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THE SEMIOTICS OF THE UNCONSCIOUS IN
GILLES DELEUZE AND ROLAND BARTHES

In his preface to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, Michel Foucault asks the authors' forgiveness for describing their book as the first book of ethics written in France in a long time. As the chair of philosophy at the newly founded *Centre Expérimental de Vincennes* (University of Paris VIII), which had been founded in the wake of the 1968 student protests, Foucault had helped secure a position for his friend Gilles Deleuze and Deleuze's soon-to-be writing collaborator, Felix Guattari.

The open admissions school prided itself on social critique and many members of the philosophy department had Maoist leanings. François Dosse writes that "although Foucault created the department, the idea had come from Jacques Derrida."¹ An interdisciplinary institution, Vincennes was also the historic prison for the Marquis de Sade in the 1780s, and so had a history of dealing with madness not to be lost on its chair of philosophy. Dosse writes that the university "incarnated the triumph of structuralism, the end of a long battle that had fulfilled an impossible dream: a literary university reconciled with science where structural thinking played a major role."²

This essay argues that in order to fully understand both Deleuze and Guattari's and Foucault's description of *Anti-Oedipus* as "ethical," it is necessary to read Deleuze and Guattari's book in light of the mission of the *Centre Expérimental de Vincennes* and French intellectual reactions against bourgeois politics, academics, and art. I read Deleuze and Guattari's uprooting of the psychoanalytic and structural linguistic projects, which they call schizoanalysis, as a deep critique of a European social imaginary in which the unconscious is mind-manifested into a more than one-dimensional space.

In particular, I focus on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the unconscious in relation to Roland Barthes's semiology. This information is often lost on American readers who perceive the French intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s as a kind of legendary canon while missing the point that what made them revolutionary is ironically what is non-existent in American academia.

To begin with, structuralism in France became fashionable in intellectual circles in France in the post-World War II years, following the reception of Martin Heidegger among Jean Paul Sartre & Company. In the early 1950s, Roland Barthes emerged as

¹ François Dosse, *History of Structuralism: Volume 2, The Sign Sets*, 1967-Present, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, 148.

² Ibid., 142-143.

a voice distinct from “existentialism.” Although linked to Ferdinand de Saussure earlier in the century, structuralism in postwar France came to exist as a *certain kind of writing that performed critique*. The discussion became especially enmeshed in concepts of the literary. Because of this, it is helpful to understand that as Barthes was studying philology in the 1940s (poor health kept him out of the war), he also came to react against Jean Paul Sartre’s brand of existentialism and particularly a short book called *Literature and Existentialism*, which contains a chapter called “Why Write?” Here are some key passages from Sartre:

One can imagine a good novel being written by an American Negro even if hatred of the whites were spread all over it, because it is the freedom of his race that he demands through this hatred. And, as he invites me to assume the attitude of generosity, the moment I feel myself a pure freedom I cannot bear to identify myself with a race of oppressors. Thus, I require of all freedoms that they demand the liberation of colored people against the white race and against myself insofar as I am a part of it, but nobody can suppose for a moment that it is possible to write a good novel in praise of anti-Semitism. For, the moment I feel that my freedom is indissolubly linked with that of all other men, it can not be demanded of me that I use it to approve the enslavement of a part of these men.

Hence, any attempt to enslave his readers threatens him in his very art. (64) [...]

One does not write for slaves. The art of prose is bound up with the only regime in which prose has meaning, democracy. When one is threatened, the other is too. And it is not enough to defend them with the pen. A day comes when the pen is forced to stop, and the writer must then take up arms. Thus, however you might have come to it, whatever the opinions you might have professed, literature throws you into battle. Writing is a certain way of wanting freedom; once you have begun, you are engaged, willy-nilly. (65)

In these passages we see the postwar bravado on the left as siding with anti-fascist politics and decolonization. Sartre identified writing as a way of wanting freedom and the expectation was that there was a way to achieve it. This feeling would be highly qualified by the time Deleuze and Guattari would be writing.

