

Deterritorializing Desire: A Deleuzian Reading of Joyce's *Ulysses*

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“The truth is that sexuality is everywhere: the way a bureaucrat fondles his records, a judge administers justice, a businessman causes money to circulate; the way the bourgeoisie fucks the proletariat; and so on. And there is no need to resort to metaphors, any more than for the libido to go by way of metamorphoses. Hitler got the fascists sexually aroused. Flags, nations, armies, banks get a lot of people aroused.” (Anti-Oedipus 293)

Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972) is notoriously inaccessible to its initial readers. But then this is characteristic of most post-structuralist fiction and non-fiction. Philosophers like Derrida and Deleuze dismantle, as neurotic delusions, the concrete divisions that are assumed to exist between the theory and theorization, concepts and metaphors. In fact, the liberation of the form/unconscious from the constraints of the content/conscious is enacted in the very process of theorizing schizophrenia.

In *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and Deleuze and Guattari's other works, their concern is to understand how theoretical perspectives can construct or create subjectivity. This, in fact, is their critique of psychoanalysis. While the book is an intricate labyrinth of references to art, literature, anthropology, ethnography, economics, psychology, physics, aesthetics,

mathematics, philosophy etc, the first section of this paper would attempt to read schizoanalysis as a revolutionary materialist psychiatry principally influenced by Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. The second section of the paper would try to extend the scope of the theoretical work discussed by endeavoring to show how schizoanalysis can contribute to the field of literary and cultural history. In this section the paper would try to read and analyze various planes of the Ulyssean fictional universe through the lens of schizoanalysis. Also, as regards the scope of this paper, it is more comprehensive than analytical, more speculative rather than factual.

I

To begin with, one must contend with the writers' understanding of the originally psychiatric term "schizophrenia" which, for them, refers to one axis of the economic, cultural and libidinal dynamics of capital. It is a specific mode of psychic and social functioning that is produced as well as repressed by the capitalist economy. The other axis of this capitalist dynamics is represented by the term "paranoia"-when capitalism is unable to come to terms with the process of schizophrenia it has produced, it results in madness. Thus, they call it as "reactionary and fascist". (*Anti-Oedipus* 380). In other words, Deleuzian "schizophrenia" is a socio-historic construal rather than a psychological one. Moreover, the reductive, psychiatric schizophrenia is, in fact, a consequence of the incongruity between the dynamics of schizophrenia created in a capitalistic society and the dominant institutions in that society.

In optimistic scenarios the process of schizophrenia takes the shape of viable social practices and the pleasure of unbridled, free-form human interaction. This point can be further explained by using Eugene Holland's analogy of improvisational jazz. According to him, as compared to a symphony orchestra which is characterized by a rigid and

intensive specialization of roles and imposition of order from outside, in a jazz performance the group organization is less rigid and interaction among the players is more dynamic and improvisational. They use a well-known melody as their point of departure but instead of slavishly imitating it, they interpret and improvise to create a novel tune (x-xi). Thus Jazz, according to Holland, represents an interpersonal as well as social ideal where capital can be used as the source for shared production and gratification in the present as opposed to reproduction of ossified power-structures.

Capitalism, according to Deleuze and Guattari, engenders schizophrenia as fluctuation in capital flows and crests and troughs of market trends substitute the stability and blithe spirit of pre-capitalist societies. It is a kind of unlimited semiosis where fixed meanings are challenged and destabilized. In fact, schizophrenia is a tendency intrinsic to capitalism as the extension of capital- both, spatial (imperialism and globalization) and psychological (marketing) also facilitates a corresponding deracination and thawing of meanings and beliefs. Adversely then, paranoia would mean absolute systems of belief with fixed meanings and rigid structures. "Against the Oedipal and oedipalized territorialities (Family, Church, School, Nation, Party), and especially the territoriality of the individual, *Anti-Oedipus* seeks to discover the "deterritorialized" flows of desire, the flows that have not been reduced to the Oedipal codes and the neuroticized territorialities, the *desiring machines* that escape such codes as *lines of escape* leading elsewhere." (Mark Seem xvii). In Deleuzian metaphysics then, schizophrenia is a revolutionary breakthrough as opposed to a psychological breakdown in the case of psychoanalysis.

