

Metalepsis Seminar • Virtual Session 18

[metalepsis seminar](#) / WAAC•PSU / 30 April 2014

catalepsis disciplinary actions

METALEPSIS SEMINARIANS, 9-ERS, AUXILIARY MEMBERS, and OCCASIONAL GUESTS



Jean Rochefort and Johnny Hallyday in Patrice Laconte's 2002 film, *The Man on the Train*.

PRELUDE: This is a tough newsletter, a lot is packed into tiny bundles. We move into new territory, i.e. what to DO with the issue of j'ouïs-sens, the "catalepsis" that follows metalepsis. It has consequences for work, both critical writing and architecture. It may mean a lot to those facing the writing of dissertations and theses, but it is also meant to mean more to just thinking and feeling, to reflections and friendships, which is to say this is a personal move, not just a semiotic/philosophical consideration. The films and opera clip tagged below are ones that are central, so try to follow up. This is an emotional time of year, when many of us are saying goodbye to something. Let's say hello to something else and use catalepsis to structure a future together. Amore More Ore Re (you can spell out the initials, too).

* thanks to luc and karima ...

At reviews at WAAC last week, some interesting discussions developed around the idea of Purgatory. This is where we're at, right? Most of us. It was a mountain (see below), the middle ground of Dante's Divine Comedy, and we know the other versions of that mountain, the ziggurat, the *mons delectus* (mountain of choices, garden of the forking paths ...), the Egyptian pyramid, the Rosicrucian symbol ... the space between heaven and hell. Dante was thinking about a lot of things when he took up this problem of the middle term, and how it is a gap between one predication and its reversed position. We have a kind of cosmic claim in thinking that Purgatory is the place where, as in the famous line Desi Arnaz gave to Lucy in the famous American TV comedy show, "you got a lot of susplainin' to do!" 'Susplainin' is what critical theory is about, not to tag every question or label every drawing, but to lead on with ACTS, not contents! Žižek is correct on this, and absolutely accurate. Theory must take up this middle ground as something critically related to the act, the body's primacy over the mind, it's ability to be decisive and knowing *before* the slow thoughts of conscious rationality try to usurp its beauty. Karima had on her desk the incredibly destructive book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, by Daniel Kahneman. The idea sounds intriguing at first, even Frascarian, because Marco would advocate "slow thinking" as a counterpart to "slow food" and the idea that local resources also involve a radical imaginative materialism. Marco yes, Kahneman no. Kahneman's system is actually backwards. "Fast" for Kahneman is instinct and emotion. We know emotion works indirectly, it is the slow food of the soul. Instinct is not impulse, it is *Trieb*, the drive, the death drive, the construction of the empty place of *jouissance* through compulsion, and the cross-inscription of aim and goal (we aim but incorporate the goal within the aim, Carolina's example of the horizontality and verticality of Castelvecchio). We can allow our sources to fall short of their marks but not to have things backwards. This is idiocy pure and simple, not the idiocy we must employ as stupid angels in the projects of *j'ouïs-sens*, the sinthome, the acousmatic ventriloquist's dummy, the automatons of Truth.

For Žižek, emotions and the drives (cf. NOT instincts as the bad translation of Freud's term, *Trieb*, often suffers) have the key to Marco's slow thought idea. This is the catalepsis of thought, which would seem to freeze the body but it actually freezes the time that conceptualization wants to appropriate. So, 9-ers and WAAConians, here's how to defend yourself against such trash talk that promotes itself as "cognitive wisdom." The body in catalepsis is fast, super fast, but what happens is like the digital trick used a lot these days, where everything is frozen except for one character or object, which is able to swim around suspended objects and people. The cataleptic body is the theoretic body, outside of time, an embodiment of pure act. It seems to break the laws of space and time, hence, it is about the four forms of "detached virtuality," travel through time, the story in the story, the double, the contamination of reality by the dream. In short, it is about Eternity, eternal love, eternal possibility.

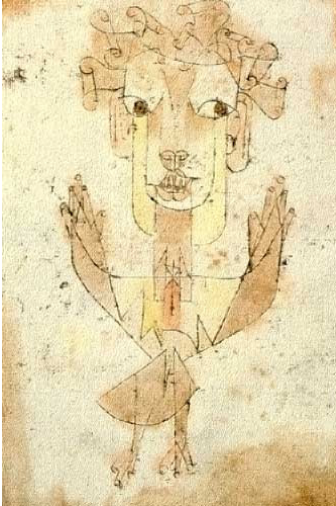
Cognitive psychology wants to create diagrams with labels, and we all go through this phase where we need to create "master plans" where ideas are spread across the page like buildings on an American campus (not WAAC, the other kind, like U.Va. or Columbia, eh?). This easily assimilates the humanist model, where binary signifiers are converted into a line, and a middle balance position is sought. The problem with this has been known since Plato, and later Dante. The middle is not a balance point, it is a mountain of radical discontinuity, it is a Purgatory. With catalepsis in your ammunition belt, you can shoot your way out of any argument. Note: we owe this idea to Claudio Sgarbi, who made the leap we needed in the Metalepsis Seminar, Claudio who opened up the portal to the ancient mysteries and, especially, the Vichian mystery of the two Diana's, whose name (Djana) also is about the Janusian hinge, the gap between predications. Now you see how the middle is not a balance point. It is a point of the Act. We now get Žižek and Vico on the same page!

