

Echoes of Sophocles's Antigone in Auster's Invisible

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**Abstract:** In her article "Echoes of Sophocles's *Antigone* in Auster's *Invisible*" Kathleen Waller discusses Paul Auster's *Invisible*, a novel that explores Deleuze's and Guattari's ontological idea of becoming in a virtual world versus merely living in the actual, physical world. Sexual and immortal desires in the protagonist's virtual world show a near achieved nothingness, or "a space which is unlimited" and filled with the being's energy, and a being who is becoming, a "univocal being" as a "free spirit" of energy. However, because these desires are only realized through a repression, Auster asks us not to go as far as Deleuze's and Guattari's "Anti-Oedipus" argument that negates a being dependent on experience: instead of merely dealing with the actual world to reach a state of "nomadic ... distribution" of the energy particles that create a "univocal ... Being," we should become only as participating members of families and relationships in which love is truly realized in both the virtual and actual. The novel is in essence a retelling of *Antigone*, which exposes the desires for immortality and incest as a connection to a preservation of the family or its uniqueness. Auster retells the story through a more explicit ontological approach that asks us to consider not only the definition of *being* but also the impact of bio-political acts on society.

**Kathleen WALLER**

### **Echoes of Sophocles's *Antigone* in Auster's *Invisible***

In Gilles Deleuze's preface to *Difference and Repetition*, he connects his forthcoming views on ontology to that of the "the contemporary novelist's art which revolves around difference and repetition, not only in its most abstract reflections but also in its effective techniques" (xix). Some novelists question the definition of being through the language of their fictional characters and create layers, thus forcing us to find meaning in the space between. Paul Auster is a novelist who does this repeatedly using frame narrations, accidental intersections, virtual or dream worlds, and allusions. His latest novel, *Invisible*, repeats aspects of Sophocles's *Antigone*. It makes a case for embracing Deleuze's idea of becoming in a virtual world versus merely living in the actual, physical world. Sexual and immortal desires in the protagonist's virtual world show a near achieved nothingness, or "a space which is unlimited" and filled with the being's energy, and a being who is becoming, a "univocal being" as a "free spirit" of energy (Deleuze 36, 41). However, because these desires are only realized through a repression, Auster asks us not to go as far as Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "Anti-Oedipus" argument that negates a being dependent on experience: instead of merely dealing with the Actual world to reach a state of "nomadic ... distribution" of the energy particles that create a "univocal ... Being" (Deleuze and Guattari 36-37), we should become only as participating members of families and relationships in which love is truly realized in both the virtual and actual. If so, one would conclude that Auster's ontological view is also psychoanalytical in nature.

Auster's theoretical paradox lies in both grounding us in a relatable, although tabooed, experience and un-grounding us through his use of historicity that is repeated in shifting between the actual and virtual, the spaces of Paris and New York, and the present and past that opens up the text to consider allegorical connections. With incest as a focal point, Auster asks us to consider theoretical writing by those brave enough to tackle the subject, including Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault. Joan Copjec makes use of their theories and the incest taboo in discussing *Antigone* in "The Tomb of Perseverance: On *Antigone*." Through her assessment of *Antigone*'s current implications, we can see how *Invisible* is also in essence a repeated narration of the Greek tragedy, of Antigone's *Atè* within society's bifurcated reality is central to each text's exploration of ontology. Copjec questions: "How can we account for the temporal nomadism of figures from the past? And, in this context, how is it possible that the drama of Antigone still concerns us?" (234). She suggests that it does and explains that in Lacan's reading of the text, "structure gives meaning to [Kreon and Antigone's] acts" and that those acts are inherently performed by "sexual beings" (Copjec 236). Auster is able to use the concept in the "consideration of contemporary urban issues," which Copjec sets up as a possibility (234). Even after the rise of the modern (and postmodern) era, family connections and one's own endurance are remain important. Perhaps because the workplace, national agendas, and materialism may push aside questions surrounding the *Atè* and immortality, it is even more poignant to explore these issues. Antigone acts in order to "honor ... her family's singularity or *Atè*: that which belongs to them and no one else" (Copjec 260). When Ismene asks if she "dare, despite Kreon" respectfully bury her brother, Antigone replies that "He cannot keep me from my own" (Sophocles, line 54-5). "Singularity" is a term Deleuze uses to "ground [the] principle and the infinite as its element" (43). It is both the impulse to act and the object toward which one drives, for this uniqueness may exist and also be spread.