In addition to Sartre’s emphasis on freedom, structuralism in France was combined with a rehabilitated notion of Marxist critique (the “humanist” Marx) after his early 1840s work became available in the 1930s, and the dissemination of interest in Ferdinand de Saussure’s *Course in General Linguistics*. These trends precipitated a break with Sartrean “existentialism.”

Initially enamored, Roland Barthes broke with Sartre early on,

publishing *Writing Degree Zero* in 1953 to critical acclaim. According to François Dosse:

Barthes adhered to the Sartrean theme of freedom conquered through the act of writing, but he innovated, no longer situating the commitment represented by writing in the content but rather in the form. Language became a finality identified with reconquered freedom. Literature, however, was at a zero point to be reconquered. It had degenerated through its dissolution in a daily language made up of habits and prescriptions, and through stylistics, which leads to an autarkic mode, to an ideology in which the author acts as if he were cut off from society and reduced to a splendid isolation.³

That needs to be kept in mind as part of the impetus for Barthes as he turned to linguistics and semiology. The entire critique of the “zero degree” in writing was like pressing a reset button for what was determined as “literature” over and against the perceived bourgeois values that had persisted in France before the war. *Writing* (*écrits*) signaled a register of literary production divorced from bourgeois values.

A “new” literature, signaled by the *nouveau roman*, had to be generated to accomplish the postwar political shift in language with a focus on *objects* as opposed to plot, action, ideas, and character. This *writing* needed its critical compendium, which was found in structural linguistics, which also focused on the objectivity of language and linguistic apparatuses. Barthes increasingly turned his attention toward such analyses.

In his 1964 book, *Elements of Semiology*, Barthes took it upon himself to describe a “new” science that Saussure had called for in his *Course on General Linguistics*. Saussure had written that

A language is a system of signs expressing ideas, and hence comparable to writing, the deaf-and-dumb alphabet, symbolic rites, forms of politeness, military signals, and so on. It is simply the most important of such systems. It is therefore possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life. It would form a part of social psychology, and hence general psychology. We shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek *semeion*, ‘sign’).⁴

Note in particular Saussure’s linking of the new science to psychology, which was also a new science at the time he was writing. Importantly, Saussure had also written, “colonisation, which is simply one form of conquest, transports a language into

³ François Dosse, *History of Structuralism* Volume 1, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997: 72.

⁴ Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, New York: Hill & Wang, 1964: 15.

new environments, and this brings changes in the language.”⁵ But Roland Barthes disagreed with Saussure’s claim that semiology would precede linguistics as a science or that linguistics would be a “branch” of semiology.

Barthes claims that semiology is a branch of linguistics rather than, as Saussure suggested, a broader science of which linguistics was a branch.⁶ This is partly because for Barthes:

it appears increasingly more difficult to conceive a system of images and objects whose *signifieds* can exist independently of language: to perceive what a substance signifies is inevitably to fall back on the individuation of a language: there is no meaning which is not designated, and the world of signifieds is none other than that of language.⁷

Barthes goes on to claim that this is difficult because, despite its nature as a branch of linguistics, semiology must study non-linguistic objects:⁸

a language does not exist perfectly except in the ‘speaking mass’; one cannot handle speech except by drawing on the language. But conversely, a language is possible only starting from speech: historically, speech phenomena always precede language phenomena (it is speech which makes language evolve), and genetically, a language is constituted in the individual through his learning from the environmental speech (one does not teach grammar and vocabulary which are, broadly speaking, the language, to babies).⁹

After this passage in *Elements of Semiology*, Barthes turns his emphasis to the understudied Danish linguist, Louis Hjelmslev, who famously updated Saussure’s language to indicate “expressive plane” (signifier) and “content plane” (signified). Hjelmslev’s distinction would later allow Barthes to make critical distinctions between denotation and connotation in *S / Z*. In *Elements of Semiology*, however, Barthes notes by way of Hjelmslev that schema/usage can be contrasted with *langue/parole*.¹⁰

He notes that it is not possible to identify “language” as the *code* and “speech” as the *message*.¹¹ In other words, the distinction between *langue* and *parole* cannot be a reservoir of content and selective uses of formalized articulations from that reservoir. In Freudian terms, *parole* is not merely manifest to *langue*’s latency. Rather, the performance of speech is the objectively identifiable artifact of language as performance and *langue* is accessible through the performative events structuring articulation.

⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁹ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰ Ibid., 17.

¹¹ Ibid., 18.

What we get instead of a clean dipper into the unconscious *langue* soup is the conception of the “idiolect.” Barthes describes this as “the language inasmuch as it is spoken by a single individual” or habits of the individual; also, however, the language of someone with aphasia or the “style” of a writer, or “the language of a linguistic community.” He then says, “the idiolect would then correspond roughly to what we have attempted to describe elsewhere under the name ‘writing.’”¹² Idiolect here would correspond roughly to the *means of expressivity* available to one within a given system, a system which, as Heidegger would say, simultaneously “speaks” the writer or “scriptor,” as Barthes terms it in his famous essay on “The Death of the Author.”

Because it is the system that “speaks me,” and that “system” – which is unconceivable – is not located within one individual, one is never expressively “free.” A serious inquiry into Structuralism cannot rely on the bravado and “freedom” that Sartre called for, nor the ethics implied in that bravado. More importantly, to the extent that expressivity is itself moved by a force other than my ‘self’ which simultaneously shapes that ‘self’ as a vocative entity, the spew of my words babbles a brook bigger than being. It is relatively easy to see that an idiolect becomes in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, an assemblage of possible articulations, especially when we combine the idiolect with Deleuze’s *On Nietzsche and Philosophy and Difference & Repetition*. But less noted is the ways their perspective relies on Barthes, and this is crucial in order to understand how Deleuze and Guattari formulate a schizoanalysis of the unconscious.

In *Elements of Semiology*, Barthes takes his inversion of Saussure and applies it to concrete examples of semiology in practice, each with its distinction between language and speech:

1. With garments or fashion: Language = the *written* material about fashion in magazines while Speech becomes how people individually dress or “worn.” Also: “What is given by the fashion photograph is the semi-formalized state of the garment system.”¹³
2. Food: “the menu illustrates well this relationship between the language and speech: any menu is concocted with reference to a structure (which is both national – or regional – and social); but this structure is filled differently according to the days and the users, just as linguistic ‘form’ is filled by the free variations and combinations which a speaker needs for a particular message.”¹⁴
3. Cars: More restrictive for speech because, like most clothes now, they are ready-made.

¹² Ibid., 21.

¹³ Ibid., 27.

¹⁴ Ibid., 28.

4. Furniture: Language = functionally identical pieces while Speech = variations within one piece or various pieces in a room.

5. Complex Systems / Media: Cinema / television / press are hard to distinguish between language and speech.

By inverting Saussure's distinction between semiotics as antecedent to linguistics, Barthes relegates semiology to the study of signs. *Langue* is also objectified to a certain extent in the examples above. When we combine this with the notion of writing "degree zero" we get a metalanguage of *literature* dissociated from bourgeois notions of taste, one that prioritizes poetics. We get a semiological manifestation of something like a collective unconscious materialized as the field of the literary, but the concept of the literary in Barthes distinguished itself against both literary realism that he associated with nineteenth century aesthetics and notions that mystified language and symbolist poetry, which essentialized and alienated itself. The literary was not to be confused with metaphor.

Moreover, in contrast to the Frankfurt school, who sought a critique of society through "negativity," Barthes took "language" and materialized it in the form of "writing." "Writing" produces language as an "object" of study for the semiotician. Like ready-made clothing and the manufactured car, the materiality of language limits and determines speech. "Metalanguage" can, to a certain extent, liberate speech from language – but this longing for liberation also seems bourgeois, which may be one of the reasons Barthes later says the "death of the author" is the "birth of the scriptor."

