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## **“Sigmund Freud, Analyze This”: How Madonna Situates “Die Another Day” Beyond the Pleasure Principle**

Madonna’s song “Die Another Day” was commissioned by MGM Studios as the theme for the 2002 installment of the James Bond film franchise. In a press release of 15 March 2002, Bond producers Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli announced: “We are thrilled that Madonna, who is recognized as the world’s most exciting songwriter and performer, has agreed to compose and sing the song for the first James Bond movie of the new millennium” (“Die Another Day Main Title Song”). Madonna co-wrote the song with Mirwais, her consistent collaborator since the late 1990s. To help promote the movie, the single and its music video were released in October 2002; the film *Die Another Day* opened a month later in deliberate coincidence with the fortieth anniversary of the first Bond film. The single hit No. 8 on the Billboard Hot 100 and No. 3 in the U.K. It earned a Golden Globe nomination for Best Original Song. The song later reappeared on Madonna’s *American Life*, lifting the album to Platinum certification by the RIAA and #1 on the Billboard chart.

While none of these facts are likely surprising, the song itself is surprising enough: disregarding the conventions of Bond minstrelsy, Madonna fulfills the song’s promise to “avoid the cliché” by eschewing any reference to things 007, instead opting to issue a startling injunction to the founder of psychoanalysis (of all people) with the words, “Sigmund Freud,

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analyze this.”<sup>1</sup> This is a most curious moment, and one that warrants our further investigation: why, when called upon to sell another dose of James Bond to an ever-willing public, would Madonna ignore the screenplay and instead address Freud?

This essay takes Madonna up on her invitation to Freud, reading “Die Another Day” alongside *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the revolutionary and dense text of 1920 wherein Freud introduces the concept of the death instinct. It seeks to understand why Madonna would call for Freud in this song, and indeed why the Freud of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* specifically. Madonna’s demand and invitation to Freud marks the end of the song’s introduction and gets us dancing in earnest; the rest of the song is filled with resolutions consistent with Freud’s concept of the death instinct, such as “I’m gonna delay my pleasure,” “I’m gonna destroy my ego,” and “I’m gonna close my body now.” Does Madonna offer her song as a challenge to psychoanalysis, as we might suspect when she laughs somewhat diabolically and whispers “I need to lay down” into the microphone? Or is she instead offering her song to the listener as analyzable dream-imagery, as suggested by her opening line, “I’m gonna wake up, yes and no”? This paper addresses these problems, and then concludes with the claim that Madonna, either cannily or unconsciously, makes good on her contract to MGM in referring us to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, insofar as *Beyond* is precisely the text that accounts for the pleasures of watching a Bond film. Madonna’s appeal to Freud, be it invitation or dare or injunction, subtly constitutes the best of possible advertisements for the film. Thus Madonna’s “analyze this” exploits a dare until it functions as truth also.

We may wonder: has Madonna actually read *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*? This seems possible, given the consistency with which the song “Die Another Day” addresses issues raised by this one text. It is beyond doubt that Madonna has something specifically Freudian in mind, as she demands a Freudian reading of her song as explicitly as possible. But the depth to which Madonna has studied Freud, and the rigor of that study, is difficult to estimate or even ascertain. That issue, though, is im-

material for my purposes here: in this paper, I am more interested in the effect created by Madonna's conversation with Freud than in its motivation. That is, I am interested in contemplating what Madonna's gesture might itself mean, not really what she means by it.

*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is Freud's most speculative work and perhaps his most interesting. The text is famous not only for its theoretical daring but also because it ushers in the final topological phase of Freud's career and introduces the ever-controversial concepts of repetition compulsion and the death instinct. The body of scholarly work on *Beyond* is staggering, having warranted book-length commentaries by thinkers including Derrida, Lacan, and Laplanche.<sup>2</sup> *Beyond* is a text about repetition, desire, the binding and unbinding of the libido, the death instinct's struggle with the erotic instinct, about trauma, dreams, and mastery. This is also the text where Freud discusses his young grandson's game of "fort!" and "da!", one of the most immediately recognizable moments in Freud even to non-specialists (Standard Edition XVIII: 14-17). It is a perplexing text, even to the extent that Freud frequently undermines his own arguments whenever objections spring to his mind. He even goes so far at one point as to disclaim its revolutionary findings, insisting that he is not himself persuaded by his new hypotheses, nor does he expect the reader to be persuaded (SE XVIII: 59). And yet the implications of his speculations here compel Freud to revise central tenets of psychoanalytic theory, and he makes these revisions right here in this text: here for the first time, for instance, he acknowledges that some dreams are not fulfillments of wishes, and that there might be such a thing as primary masochism (SE XVIII: 32, 55). Freud has made a major discovery here, and only by a line of reasoning and self-doubt that would do even Descartes proud. He has dared to inquire into the existence of another process, one independent of the pleasure and reality principles, preceding them and more fundamental. The discovery of the death instinct marks a genuine revolution in psychoanalysis: no matter the disarming degree of uncertainty with which Freud proposes the idea, he never backs away from the concept of the death instinct in any of his later writings. Hence *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*