Likewise, Auster's Adam Walker writes his memories down in order to uphold his family's *Atè* as he anticipates death by cancer. Just as Antigone feels an urge to "shout" and "proclaim" her love for her brother (Sophocles line 108), Adam's shared writing spreads his own life along with that of his family members. Adam's memories circle around the trauma of experiencing his brother's death during childhood. As he recalls the memory in writing, he must write in the second person, for he cannot fully deal with the repressed pain. He pushes the trauma aside: "You don't want to think about it. You have run away now, and you don't have the heart to return to that house of screams and silences" (Auster 109). However, Adam and his sister also celebrate their dead brother's birthday each year, talking about him in memory, as "if he were still alive today," and about the imagined future (Auster 138-39). The fear that a "little more of him has vanished" in memory each year makes Adam even

more desperate to preserve his uniqueness and that of his family, just as Antigone's dead brother's "unique[ness] ... motivates her act" (Copjec 260).

The drive toward this Lacanian "object a" is a desire which becomes that for incest and immortality. Adam sends his written accounts of memories and these desires to the narrator, a university friend, with an "urgent" request to help him overcome the "fear" of not finishing his text, since he is "dying of leukemia" (76-77). In his second letter, he states, "the only thing [he] want[s] is more life, more years on this godforsaken earth" (165). In his narration we see the fear of being deleted from the Actual world as he imagines his coming death: "Walker is vanishing from the world, he can feel the life ebbing out of his body" (236). Adam clearly cannot accept death as a part of life, which a truly Deleuzean univocal being would do. Although both he and Antigone know they will soon die, they hold onto an immortal desire for themselves and their families. Antigone preempts her execution by hanging herself and thereby proving the faulty reasoning Kreon displays in wanting to kill her as a way to uphold society's law: she "suffer[s] at [her] mother's brother's hands / for an act of loyalty and devotion" (Sophocles lines 1097-8). Her last words in the play make Kreon's ensuing loss of his son, who kills himself out of love for the dead Antigone, and his wife, who kills herself out of love for her dead son, poignantly tragic in his loss of family members. Kreon cannot see the purpose of Antigone's betrayal to him by interring her brother until he experiences a detachment from his own family. Her suicide is a political act that creates energy moving toward her *object a*; it is a calculated preservation of the family *Atè*. Adam's death, however, is passively carried out by disease. His act of writing, finished in frantic notes before the moment of death, is an impulsive drive to hold onto his Virtual world. Rather than committing suicide as a political act, he creates a political act in the time before a known impending death.

If this act is impulsive rather than related to a repression, how does it change our understanding of Adam's ontological being? In Claire Colebrook's explanation, Deleuze and Guattari argue that "desire is a flow of connection, production, and ever more complex differentiation" (143). The difference in Adam's sexual desire is through a connection to his family *atè* that produces a generalized feeling of love. Instead of a single repression creating Oedipal urges within a "prohibiting incest society," difference exposes the general "desire [to be] forbidden." The same desire is linked to "the impulse of literature," which may be why Adam chooses to write (Colebrook 143). As Adam explores his virtual world of memories with more complexity, he can diffuse concentrated moments of pain. In "The Politics of Life in the Thought of Gilles Deleuze," Todd G. May explains the Deleuzean "incorporeal transformation": "As one goes more deeply into the past in recollection, one discovers the past as more relaxed, the entire past not so tightly woven around any one moment" (26). Adam's memorable moments are related to writing, death, and sex. The first sexual relationship Adam describes in his writing is that with a woman, Margot, bearing nearly the same name as his mother, "Marjorie, a.k.a Marge" (41), and with whom he felt to be a "beginner in the arms of a veteran" (52). There are echoes of Oedipus (Antigone's father) here, as well as the "taint of incest" and "libidinal overtones" between Antigone and her brother (Copjec 236). Auster's implicit incest taboo reference is a warm-up: Adam warns his in-text reader, the narrator, that the written memory of having sex with his sister is "disgusting" and "makes [him] want to puke" (91). The Deleuzean experience of repeating the act in both childhood and adulthood helps Adam to understand his family *Atè*. This started through "explor[ing] each other's bodies in games of 'doctor'" and by engaging in private activities naked, such as bathing and "jumping on the bed" (114). During the "grand experiment" (117), the siblings choose a night when their parents will be out of town to explore each other's bodies sexually until Adam feels "profound intimacy" (119). Auster aligns readers with the frame narrator who is "not disgusted" (157), and therefore also makes us question if Adam's ability to become is only owing to his acceptance of a familial repression. There is never a moral judgment cast on him. After Margot's partner, Born (also her second cousin), finds out about the adulterous sexual act, he thanks Adam for "showing [him] the light of truth" in his relationship (57). However, if we have truly deconstructed and absorbed our moral judgments about sexual difference as both the narrator and his wife do, we then have achieved a level of being that is free from societal taboos: Adam likens him and his sister to "male and female versions of the same person" (112). They are enveloped in a distributed energy that is family love, free of societal identities: "love is not a moral issue, desire is not a moral issue" (144). Adam's sister defines "real love ... when you get as much pleasure from giving pleasure as you do from receiving it"