Don't flinch! don't give way as to your desire, Lacan says! Fantasy, which attempts to cover up the fact that the line between the high and low, the universal and the particular — the line imagined to string together the predications, signifiers, etc. that constitute the Symbolic — that fantasy is a cover-up, something with vertical and horizontal "joints" that, if we break them apart using Truth (first and fourth) as our battle cry, we can get from symptom to sinthome, from love affairs to love itself. ("The lover is by love possessed.") When love possesses us we act on Her Behalf. Who "She" is, is the subject of another, much longer, newsletter. She is She, in all of us, men too. In the sinthome we go past the phallic either/or into the feminine both-and but *not all*. Here is the key to Purgatory, and to the engagement of the vertical and horizontal. Carolina Dayer brought up the example of Scarpa's Castelvecchio, where horizontal movement pays off in the developing and accumulating unconscious of the floor and ceiling. Horizontality is about the goal and the aim. We aim but the goal is incorporated in the aim, and *vice versa*, so we always have a moving target — what Zeno tried to teach us with his infinitely divided spaces, his arrow suspended in space. (If only Zeno could have lived to see the digital representation of his frozen spaces! He would have been so happy to say, "SEE! that's what I mean when I show how Parmenides gave us a chance to return to the mirror, to ask for our Real selves back from the Imaginary, the Symbolic; how we find in our *jouissance* a *j'ouïs-sens*, a sense we hear). Remember that psychoanalysis was born around the *hearing* of what the analysand *does not say*, the negatives, the gaps, the gasps, the errors. This is what we hear on the top of Mount Purgatory.

We have the arch-humanist (a good one this time) Petrarch, who climbed Mt. Ventoux in southern France, the same mountain painted over and over by Cezanne, the mountain whose name, "windy," connects to the *afflatus* that was impregnating Jerome when he translated the Bible into Latin from polyglot texts in Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew. We cannot think without being impregnated. I would use a standard four letter term associated with this but we are not fully ready to understand this as an act of gentle gnosis. The wind impregnates, it does it with words, but it is not the brain that is the womb, it is the whole body, the body of catalepsis. Petrarch, as everyone knows, loved and possibly wanted to fuck Laura, but she was what Nabokov called a "nymphet," a girl between 9 and 12, caught between childhood and womanhood. This does not play well in our puritanistic age, where we automatically think of child molestation. Nabokov dealt with this in *Lolita*, where the problem was that his first love, Annabel, died too soon. Like Poe's Annabel, the angels came of of the clouds by night, chilling and *killing* my Annabel Lee. Time stops, the lover-survivor goes on, haunted. The moon never beams without bringing me dreams of the beautiful Annabel Lee ... the stars never rise but I feel the bright eyes of the beautiful Annabel Lee. We are lovers in catalepsis, lovers in Purgatory, which inverts the presumed connection between universals and particulars, thanks to the young woman, the Diana that we should not have discovered, whose *haram* drives us crazy, into the forest to be consumed in 33 ways.

Are you able to keep up with this? It's good! This is good stuff. You can use it. But it's tough going! You can take back the imagination lost to creeps like Kearney and W.J.T. Mitchell — favorites in architecture school reading lists. You can take back the feminist theory classes, the geography theory classes. Get your guns! Be the nobodies in "no man's land" — do you now see the clever clue in this metaphor? Do you know

Mr./Ms. Nobody? Do you know how impossible he/she is, and how gender is thrown into question? Even more important, do you know the connection between (Odysseus's) Nobody and the race to the boat? We all have a race to the boat, where our Name becomes the key. This is Žižek's "end game," and you can read all about it in Samuel Beckett's last plays.



