

Metalepsis Seminar • Virtual Session 7.5

metalepsis [seminar](#) / WAAC•PSU / 15 February 2014

SPECIAL VALENTINE EDITION

METALEPSIS SEMINARIANS, 9-ERS, AND AUXILIARY MEMBERS



the "nose" of the frame pushing into the party space of *Notorious*

* special valentine word: "pulsión"

The seminar keeps happening as long as the coffee is still brewing in State College (sorry, Alexandrines). Today being 'Valentines' it is appropriate to speak of love, a.k.a. Diana in her two guises, one for the waking world, the other (Endymeon) for sleepers, i.e. the unconscious. Our brief session this morning touched on the idea of chirality as something poking out into the perceptible world, creating a right-left or "stereognostic" knowledge. Think of the classic cipher of romance, the heart with an arrow through it. This is the drive — all drives aim at the heart so to speak — and "death" (or its look-alikes) is the "aim," but being good Lacanians we know that aim and goal are two different things.

What about the drive, in Spanish or French, where the idea of a energy pointed outward or inward (same thing in Lacanian), is immediately understood as an energetic force — *pulsión*? In the frame from *Notorious*, above, Cary Grant could be just another tall audience member sitting in front of us, blocking our view of the screen. When Ingrid Bergman addresses him, however, we realize that this is a special conversation. He doesn't speak. Only after the other guests have left does the camera rotate 90° to convert this silhouette into a human being, or rather someone acting like a human being.

In frame language, we are calling this a "nose" — a bit of the subject's space that is pushed into the objectified world on the other side of the frame. Representer becomes represented, so extending this logic makes for the classic *mise en abîme*, the mirrors-in-mirrors thing. Today in seminar we referred to John Fowles *The Magus*, a novel where the narrator is drawn into a succession of reverse-polarity situations. In the middle of a *mise en abîme* situation, the only thing we can notice is that there is a difference between the "even" and "odd" stages. We have a dissolution of any representational meaning (everything is a representation of a representation of a representation ...) and only the chirality is left!

To think concretely about the experiment in Psych 101 where you look at a circle of purple dots, where one goes blank in rotation, and the effect is that you see a green dot moving around in a circle. It doesn't work if you look directly at the missing dot; only only get the phi (or beta) function to work if you stare at the center. In other words, *it takes an angle* to activate this "neural" automatic substitution, where you "see because you don't see." This is as real an analogy as one can find to say that, in perception, we poke a similar kind of pointy thing into framed objectivity to reveal a dark matter. Chirality is there with or without our conscious recognition.

From the nose we go to *mise en abîme* and thence to the "Magritte mirror" case, which is a kind of

combination of Sartre's voyeur, who while looking through a keyhole hears a footstep on the stair behind him/her *plus* the idea of satire that Magritte addresses in "Not to Be Reproduced." I call it "Sartire." This is the detached virtuality of the optical image that refuses to behave itself. At this point we have a pure, distilled version of metalepsis. This is the [study guide for use in future workshops](#) on the calculus. It has a shortened argument for why metalepsis is the critical part of critical theory.

* two dianas

The case for two Dianas is this. Human consciousness begins with the idea of a space sandwich. In front of the viewer is a viewed that becomes enigmatic when pulsion pushes it past its perceptual limit, or sucks it out from behind, as in the case of (again) Sartre's description of the chestnut tree in *La Nausée*. Something enigmatic is inserted *behind* this blown-out or sucked-out shell, and that something is related to *pulsión*. It IS *pulsión*! This is the invisible tip of the visible, and it specifies two kinds of "investments" that humans shall henceforth make in the perceived world: an inventory coordinated as a field, and a more circular, more "synecdochic" movement about an empty center, based on the *sinthome*, coordinated by messages from the unconscious. These messages are not symbols or meanings; they are automated. This is why gamblers tend to be addicts.

Out of this situation two primary conditions emerge: one is the automation process, when Diana kisses Endymion while he is sleeping. Which is "all the time" in the sense that Endymion is the unconscious version of Actæon. Actæon is divided into two parts, an inventory part and a sinthomic part. As Mr. Inventory, he hunts animals in the forest. as Mr. Sinthome, reverse predication takes over, the hunter becomes the hunted. The 33 dogs are about the mortification of the "flesh" relating body to psyche — they are another version of the "herm" which connects the head to the phallus and keeps the house safe from intruders.

The apotrope function of the herm protects the space of Diana, where she is who she is, where appearance and reality are the same thing, i.e. the "Bride Laid Bare," so to speak (in Duchamp-ese). To enter this space is only for the initiated, only for the immediate "family." The hearth is the point where the dead of this family meet the living.

Vico says almost as much in the famous passage, §524 of *The New Science*. DP Verene knows it's there but doesn't say much about it. Yet, Vico says that the two Dianas are the beginning of everything human! How Lacanian! AND, because Lacan's sexuation formulæ are about selective admission to protected spaces, and the feminine exemption from the phallic rule, we have another reason to endorse Vico on his perception that this first moment is related to the institution of marriage.

How you handle this in your women's studies courses on contemporary feminist theory is up to you. It's radical, it's spatial as well as temporal, it's got something for everyone, or maybe we should say "not-all" of everyone.

* all the world needs now is love, sweet love

Thanks to all of those heartfelt artists who have extolled Diana without knowing too much more about it than *pulsión*, what makes the world go around. Wouldn't you know this would be a drive? —But, a death drive? Well, correcting the mistaken views that this is a drive *towards* death (although it does circle around to an empty void) can help: it's the "sum total of resistances offered by the subject in the face of the Real" — i.e. what we do to resist death, and hence "between the two deaths," a.k.a. Betty/Diane in *Mulholland Drive* who after her suicide continues to fantasize about lovely Rita.

My favorite all-time valentine song is Otis Redding's "[Try a Little Tenderness](#)." (sorry for the ad) This is my valentine, to all of you WONDERFUL META-LEPSARIANS who have made this year so fantastic for me. Listen to the opening argument, and greet the "heartbeat" on the rim of the drum in anticipation of the organ's more insistent long chords. Then, a little back-beat, some staccato notes on the organ and you're into Otis's best wham-o musical moments, straight from the church choir. Turn it up loud.

go eat some chocolate!