

Metalepsis Seminar • Virtual Session 17

[metalepsis seminar](#) / WAAC•PSU / 23 April 2014

Claudio Sgarbi on true love; commentary by Kunze; cataleptic conclusions

METALEPSIS SEMINARIANS, 9-ERS, AUXILIARY MEMBERS, and OCCASIONAL GUESTS



Marc Cros (Jean Rochefort), the model Mercé (Alda Folch), and the sculpture in the 2012 film, *The Artist and the Model*.

* claudio sgarbi says hello and ...

A letter to all of us from Claudio Sgarbi:

I am trying to comprehend. I am guided by the desire to comprehend. To comprehend what? To comprehend the limits, the boundaries, the frontiers where the space of our architecture (the architecture of our friendship) can exist. So I try to make it real – this “trying,” being the act I perform constantly in my work throughout the time I constantly invent to make sense ... because “the act” is constantly delayed, postponed. One of the major obstacles in this act, that Don is proposing to consider as the ground of our interaction, is the concept of identity. I will try to tell you what I can think about it in another occasion. So I have to leave this obstacle unquestioned now as a big black hole.

I see many important spaces of interaction and I am so happy to share this architectural space with you, friends.

The most outstanding space of interaction that is relevant for addressing some of the limits of our architectural space is the e-ros-e. I am deeply into your melalepsis seminars. I cannot stop venturing into their reiterated *mise en abyme* (or “unlimited semiosis”).

To comprehend the architectural space of e-ros-e is a fantastic endeavour. Eros, sex, libido, love, desire and all their declinations in any possible languages and discourses and images, creates a territory for the imagination that is a pleasure to get lost into. As someone as suggested philosophy is not “the love of wisdom” but **the wisdom of love**. But we know that *philia* is not just love and *sophia* is not just wisdom. Let’s stop for a moment on one of the concerns of the humanistic thought — the distance that should exist between pleasure and lust. To ground this issue in the humanistic thoughts (those writings to be read aloud – this is what the early treatises were about) on architecture we can refer both to Alberti and Filarete. I remember the dialogue in Filarete where the limit between the two (pleasure and lust) is set forth. The danger is *voluptas*. I translate it as “lust”. You can build your ideal city out of necessity (a controlled pleasurable desire) a kind of pleasure/desire/libido that has an end in the architect/mother/client/father to give birth to architecture.... – Where is the *jouissance* here?? To go beyond the pleasure principle?; but we should avoid falling into the traps of unbounded passion (desire for desire – libido – lust). Very correctly Don and Žižek are pointing out that there is a very much questionable, very much misleading ideal middle

ground. The humanists – and we are still into that frame of mind – insisted on the ideal middle ground. All their Aristotelian golden means.....drive us directly into our ideological fake equilibriums, misleading harmonies and other ethical traps. The *eros* that is supposed to have its logic within itself can be represented by the architectural design of Wittgenstein house (my paradigm in this sense). The *eros* that is supposed to have its logic within itself can be represented by the architectural design of Wittgenstein house (my paradigm in this sense). **The *eros* that degenerates into *voluptas* can be represented by Scarpa's Brion Cementary.**

The major problem: a completely misleading mistake made by Freud's interpreters is that *eros* has its end within itself. When I stop sucking the milk from the breast to feed my stomach and I begin to suck into the void just for the pleasure of sucking, there, in that very moment, the libido arises. This is an absolute disaster. I believe this is wrong. (The distance between pleasure and lust is the same that exists between knowledge and judgement (critique)).

What do I propose for our fantastic group of friends: not a middle, politically correct ground but a reversible *lapsus* (slip of hand, more than a slip of tongue – a figure of facture more than a figure of speech) meta/katalepsis. I am interested in the *leptis* of the meta/kata/upo/ana-leptis. There was a magic ritual in the sacrifice that suggested that a magic re-composition of the relics of the sacrificed body could reanimate the dead body. After killing the bull and after having eaten its flesh it is possible to bring back the bull into life. The *jouissance* is a reversible fall/stumble transgressing the prohibitions imposed upon enjoyment beyond the pleasure principle. Beyond desirable necessity, beyond reasonable libido, beyond *voluptas* there is this condition of unpredictable pleasure *or* pain.

The metalepsis and its many instants of kataleptis (because every instant I consider the arrow of the unlimited semiosis I found a kataleptic stillness) can create the condition of open reversibility, the embodied meaning of turbulence made of countless intervals of delay. The permanence of the ephemeral.

Now I feel ready to think about e-ros-e. But I am not sure you are on the labyrinthine line. I am not sure I am either.



Dina (Ronit Elkabetz) and Tawfiq Zacharya (Sasson Gabai) in *The Band's Visit* (2007)

* the difference between pleasure and lust

Thank the gods of love, perhaps, for Freud's and Lacan's good sense to talk about pleasure (*jouissance*) and lust (desire, from the more "neutral" term, *Lust*). The minor complication is that *demande* in French is quite mild — "to ask for something." In German, *Urlust* means a primal desire, so there is a range, but nothing like the English "lust," which seems to be reserved for raw and usually abusive passion.