(143). Here, she is not referring to the physicality of sex, rather the energetic essence of desire and Affectation. In "On Whitehead and Deleuze: The Process of Materiality," Michael Halewood describes this essence as "express[ing] a limited yet infinite potentiality that is neither fully exhausted or realized by those individuals that rise out of it" (73). The *Atè* is the object but also the energy itself and love pushes this energy toward the infinite, or immortal.

Adam's ability to see beyond gender and family role identities is a truth, whether he imagines the acts of incest or not. His written memories represent his Virtual world, which is the Deleuzian reality. When his sister later sees the manuscript, she claims there was "never any sex. What Adam wrote was pure make-believe" (Auster 255). She suggests the incest was "a dying man's fantasy, a dream of what he wished had happened but never did" (Auster 256). There is no other witness to account for these acts. However, one would ask why he would willingly connect himself with a behavior that society has labeled as disgustingly "unnatural" and "essentially different." Psychoanalysis "allow[s] individuals to express their incestuous desires in discourse," helping one to relieve repression (Foucault 39, 129). By expressing this desire, Adam should be able to move beyond his repression, separate his sister and mother from his sexual desires, and reach the Lacanian symbolic order, which "dictates proper behavior in society" (Rivkin and Ryan 124). For it is the "prohibition of incest [that] is merely its subjective pivot," whereby the "forbidden" mother and sister objects unconsciously cause the subject's desires (Lacan 185). However, Adam's writing is given over to the narrator in three chunks, and he continues to pursue incestuous desire in each. He never moves beyond a sexual desire for his sister and also engages in further sex acts with Margot. With a Lacanian reading of Adam's self-formation through memoir, we realize that he remains trapped by his Oedipal repressions until death, making him the only victim of this societal crime.

Adam may see incest as a crime in Deleuzian actuality, but it is merely a part of his energy in the Virtual. Auster often focuses his text on a moment of "occurrence of crime" that forces the protagonist to use "self-discipline ... to counter the external discipline" (Walker 389-90). There is no evidence of guilt or shame from Adam, his sister, nor Margot in the virtual. However, a second crime is introduced in the text to provide a wrong that he cannot subvert. Born becomes the antagonist as he kills a boy who tries to mug him and Adam with an unloaded gun. The boy is labeled as a "black kid dressed in dark clothes" (Auster 63). Both Adam and Born react with a fear of "the nightmare gun that lived in every New Yorker's imagination" (63), and the boy's described blackness is linked with the "darkened street" as a fear of the conflict between white and black races: "fear made [Adam] blind" (63) and his vision of the scene is blurred: "It was too dark to make out much of anything" (65). In Greek tragedy, blindness is a symbol of seeing beyond a physical reality. Sophocles's Teiresias is the blind sage who exposes the mistakes of characters within the text. Although Adam is not aware of his wisdom at this moment, his blindness marks a more nuanced view of the world. While his impulsive reaction is to try to diffuse the conflict in this blindness, Born's presupposition of conflict causes him to have a knife ready, which he readily pulls from his jacket to kill the boy. Born's decision to leave the scene is emotionless and based on a sense of clear-cut survival instinct: "The boy is going to die, and we can't have anything to do with it" (65). His mentality is that the boy is evil and deserves to die; he and Adam are innocent and deserve to live. There is no emotion connected to the clear-cut dichotomy of evil and good, or death and life. Adam is instead repulsed by the incident but even more shameful of his own "failure to act" that "forc[es] [him] to confront [his] own moral weakness" (68). With this, we know that Adam is working toward becoming, which he later nearly accomplishes when he writes, but psychoanalysis exposes a continued problem with this trauma. Even if the repression is still a problem, he can move toward immortality by creating affect.

