

## Metalepsis Seminar • Virtual Session 20

[metalepsis seminar](#) / WAAC•PSU / 14 mai 2014

zairjas and carnival • psychotheology • houses in heaven

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



carnival offered the practice of endogamy within classes to achieve requisite genetic variety

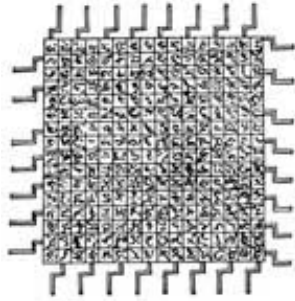
### \* carnival and the zairja

Let's be frank about the matter. The reason for carnival was not, as is usually put forward, to have a lot of fun before lent begins (fasting, praying, ashes and sackcloth). It was to freshen up the gene pools of social classes that would otherwise become sick through overbreeding. In the pure form, one put on a full-body "domino," something like a unisex shador. Lawrence Durrell (*Mountolive* 1958): "One feels free in this disguise to do whatever one likes without prohibition. You cannot tell whether you are dancing with a man or a woman. The dark tides of Eros, which demand full secrecy if they are to overflow the human soul, burst out during carnival." And burst out they did, enlivening the normally separated economic-social classes with traits they did not specifically request, making for robust hybrids or, in some cases, monsters.

We have several terms for unlimited semiosis: the chain of signifiers (contaminated by metalepsis), unlimited predication, reverse predication with gap/void, extimacy, polysemy ... all of these will get you the same sense of infinity that curves in on itself, where space is not just curved but curvature itself, where time can be both inside itself and outside at the same time — epipany. Also *kenosis* (knowing without knowing), supplemented by the other five Bloomian terms, *clinamen*, *tesseract*, *apophrades*; and the agencies of lunacy, *eros/dæmon* and *askesis*, retreat. In this last term we have not just the image of "flight from the enchanter" but the idea of the *matrix*, the womb, but also the "original site," the home, the home land and home as land. Matrix returns in the form of the inventory we make of experience, space, love, whose mindless mathematical mapping requires us to see everything, do everything, be completely open to an unknown future — the ACT! (For those who have missed Žižek's take on this, it is the idea that the emotions, muscles, etc. know how to act *before* the brain has any idea of what's happening. This clinical-scientific data confirms Hegel's views on the subject and seems to offer all those in architecture schools who have wanted evidence of embodied consciousness something more than they bargained for: a material imagination to beat the band!)

The matrix of cathexis, where the fetish drives our desire for objects while at the same time defining in them a space we cannot reach — is this not a mini-matrix, a portable womb, making any object we

desire capable of impregnation with desire, able to gestate under darkness (always a number of darkness is involved, 40 for humans) — and what about the birth? About this we can say that it is not just a child, made out of and through the objects of the world, but childhood itself, our own rebirth, the joy parents feel in viewing their newborn, a pure true joy.



Jonathan Swift's idea of the *zairja*, copied (famously) by Daniel Libeskind  
Yes, I know you've seen it before.

Unlimited semiosis thus has its own sex toy, the *zairja*. The *zairja* was a computer, the first computer, known by the Eleventh Century Arabic, Lurianic, and Christian mystics, as a astrological-astronomical mix-up tool able to take simple ideas, combine them, and create a rich mix, a *matrix* in the graphic and mathematical sense. The point of the *zairja* was not to make muddy thoughts clear but, rather, the reverse. To remove thoughts from their original contexts in order to liberate them. The aim was something like "unlimited semiosis," the ability of any thought to form a copula/predication with any other thought. Don't spread this around, it turns the word "fuck" to its proper role as a creative physical and mental act, a release from the impasse of broken relationships of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real (Lacan). Thanks to the paper by Young-jin Park, we have a good account of how to fix these relationships through the *sinthome*, the little ring that heals all wounds and goes beyond the "interpretive" function of standard psychoanalysis. If we may borrow a term from Eric Santner (*On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life*).

## \* psychotheology?

On the Psychotheology  
of Everyday Life



Reflections on  
Freud and Rosenzweig



This somewhat weird study of Franz Rosenzweig, a failed PhD student in history who developed, in his despair apparently, a unique thesis on the madness of capturing a pure instant. (Bachelard fans wake up and pay attention!) Here we have a bit of Parmenides coming back to remind us about Being. We can't speak about it (only paradoxes arise, as in Zeno's classic set). On this point Lacan is precise: we must choose between being and speaking at the mirror stage; it is a forced choice, we are asked to either speak or shut up forever, exile ourselves from life, love, and community. But, is being entirely lost in this choice? Santner, following Rosenzweig, seems to suggest not. In this, he is on Lacan's side, and on the side of the *sinthome*. We can go back to the mirror stage, effectively say "fuck you" to the

ideal ego, the one in the Imaginary of the mirror, the one that looks better than us, the one that throws us into a *corps morcélé* retroactively (i.e. we hadn't realize what a mess we were before this handsome/beautiful mirror image of ourselves). Along with the stupid ideal ego we get to say goodbye to mastery itself, the goal of "finding in something everything there is to find."

