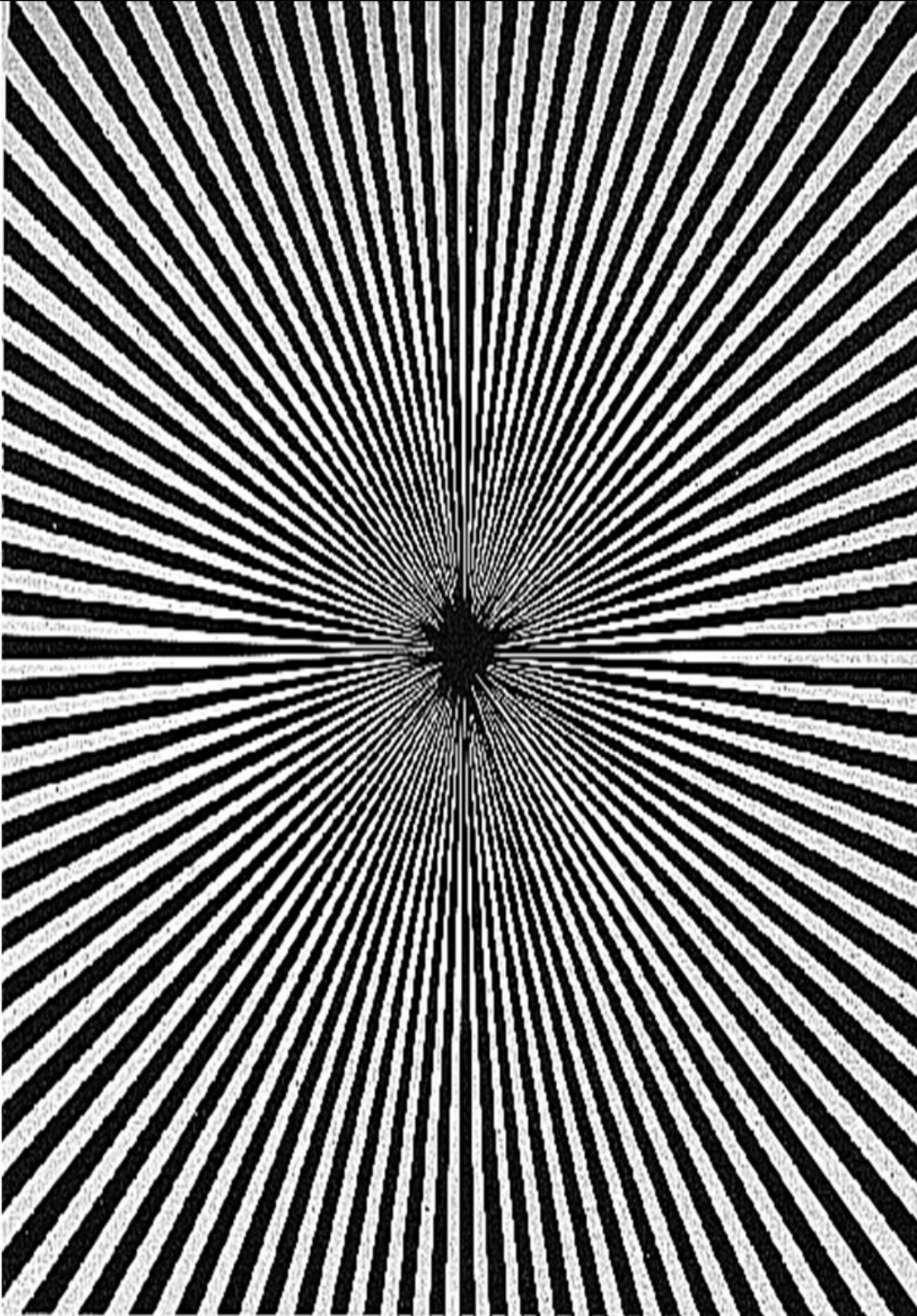
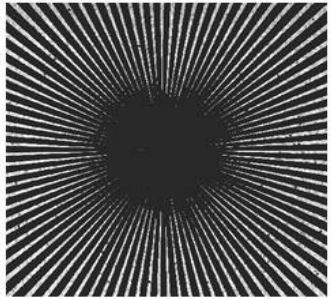


# ROBOTOMY



**Andrés Vaccari**

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Summer. They walk hand in hand.

He remembers being barefoot; the asphalt is hot and small pieces of glass hurt his feet. She walks by his side, occasionally raising her head, looking into his eyes and smiling. For a few moments, her face fills the whole field, indeed, the whole of his consciousness.



It slows down the sequence,

*tracking the little changes of her expression and relishing every frame of her company.*

Presently, the gaze wanders away, following the trace of smoke-spirals in the sky and accidentally intersecting the path of a solitary pigeon.

This is the most difficult part, the part when she drops out of sight, therefore out of existence. He has learned how to deal with it, though; his awareness focuses on the touch of her hand. He squeezes her fingers and clings to the texture of soft flesh against bone.

*But something in the distance distracts Its attention - something It doesn't remember from before. A tall, gaunt man in an impeccable white suit and a wide straw hat is crossing the avenue. From his weather-beaten features, two small glowing eyes dart about, calmly assessing the streets, the crying children and the smoke rising from street fires.*

*Straight away, It can tell the man does not belong to the original recording. He casts no shadow, and walks through people and solid objects as if they didn't exist. He stops in the middle of the avenue for a moment and looks around, undoubtedly searching for It.*

Restlessness begins to surge through It.

*After a quick rummage through the memory, It identifies the man. He is Ghost 28.*

*One day, It thinks, It will give the Ghosts proper names - but no, maybe that's not a good idea. Baptizing the Ghosts would be to acknowledge their individuality, their concreteness, to give them power over It.*

The gaze returns to her. She is looking down now, almost shyly. The uneasiness goes away. She is his. He is hers. Everything is okay.

aBORT