Paul Klee's Angel of History, cited by Walter Benjamin

I am laying it on the line here, holding out my wings to create a vortex in the forward motion where I have to go backwards but you go forwards, the "angel of history." It is a sense we hear. So "listen up"! Carolina's example from Scarpa's Castelvechio of the horizontal-vertical is a theory about the cataleptic unconscious and the recovery of sense, *j'ouïs-sens*, where we "do not give up on the possible, by holding on to the impossible and to ..." you know the quote. We cannot move but we can hear, we hear acousmatically. It is our Annabel love, our kingdom by the sea, where we "love with a love that is more than love." Poe knew all about this, as much or more than Petrarch, Zeno, Plato, or Parmenides, but the point is that they all have a piece of the puzzle, but only big thinkers like Žižek and Vico, and big pencils like Scarpa's, can draw us out of our frozen conditions, past the Kearneys and Kahlmans that are so often plopped on our desks and drafting tables.



The "mons delectus" (mountain of choice), image of the *Table of Cebes*, cited by Vico in his *New Science*

* scholarly appreciation of the catalepsis connection

We cannot take Joycean run-on sentences to the dissertation bank. They will not cash your checks. However, there is always an abundance of historical evidence that shows that others have thought what we are thinking, realized its "impossibility," its relation to the ACT, and "acted upon it." One such case is Vico's inclusion of the idea of Cebes' Table, the *mons delectus*, filter of souls. Those destined for heaven must still be purified after their journey through the shadow of death and discovery of evil in an inverted position (cf. Lacan's extimacy). At the bottom of the *mons delectus* (above), infants are admitted to a labyrinth that is normally thought of as the pilgrim's progress of literal life. You run into a bad gang (left side), drinking, gambling, all the rest. Or, you avoid or survive major disasters and make it to the top. The top is particularly important. It is related to the "ether," the pure blue of the sky, what Vico calls *animus*. It is *caelum*, which means (Vico gives us the etymology in his *Autobiography*) both "heaven" and "wedge." Wedge? this is the *agutezza*, the art of the witty saying, the art of wit itself. The point of *agutezza*, well-studied by 16c. Mannerists, was to penetrate *anima*, Diana in other words. To enter the grove and view the *haram* of Diana, to see things "as they are." This is a disruptive, enigmatic vision. It doesn't mean anything. It is pure beauty, pure knowledge, *kenosis*. Our brain is open to the wisdom of the sky (Actæon's horns are this shamanistic device), but our bodies must be purified, freed of SYMPTOMS! How do we do this? We must let the 33 dogs devour our symptoms, that is what Mt. Purgatory does. That is what the *mons delectus* shows us, but we have to understand the top.

Is this the temple of wisdom? Is it *kenosis*? It is certainly architecture, and about architecture. Hegel gives us good advice. "Give up on the project of knowledge as 'absolute' or perfect knowing. It doesn't exist. Nonetheless, hold on to the pure negative quality of desire, its impossibility." Hegel gives the example of Golgotha, the "place of the skull" he had ridiculed in his passage about phrenology, and citation of standard philosophy as a "skeleton with tickets stuck on it." (We all have to use diagrams with labels, but they are skeletons, zombies.) Golgotha as the place of sacrifice and abandonment is a tough theological nut to crack. In Žižek's terms, Christianity is really the perfect religion for atheists, Christ is the ideal atheist. Christ realizes it is not the Jews or the Romans who are killing him, but God Himself. The sacrifice is foreshadowed by Abraham — the meaningless bet with the devil, eh? — and profound proof of God's non-separate existence in some Absolute realm but His permanent interior presence as negative. *Kenosis* is about this negative, and the "return of the dead," *apophrades*, is its signal. The 33 dogs; Mount Purgatory; the filter of good and evil.

Naturally, you don't start talking this way at your dissertation defense or you are well and truly screwed. You have to know Vico's connection to the Mannerists, the Mannerists connection to the (occult) art of memory

(NOT what Frances Yates knows anything about!), to Giulio Camillo's magical temple of memory, where Apollo has been *lifted* from his position in the row of the planetary gods and replaced by the Banquet of the Gods, a supreme mystery. This is not Lacanian raving but scholarly fact. From Camillo you go to the Lurianic mystics of the Kabbalah, and the Arabic mystics' invention of the *zairja*, converting the houses of heaven into a matrix of cathexis, an inventory based on the symptom. What else is astrology but an "inventory based on the symptom." Lovers, you know what you have to do. You have to get from *jouissance* to *j'ouis-sens*, to acousmatic understanding. You have to listen to her. Her. You listen in your dreams (Semele, the other Diana that Vico cites as central to human imagination) where you are kissed. More about this kiss later. It is the kiss of the soul by the soul. Hey! we could start a jolly religion here!

