



Donald Kunze <kunze767@gmail.com>

"the flux, or more exactly the double parallel stream" (Book V)

Donald Kunze <kunze767@gmail.com>
To: Claudio Sgarbi <cldsgrb@gmail.com>

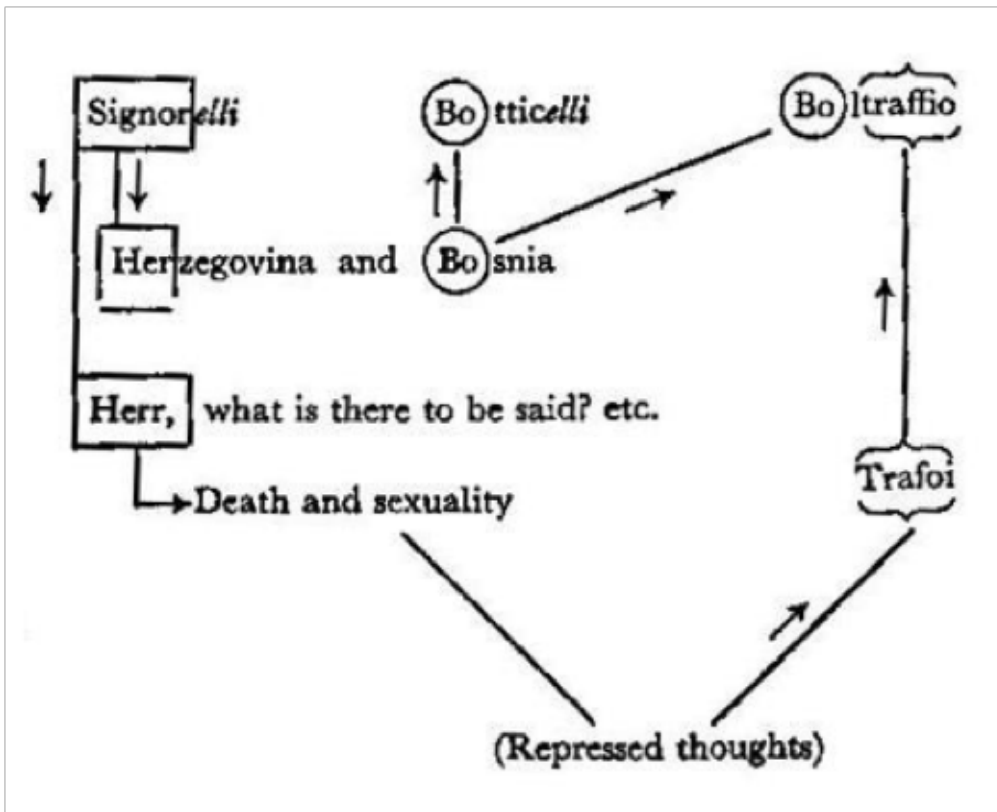
Wed, Mar 9, 2022 at 8:54 AM

Hi Claudio ... the cat *indeed* does sit on the mat. We need only one consonant to change the furry cute animal into a flat dull much-abused floor covering, but then in some cases the two things can have a relation, which is the thing about language that keeps it from being an index (again, Lacan uses a complicated term but he uses it *correctly*, 'bi-univocal concordance', to say what language is not.

Grigg is probably the best translator into English around, if only for the pleasure of reading him I wish I could send you his translation of Seminar V. This has the episode of the Signorelli Parapraxis, parapraxis being another one of those words that drive people crazy but it's a good word. It allows us to talk about suppression and forgetting in one and the same breath.

You'll just have to get over your dislike of 'agency'. It is a better word than instance, which doesn't give much more than the idea of something temporal and quick. Agency is about effectiveness. An agent gets things done, an 'agency' is a whole set of linked procedures that work like a stage crew to change the scenery between acts while the curtain is down. Remember they are union workers — don't mess with them!

Parapraxis is remarkable, since *at the first instance of forgetting*, one signifier takes the place of another, but it does it silently. Herr takes the place of Signor and all of a sudden we can't remember Signorelli but we CAN think about HERzegovina, BOsina, BOtticelli, BOltraffio ... Then there is the story of the Turks who consult HERR docktor, who believe that when sex is over so is life, and then the life of one of Freud's ex-patients comes to an end in TRAFoi, possibly because of some love distress ... a whole cloud of relationships, each link based on a different *kind* of rule, all due to this one part of a name being removed and repurposed. I am just now writing on this subject, so thanks for bringing it up.