Even then one has to be wary of reading schizoanalysis facilely as, in their own words, "militating in favor of an irrationalism of desire" or perfunctorily "identifying the revolutionary with the schizo". Rather, "art and science", according to them, "cause increasingly decoded and

deterritorialized flows to circulate in the socius, flows that are perceptible to everyone, which force the social axiomatic to grow ever more complicated, to become more saturated, to the point where the scientist and the artist may be determined to rejoin an objective revolutionary situation in reaction against authoritarian designs of a State that is incompetent and above all castrating by nature." (*Anti-Oedipus* 379). Schizophrenia thus stands for the positive potentiality of capitalism – radical ingenuity, free play and revolution. But absolutising it in any way would lead to its very contrary - to paranoia, which can be any single, all-embracing system. Rather, it is the ultimate subversion of any such systematicity. According to Mark Seem, "From paranoia to schizophrenia, from fascism to revolution, from breakdowns to breakthroughs, what is investigated is the process of life flows as they oscillate from one extreme to the other, on a scale of intensity that goes from 0 ("I never asked to be born ... leave me in peace"), *the body without organs*, to the nth power ("I am all that exists, all the names in history"), *the schizophrenic process of desire*." (xvii).

II

Although the fact that the collaboration (book) emerged as a result of the events of May 1968 is inexorable in understanding its political import yet my reading would concentrate on what Michel Foucault in his Preface to the 1977 English edition calls "anti-fascism" which signifies resistance to "not only historical fascism...but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us" (xiii). According to Eugene W. Holland, "Whether swimming against or with the historical tide, schizoanalysis carries the fight against fascism and power well beyond battles with the French Communist Party or with the state, extending it into ethical, cultural, familial, personal, and libidinal domains, in addition to the economic and the political" (ix-x). It is the exploration of

the political ramifications of schizoanalysis in this extended sense that the interest of this study lies.

Deleuze's metaphysics was influenced by Spinoza's idea of a plane of immanence where all matter is made of a single substance and hence stands on the same level of existence. Joseph Valente tries to link representation and desire by venturing to offer a theoretical framework where Oedipal desire and representational meaning form two vertices of a triangular structure that forms the monad of the social organization. Both these entities are envisaged as unified and stable finalities culturally located in accordance with the third transcendental term, *phallagos* which is the governing principle that defines the social norms of truth and pleasure to be pursued (192). Deleuze and Guattari suggest preconceiving desire inversely. Generally, desire is conceptualized as re-presentational i.e a perpetual, individual lack but here, it is reformulated as a productive, ongoing "assemblage" of breaks and flows arranged across a plane of immanence whose dimensions continually rearrange themselves in accordance with developing connections and fragmentations that unfold across its surface. In this sense, desire does not perform the compensatory function of generating fantasies such as those grounding Bloom's cross-gender identifications. Rather, it pertains to creating the unimagined in the real by continually exceeding the comparatively fixed and unified systems, sexual, textual and otherwise, which it has generated. In other words, it is not a reiteration of vertical power relations but an envisioning of horizontal, diagonal and transversal possibilities.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of "assemblage" as something which is constructivist, possessing no organic structure or purpose, limit or telos. It does not exist as be-ing but rather as an incessant and multiple becoming. Deleuze construes reality not through the concept of identity (reality for him is a becoming rather than being); there is no good and evil but rather only circuits of relationships which are either favorable or unfavorable to