In such a statement, Barthes is not nostalgic for the author, who is the conditioned subjectivity of modernity. Barthes was pushing beyond any influence of the dialectical language of Hegel as well as any naturalized or alienated sense of language. From this perspective, "meta-language" as theory, like his treatment of *langue*, materialized the real rather than symbolized the abstract.

This would prove especially influential for Gilles Deleuze, who in his early work on Nietzsche was already attempting a rejection of dialectical language and particularly negation. Deleuze works this out in *On Nietzsche and Difference and Repetition*. But one must remember Deleuze's context. Why would a French philosopher in the early 1960s turn to Nietzsche?

In part, Deleuze was distinguishing himself from his teachers. Hegel could be read as the philosopher of the bourgeoisie during the time Deleuze was a student, and Jean Hippolyte, who had directed Deleuze's *diplôme d'études supérieurs*, was the premier Hegel scholar in France. In a similar rejection to that of Barthes and literary theorists with respect to the zero degree, Nietzsche would help Deleuze bring a degree zero for philosophy. The political context in France seems to be that a philosophy had to be employed that was not subservient to the new and strong-willed fifth republic under Charles de Gaulle, nor must it recapitulate the

bourgeois sentiments of the third republic.

François Cusset's *French Theory* records the fact that the shift from Hegel to Nietzsche was a primary motivation for the famous 1966 conference at Johns Hopkins University entitled "The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man," which gave birth to poststructuralism (Barthes attended, Deleuze was invited but could not make it and sent a letter that was read publicly by the organizers).¹⁵

In this context of the necessity of new governing powers in France and the conservative turn toward de Gaulle following the Algerian war in 1958, we can read a political charge to Deleuze's *Difference & Repetition*, which would appear in France in 1968. Repetition would be merely reactionary, a Hegelian dialectical negation producing a synthesis that was not entirely new. True difference could not be merely a recapitulation or re-interpretation of an event; it needed to be an entirely new event. Again, I want to suggest that it is the "degree zero" as a reorganizing point that gave a particular resonance to the interest in semiotics shared by Deleuze and Barthes, who curiously echo each other repeatedly but do not cite each other outright, even while they mutually reference major thinkers in linguistics from the period.

In *Difference & Repetition*, Deleuze carefully navigates this terrain through his discussion of the Idea, linking the unconscious with the project of structuralism and arguing that "relations we call structures are *senses* from a genetic point of view."¹⁶ He goes on:

In short, representation and knowledge are modelled entirely upon propositions of consciousness which designate cases of solution, but those propositions themselves give a completely inaccurate notion of the instance which engenders them as cases, and which they resolve or conclude. 'by contrast, the Idea and learning' express that extra-propositional or sub-representative problematic instance: the presentation of the unconscious, not the representation of consciousness.¹⁷

In a synesthetic move, Deleuze collapses "the psychic multiplicities of imagination and phantasy, the biological multiplicities of vitality and 'monstrosity,' the physical multiplicities of sensibility and sign..." by asserting the sub-representative place of the Idea.¹⁸ Thus he claims that "the unconscious may be defined either by the extra-propositional and non-actual character of Ideas in the para-sense, or by the non-

¹⁵ François Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008:29-30.

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Trans. Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, 1968: 191.

¹⁷ Ibid., 192.