Antigone works toward becoming in order to spread the energy of her family *Atè* as a form of immortality. She is juxtaposed with Kreon in the same way that Adam is with Born. While the protagonists create Deleuzian Virtual realities where moral values are pushed aside to strive toward feelings of love, the antagonists live in the Actual world of black and white. When Kreon speaks of "good and bad" (Sophocles line 636), Antigone responds that they represent an unclear binary, where in the afterlife "all [may be] pure" (line 639). Kreon, like Born, says "death is the price" for rebels like Antigone's brother or later for herself (line 260). And proclaims it is "impossible" that any "god" could "honor criminals" (lines 363-64). Their earlier discussion of "good and bad" goes on in this way: "Kreon: Enemies and friends are two different things, / and dying doesn't reconcile them. / Antigone: And I was-

n't born to hate one with the other, / but to love both together. / Kreon: If you must love somebody / go down there and love the dead. / I'm alive, though, and no woman will rule me" (lines 640-46). Here, Kreon clarifies that he acts as a function of binaries including "Enemies and friends," "dead" and "alive," and "woman" and man. Antigone links the upholding of these binaries to feeling "hate," while experiencing a regard for all humanity in the society around her gives "love." Her acts are a function of love. Through her acts, she wants to create as much Affect, in the physical form of tears shed mostly by her sister. Ismene lacks the courage to act as strongly as Antigone, but she still believes in the purpose of preserving the loving energy of her family. It is better that she is not able to go so far as to give up her life as well, so that she may show others her tears. Antigone originally begs of Ismene: "Will you join with me? Will you help me?" (line 47). However, after Antigone reconsiders the Affectation she can create and sees that Ismene is not ready to die, she demands: "Save yourself. I want you to escape" (line 681). Ismene is "weeping" and is "not afraid to weather suffering" (lines 648, 662). Her constant tears tell the story of Antigone's pain and the loss of their brother to the rest of society.

Affective tears represent a difference that is realized, creating an "infinity of representations" that is still contained in finite particular Selves considered as essences" (Deleuze 56, 49). The reading of Adam's writing is an affectation for his sister who is "deeply moved" by it (257). His sister is a living tool in the continuity of the family *Atè* after Adam's death just as Ismene must carry her family's energy after Antigone's death. Adam knows she may find it "extremely upsetting," but wants her to read it after he dies (252). Rather than trying to hurt his sister, he is extending himself energetically by creating affect in others. Thereby, the family *ate*, both as a Deleuzean singularity and Lacanian "object a," and his own being will become more immortal. The memoir also makes his friend, Cécile, cry with "grotesque and unpardonable tears" (274). When Adam says good-bye to Margot after their affair, her "eyes unexpectedly filled with tears" (52). Later, she "is crying" when Adam tells her about Born's crime (172). He links her tears with those of Gwyn at their brother's birthday, noting the visual effect on the women as "the weeping mascara of death" (173). He attempts to change death from an end into an energetic spread of one's being. Adam is affected by watching a "miraculous resurrection" in a film. As he cries, he feels the theatre may be "connected to [his] brother" and feels as if he is "ris[ing] from the dead" (134-35). Adam both looks back to try to capture what he can of Andy's being while also hoping to live on in the energetic spread of his own tears and of those who read his book after he is dead. Becoming is painful. Crying and hurt here are part of the process just as for Antigone. When the Sentry finds her burying her brother, "She wailed out loud: / that sharp sound out of bitterness / a bird makes when she looks in her nest and it's empty, / it's a widow's bed and the baby chicks are gone" (Sophocles lines 516-18). The Sentry's metaphor for her tears link them with her family, though the tears are likened to those for a dead husband or children. This comparison emphasizes the idea that it does not matter if the dead is brother, husband, or child, but that he is family. She uses her body for a political Act that moves toward immortalization of this family, but isolates herself through exile and suicide and is not able to seek actual relationships to feel love.