is often read as the first text of the last phase of Freud's career: texts as central as *The Ego and The Id*, *Civilization and its Discontents*, and *Group Psychology* follow from the premises introduced here. Partly because of its stock of shocking new concepts and its strange habit of undermining its own diabolical arguments as it presents them, *Beyond* is commonly numbered among Freud's most difficult texts.

The speculations of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* populate Madonna's song to a remarkable extent, and these carry with them significant effects—even forcing us to reconsider what it might mean to “die another day.” *Die Another Day*, like all Bond films, is an action picture about espionage kept as courteous as possible in the face of international skullduggery. Unlike many Bond films, though, the British intelligence community has here been undermined from within: this time Bond has been betrayed by a mole, suspended and disavowed by his employers, and now he needs to act (mostly) alone to solve the horrifying mystery of Colonel Tan-Sun Moon's weapons-for-diamonds scheme.<sup>3</sup> At its most literal level, the title of the film refers to the physical transformation and persistence of Colonel Moon, who has somehow survived his first brush with Bond only to reappear, genetically altered, as the evil megalomaniac Gustav Graves.<sup>4</sup> Bond jests upon encountering his transformed nemesis that Graves is finally ready to “die another day.” But viewers of the film will sense as well that its title is also supposed to refer to James Bond's own fortitude and indestructibility: the title is a testament both to James Bond's wily charm and the character's enduring public appeal. We sense this because *Die Another Day*, even more than other Bond films, demands to be read as either an homage to the venerable film franchise or a postmodern exploitation of its signal motifs. The imagery and dialogue of the film are filled with winking references to nearly every preceding film in the series, suggesting that Bond himself—both in the plot of the film and in twenty-first century culture—will not die until another day.

Madonna's song attempts none of these self-congratulatory gestures, and instead infuses the titular phrase with a whole range of new and specifically Freudian meanings: its “Die Another Day” is not a matter of en-

duration but rather seems to refer to negotiation and deferral. Madonna's lyrics frame the song's title and chorus in relation to an internally regulated and flexible death instinct: "I think I'll find another way . . . I guess I'll die another day." In uttering these lines, Madonna speaks not as the voice refusing death but as the organism committed to the singularity of its own death. She will die another day because, as she puts it, "it's not my time to go." Or, if one prefers Freud's version, "the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion" (SE XVIII: 39). In Freud's theoretical model, the pleasure and reality principles work to forestall the fundamental drive toward destruction: even though "the aim of all life is death," the erotic and death instincts negotiate a compromise, one that Freud calls "a lengthening of the road to death" (SE XVIII: 38, 40, emphasis in original). In Freud's terms, "one group of instincts rushes forward so as to reach the final aim of life as swiftly as possible, . . . the other group jerks back to make a fresh start and so prolong the journey" (SE XVIII: 41). According to Freud, death is always an internal process: each organism finds its preferred and proper way to die by deferring the impulse that would destroy the organism immediately.

Freud calls this deferral "a short-circuit" (SE XVIII: 39), a metaphor that becomes grossly literalized at the end of the "Die Another Day" music video. The video, directed by the Swedish advertising team Traktor, redeploys several themes from the *Die Another Day* film, including imagery of fencing and torture. It features four separate locations, each featuring one or more Madonnas, and makes little attempt to connect them through any overarching narrative. In one scene we see Madonna, dressed in a tanktop and bedraggled by torture, thoroughly enjoying her sufferings as she lip-synchs the words to the song; she has been captured by menacing Asian men and is being prepared for death by electrocution. In another scene we find two fencers dueling on a red carpet in a seeming palace, the halls decked with suits of armor. In a third scene we see Madonna, alone, dancing while shackled and confined in a small, dank cell. In the fourth scene we find ourselves with Madonna amidst several display cases that seem to hold glass collector's items. The video alter-



nates freely and rapidly between these scenes, suggesting their narrative simultaneity, and interlaces them only incompletely toward the end of the video when the fencers smash through a window in their palace and find themselves in the fourth set, ready to destroy its collection as collateral damage to their fierce struggle.