¹⁸ Ibid., 193.

empirical character of the *paradoxical* exercise of the faculties.”¹⁹ He then moves to discuss the twentieth-century preoccupation with ontology and attributes a novelistic or theatrical quality to the Idea, thus subordinating the discussion of science and philosophy to literature. He notes that by doing so, we come to see how Being questions its own difference and

(h)ence, that form of writing which is nothing but the question ‘what is writing?’, or that thought which asks, ‘what does it mean to think?’. These give rise to the greatest monotony and the greatest weaknesses of the new-found common sense in the absence of the genius of the Idea, but also to the most powerful ‘repetitions’, the most prodigious inventions in the para-sense when the Idea emerges in all its violence.²⁰

The discussion then turns back toward Nietzsche and Leibniz, and particularly ‘affirmation’ in the Nietzschean sense.²¹ The task becomes the affirmation of chance, an aleatoric apogee in the throw of the dice: “The most difficult thing is to make chance an object of *affirmation*, but it is the sense of the imperative and the questions that it launches. Ideas emanate from it just as singularities emanate from that aleatory point which every time condenses the whole of chance onto time.”²² The violence of the Idea is in the imperative form in which it emerges. It is not something we have control over, and that is why Deleuze situates it in the unconscious.

The power of decision at the heart of problems, this creation or throw which makes us descendant from the gods, is nevertheless not our own. The gods themselves are subject to *Anankē* or sky-chance. The imperatives and questions with which we are infused do not emanate from the I: it is not even there to hear them. The imperatives are those of being, while every question is ontological and distributes ‘that which is’ among problems. Ontology is the dice throw, the chaosmos from which the cosmos emerges.²³

At this point we can see that ontology, Being, the Idea, and the unconscious are ingredients for eruptions of singularities, which Deleuze, following Barthes and Saussure puts onto a horizontal and vertical axis.²⁴ He takes up once again the linguistic Idea. Deleuze is concerned that linguists employing the notion of difference in Saussure’s sense of phonemic difference at times confuse difference and opposition.²⁵ Difference is not negative, nor is it oppositional.

He asks of those who would conflate opposition and difference:

“Is this not a way of introducing the point of view

¹⁹ Ibid., 194.

²⁰ Ibid., 195.

²¹ Ibid., 198.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 199.

²⁴ Ibid., 202.

²⁵ Ibid., 204.

of consciousness and actual representations into what should be the transcendent exploration of the Idea of the linguistic unconscious – in other words, the highest exercise of speech in relation to the point zero of language?”²⁶

The connection to the zero point here, I want to argue, is directly linked to Roland Barthes’s notion of “writing degree zero” and his refutation of Sartre’s “Why Write?”, even though Sartre was the first to name the language in Camus’ *L’Etranger l’écriture blanc* or “colorless writing.”²⁷ But we can only get at this for Deleuze refracted through Barthes’s later work in *Elements of Semiology*, hence my earlier gloss on it.

In *Writing Degree Zero*, Barthes suggests disengaging from literary language by creating “a colorless writing, freed from all bondage to a pre-ordained state of language.”²⁸ He says “writing at the zero degree is basically in the indicative mood, or if you like, amodal.”²⁹ The goal is to create a writing absent of style “in which the social or mythical characters of a language are abolished in favour of a neutral and inert state of form.”³⁰ This writing would be in between the subjective and imperative moods, and we see with it a move toward a certain kind of objectivity in which it would become a cipher for the unconscious.

This becomes more apparent after *Elements of Semiology* in which writing itself presences *langue*, as in the food menu, whereas speech is the choice from the menu. The point then becomes that the menu is itself an apparatus delimiting possible forms of expression. One can never be “free” in Sartre’s sense, but one can maneuver into a way of writing – and this is why I say structuralism / poststructuralism is a kind of writing – that gives access to the unconscious. I believe that this is where Deleuze advances on Barthes in *Difference & Repetition*.

We are now better able to see the political nature of Deleuze’s project within the Marxist tradition. It is important then to note the favorable treatment that Louis Althusser receives in *Difference & Repetition*:

Althusser and his collaborators are, therefore, profoundly correct in showing the presence of a genuine structure in *Capital*, and in rejecting historicist interpretations of Marxism, since this structure never acts transitively, following the order of succession in time; rather, it acts by incarnating its varieties in diverse societies and by accounting for the simultaneity of all the relations and terms which, each time and in each case, constitute the present: that is why ‘the economic’

²⁶ Ibid., 205.

