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pre-Thanksgiving newsletter

1 message



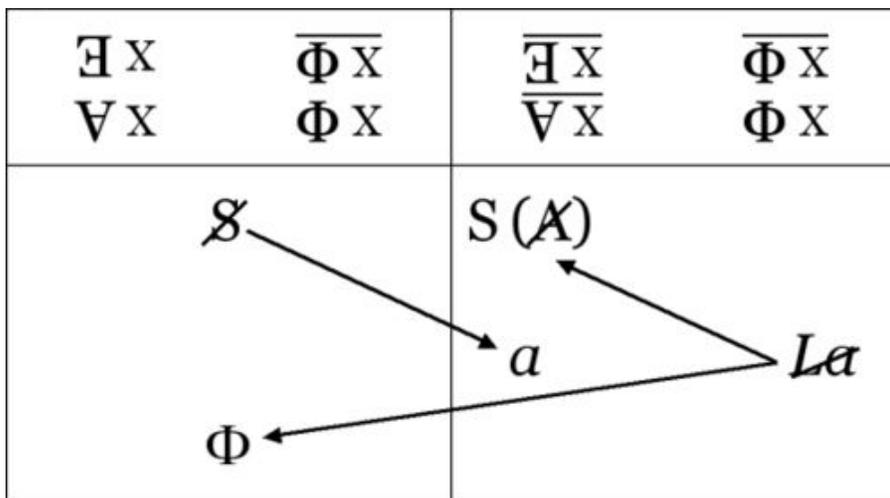
Metalepsis Seminar / Special Thanksgiving Issue

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SO, THIS IS LOVE?

METALEPSIS SEMINARIANS, 9-ERS, AND AUXILIARY MEMBERS:

Brilliant conversation on the subject of sexuation and love can be exhausting, especially when you throw Lacan's impossibly complex-looking table of gender differences into the mix.



It's really the case that if you Google "sexuation negation" [you get this](#). Virginia Tech. really does owe me a lot more money for this gig!

The rule that "all those who choose to call themselves men" must obey is the complete surrender to the symbolic, a rule generating laws that must be obeyed by "all but one exception" (the "Big Daddy" figure), who "keeps the Real for himself." Those "who choose to call themselves women" are not-all, and there are no exceptions. But, there is some traveling in this diagram! The cancellation of the "The" (La) of The Woman (Lacan's scandalous dictum "The Woman does not exist!") underwrites the phallic law (σ) to which all men are subject. My terse and not-always-that-helpful essay on "Negation, Fathers, and Sexuation" tries to adjust this to [Ginnie Lemoine's wonderful essay](#) on sexuation. Lemoine was a friend of Nicole Loraux, I think. *The Divided City* tells the story of two Athens existing side by side, but only one is noticed by archeologists and anthropologists who, like Vernant, forget about Hermes' many-sided personality and ability to *steal*, both love and distances.

The prytaneion stole the fire of Hestia, with the usual tragic result of all ideologies, it forced men to say ridiculous things about women (cf. Socrates' reminiscence of Diotima in his speech at the Symposium). I rest my case, temporarily.

• true love

Once in a while it becomes possible to see several important points at once. We are at just such a moment with the crossed-out "La" — the veiled woman. In *Alcestis* this is not just to hold off on the punch-line of the joke Herakles is playing on Admetus, it is the permanent bond between the mothers and daughters "wedded to the flame" where the *manes* (household gods = the domestic interior as the first religion). The veil, the invisible, the *delay*. Is there a timing of the "end of time," where space closes down operations, just as there is a delay in timing that opens up space with the oral, anal, and phallic "objects of desire"?

The aim, to repeat this important point, is to replace the static discourse that fixes gendering along the lines set up by religious fundamentalism and the tea party and bring it into every transaction, at every scale, in every guise. Although we cannot fully understand what Mladen Dolar says (apparently!) about love's combination of fate and chance, we *can* see that eros is radically composite, that it does things with time and space.