Jouissance is the critical pivotal term. It ordinarily designates sexual pleasure, the crisis of climax. About this we know little more than what Tiresius, the blind bi-sexual poet, said, that men know nothing about how much women enjoy. This "know-nothing" disadvantage of men goes further. It is the inability of those who are gendered as men (with Lacan, everyone can choose) to understand the logic of the not-all, which in language is the *mi-dire*. The either-or of male gendering rules, where symbolic castration (agreeing to be misidentified within the network of symbolic relationships, to be a "sign of one's self") is a condition of belonging, cannot comprehend the idea of exception that is true for all "who choose to call themselves

women." Note: Lacan was one who "wished to call himself a woman," but even he said it was not that easy! Of course he did not say all there was to say about it.

The gendering choice is significant, for it is the choice between SPEAKING and BEING that constitutes the first radical choice of subjectivity. At the mirror stage, we are confronted with a version of ourselves that is superior. It stands within the symbolic because of an act within the imaginary — a seemingly perfect "lock." It makes us realize we have been inadequate "all along," but we apply this shame/lack retroactively. Poor little us, standing before that superior image! Poor little us, having to choose misrecognition as that image in order to speak, to be a subject! What if, however, there is an end to the chain of signifiers this forced choice has permitted. What if, at the end of things (we are at an ecological and economic and social end that makes it easy to think about this!) we are given a chance to go back?

Lacan's wife in the 1940s occupation of Paris was Jewish. Knowing the dangers, he decided to act boldly. He simply walked in to the office of the German Gestapo and asked to see her file. They brought it out, he took it, and turned around and walked out. No one pursued him. He got away with it. This kind of abduction from ideology is a model for what happens in architecture's "late theory" period. We must go in, ask for the file, and march out. We need to take what is ours, what is in danger. What is ours is truth, or — with more dire consequences — the TRUE. Not true facts, that is, but the big picture. Alireza Moharar has given us an [account of Dirac's understanding of what he had to do in physics](#), his equation dealing with time outside of time. Further, he has pointed out that Einstein had become aware that the more fantastic and unbelievable something was, the more true it was theoretically.

Where do we find such a TRUE? We find those who have sought it, the "lovers of truth" who are, as Claudio has pointed out, loved BY the true. Even in this situation, reversed predication comes to help us out. It will be the gap between loving and being loved that we find the TRUE, and in the process we will, like those in World War I who survived by being in the "no man's land," we will be nobodies. We will be "less than nothing." We know the lovers because they are misunderstood: Vico, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Poe, Nabokov ... the misunderstanding continually regenerates itself with every new generation of idiot-theorists. We can be "theorists as idiots" however, to reverse that predication. Lovers are natural fools, the Romans equated falling in love with having your head "worn down" by phallic pleasure. This produces symptoms (listlessness, foolishness, rashness) but we need the "fourth ring" of the *sinthome* to avoid the body from being the hysteric body of phallic love. The fourth ring is the magic ring we use to "go back," to "take back our dossier from the mirror stage."

Berrin Terim has been looking for an "architectural case study" to talk about the ugly, and I suggested a mediocre 1945 film, [The Enchanted Cottage](#).

From Wikipedia: When socialite Army Air Force pilot Oliver Bradford (Robert Young) is disfigured by war wounds, he hides from his family, including his mother and fiancée and decides to live in seclusion in the seaside New England cottage he'd rented from its current owner, Mrs. Minnett, for his originally planned honeymoon. Laura Pennington (Dorothy McGuire) is a shy, homely maid who has hired on as the cottage's caretaker. Oliver and Laura gradually fall in love and discover that their feelings for each other have mysteriously transformed them. He appears handsome to her, and she seems beautiful to him. This "transformation" is perceived only by the two lovers (and the audience). Laura believes that the cottage is "enchanted" because it was once rented to honeymoon couples, and in time the widowed Mrs. Minnett reveals the true story behind the cottage's enchantment legend.

The magic is the cover story, it is the buffer between the unbelieving public and the script-writer's idea. The real magician of course does not need the term "magic." He/she believes in effectiveness — knowledge that the trick works and will work for everyone. This is our *sinthome*. We know it does a repair job, it finds the TRUE, it walks out of the Gestapo office of the mirror stage with the dossier of the loved one. The subject does not get an identity — this is an important point — but rather he/she gets a relationship to Diana (according to Vico). The meaning of Actæon has been radically distorted by those who read the myth literally. Actæon has seen the *haram* of Diana, and it has transformed him. He does not respond in a phallic way, i.e. he does not get an erection and become a would-be lover, a rapist. He *does not lust*. Rather, he converts *jouissance* as a possibility, always involving misrecognitions of the lovers of each other, into *jouis*-sense. His head grows antlers. The sky becomes his night-cap, the stars become his thoughts. He lives in the "houses of heaven," the signs of the zodiac, because he finds the truth is "out there."