We can understand the music video as a series of dream-images, especially since Madonna opens the song with the line, “I’m gonna wake up, yes and no.” Her “yes and no” signals that we are squarely in the domain of the unconscious, where “yes and no” are indistinguishable (such is Freud’s position, at least, in his essay “Negation” [SE XIX: 235-39]). Within these dream-images, mirrors are smashed, fetishized collectables are dashed to bits, and Madonnas fight each other in a scene that recalls Poe’s “William Wilson” more than any Bond film.<sup>5</sup> By the end of the song Madonna still hasn’t awakened: in an unusual effect even for dance music, the canned string arrangement cuts in and out at the producer’s will, even blending into Madonna’s own distorted voice, creating an effect comparable to a person’s intermittent ability to hear when falling asleep.<sup>6</sup> For these reasons, I read the electric-chair music video as a punishment dream. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud explains that punishment dreams are indeed pleasing wish-fulfillments, in that “they merely replace the forbidden wish-fulfillment by the appropriate punishment for it; that is to say, they fulfill the wish of the sense of guilt which is the reaction to the repudiated impulse” (SE XVIII: 32). Appropriately, then, Madonna grimly acknowledges in the lyrics that “for every sin I’ll have to pay,” and her laugh here suggests an intense pleasure in this settlement. What we witness in the music video is obviously pure *jouissance*.

Traktor’s video features different sets and different situations from those of the movie, despite their shared thematic elements. The film’s opening credits, choreographed to accompany Madonna’s song, are displayed over a stylized montage of Bond being tortured with scorpions in a North Korean prison. Unlike the torture montage from *Die Another Day*, the music video’s torture chamber features neither scorpions nor hellfires; instead we find a dingier, less “official” space of confinement featuring iron

shackles and the 1950s-style electric chair. The imagery is not culled from the film, despite occasional visual references to previous Bond villains (for instance, one of the executioners has metal teeth). Editing also emphasizes the differences between these situations, as the film's montage sequence visually compresses time, suggesting fourteen months of grueling endurance within only a few minutes of screen time. The music video, on the other hand, makes no similar attempt to document or celebrate Madonna's endurance, nor does it represent any slow, deliberate torture. Its electric chair implies a very different mode of suffering than that which the scorpions portend in *Die Another Day*. At the end of the video, Madonna defiantly escapes from her torturer's botched attempt to electrocute her. Bond, on the other hand, makes no attempt to escape his captors and in fact asks for his execution to be expedited even as he is being allowed to simply walk away as part of a deal negotiated offscreen between Britain and North Korea.<sup>7</sup> The electric chair dominates the music video with its ominous immediacy, implying a headlong rush into death—death not in one's own fashion, but in the fashion and time most convenient for the state. Just when it seems that Madonna's feisty tenure has expired in the music video, she escapes the electric chair through its unexpected "short-circuiting." The electric chair of the music video presents itself as a figure for the immediate and overwhelming jouissance of death, and it forces Madonna to portray a subject who must negotiate around, and slip away from, this jouissance.

Thus Madonna's vow to "delay my pleasure" makes psychoanalytic sense in the context of the Freudian short circuit. For Freud, the reality principle "does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction . . . as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure" (SE XVIII: 10). Madonna wriggles away in a cloud of smoke, but a Bond-styled blood-red graphic reminds the viewer that, in escaping the chair, Madonna here has not escaped death altogether, but has merely been "lengthening the road" toward it (Freud SE XVIII: 40). It seems that we have

seen Madonna “struggling through, by roundabout paths,” to again employ the Freudian parlance (SE XVIII: 11).

But how does the electric chair come to impart its complicated form of jouissance? One answer may reside in the binding that Madonna engages in as a preparatory measure for execution: in Freud’s terms, “the mechanical violence . . . would liberate a quantity of sexual excitation . . . but, on the other hand, the simultaneous physical injury . . . would bind the excess of excitation” (SE XVIII: 33). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* carefully theorizes the binding and unbinding of cathected energies: Freud sees the “binding” of the drive as a crucial step in the deferment of death. In Freud’s model, the erotic drive diverts the headlong rush to death by converting energy from a “freely flowing” to a “quiescent” state, a conversion accomplished by a psychic binding (31, 30).<sup>8</sup> Madonna, alone with the electric chair, prepares herself for her pending electrocution by binding her left arm in a leather strap. Despite her frantic pace, this act of binding somewhat resembles that of the Morning Prayer in Kabbalah. Whereas at first it was unclear why this prayer would be an apt preparation for either the electric chair or her subsequent escape from it, *Beyond* allows us to read this performance as another literalization of a Freudian motif. For Freud, the binding of erotic energy sublimates the deathly jouissance into its own deferment. The process of binding, for both Freud and Madonna, allows the organism to die another day.<sup>9</sup>