In conversations after our seminar, I was reminded of the strange evidence of psychology experiments using "forced perspective scenery" such as that employed at the [Teatro Olimpico](#), where space elements are constructed around a shorter vanishing point. The weird thing in experiments using such forced perspective scenery is that the usual effect — where a figure walking toward the vanishing point seems to get larger — doesn't work if the observer and the observed are actually in love!

A test for love! — and one based on Renaissance architecture to boot! HOW WILD IS THIS?

• [La Nozze de Figaro, Act 4 Finale](#)

In this magnificent musical rendition of the conclusion of *Alcestis*, where King Admetus is tricked into breaking his oath to his self-sacrificing wife by accepting a veiled bride, only to discover that the gift is his resurrected wife. Mozart saves us some trouble by having the count arrange a meeting in a dark garden (this production doesn't handle this aspect) with Susanna, the servant he wants to seduce; but Susanna has engineered a switch with the Contessa. What Mozart wants to get to is 16 measures of infinitely sweet cascading forgiveness, sung by the Contessa after the Count pleads for mercy. Note that the count *cannot look at his wife* until she "elevates" him. 16 "measures" is all it takes!

As Isac Dinesen puts it in [Babette's Feast](#), "mercy and truth have kissed." For your Thanksgiving Day experience, take a look at this clip, where General Lorens Löwenhielm quotes loosely Psalm 85, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." If you rent this film do not get the American English dubbing that gives a sappy Christian interpretation to this. It's a speech that's all about art and its relation to love. There is a [clip in Danish](#) with subtitles that you can watch.

The story is about delayed payments of debts, and forgiveness of broken promises.

Pyramus and Thisbe ... so the end of life (and love) is also about *timing*, just like the beginning of life with the three drives!!! Here's where Lacan's crazy diagram starts to make sense. The *distances* are predicated by acousmatic promises and converted by false signs (the bloody scarf that convinces Pyramus that Thisbe has been killed by a wild animal). If only they had both been "on time"!

If you find any consolation in Lorens Löwenhielm's gentle and moving speech, you may consider yourself to have resolved the matter of chance and necessity, which apart do not make any sense but, when invited to "kiss" in an act of mercy and truth, such as found at the end of *Nozze di Figaro* and *Alcestis*, give us something to hope for, and an "acousmatic" guide to our designs.

Acousmatic means many things but all roads lead back to the "inner voice" idea, which can be the basis of a password that allows some things to slip through impossible walls, voids, and other barriers — jus' like a woman! The woman who "does not exist" is Odysseus when he decides he must be called "Nobody" to be able to make good on the final leg of his escape plan. Look closely. He renounces the "name of the Father," he exercises the free subjectivity of denied identity. He, like the Count in *Nozze di Figaro*, renounces his claims to

his inheritance.

Karima Benbeh whisper-sang to me her favorite poem, *Demain dès l'Aube* by Victor Hugo, a promise of reunion with his beloved-demented daughter.

Demain, dès l'aube, à l'heure où blanchit la campagne,
Je partirai. Vois-tu, je sais que tu m'attends.
J'irai par la forêt, j'irai par la montagne.
Je ne puis demeurer loin de toi plus longtemps.

Je marcherai les yeux fixés sur mes pensées,
Sans rien voir au dehors, sans entendre aucun bruit,
Seul, inconnu, le dos courbé, les mains croisées,
Triste, et le jour pour moi sera comme la nuit.

Je ne regarderai ni l'or du soir qui tombe,
Ni les voiles au loin descendant vers Harfleur,
Et quand j'arriverai, je mettrai sur ta tombe
Un bouquet de houx vert et de bruyère en fleur.

(Watch out — there are some really horrible translations of this on the web!)

So, if tomorrow, when dawn whitens the landscape, we decide to leave to join truth with mercy, let's make sure we have a good breakfast beforehand! To you all on this Thanksgiving occasion, I thank *YOU* for an engaging and productive discussion of these important matters.

best wishes, hugs and kisses, for you all — happy Thanksgiving!



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