²⁷ Susan Sontag, “Preface” to Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, Trans. Jonathan Cape: New York, Beacon, 1953, xx.

²⁸ Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, Trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, New York: Hill & Wang, 1967: 76.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 77.

is never given properly speaking, but rather designates a differential virtuality to be interpreted, always covered over by its forms of actualization; a theme or ‘problematic’ always covered over by its cases of solution.³¹

Now we are in a position to see just why the project of schizoanalysis became necessary for Deleuze as he teamed up with his new colleague from the psychoanalysis department at Vincennes, Felix Guattari. This should also clear up why capitalism and schizophrenia go together and a deeper sense of why in moments where it seems capitalism has “won” we get people claiming the end of history. It also sheds light on philosophies of the event and there seemingly ahistorical nature.

Event philosophy is not anti-historical so much as it is in a lineage through Deleuze of Nietzsche’s genealogical method, a method that gets re-interpreted in 1960s France when attempts at zero-degree writing are part of a leftist critique of Gaullism that employs the language of poetics and math. It is no surprise then, that this is the period when the *Oulipo* (*Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*) gathering of mathematicians and writers began their workshop to create constraint-based literature using formal mechanisms to create events.

The big “event” of the late 1960s France was of course May of 1968, which began with students and spread to factories, ultimately halting France’s economic production. There is simply no way to downplay the importance of the situation for French intellectual thought and for Deleuze’s career. Only after 1968 was Vincennes founded. Of course, the philosophy of the event is more resonant with Alain Badiou than Gilles Deleuze, but in *The Clamor of Being* Badiou recalls more than a decade of conflicted thinking in relation to Deleuze only to say that his work and that of Deleuze form a “paradoxical tandem.”³²

Moreover, Badiou claims that “Political sequences, bearing the stamp of the event, are one thing; philosophical eternity, even if, in its construction, it is conditioned by politics, is another.”³³ In Deleuze’s language, “philosophical eternity” would be the occupied space of *aion* against *chronos*. But *aion* occupies an envelope around the linear projection of the political, attempting a critique of the very shaping of articulation itself and how it comes to be. In this sense, Deleuze’s paradoxical tandem to Badiou’s philosophical eternity is in Deleuze’s close relationship to rhetoric – and, by extension, poetics.

If poetics is *making*, Badiou is more poetic than Deleuze, as we can see in his eloquent explications in *The Age of Poets*. Deleuze emphasizes prosaic movement of flows, and we must ask: what are the forces at work in “filling out” and “narrowing” the shape of the event assemblage? And by extension, *what are the poetics*

³¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Trans. Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, 1968: 186.

³² Alain Badiou, *The Clamor of Being*, Trans. Louise Burchill, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000: 3.

³³ Ibid.

of those tools that accomplish the work of force? It is important here to note that while capitalism and schizophrenia "go together" as I have said, they are not the same thing.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari write:

it would be a serious error to consider the capitalist flows and the schizophrenic flows as identical, under the general theme of a decoding of the flows of desire. Their affinity is great, to be sure: everywhere capitalism sets in motion schizo-flows that animate "our" arts and "our" sciences, just as they congeal into the production of "our own" sick, the schizophrenics.³⁴

Schizoanalysis is necessary because it allows one to get at the limits of capitalism, but those limits are never static, nor can we see in all directions at once. The only way into schizoanalysis is to enter a performative stream. As they write,

"one can say that schizophrenia is the *exterior limit* of capitalism itself or the conclusion of its deepest tendency, but that capitalism only functions on condition that it inhibit this tendency, or that it can inhibit this tendency, or that it push back or displace this limit, by substituting for its own *immanent* relative limits, which it continually produces on a widened scale."³⁵

A Thousand Plateaus then takes up the performative mode necessary to schizoanalysis. Still, like structuralism, the method is a kind of writing:

There is no longer a tripartite division between the field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject.³⁶

The project of schizoanalysis is its own assemblage, constantly growing and turning on association while maintaining enough meditative attention not to devolve into verbal salad. And that is its trick or subterfuge as a critical device; it must mask to a certain extent its sanity by maintaining an ongoing openness to the insane.