Madonna binding her arm in preparation for death foretells another scene of binding—her cameo appearance in the film *Die Another Day*. Madonna plays a sensuous fencing instructor named Verity, eager to test James Bond’s athletic mettle. In one of her few lines, she asks Bond to help her tie her corset, as it has come undone. Bond, played by Pierce Brosnan, answers with enigmatic but flirtatious zeal, “Why not?” This act of courtesy is quickly followed by Bond’s equally courteous but nonetheless frenzied duel with Gustav Graves, who is one of Verity’s charges. The film features an extended fencing scene between Bond and Graves, each dressed in white. But when the fencing theme is taken up again in the music video, it appears with a twist: the duel is now between Madonna,

dressed in white, and an anonymous adversary dressed all in black. A second twist follows shortly thereafter: when the black-clad fencer is unmasked, she too turns out to be Madonna. The black-clad fencer opens her mouth in astonishment at this coincidence (as might the viewer), before continuing the duel more aggressively than before.<sup>10</sup> The final twist is that, mysteriously, whenever either of them cuts the other, the wound appears on a third Madonna's body, this one imprisoned in the remote torture chamber. This last Madonna, imprisoned and absent from the duel, sustains its injuries remotely. It is obvious enough that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* could be read as staging a metaphorical "duel" between Eros and Thanatos, and it would be easy enough to cast the dueling white-and-black Madonnas in these roles for the purposes of our reading. But Freud's uncertainty about the existence of the death instinct, and the nonreciprocal relation that he posits between the pleasure principle and its possible "beyond," give me pause about making this association. However, this fencing metaphor gets more interesting, and usefully rigorous, when we understand the third, displaced Madonna as an implicit illustration of the transference's role in repetition compulsion, a topic that Freud explores at length in *Beyond*.

Seeking an example that would convey the tragic weight of the compulsion to repeat, Freud refers us to Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Freud calls Tasso's work "the most moving poetic picture of a fate such as this" (SE XVIII: 22), "this" being repetition compulsion. In Freud's account, Tasso's hero Tancred "unwittingly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight" (22). In this context we cannot help but note the suits of armor that provide the background for the dueling Madonnas in the music video: indeed the unveiling of the black fighter in the music video carries with it a comparably uncanny, unheimlich sense of striking something too close to home. But the part of Tasso's story that illustrates the compulsion to repeat comes next: Freud says that Tancred "slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining" (22). Freud reads this second, arboreal at-

tack as evidence of a compulsion to repeat the scene of a trauma “which overrides the pleasure principle” (22).

Freud and Madonna each work through fencing metaphors to illustrate the pathos of repetition, and each tells this tale through a seemingly supernatural series of displaced injuries and a duel with someone uncannily too much at home. Certainly the film’s extensive use of fencing themes and imagery, which provide the pretext for Madonna’s own cameo role in the film, suggests fencing as an especially appropriate vehicle for Madonna’s music video as well. But the video stages its fencing scene in a very different—indeed, specifically Freudian—way. I want to understand this element of the music video, then, as an illustration (however possibly unintentional) of repetition’s role in the transference. In describing repetition compulsion as the symptom of trauma, Freud justifies the need for a “beyond” of the pleasure principle: “The compulsion to repeat also recalls from past experiences which include no possibility of pleasure” (SE XVIII: 20). Madonna, consciously or not, illustrates the compulsion to repeat rather adequately: in the course of a four-minute song, she resolves to “die another day” no fewer than twenty-five times. For Freud, the compulsion to repeat actions or phrases is a sign of the “transference neurosis,” a problem that sometimes emerges within psychoanalysis and can further complicate cases of trauma (SE XVIII: 18).

In introducing the topic of the transference neurosis, Freud describes a scene not at the traumatic warfront, nor in dreams: instead, he invites us into his office (SE XVIII: 18). Inhabiting this neurosis, Madonna places herself in a similar situation, taking on the role of the neurotic analysand, offering a defiant laugh and whispering “I need to lay down” into the microphone two-thirds of the way through the song. Addressed thus, Freud—and indeed the listener, who, in hearing this confession, is temporarily allied with Freud—becomes a master or father (thanks to the transference) able to authorize and supervise Madonna’s “laying.” Madonna’s utterance, at once sexually inviting and vaguely menacing, suggests that she has adopted an hysterical stance in relation to Freud. In Freudian-Lacanian thought, the hysteric is by definition coquettish, playful, subver-