particular individuals, what they call as “desiring-production” and which replaces Freud’s unconscious. In short, “*There is only desire and the social, and nothing else.*” (*Anti-Oedipus* 29). Since the production of reality and society takes place through desiring-production, history cannot be comprehended as a dialectics of class struggle, but rather through the flows and blockages of desire.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, one strand of Deleuze’s enquiry is to find an explanation to the question: “Why do men fight for their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?”, based in terms of desire (29). Reading Bloom’s masochism in the light of Deleuze’s enquiry, one can infer that individuals in a society are not simply paralyzed by the larger forces of the capitalist ‘socius’, operating in a state of false consciousness but are masochistically constituted as subjects through its intensive forces and as such divided. Bloom as a masochist exemplifies his relative economic disempowerment and emasculation as a foreigner and Jew in the racist subculture of Dublin and Ireland and at the same time metonymising and diagnosing the very feminization and disempowerment of the Irish male population who were subjected to British control and projected this unmaning and debility onto him as a sacrificial victim. In the “Cyclops” episode in *Ulysses*, J.J. comments that “every jew is in a tall state of excitement, I believe, till he knows if he’s a father or a mother.” (289).

James Davies points to the Catholic tradition of ‘blood libel’ according to which Jewish blood must flow for ever on the anniversary of Christ’s death as they were responsible for it. As a result, it was held that even the Jewish male menstruates and is therefore feminine (98). In the same episode, the narrator abuses Bloom calling him “One of those mixed middlings he is. Lying up in the hotel Pisser was telling me once a month with headache like a totty with her courses” (290). This sexual ambiguity is highlighted even in the description of his act of masturbation in the “Ithaca” episode:

“Because of the surety of the sense of touch in his firm full masculine feminine passive active hand” (498).

Apart from social alienation Bloom's voluntary impotence and masochism can also be seen as a means of estranging himself from Molly's suffering at the loss of Rudy. The loss of the male successor and, the unwarranted guilt and the shame it engenders contribute to this masochistic attitude exemplified in the act of masturbation which was generally regarded as a sinful perversion in religion and society. According to Deleuze, in masochism, pleasure is postponed to prolong the positive, immanent process of desire. This is visible in Bloom's need for self-humiliation which is given free play in his awareness and encouragement of Molly's impending sexual tryst with Boylan, later that evening. According to her, by sending Milly to Mullingar, Bloom had not just encouraged but, in fact, deliberately choreographed her act of adultery.

Either led by a strong masochistic impulse or in his endeavour to alleviate his wife's suffering, or both, Bloom attempts to put her into the masculine role of a sadistic dominatrix. Davies also points out that since the death of their son and the guilt it has produced, he can relate to Molly sexually only by seeing her in the role of a masculine dominatrix and the moment his sympathy for her returns he loses his sexual desire for her (100). In order to initiate her into masochism he introduces her to books such as *Ruby: The Pride of the Ring* - with its “Fierce Italian with carriagewhip” (53), James Lovebirch's *Fair Tyrants* with “the part about where she hangs him up out of a hook with a cord flagellate” (557) and Sacher Masoch's *Tales of the Ghetto* (199).

In *Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty*, Deleuze points out that the dramatic enactment of ritualized cruelty in a masochistic exercise is based on various rites of passage - primarily, the rites of regeneration and rebirth, performed in traditional societies. It is this regeneration which Bloom strives to attain through the mythical body of Molly – the rebirth of his lost son (familial),

the renewal of his sexual relationship with Molly (libidinal), his own rebirth (personal) and the revival of Ireland (political).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, "Schizophrenia or desiring-production is the boundary between the molar organization and the molecular multiplicity of desire" (*Anti-Oedipus* 102). As opposed to the coldness, negativity and the stasis of the masochist, there is the positive self-assertion of Molly. Molly is completely disappointed with Boylan's indifference towards her feelings and his complete unwillingness or disability to admire her. "Desire does not express a molar lack within the subject; rather, the molar organization deprives desire of its objective being." (*Anti-Oedipus* 27). Boylan's absolute incorporation by the "molar line" makes him treat Molly as a commodity, slapping her on the backside just as breeders in a cattle market slapped "a palm on a ripemeated hindquarter" (49). In contrast to Boylan's brutishness, in "Penelope" Molly recognises Bloom's "molecular" potential for becoming woman: "I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is" (578). Thus, in the character of Molly, we see a transcendence of the oedipal constraints of Irishness, Jewishness etc. Rather than the blockage of the flow of desire in the case of Bloom, a perpetual deferral of pleasure, in the case of Molly we see an abundance and unbridled flow of desire.

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