By the time you outline just the basics you have a scholarly path leading from Sumerian planetary lore and the mix of astronomy and astrology all the way to modern theories of imagination. You retain the idea of the *zairja* from its earliest shamanistic applications in the sciences of divination invented by the first humans (the calf's liver was one of the first of these, because fatty deposits seemed to be like constellations in the sky). You retain, most important, several key images of literal architecture: (1) the temple that exists and doesn't exist at the top of the *mons delectus*, the inverted form of the labyrinth; (2) the mountain itself, modeled as a pyramid or ziggurat, a "world mountain" that is also a filter of good and evil; (3) the theater, in all its glory, as a reverse predication of death and life, silence and noise, light and dark — always with the gap that must be interrogated by Nobodies; and (4) the idea of "body loading" that leads to "super-symmetry" that is a computer, a mind "out there," where the extimity of this being cast out is a guarantee of Truth. Hi, Carlo Scarpa. This was what Poe (the purloined letter), Cervantes (*la mancha*), Shakespeare (*Midsummer Night's Dream*), and others have thought about. It is certainly not hard for anyone with a library (Scarpa, e.g.) to find out how and put it in his binary vector predication of horizontal and vertical. Some people know this intuitively, but need to find the footnotes.



Mozart, "one of us" in terms of reversed predication

* patrice laconte, mozart, and more

If we get tired going to the library, there is always the cinema and opera house. In Patrice Laconte's *Man on a Train* (*L'Homme du train*, 2002), a bank-robber (Johnny Hallyday, famous for his Elvis impersonations before he became a famous actor) comes into town needing an aspirin and a place to stay. Jean Rochefort offers both. A retired poetry teacher and aged bachelor, Rochefort lives in a seedy mansion with a good view of the stars. He discovers Hallyday's cache of pistols and works out the rest, but does not back away from his rough guest. And, the guest reveals his gentler side, his love of poetry. A student comes over at the wrong time for his weekly lesson, and Hallyday substitutes, asking the boy about the meaning of a poem, and quoting some passages. The bank robber has talent! The two men go to a *brasserie* for lunch. A group

of louts are drunk and disorderly, and Rochefort confronts them, to the great admiration of Hallyday. Instead of beating the retired teacher to a pulp, the main lout remembers that he was his teacher, and quotes some of the lines he has still remembered ... a tender moment, a moment along the paths of Purgatory.

The bank robbery goes wrong; Rochefort's heart surgery goes wrong. In death the men realize the opportunity for a criss-cross transfer, an exchange of a pure soul for a spotted one (cf. *manchar*). The cross the street, the exchange happens in the middle. Architects know all about this mid-point.

In *Così fan tutte* ([simulcast last Saturday](#)), Mozart gives us a clear picture of our calculus of predications. A master (Don Alphonso, an "old philosopher") and a servant, *Despina*, sung on Saturday by the beautiful Danielle de Niese, divide up the field: Alphonso < ... > Despina. Naturally, \diamond becomes <> and <> becomes ><. The servant gets the upper hand, becomes the operative "third term," the devil, Eros. The predications of the < ... > are two pairs of lovers who trust each other, but Eros decides this is too simple. Don Alphonso devises a wager whereby the men disguise themselves and woo their friend's lover, to see if she will break her vows of fidelity/chastity. It's a cruel, man-style idea, of course, but listen up, these people did not have feminist theory classes, they had to devise good feminism out of the prejudices of their times. Disguised as Albanians (much cuter than their original selves) they pester and pound away. Finally, the women give in. The criss-cross design has reverse predicated the couples, and a wedding is set up by Despina disguised as a Notary.

Così fan tutte: "They're all like this!"

Like what? like this:

Alphonso <... Fiordiligi<>Guglielmo ... Dorabella<> Ferrando ...> Despina
tutte >< "albanian" lovers
Fiordiligi \diamond Ferrando ... Dorabella \diamond Guglielmo
where \diamond = the Rose of Despina, ><, under the wager of Alphonso, <>

At the last minute, the Albanians "disappear" and the original lovers return. Forgiveness bathes away the bitter defeat and the couples are married in the original order in which they appeared, but the point was that the "impossible love" existed and triumphed for a brief moment, and was more intense and intelligible than the one that returned as a "symptom." Conventions of audiences today as well as then demand nothing less than a reinstatement of standard moral practices. But, morals are not ethics. Ethics open the way to Eros, Rose. The emotions know something our rational brains do not: impossibility lets us "hold on to the possible." This is ethics, pure and simple. How do we know? The music tells us so. We "win when we lose," the men discover. We must turn the world upside down, make impossible mathematical calculations. Not give way as to our desire.

First, [watch the clip from MetOpera](#) and see the calculus of metalepsis/catalepsis dance before your eyes (**I will kill you if you do not do this!!!**). Listen to Mozart's quantum physics. Then, go rob a bank.

Bonus materials: Poe's *Annabel Lee*, which must at least be read out loud, but best memorized to understand how the ambiguity of lines, the near-loss of memory, reconstructs in the head of the reader a perfect womb-tomb-labyrinth of desperation and lost love.

Love to you all!

D, cataleptic metalepsarian