sive, and sweetly menacing; indeed she demands that the analyst/master show his stuff in a seeming attempt to submit to the master's knowledge, but does so until the gaps or holes in the master's knowledge become readily apparent. Here we can note that Madonna does not simply propose that Freud "analyze this"; rather, she presents her demand repetitively ("analyze this!/analyze this!/analyze this this this this this") so as to suggest an unending stream of "submissions" to Freud's authority. "There's so much more to know," sings Madonna resolutely, meanwhile promising to "keep this secret." The hysteric, Lacan explains, gets off on the master's knowledge; she is in search of a master who can be mastered.<sup>11</sup> Thus Madonna's "I need to lay down," replete with its sexual allurements, its confession of weakness, and its demand for analysis, strikes a peculiarly destabilizing chord for the analytic scene. Madonna, laughing equivocally as she appeals to Freud for analysis, enacts both a "papa don't preach" act of defiance and a "justify my love" daughter's seduction.

But Madonna's willingness to strike a hysterical pose is itself undermined by her resolution to "die another day." As Lacan notes, "The hysteric reaches the goal immediately. The Freud she is kissing is the objet a" (Seminar XV, 21.2.68, X 9).<sup>12</sup> The Madonna of "Die Another Day" is indeed interested in flirting with Freud and demanding an exhibition of his knowledge. But her resolutions to "delay my pleasure" and "destroy my ego" suggest another stance, one that might extend beyond the satisfactions of the pleasure-unpleasure/reality-unreality matrix. Madonna is, quite precisely, refusing to reach the objet a immediately; she is toying with it, rehearsing its acquisition, so as to master its satisfactions in her own proper way. Lacan wrongly assumes that Freud was solely responsible for solving this problem for hysterical patients, even wondering "how was he able to put in suspense in this radical way what is involved in love?" (Lacan, Seminar XV, 21.2.68, X9). But Madonna, knowingly or unknowingly, strips Freud of his responsibility by taking this act of suspension upon herself.

Interestingly, Madonna's whispered "I need to lay down" is preceded by an "uh . . . uh." This "uh - uh" might be read as a modified "o-

o”: “o-o-o-o” being the small child’s utterance that Freud interprets as “Fort!” or “gone!” (Freud SE XVIII: 15). This is supported by the music video, in which Madonna grabs a razor-edged hat (one of the accoutrements of Bond villainy) and throws it away. “Gone!” she announces with her “uh uh,” just as she sends the hat away in a pleasurable display of mastery. A children’s game: is this gesture not the fulfillment of her promise earlier in the song to find “A time to work, a time to play?” In Freud’s account, children’s games such as fort-da are the very processes by which we master and negotiate trauma and initiate repetition compulsion. And so it seems almost inevitable that Madonna’s very next utterance assumes the position of the analysand (“I need to lay down”) and then, by transference, gets locked into an interminable compulsion to repeat: all she can say for the remainder of the song are variations of “I guess I’ll die another day” and nothing else. Moreover, the disco-style drum machine, which through most of the song has enjoyed intermittent rests, now remains uninterrupted; but even it is survived by the seemingly indefatigable syncopated string arrangement caught in an endless loop of repetition that outlasts all of the other instruments.<sup>13</sup> According to Freud, fixations about death (or, as he puts it, “involving a risk to life”) approach hysteria in the “wealth” of their symptoms, but also stretch somewhere beyond hysteria, “surpass[ing] it as a rule” (SE XVIII:12).

Freud takes it upon himself to limit the repetitive utterances that can emerge from such situations: he accepts that it is “the physician’s endeavor to keep this transference neurosis within the narrowest limits: to force as much as possible the channel of memory and to allow as little as possible to emerge as repetition” (SE XVIII: 19). But Madonna has already pointed her own way out of this fixation, and thus has indeed “found another way”: her earlier promises to “close my body now” and “suspend my senses” are fulfilled through her scenes of binding from the music video, as described above. Freud, like Madonna, would have the organism close its body by a process of binding so as to suspend its senses; thus binding, somatic closing, and sensory suspension are intimately linked processes in Madonna and Freud alike. In section IV of

Beyond, Freud describes the binding of energies as a “crust” that forms around the body that will dull the potentially traumatic impact of outside stimuli (SE XVIII: 24-33). In the video, the cut that pierces the bodily armor of the fencing Madonnas illustrates the impact of the cut as traumatic: indeed, Freud suggests that “we describe as ‘traumatic’ any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield” (29), a misfortune strikingly literalized in the music video and protected against in the lyrics.<sup>14</sup>