The enchanted cottage involves seeing the TRUE that lies like a pulsing cosmogram within the ordinary parts of a building. In Žižek's film, *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, he tells the story about a man who discovered glasses that would reveal the ideological message concealed within ordinary things. Seeing the

"emperor without his clothes" is a crude version of what happens with the sinthome. We identify the folder we need to take back. It has been put in the form of the forced choice, the demands of the Big Other. We say simply, "the Big Other does not exist." For example, Berrin can say that the conventional "requirement" (we find it in every graduate program) to include an "architectural case study" does not exist. The absurdity and ideology of this requirement is clear. We do not have theory that can be understood outside of architecture and then "applied" to examine interior contents. There is no "demonstration" of theoretical truth. It is revealed, given to us, in the process of uncovering beauty. The enchanted cottage is our *j'ouï*-sense because we see what others can't see, we see a cosmogram that, like Actæon's horns, transmits directly into idea, in the highest sense of that Greek word. This realization allows us to talk not about a "case study" but rather about a parody of the desire to do a case study, the foolishness of those who see themselves transformed when "in reality" they are still just miserable deformed and ugly. This is holy folly, it is the power of the fool, which in ancient times (Enid Welsford, *The Fool*) allowed fools to levitate, vanish, and pronounce wise truths.

The case study does not exist in the same way the sexual relationship does not exist. There can be no difference detected between theory and practice if the presumption is that "theory explains or informs practice." With difference, however, there is a relationship, and like the sexual relation the true of theory is bound up with the question of love and sex. We know the book that tried to say this first, we have to see if it did a good job, but we also have to stay true to our TRUE, our desire for relationship outside of the forced choice of ideology.



the non-couple couple, Scottie (Jimmy Stewart) and Judy/Madeleine (Kim Novak), in *Vertigo* (1958)

* what's catalepsy got to do with it?

The horror of the 18c. and 19c. was being buried alive. I.e. looking to be dead while being fully conscious and aware, only to be stuffed inside a coffin and smothered in some last few moments of terror. But, catalepsy is more than this, so we use "catalepsy" in the same way we use "metalepsy," to designate a broad range of things. Žižek cited the studies of muscle action that precedes brain recognition. Our minds in some cases at least are "not in charge." The act comes first and then the recognition. Any concert pianist might tell you that thinking about a piece during performance can mess up the fingers. One has to stay detached, listening to oneself play, "at a distance."

There are some works of art where everything that really "happens" happens in the last few minutes or seconds. Such is the case with *The Artist and the Model* (2012) with the aged but still masterful French actor Jean Rochefort. Again, Wikipedia:

In the summer of 1943 in the occupied France, a famous sculptor, tired of life, finds a desire to return to work with the arrival of a young Spanish woman who has escaped from a refugee camp and becomes his muse.

The film begins with a discussion about the value of work (sketches, studies, trials) as trash, but trash that the artist does not wish to throw away or organize but allow to litter the studio. At the same time, there is a discussion of nudity, how the artist's access to the model's *haram* ("that of the woman which should not be

Mercy and truth have met together. Righteousness and bliss shall kiss one another. Man, in his weakness and shortsightedness believes he must make choices in this life. He trembles at the risks he takes. We do know fear. But no. Our choice is of no importance. There comes a time when our eyes are opened and we come to realize that mercy is infinite. We need only await it with confidence and receive it with gratitude. Mercy imposes no conditions. And lo! Everything we have chosen has been granted to us. And everything we rejected has also been granted. Yes, we even get back what we rejected. For mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and bliss shall kiss one another.

and, also ...

You must also know that I shall be with you every day that is granted to me from now on. Every evening I shall sit down to dine with you. Not with my body, which is of no importance, but with my soul. Because this evening I have learned, my dear, that in this beautiful world of ours, all things are possible.

Righteousness and Bliss, Mercy and Truth, Beauty and Truth — Truth in the first and fourth position (Lacan); a thousand nights ...

... and one night, where Fred and Ginger finally find their fine ... romance, this time with kisses (cf. *Swing Time*). The house of rose, the "enchanted cottage" where we finally recognize ourselves.

Don't forget the two r's, 'readin' and 'rightin'. As for 'rithmatic, don't forget to read **Alireza Moharar's essay on Paul Dirac's "[Valis Equation](#)."**

*** confabulations, the movie**

Finally the presentation I did for the *Confabulations Symposium* (WAAC, March 30–31) is on [YouTube](#). It may soon be missing the fantastic sound track if I can't find a way to pay royalties to the deserving artists, Anat Cohen and crew. I am trying to find out how to do this but, to hear the whole business, tune in and turn up the sound.

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