Hegel, Nietzsche as well as Derrida’s “Tympan” “Double Session” and “Glas”, crystallizes in a supreme critical cybernetic fugue, which closes with the following coda:

The critic keeps writing. Writing is the only craft or exercise through which the writer maintains their tact at setting the sails of difference and modulated articulation, even if they already have tenure, even if writing further therefore represents an unnecessary risk or danger to the stability they have achieved. The critic keeps on writing, even as they have sustained their quixotic quest of reading, in Benjaminian fashion, *everything*. (202)

Granted indulgences for visiting particular sacred locations along the journey, Sussman’s next chapter breaks off “Playful Healing”, stopping at the “Transitions of D. W. Winnicott”. Once more, the chapter loops back to the disfigurative traits of Kafka, Joyce, Pound, and later Beckett in a move where linear accretion collapses “past all points of absurdity,” and “by dint of its intrinsic ‘chunking,’ it begins to ‘loop strangely’ on itself: it ‘bubbles’ into its performative and metacritical dimensions.” (219). Sussman’s reading of “Winnicott’s manifestly playful psychotherapeutic alliance” (242) turns into a resonance to be replayed in various parts of the volume, but above all in “Afterword: Healing, Systematically”. In the meantime, Sussman revisits phenomenology, abandoning rhythm for a time, and returning to the morphing space of figures and their cognitive implications.

Almost as an echo of Virginia Woolf’s “The Mark on the Wall,” the section titled “The Figure in the Network” presents the ethical aspects of Douglas Hofstadter’s “affective correlative to intelligence”, in loving memory of his deceased wife Carol. The true meaning of empathy is “the interpenetration of souls” (257). Sussman’s “on the fly” account of Hofstadter’s *I Am a Strange Loop* as a network “simulating and predicating mental activity and interpersonal behaviour” (261) settles on the “tectonic-cultural plate/platform” (284), anticipating the virtual landscapes of contemporary online social networks almost as a confirmation or material proof of our emotional inscription in cyberspace. The constant movement of this metamorphic narrative is here held first in the space of melancholy, and almost immediately in the time of Morpheus jetlag, as it reaches its final autopoietic afterword loop. Sussman’s discussion returns to its starting point, to justify art and critical writing as an interventional therapeutic initiative to “embroider, adumbrate, elucidate, enlarge, and modify or correct a configuration or state of affairs that has persisted and persists.” (307).

All of these interventions “involve mutual understandings, whether with relations, mentors, friends, or poets and sculptors thousands of miles and years away” (307) and can ‘heal’ because they “open windows within the architectures of closed systems” (310). “The degree to which an intervention is prompted, commissioned, or remunerated by an other, its ability to bring about systematic reconfiguration, opening,

and release is foreclosed.” (307) It is in this sense that ‘healing’ is “a process of *remediation*”, “a *medium* rather than a conceptual model, technique, practice, or school” (310), where the “ultimate results of the quest for ‘wholeness’” is the “cessation of pain” (311). Thus, in the last pages of the volume, Sussman’s narrative turns again to psychoanalysis, as it morphs into schizoanalysis, in order to clarify the relationship between the experience and consciousness of pain, as well as the addiction to sites of unconscious scape provided by the therapeutic virtuality of aesthetics and critical writing.

Sussman’s describes writing as an impossible choreography between various levels of signifiers as they morph in transitional spaces where rhythm is soothing. Thus, he explains that “The aesthetic of composition is the dynamic zone *orkhōra* where the non-linearity common to poems, Zen *kōans*, and inventive mathematics proffer limited healing and recourse to discourse rendered immobile by the erosion of its very grooves” (329); an intermedial non-place “waived or suspended by the *visual* resources intrinsic to poetic space.” (329)

Before closure, Sussman’s performs yet a final ‘number’; a coda that facilitates the convergence of the multiplicity of discourses around the parable of “one-finger Zen” (333). The “ability to dislodge stasis, melancholy, or sedateness into spirited motion is the secret logic networking if not sequentially harnessing the Zen *kōans*” (341). In the parable, the Zen master and his pupil engage in an indexical relation where knowledge is transferred from one to an other entering the domain of digital relationality. “Buddhist practice is the mindful demolition restoring the freedom of the flow”, leaving behind “analog naming, comparison, mapping, division, and contribution” (335). The digit signals a creative *playful intelligence* that feels more at ease in its acrobat suspension among various levels of mental organization while attempting to capture the eternal movement of Escher’s drawing handsholding an autopoietic *porte-crayon*, digitizing tradition.

Carol and Douglas Hofstadter in a mutual nose touching, forming a (metaphorical) “strange loop” in July of 1987 in the Wallowa Mountains in Eastern Oregon.
Source: Grossman, 2007



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