Madonna’s tattoo in the video announces this complicated protection scheme against jouissance equally effectively, and even suggests that, as Lacan claims, jouissance becomes alienated from the subject through the appearance of the signifier. That is, the video features Madonna using a signifier quite literally to shield herself from overwhelming jolts of enjoyment, which she apparently associates with God, fatherdom, and prohibition. Madonna, binding herself frantically in preparation for the electric chair, sports a faux-tattoo on her right arm in Hebrew lettering. Spelt with the letters (right to left) “lamed,” “alef” and “vav,” (roughly, “LAV”), the tattooed word is possibly an uncommon form of the Hebrew word for “no,” or possibly “not”; it may also be one of the names of G-d.<sup>15</sup> The no! and name of the father combined punningly upon her body, Madonna visually suggests that she has been marked by the letter but can still enjoy the Other directly. This form of jouissance, which Lacan associates with mystical religious ecstasy, is the reward for those (namely, women) who can manage to be incompletely contained within the strictures of the Name-of-the-Father. Lacan asserts that womanly mysticism is “something serious” even though its practitioners “know nothing about it”—which is a formulation that may resolve the perceived contradiction that Madonna, who claims to take Kabbalah very seriously, nevertheless has been accused of treating the mystical tradition somewhat unknowingly (Lacan Seminar XX 76).

Her body supposedly pushed to its physical limits, the Madonna of the music video erupts in a seemingly overwhelming and deathly enunciation of enjoyment that leads her to recognize pleasure as the bodily limit to



endurable suffering.<sup>16</sup> The enigmatic tattoo presents a literalized case of the feminine jouissance that, as Lacan says, allows ~~the Woman~~ (the Lacanian strikethrough indicating her relationship to the symbolic order)<sup>17</sup> to enjoy not only through the signifier but also in direct relation to the Other (Seminar XX 64-77). As Lacan explains, some tattoos can be understood as materializations of the libido, and they “certainly [have] the function of being for the Other, of situating the subject in it, marking his [sic] place in the field of the group’s relations” (Seminar XI 205-206). Noting their “erotic function,” Lacan claims that with some tattoos, the subject “in short circuit, more directly than any other, succeeds” in integrating subjectivity and desire (Seminar XI 206). Madonna’s tattoo, in its direct assertion of the dialectical subversion of the subject and of that subject’s direct access to the Other, implies that even while Madonna may not have actually yet destroyed her ego, her ego nevertheless has been unseated, jeopardized, and self-alienated.<sup>18</sup> Fittingly, once Madonna vanishes from the short-circuiting electric chair at the end of the music video, the letters from her tattoo appear as if burnt into the electric chair itself.<sup>19</sup> This fresh mark of “no,” however, in this new context, seems to celebrate Madonna’s prolonging the road to death more than it documents the Name-of-the-Father: it appears as a marker of Madonna’s escape, and it appears seemingly because we have just seen the white fencing Madonna of another, seemingly unrelated scene shoot an arrow through the heart of the black fencing Madonna (which could possibly be read as Eros staving off Thanatos for awhile).<sup>20</sup>

In the lyrics, the music video, and the film, we see an intimate conversation emerging between Madonna and Freud. This conversation, we must remember, is thoroughly commoditized, and it must serve commercial purposes in a remarkably overdetermined way: the song is designed to serve as a commodity in its own right (as a hit single), as an advertisement for itself (in its music video), an advertisement for Madonna as construed as a brand unto herself, an advertisement for the film, and as a prominent part of the very film that it is supposed to advertise. In employing (and implying) concepts from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Ma-

Madonna has effectively made good on her promise to MGM by offering listeners a subtle explanation of the pleasures awaiting audiences of the Bond film. When people paid eight dollars to see the “new” Bond, they weren’t getting anything new at all: indeed, the fact that *Die Another Day* could gross over \$160 Million at the box office despite offering audiences only what they’d seen nineteen times before over the past forty years hints at the powerful pleasures and potential for capital gain associated with the compulsion to repeat. Freud, of course, would have had difficulty in understanding this phenomenon, which presents a challenge to his claim that “[n]ovelty is always the condition of enjoyment” (SE XVIII: 35). But nevertheless it is clear that film viewers, like readers, enjoy particular forms of pleasure from following heavily plotted narratives. Here I’m drawing from the work of Peter Brooks, who offers an account of readerly desire in his classic study of narratology, *Reading for the Plot*. It should come as little surprise that Brooks bases his model of narrative pleasure on a close reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Brooks’s theoretical model posits that viewers of a heavily plotted film such as *Die Another Day* would take pleasure from balancing two instincts: one that aspires toward the end of the film, and one that delays that ending by following a circuitous path toward it (Brooks 103-104). Seen in this light, when Madonna reminds us of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, intentionally or otherwise, she is gesturing toward the specific theoretical frame that can account for the enduring appeal of James Bond for viewers. This form of pleasure announces a marked contrast to the popular perception of Madonna’s own career, which has been famously marked by countless personal reinventions.<sup>21</sup> While the filmic Bond character has slowly evolved over forty years of wear, Madonna’s persona as a pop star has struck many mainstream listeners as daring, unpredictable, and malleable over the latter half of Bond’s career.<sup>22</sup> But Madonna’s poses for “Die Another Day,” despite being routed unexpectedly through Freud’s genuinely daring work, here as usual serve the corporate interests of the culture industry primarily. The effect of Madonna’s call for analysis ultimately produces a different sort of objet a, specifically the sound of a ringing jackpot shared between Mav-