Parapraxis is basically metaphor, as Lacan argues in Seminar V. The 'down' of suppression creates the 'up' of the cloud of associations, and these 'float' above an 'x' that is also ?, namely things held together by a mysterious, unknown, and missing factor (Signorelli).

Not for nothing does Signorelli paint himself into his own fresco, standing just in front of the artist whose work HE has painted over. This must have struck Freud as peculiar. The artist stands OUTSIDE the painting to paint it, but all of a sudden he jumps INSIDE to say what he has done, namely DEFACE the artwork now covered by his own — a literal demonstration of parapraxis inside the cathedral of Orvieto! Too good to be true, eh?

Think of a balloon filled with water. You squeeze one part of it and the water presses out the balloon in another unpredictable spot. That's parapraxis, and parapraxis is the Unconscious. What comes out in another spot is not just a mass of weirdly connected signifiers that seem to have nothing to do with anything, but a *structure*. If you watch people in a foreign country playing a game, you may not know the game or its rules but you know it's a game; it has a binary outcome, winning or losing, with only one of each (1:1), but that ending has developed slowly, and each new move has changed the nature of the game slightly. Chess, for example, is not just one game but a game where the game itself changes ('gambits'). That's what happens in parapraxis, which is most economically written in the terms of metaphor, and which is best described as AGENCY.

We run into agency later, in Lacan's theory about discourse. It is the upper left of the quadrated field, around which turn a master signifier ('rules of the game'), a signifying chain (the gambit function), the surplus or lack that can't be defined (a - the object cause of desire), and the barred subject (the bar = constrained to play by the rules, which are always changing).

Now, would 'instance' really cover these complexities, which are not just Lacan wanting to sound enigmatic but life as we actually have to go through it, when someone takes the place of someone else, in our affections or at work, where we forget things and have to beat around the bush to remember them again, or where rivalries of all kinds 'paint over' the situation? Agency is the only idea that can cover all of the things that go into such a simple thing as forgetting a name, which lead to so many other thoughts, yet eventually circle back to the single 'instance' of forgetting. In *Vertigo*, Midge paints her face in the place of Carlotta's as a joke she thinks will make Scottie laugh but Scottie doesn't laugh. He is disgusted. How and why does this scene work? It is a fast way to prepare the audience for the *next* scene, which is much longer and must take place in zero-gravity (the vertigo theme is always present in some way). Scottie doesn't

fall for the joke, now he floats along with Madeleine.

If Hitchcock doesn't do something like this quick stupid little scene, the longer more complex scene will simply not work. People will not like the film, they will think it's too tedious. We have to have this stupid little scene, this paint-over (think of Signorelli doing the same thing!), for the whole film to work. This is why psychoanalysis tells us important things about how things work in real life. Effectiveness works in a different kind of space time, the space time of agency. This is what Žižek means when he uses the expression 'reality of the virtual' instead of the euclidean 'virtual reality'. We are obsessed with how things are made to appear but they really aren't that way; we should instead look at how virtual relations are established to make things Real, i. e. in relation to the unconscious, which is not a storehouse but more like a train station or train yard, where things are re-routed (Freud: *Bahnlungen*, 'networks').

Long digression, eh? I want to get you to the point where you see the beauty of Lacan's thinking so that you acquire the patience of his funny way of talking. you need to sympathize with his need to say something correctly. He chooses particular words, many of them hard to translate into English, so *instance* has a sense in French that English lacks, so we have to use agency to cover all the bases. the problem all of us have is that if you stop reading at a point and say 'what does this mean' you almost always get frustrated. How can you ask what the master signifier means when its function is to mean nothing! It is the essence of *kenosis*, and *kenosis* has been going on for millenia, so we know all about it if we have been paying attention to things. So when Jesus kneels down to doodle on the floor of the temple, *katagraphēin*, we know this is a way of emptying out and, lo and behold, the Sanhedron who had come to frame him into a forced choice (the woman must die or you must misquote the law, and then we throw you in jail) suddenly leave the room. A *quick* gesture that is *effective*. An *agency* that is virtual!

Once you jump into the pool the water will not be chilly.

I must work on the *Vertigo* paper today ... thanks for getting me started.

best, don

boundary language • **institute for psychoanalytic study of architecture**

[Quoted text hidden]