

newsletter • september 12 • seminar metalepsis

The third session of the metalepsis seminar (7pm Thursday) must make up for some time lost in playing with Möbius bands and laughing at our own jokes. The aim of metalepsis is to enable us to act meaningfully, decisively, and courageously (cf. the three magical being in *The Wizard of Oz*), so that we may move from simple negation to renunciation (of ideology) and foreclosure (of its toxic manifestations). This is done first through words, the basis of theory, which gains us the advantage not so much of gnosis (the sensation of knowledge as absolute) but of kenosis, a “knowing without knowing.” The Essenes practiced this, so did Lurianic mystics, so did the Orphics and their Renaissance wannabe’s. We can, too, with a little help from our “revisionary ratios” (askesis, dæmon, tesserae, clinamen, apophrades, and kenosis proper). These are the chapter titles in the Book of Metalepsis, surely a *grimoire* if there ever was one! “Give, sympathize, and control.” Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata (what said the thunder).



What more obvious example of reversed predication (and, hence, metalepsis) can be found than in the common occurrence of “infill,” which appropriates space intended to remain as a void to fill with utilitas and firmitas to the heart’s content? The amphitheater of Arles suffered such re-purposing, only to be again re-purposed as a modern tourist attraction and sports facility. Who can say which fate was the real one? Sometimes a mold is made in the negative to cast in the positive, but we know one thing: the jig preserves the work in a way that defies simple analysis.

*On the doors the Death of Androgeos: then the Athenians,
Crecrops’s descendants, commanded, sadly, to pay annual tribute
of seven of their sons: there the urn stands with the lots drawn.
Facing it, rising from the sea, the Cretan land is depicted:
and here the bull’s savage passion, Pasiphae’s
secret union, and the Minotaur, hybrid offspring,
that mixture of species, proof of unnatural relations:
the artwork here is that palace, and its inextricable maze:
and yet Daedalus himself, pitying the noble princess
Ariadne’s love, unravelled the deceptive tangle of corridors,
guiding Theseus’s blind footsteps with the clue of thread.
You’d have shared largely in such a work, Icarus, if grief
had allowed, he’d twice attempted to fashion your fate
in gold, twice your father’s hands fell. Eyes would have read
the whole continuously, if Achetes had not arrived
from his errand, with Deiphobe, Glaucus’s daughter,
the priestess of Phoebus and Diana, who spoke to the leader:
‘This moment doesn’t require your sightseeing: it would
be better to sacrifice seven bullocks from a virgin herd,
and as many carefully chosen two-year old sheep.’*

— Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book VI

When Aeneas gets to Cumæ to consult the famous Sybil there, the experience is given the form of a descent into the underworld, a “katabsis” (κατάβασις). But, before Aeneas can get on with his trip, he pauses to admire the gates of the Hell made and donated by Dædalus, a previous famous visitor to the shrine. These gates depict the whole of “that Minos mess,” the story of the Greek tribute of Athenian youths for sacrifice, the last-minute substitution of the white bull, the curse placed on Pasiphæ, the prosthesis Dædalus devised to allow Pasiphæ to copulate with the bull, the labyrinth subsequently required to imprison her offspring, so on and so forth. This is ekphrasis in all its glory, the planting of a work of art inside a work of art, a momentary shift of temporality and creation of a new kind of space from the tick-thinness of the entry doors. Isn’t this also the LAMELLA, the famous membrane described by Lacan is the seat of consciousness, the intersection of death and life by an organ that becomes the center of the mind? You be the judge.



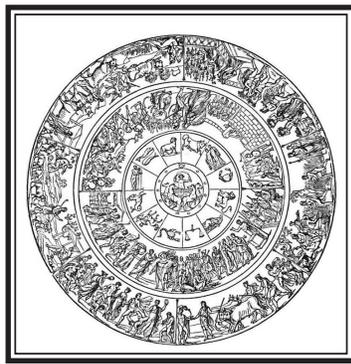
Menu

(main ideas of the seminar, check list)

- **reversed predication**
- double inscription
- **the uncanny**
- obversion/extimity
- **diegesis/mimesis**
- the goldfish paradox
- liminality, margins, Janus
- emergence
- **lamella, "flesh of the world"**
- partial objects
- death drive from Freud to Lacan
- four forms of discourse
- **thinker as idiot**
- horizontal atlas
- **irony of the master-slave**
- signification through absence
- **stochastic resonance**
- **the acousmatic voice**
- chiasitic ciphers
- *venustas vs. utilitas/firmitas*
- dissensus vs. consensus
- sites of exception
- **the causal chain**
- Lucretian flow space
- detached virtuality
- forms of the fantastic
- Tower of Babel, Garden of Eden
- memory theaters, various
- **procédé (Roussel)**
- the Zairja (ذرياز)
- Lacanian Ouija board
- the gaze, magic, body loading
- toilet designs, various
- Surrealist gardens, various
- sexuation of space
- civic space as exception
- sustainability and ideology
- calculus of form, variants
- sorites, puzzles, mystery stories
- the Aleph (آلف, אָלף)
- travel dysfunctions
- *objets petit a*
- pleasure vs enjoyment
- **the ideological subject**
- interpellation/interpolation
- **love, daemon, eros**
- **apophrades**
- **kenosis**
- **tessera**
- **askesis**
- cosmogram
- propriocept
- **stereognosis**
- **ekphrasis**