Adam is also at this isolated crisis point when he writes his book. His wife has died; he has been diagnosed with cancer; he is living a plane ride away from his sister. There is a temporal gap from the end of his memories when loneliness and "constant solitude" pervade the writing of his thoughts to when he begins writing about these experiences (169). It is exile that sparks these feelings, like Antigone's "alone and desolate" emotions in the isolation before her death (Sophocles line 1075). As he first leaves for Paris, both his mother and sister cry, and "pain is the only thing that holds [them] together now" (152-53). The family's love is replaced by pain because this move was an escape from his "failure to act" against Born's crime rather than a political Act. Even worse, the second move is passive and negative, since it is caused by Born planting drugs in Adam's room, resulting in being "banned for life" from France (242). From New York to Paris to San Francisco, where he eventually settles, he loses connections to his family. He then lives in the Actual world, unable to face Affect's pain. He marries Sandra Williams and spends nineteen years with her before she dies. Only one paragraph in the text is devoted to this time. Similarly, Antigone's marriage to Kreon's son is never realized and merely acts as a tool to expose Kreon's lack of understanding about the family *Atè*. Both marriages show the mistakes that the antagonists in each text make about rigid binary definitions. Adam claims, "the truth was that I loved Sandra, loved her from the first day to the last" (86). How-

ever, he does not show this love in any sort of natural way for the reader to identify with, as he does with his sister. We similarly see verbal exchanges of love and pain between Antigone and Ismene, but the play leaves a marked absence of interaction between Antigone and her fiancé. There is only talk between them when Antigone first rejects him and then they are spoken of when her fiancé kills himself on her grave. It is a cold reality. Likewise, Adam's time with Sandra is without a virtual, without affectation. Although he may not feel pain, he also does not truly feel love. As an object, she is connected with Born's crime and the inability to deconstruct binaries: she has the "same last name as the murdered boy ... a slave name ... and although an interracial marriage can pose numerous social problems for the couple, I never considered it to be an impediment" (86). Adam links "Williams" to both the crime and her race without showing this relationship. In the actual, racial binaries and crime-related right and wrong do exist. We can imagine these briefly noted nineteen years as being subjected to the normalizing of society: the formation of a restrictive, mortal identity.

Merely living in this actual without becoming is meaningless. Auster leaves us with a frightening image through Cécile's account, revealing an empty life in the actual: "A barren field stretched out before me, a barren, dusty field cluttered with gray stones of various shapes and sizes, and scattered among the stones in the field were fifty or sixty men and women, each holding a hammer in one hand and a chisel in the other, pounding on the stones until they broke in two, then pounding on the smaller stones until they broke in two, and then pounding on the smallest stones until they were reduced to gravel" (307). There is little imaginable that is more labor intensive and mindless than splitting rocks day in and day out. Repetition does not give meaning to this way of living. Instead, Cécile is haunted by the image for the "rest of [her] life" (308). As the last page of the novel, it is an ominously lingering image for us as well. The passage concludes a trip to seek closure with Born — the figure of evil in the world. The scene represents his space — where evil exists and familial love is meaningless — and asks us to go back to the question of why Adam would return to a state absent of the virtual for nineteen years of his life. The gap shows a lingering, repressed pain in the narrative of his trauma that keeps him from embracing the Virtual.

Deleuze asks us to deal with the physical world in this way; we are to take what is bad in our lives or society, change it to a diffused energy by realizing its difference and opposing binary, and absorb it in our own energy. However, this would suggest that by writing beautifully of incest in a man's Virtual world, Auster condones its practice. On the contrary, Adam could never fully get over his fixation on his family *ate* caused by his brother's death. No other woman could compare to his sister and he could not accept mortality. He is also never able to fully subvert Born's criminal act. These repressions may be why a painful and de-energizing cancer is stuck in his marrow. While this is a failure to reach nothingness and immortality, it shows that Auster does not want us to accept actions that will hurt people. Born clearly is a figure who hurts. Incest, as desire, only hurts Adam who cannot move beyond it to find more love in new relationships. Auster does not hope for "ungrounded chaos which has no law other than its own repetition" (Deleuze 69), for a universal law is needed to condemn Acts that hurt people, as argued in Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*. Immortal desire, however, may be embraced as it strives to Affect as many people as possible in a positive way. In this way, Antigone's suicide strives to create immortality for her family *ate*, but she conversely causes more destruction of her family. Her own death, combined with those of her fiancé and mother's brother's wife, kills off most of the family. Ismene is left, but is she strong enough to create affect? Antigone leaves nothing tangible for us to learn by. She leaves us with the strong feeling of death and the "fool[ishness]" of Kreon without solution for society's black and white laws (Sophocles line 1525). Sophocles shows that the "proud pay with great wounds" (line 1533), and Antigone is one of these mortally wounded characters of the stage. Rather than a solution to trauma and hardship, she represents an "*accumulation* of more and more of the same. And the relatively insignificant, de-idealized *dust* of Antigone becomes something more like the soil of modern nation-states or the *blood* of their citizens' mortal bodies" (Copjec 263). We are left with the opposite of feelings of immortality. The community appears doomed by a repeating tragic fate. She has been righteous in protecting her family *ate*, but has not thought through how to help those she leaves behind, people who then kill themselves over her death and others who lament without optimism for a just universal law that encourages humanity's allowance to feel love.