92 David Sigler

erick, BMG, UMA, EON Productions, and MGM. But Madonna, in pursuing this most consistent cause of her desire, has nevertheless revealed that viewers can experience in *Die Another Day* a few of the pleasures of the unconscious itself as they negotiate their way through countless incarnations of the Bond myth.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> My understanding of the business aims and generic expectations for a “normal” Bond theme song has been greatly enhanced by Jeff Smith’s essay “Creating A Bond Market.”

<sup>2</sup> See Lacan’s *Seminar II*, Derrida’s *The Post Card*, and Laplanche’s *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, which represent three of the most rigorous and influential commentaries on *Beyond*.

<sup>3</sup> I hope that this brief statement of the premise of the film does not unfairly neglect the important part played by Jinx (Halle Berry) in the saving of the world. I confine my remarks to Bond’s situation only to highlight the main differences between *Die Another Day* and the rest of the Bond oeuvre.

<sup>4</sup> Bond’s efforts to correct and regulate flows of capital are consistent with his role as corporate “company man,” to borrow Edward P. Comentale’s designation and astute analysis of Ian Fleming’s Bonds. See Comentale’s essay “Fleming’s Company Men,” especially pp. 9-11.

<sup>5</sup> I wish to thank Keith E. Clifton for reminding me that Madonna attempts similar dream-imagery in the music video for “Bedtime Stories,” and also for informing me that Madonna used the electric chair as a prop during her performances of “Die Another Day” during her *American Life* tour in 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Freud discusses this phenomenon briefly in the chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams* entitled “The Stimuli and Sources of Dreams,” wherein he acknowledges the importance of sensory receptors in shaping dream content but explains that “[s]cientific enquiry, however, cannot stop there” (*SE IV: 27*). For a further discussion of Madonna and her relation to dreams and psychoanalysis, see Daniel Walden and Helena Poch’s article, “Psychoanalysis of Dreams: Dream Theory and

Its Relationship to Literature and Popular Culture: Freud, Billy Joel, Appelfeld, and Abe," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 32:1 (1998 Summer), pp. 113-20.

<sup>7</sup> For an interesting discussion of *Die Another Day*'s representation of North Korean-South Korean politics, North Korea's relationship to the West, and the film's representation of the North Korean nuclear armament, see Alexis Albion's "Wanting To Be James Bond," pp. 213-214.

<sup>8</sup> For a rigorous Freudian interpretation of libidinal binding and anal eroticism in Ian Fleming's Bond novels, see Comentale's "Fleming's Company Men," pp. 13-16.

<sup>9</sup> *Beyond The Pleasure Principle* cannot adequately explain, however, why a heavysset bearded man suddenly appears in the electric chair once Madonna has escaped. Traktor decides to show us an image of this man only very briefly at the end of the music video; the man seems to be enjoying the jouissance of the electric chair as much as Madonna had been.

<sup>10</sup> Uncanny doubles are, of course, not foreign to the Bond oeuvre: most memorable, the Blofield clones and their cloned cats in *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971). For an interesting psychoanalytic reading of anal eroticism, anxieties about masculinity, and their expression through the Blofield clones, see Dennis W. Allen's essay "Alimentary, Dr. Leiter," especially pp. 25-29. Incidentally, *Diamonds Are Forever* shares much of its plot with *Die Another Day*, including an illegal trade in African diamonds for the manufacture of a devastating weapon, a criminal mastermind capable of radical self-transformations, and the use of scorpions as weapons of political cruelty.

<sup>11</sup> In this sentence, I am drawing upon Bruce Fink's discussion of hysteria in *The Lacanian Subject*, pp. 133-135.