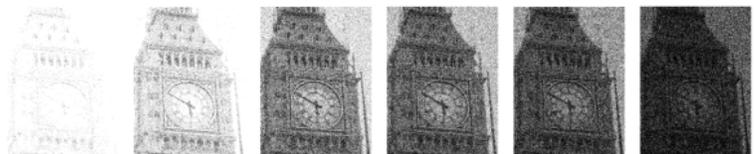
Image of the week: The "Möbius blocks," allowing the idea of mentally constructing the famous band one bit at a time, bonus points to Jewish players who find the star of David displayed (accidentally?) within the "space" left over.



THE CIRCLE-IN-THE-SQUARE OF THE WEEK (which has become the accidental theme of this part of the newsletter) belongs to the "shield of Achilles," a classic example of ekphrasis found in Homer's *Illiad*, the shield that Achilles uses in his fight with Hector, famously described in a passage in Book 18, lines 478–608. Just to give you an idea of how ekphrasis (as a "work of art described in detail within another work of art") can use metalepsis to enrich the potentiality of narration, the shield displays (in the central regions), the Earth, sky and sea, the sun, the moon and the constellations, "two beautiful cities full of people": in one a wedding and a law case are taking place; the other city is besieged by one feuding army and the shield shows an ambush and a battle; field being ploughed for the third time (more about this later); a king's estate where the harvest is being reaped; a vineyard with grape pickers; cattle; sheep; a dance; and, finally, the great cosmos-encircling streak of Okeanos. The effect of the shield as ekphrasis is the same as Borges famous "Aleph," the small aperture through which an entire universe is set a-streaming. Do not underestimate the importance or depth of meaning of this small opening. It is nothing less than the gap (δ) left behind by the desiring Other, in Her retreat (askesis) from subjective demand, something that gives rise to the Impossible-Real of partial objects, such as the gaze and acousmatic voice, bearers of the "news from nowhere" that is Eros. Don't believe me? Ask our resident poet, Luc Phinney.

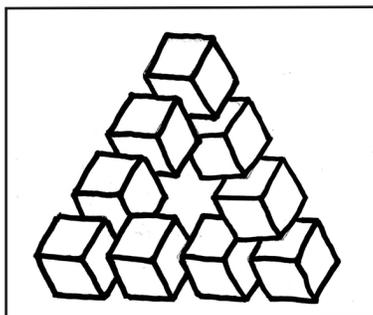


original



faint image with progressive additions of white noise

Getting serious about stochastic resonance means creating a spot where the ideas of "automaton," the acousmatic voice, the (Lacanian) idea of the password, the "rebus" quality of the terms by which the unconscious communicates with consciousness ("signalizing"), the phallic nature of the gap between externalized subjective demand and the enigmatic Ché Vuoi? of the Other all come together. Without mincing words, this is the place where neurophysics comes to the aid of philosophy, offering the evidence of an "emergence" within nature that serves the very pragmatic strategies of survival. We don't need too much more information to get to comparing the forms of aphasia, contiguity dysfunction and semblance dysfunction — also indisputable evidence from "the clinic" — to counter the characterization-dependent approaches of contemporary phenomenology and parametrics, which claim to have access to the primary constructs of a naturalism. Stochastic resonance, the reinforcing of a weak signal by white noise is nothing less than the recombination of automaton with tuchē, human affordance. In this field of (delayed) predication, everything is possible.



Tonight's Presentation

september 12, 2013

emergence

what lies within the secrets of the "small passage" that seems to offer us the keys to desire? Is this the clinical evidence we need to explain ("splain") how the Other's "ché vuoi?" converts space into ideological territory?

stochastic resonance

In case you don't know all of your partial objects yet, get ready; acousmatics is the way to open up this complex subject. How can you be in two places at once? In order to see how David Lynch thought of *Lost Highway*, with its mysterious opening scenes, tune in.

polythetic thinking

The point of it all, it must be said, is not to see metalepsis as just one more theme among others, from which one is forced to choose an adequate vehicle for a thesis or dissertation. Rather metalepsis is about how ideas fit together, how they can be deployed for the sake of the imagination. "Polythetic" thinking opposes "monothetic" or linear rationale, in the same way that exception works counter to ideology. Again, tune in!

What's the point of being an idiot if you can't say how to operationalize your advantage. For this you must know something about metalepsis and employ the few but complex terms accurately. The "how" of the seminar involves a certain technical facility, although the point is to renounce the usual models of mastery that dominate graduate education today.

As to the "why," we must ground our inquiry in the notion of personal and personalized satisfaction, a relation with Eros as dæmon that is not just a romantic retreat into nostalgia of the Jungianized past. In short, the why is that "there is work to be done," and only those who have renounced the ideology of representative thinking can foreclose its unrealities.

Collect your thoughts systematically; do not allow yourself the false luxury of incompleteness. Relate to a system (of your own invention) but remember, there were others ...

the seminar is unofficially open to casual visitors

<http://art3idea.psu.edu/metalepsis>

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