

WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT SHIT

Reversed predication is a technique in visual arts, narrative, architecture, magic, and other fields where the "frame" (generic term for the many apparatuses designed to construct points of view) is inverted or "re-engineered" to bring into question the diagetic illusion of representation. "Reversal" can involve a variety of metonymical actions: names for qualities, insides for outsides, shadows (souls) for living beings, etc. The term, reversed predication, is barely known, but its actions and effects are critical and central in discourse theory and discourse "personification," where the whole system of four Lacanian forms of discourse are engaged in a process of "occultation" of a message that "signalizes" within a semiotic system (dreams, advertising, politics, etc.).

Recycling the discourse model back to the source, reversed predication, we have a reinforced version that sets up a special global and philosophical function for the gap (flip, fold, negative, etc.). This is often the key feature of popular culture narratives that allows us to collate works that have previously demonstrated no common features — i.e. to compare Hitchcock's *Vertigo* to his *Rear Window*, or to, as in Crista's case, see how the real estate industry converts "home" to the pure commodity, anxiety.

The gap appears within the Lacanian lexicon as the "sinthom," the sign that "stands out" by virtue of its resistance or refusal to "stand within" any set of signifiers. Thus the sinthom has a phallic (\emptyset) function that, operating in the negative range ($-\emptyset$) fills out the requirements for the various "partial objects" Lacan identifies with the stages of psychic development: the breast, feces, the gaze, the voice. Along these lines, the gap may be considered through its *material conditions* if we allow that reversed predication involves, at the same time the container/contained relationship is reversed-obverted (*extimité*), a shift of the *agalma* (the thing in the subject, defined by the Other, that is "more in the subject than the subject him/herself) from the unconscious to the level of symbolic articulation. In effect, the *agalma* is materialized, just as discourse is converted into the characters of a play (Žižek's example: *Parisfal*).

Agalma constitutes something new at the level of methodology. It is possible to work backwards from the instance of materialization, i.e. to show how material cause (the jewel in *Vertigo*, for example) "signalizes" — in contrast to direct, conventional "signaling," this constitutes an acousmatic sign of psychoanalytic Truth — the resonant structure of the unconscious, but without the restrictions usually applied to psychoanalytic Truth, i.e. that it is the key to the history of the individual at the level of the clinical symptom. In keeping with the spirit of *extimité*, signaling in instances of materialization amounts to the creation of a public domain for the unconscious, extending the idea that the individual already creates his/her unconscious through material interaction with an "exterior" to the corollary of this act, i.e. that this exterior is also "public," although its perception as public depends on *resonance* rather than ideological management of the points of view. Ideologically, points of view are constructed through framing techniques that manage the \emptyset as a " \emptyset function" in the sense of connecting static frames of a film strip to produce the illusion of live action. Resonance constitutes the "unconscious" dimension of this structuring, and analysis of it constitutes a "psychoanalytic" (discourse) approach to what is normally called content analysis.

The advantage of engaging the unconscious as a public domain is that the partial objects play material roles that can be charted, mapped, and "atlased" — taking seriously the distinction between the vertical atlas's authoritarian (= ideological) zenith and the sinthom's necessarily "horizontal" status — i.e. it operates within materiality at the level of material — i.e. shit remains shit, it is not thematized from a hypothetical neutral point of view. There is no theory that is not theoretical; no theory that is free from presuppositions that retroactively and recursively interact with the theoretical content. The partial object, however, tells the story. It is the detail — the "demark" in Deleuze's apocethary of alchemical substances — that "tells the tale" (Frasconi).

"Stochastic resonance" leads us to an untested range of issues involving the "sorites": predications that have been extended through a process of *delay*, which has afforded them the power to conceal/reveal contents ("occultation"; the phi-function; *poché*). The calculus of George Spencer-Brown, used by mathematicians to model feedback in circuits, points to the curious theme of "golden ratios" evident at the level of the spiral (Fibonacci number) but, at the level of "sigma values" (Cecil Balmond), shows how number systems produce surpluses that are also lacks (i.e. the number 9). Other cultures have recognized this for a long time, i.e. systems, such as the Armenian, that count without the benefit of a zero. Artists such as Jasper Johns play games with "registers" (places) constructed to provide surplus positions within a number sequence that stochastically shake out the number nine as a characteristic of quadration (the corners of the symbolic field) and center, while charging the array of numbers with a striated "woof" and an odd-even "warp." The number 9's capabilities for palindrome reversals of its products (18/81, 27/72, 36/63, 45/54) and other oddities

have been recognized and, apparently, employed in narrative designs, such as Poe's integration of the rules of Morra, the game of left and right hands, in the construction of pocket spaces both literally and figuratively present in the narrative of "The Purloined Letter."