Auster's closing passage is also negative, but he points toward a reality with more love. He implies subtly a way that we may affect people in the real world. The passage about manual labor continues:

"Fifty or sixty black men and women crouching in that field with hammers and chisels in their hands ... They were working, they were making money, they were keeping themselves alive" (306). Earlier in the chapter, the people on this island are also named as "a curious mixed race" of Africans with some European aesthetic qualities, such as hair or eye color (280). The island is named as a "laboratory of human possibilities" that "explodes our rigid, preconceived ideas about race – and perhaps even destroys the concept of race itself" (280). Although a historian has attempted to show a positive breakdown of our views of race, it only allows for this definition in a "laboratory." Rather than a positive Virtual experience, the breakdown is a belittling experiment. How can we break the racial boundary without insulting the inherent notions of being within each race and in connection to each family *ate*? The black and white racial binary is still often addressed in US-American literature, and the conflict's persistence in society needs solutions. Auster often plays with a subtle reference to race in his texts, including the concept that families may be made of both black and white individuals if we allow for the binary's deconstruction. For example, he depicts this in his film *Smoke*. Instead of changing the racial make up of individuals as a scientific experiment, he chooses to change the interaction among already existing individuals. In the film, two biracial households are momentarily created to produce love and happiness. Politics tries to address racial discrimination, but only individuals can perform political acts as parts of their being to fully internalize and change society's racial divide.

We can only reach toward immortality by making political acts in a state of becoming. We are aware of the ensuing affects that will create and disperse our energy, but the act must be driven by a purpose. If the purpose is meant to help others, the energy will be that of love; if it is harmful to others, the energy will be that of hate. The binaries here are still important, which is why Auster does not want us to embrace completely a Deleuzian nothingness although we may still find beauty in that which society does not consider "normal." The monotonous, depressing repetition of rock splitting in the final passage also helps us to understand this paradox. The description of the people shows the clarity of a better life through becoming and living in the virtual world as one's reality. These people stand for all people, of any race, nationality, or occupation, who need those in touch with a painful repression to reach out and help them through political acts. Only loving relationships and energy can heal these wounds. Acts may say a lot, even as written in novels, but some problems require a combination of Act and action that can only be understood through the Lacanian acceptance of how painful a trauma can be. As a US-American text, the subtle connection to race provides a possible focus, or "object a," to place one's loving energy. Society has created a racial binary that still creates inequalities on a variety of levels; only loving relationships and energy can heal these wounds.

The virtual in this novel, or any that speaks to us, can be our own. In this way the text offers more of a solution to universal law than *Antigone* does, although the law must be realized through the love and acts of individuals. Sophocles shows us a failed but courageous process without direction for individuals. It is as if we are caught in the repeated cycle of fate that Antigone and her father Oedipus before her were doomed to realize. However, Lacan uses the Oedipal model not just to show repeated family tragedy but also to expose a way to heal by breaking the cycle. Deleuze recognizes the value of the repetition as a learning device, but his essay "The Anti-Oedipus" wants us to somehow absorb problems rather than dealing with them. Copjec concludes her essay on *Antigone* by explaining that Being comes from what is done in the actual world even if it is felt in the Virtual: "Perseverance locates enjoyment, not in an unachievable past nor in an out-of-reach object, but in the body eroticized by the performance of the act" (263). Auster's *Invisible* gives power to the invisible virtual while still grounding us in an attention to society and an interaction between individuals. With three layers of narration (Adam, the narrator, and Cécile at the end), and a statement that the names have been changed (and who knows what else) before publication of Adam's framed writing and that the narrator's name is "not Jim" (260), we are left wondering whose virtual we are reading anyway. Is it that of the author himself? Or possibly even our own? Any text is what we make of it: if it affects us, it becomes a part of our energy. However, it will affect us each differently and therefore create different acts and physical actions because of our experiences. We preserve our uniqueness.

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