**Everything, something, anything, nothing.** In Lacan's L-scheme, a formula borrowed from Aristotle, there is the classic set of logical possibilities. X coincides with Y (everything), partly overlaps (something) ... doesn't (nothing). Beginning to sound like a bad love novel, eh?



The case for the *sinthome*, the move past representation, is a case for love, *jouissance* turned into *j'ouï-sens*, I hear you speaking, I listen to the world whose womb gives me back what Eros had put there in the first place, a kind of "less than nothing" that turns into "more than everything." Getting beyond Aristotle is always exciting, but in this case Žižek tells us how Hegel allows us to do this. In the *Phenomenology*, for example, read the chapter on Absolute Knowledge. It is not what you might expect, how to be really really smart and join the philosophers' club. Rather, it is about how one renounces Absolute Knowledge in its false form of perfect learning, completion of the encyclopedia, solution to all the puzzles. Rather, it is a renunciation, a foreclosure on that kind of knowledge, which at first looks like despair (think of the moment in *La Double Vie de Véronique* where the Frenchwoman, Véronique, quits her piano lessons at the same moment Weronika is being buried after having a heart attack during her début concert). Véronique: "All my life I've felt like I was here and somewhere else at the same time." That's the *sinthome* for you! It's also metalepsis in all its glory!



Orfeo sings to Euridice in the French film *Black Orpheus* (1959)

## \* houses in heaven

In the film *Black Orpheus*, Euridice gives Orfeo a scarf with the zodiac signs on it. She explains them as "houses in heaven." In the original meanings of the matrix, excavated with particular care by Irina Aristarkhova in her book, *Hospitality of the matrix: philosophy, biomedicine and culture*, the matrix

(womb) is also a "site of origins." Are these houses in earth or sky? Look closely at the phallic function of Vitruvius's *orthografia*: the raising of the building's ground plan into the "sky" of the ceilings, attics, and roofs. This gesture has never gone unremarked. It is the moment, in cultures that actually build their own stuff themselves, a moment for celebration, prayer, ritual, and probably a bit of putting on the domino and having a go. It's when everybody gets to be a somebody, where nobody becomes an everybody (think of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, here, with Vico, the philosophical nobody, in the part of the "here comes everybody," HCE). Again, my little bit of acid: *Built upon Love* gets every single point it makes about Vico wrong and has to modify direct quotes to produce its own desired and false meaning. The psychotheology of houses in heaven is a lifting up, an elevation, a moment of *jouissance* if there ever was one, but as have any human cultures who have ever seen the sky and contemplated the stars, the combination of wonder with the idea of home, a home latticed with relationships of love and strife, set within wheels, wheels within wheels, tuned to the seasons but — the main point — eternal in their lack of constancy.

The home has the unhome built into it — on this account Freud is completely accurate in his etymology of the word *unheimlich*. There is "something hidden that should not come to light" ... but it has come to light. This is the night sky, but it is also our guilt washed clean of all jealousy, bitterness, loss, and pain. Washed in the Purgatory of the sunset and cleansed to shine in the constellations: Pegasus, Andromeda, Scorpio, Centaurus, Chamæleon, Vela Carina ... just speaking the names brings us a sense of joy and release ... Cignus, Lacerta ... all beautiful, all in their place as they were for the Assyrian, Greek, Phoenician, Egyptian, Sumerian etc. eyes throughout all time (some adjustments for being south of the equator, *meos amigos do Brazil!* Now we have some justification for thinking that the adjustments of town plans and house locations using the agrimensor to set the *cardos* and *decumanus*. Do we need more than these simple word to know that, from the start, lifting earth to heaven involves chirality and a line that pierces the organ filled with blood? Architects, my darlings, do not forsake the wisdom of your craft.

My bottom line this week is that we must not only take psychoanalysis (Freud, as revised and pushed further by Lacan) seriously, we must take the *end and limits of psychoanalysis* even more seriously! We must push past the symptom to the *sinthome*, to the zone of listening and making sense, a zone overseen by Eros, *dæmon*, and *kenosis*, "knowing without knowing." This must be done theoretically. It is hard work but you can do it! Keep to the calculus, to the [calculus](#), as you learned it and as you find it in such masterworks as "The Purloined Letter," "The Cathedral" (thanks Luc!), and *Così fan tutte*. Damn! we are lucky ducks!

vale