Seemingly esoteric examples taken from artists and fiction writers understates the situation of the commonplace role played by reversed predication and the materialization of agalma. In popular culture, politics, public relations propaganda, etc. the *pochés* of Johns and Poe are the money-makers. Reversed predication appears in conceptualizations of markets, as the case of Anheuser-Busch's testing of its new product, "Ultra Amber Michelob." The public does express a *preference in taste* for a beer described as a "dark light beer" over a "light dark beer," despite the fact that the taste tests put forward one and the same beer. Isolation of reversed predication as a factor again points to the *materialization of the gap*, and the identity of this materialization as "agalma." The strong version of this theory states that material experience of the world is causally calibrated by the function of agalma, a "nothing," that though negative effects framing of what is then taken to be reality (i.e. "the framed"). Agalma is the "efficient cause" in Aristotle's system, but it relates efficient cause to the "stochastic" operation of what Aristotle identified with *automaton* — the chance basis of the natural world.

The agalma covers the distance imagined to separate the natural and human world. It is a "unified theory" in that the unconscious, once established as the stochastic basis of the Lacanian Real, is integrated within the system of discourses (i.e. "thought," as that which both exceeds and falls short of language's ability to designate), although a cyclic order must terminate at the intersection of psychoanalytic discourse with the discourse of the master, i.e. the Other. This Other must be allowed its full material palette, i.e. we find it most clearly represents in works of art, architecture, literature, etc. In these we find that there are four fundamental forms of fantasy that construct (= "dimensionalize") the unconscious's final defense against confrontation with the Real. These four forms might be regarded as trial exceptions to the idea that two things can't be in the same place at the same time, played out in the media of time, space, thought, and mastery. (The work of René Girard on rivalry comes to mind.)

Where the agalma is the "missing thing that was never really possessed in the first place," its role in the "atlas" is clear: it can be a fall or a restoration, a burial or a resurrection, a *fare casino* ("getting into the shit," "saturation") or a rescue from the shit (*kenosis*). In dreams of floating/flying, dreamers consistently point to the most striking sensation: the loss of anxiety. Whether the system aims to create loss or gain, anxiety must be considered the fuel of agalma, the stuff that keeps the (stochastic) engine of *automaton* running. As with Einstein's stronger version of his theory of Relativity, it moves from seeing curvature in specific instances to considering it as a property of the entire field: space itself is curved. (Note that the move from the specific to the general theory of Relativity is itself a case of reversed predication!)



With Mladen Dolar's insistence that ideological interpellation leaves a remainder, and that this remainder "belongs to psychoanalysis," and the medium of this remainder is "love," we must add that his point was made by George Herriman in the comic strip, *Krazy Kat*, almost 100 years before. There, a cat ("Kat"), a mouse ("Ignatz"), and a dog (the policeman, "Officer Pup") play out the possibilities of a stochastic field whose acts and actors are "Krazy." In effect, the anxiety which can be removed or redoubled with reversed predication produces both shit and redemption, the shit appearing in the form of the brick tossed by the mouse at the head of the Kat, a ballistic that produces the unexpected results of love, *via* a complex and very psychoanalytical history that tells a Lacanian tale: failed mastery, hysterical wandering, a "scholastic" contemporary domain imagined somewhere in the American south-west, and the sinthomatic instances of the thrown brick, resulting in anamnestic

knowledge, *kenosis*, restoring, albeit in the negative, the original act of the slave-mouse's love letter, tossed thousands of years ago, arriving finally at its destination (to prove another Lacanian dictum). In other words, "shit happens."

Donald Kunze, March 28, 2013