<sup>12</sup> Although Gallagher translates Lacan's "objet a" as "o-object," I have decided to retain Lacan's French usage here for the purposes of consistency, specificity, and conformity with customary translation practices of Lacan.

<sup>13</sup> Thanks are again due to Keith E. Clifton, who not only suggested this point to me but also exemplifies strategies for reading Madonna's instrumentation and lyrics together in his persuasive article "Queer Hearing and the Madonna Queen" in *Madonna's Drowned Worlds*.

<sup>14</sup> Freud's meditation on the bodily crust as a shield against the shock of jouissance reverses the strategy of Gustav Graves, the villain of *Die Another Day*, who has devised for himself a metal exoskeleton capable of emitting high-voltage electric shocks. On a less technological note, one is reminded also of the scorpions that Bond endures at the beginning of the film.

<sup>15</sup> The tattoo seems to resist easy interpretation, confounding several fluent Hebrew speakers and even inspiring an explanatory note from Rabbi Yehuda Berg, spiritual leader of The Kabbalah Center. I am gathering my reading of the tattoo



94 David Sigler

from an interesting discussion of Madonna's tattoo, posted on the blog "Ghost of a Flea" and dated October 31, 2002 ("The Flea").

See <http://www.ghostofaflea.com/archives/000169.html>. A later post to this blog claims to have received an "official" explanation of the tattoo from Rabbi Berg: according to the blog, Berg explains that "The 'word' on Madonna's shoulder is not actually a word, but rather one of the names from the 72 Names of G-d. Kabbalah explain that Moses used these names to split the Red Sea, and that we can use them to create miracles in our own lives. Each name draws a particular kind of energy. The name in the 'Die Another Day' video is for eliminating the ego." See Berg's remarks at [http://ghostofaflea.blogspot.com/2003\\_02\\_02\\_ghostofaflea\\_archive.html#88420317](http://ghostofaflea.blogspot.com/2003_02_02_ghostofaflea_archive.html#88420317). Thus, in an interesting further literalization of a Lacanian motif, Madonna has not-all of the Name-of-the-Father tattooed (temporarily) on her body. For another discussion of the meaning of the tattoo, one that accuses Madonna of cultural appropriation, see Sashinka's blog at [http://sashinka.blogspot.com/2002\\_10\\_01\\_sashinka\\_archive.html#82966553](http://sashinka.blogspot.com/2002_10_01_sashinka_archive.html#82966553).

<sup>16</sup> Torture can be construed as a form of enjoyment beyond the body, one that forces the body to meet the limit of its jouissance in death. See, for example, Alenka Zupancic's discussion of "Fantasy within the limits of reason alone" in her *Ethics of the Real*, pp. 79-82.

<sup>17</sup> The term is written as barred in Lacanian theory to indicate that "The Woman" as such is not entirely contained within the symbolic order; she is, as Lacan puts it, "not-whole" and therefore she can but be excluded" by "the nature of words." That is why any reference to the universal category of "Woman" can only be written under erasure if it is to be somewhat accurate; as Lacan states, "Woman can only be written with a bar through it" (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 72-73).

<sup>18</sup> Here my understandings of jouissance, the ego, and the signifier are routed through Lacan's influential essay from *Écrits*, "The Subversion of the Subject."

<sup>19</sup> This inexplicable event seems to revise a Freudian formula from the *New Introductory Lectures*: where she was, there her signifier shall be. See Freud *SE* XXII: 80.

<sup>20</sup> The film's evil fencing champion character Miranda Frost, played by Rosamund Pike, also dies by being impaled through the chest.

<sup>21</sup> Several sophisticated scholarly responses to these reinventions have been collected in *Madonna's Drowned Worlds*, a collection edited by Santiago Fouz-Hernandez and Freya Jarman-Ivens. This collection establishes that Madonna's reinventions are a matter deserving better theorization and even begins this work in earnest.

<sup>22</sup> Bond's gradual transformations have been discussed often and well; among the most interesting of these discussions are Jeremy Black's *The Politics of James Bond* (especially pp. 159-168), Tara Brabazon's "Britain's Last Line of Defence,"

*Studies in Popular Culture*

and Jim Leach's "The World Has Changed." Madonna's commitment to self-reinvention has been well discussed in Steven Spencer-Steigler and Britta Wheeler's "Madonna, the Libertine?", Lynne Layton's "Who's That Girl? A Case Study of Madonna," and Lynn O'Brien Hallstein's "Feminist Assessment of Emancipatory Potential and Madonna's Contradictory Gender Practices," as well as in the aforementioned *Madonna's Drowned Worlds*.

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"Sigmund Freud, Analyze This": Madonna Beyond the Pleasure Principle 97

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