One tactic of the schizoanalytic method is to flirt with history while not actually doing history. As Deleuze and Guattari write,

³⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, New York: Penguin, 1972: 245.

³⁵ Ibid., 246.

³⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 23.

"History is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the topic is nomads. What is lacking is a *nomadology*, the opposite of a history."³⁷ Nomadology gives name to the method of schizoanalysis by which one maintains a line of flight constantly moving to catch the occasional fractures in capitalism through the eventual spewings of the schizophrenic who is able to bring the unconscious to presence.

Thus pragmatics (or schizoanalysis) can be represented by four circular components that bud and form rhizomes.(1) The generative component: the study of concrete mixed semiotics; their mixtures and variations. (2) The transformational component: the study of pure semiotics; their transformations-translations and the creation of new semiotics. (3) The diagrammatic component: the study of abstract machines, from the standpoint of semiotically unformed matters in relation to physically unformed matters. (4) The machinic component: the study of the assemblages that effectuate abstract machines, simultaneously semiotizing matters of expression and physicalizing matters of content.³⁸

Again, we can make some sense of this by returning to Deleuze's extension of Roland Barthes's work in *Elements of Semiology*. Consider, perhaps, looking at a book. An idiolect, or an author's "style" in a work is analyzed as its generative component, in itself, as literary new criticism would have it. The transformational element would look at the material and historical connotations emanating from the text, author, movement, genre, etc. The diagrammatic component would look at the text from the position of its zero degree element. Here, all style gives way to the poetics of the language itself.

A musical analogy is helpful here. Deleuze and Guattari keenly describe how the introduction of the synthesizer removes music from the vertical and arboreal system and places it within a rhizome assemblage.³⁹ No more are we concerned with the trajectory toward increased chromaticism or "twelve tone" music that characterized much of the early twentieth century. Instead, the very tangible qualities of tone, resonance, attack, and decay become not only discernible but discernible as intention, as something that can be mapped and mimicked. I see this as indicative of the physical components of the abstract machine. As Deleuze and Guattari write:

We must therefore arrive at something in the assemblage itself that is more profound than these sides and can account for both of the forms of expression or regimes of signs (semiotic systems) and forms of content or regimes of bodies (physical systems). This is what we call the *abstract machine*, which constitutes and conjugates all of the assemblage's cutting edges of

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 146.

³⁹ Ibid., 95.

deteritorialization.⁴⁰

The zero degree element sees the objectivity of the language, its medium, etc. in contradistinction to the idiolect which would relate to some sort of authorial style. The abstract machine is able to see the linguistic performance as a manifestation of *langue* or the unconscious rather than *parole*, or speech.

Finally, I would equate the ability to analyze the machinic component of a text to the ability to see it as potentially schizophrenic rupture, as a limit or gap in the otherwise seamless and normative flow of capitalism. One thinks of the holes in time and the map in the Terry Gilliam film, *Time Bandits*. Or, as a brilliant keyboard player I know once referred to an LSD experience: "I could hear *behind* the music." Deleuze and Guattari refer to something quite similar, though cryptically in their discussion of Artaud in their chapter, "How to Make Yourself a Body without Organs." Explicitly citing Artaud's discussion of *Ciguri from The Peyote Dance*, they write:

But there is in human existence another plane, obscure and formless, where consciousness has not entered, and which surrounds it like an unlimited extension or a menace, as the case may be. And which itself gives off adventurous sensations, perceptions. These are those shameless fantasies which affect an unhealthy conscious...I too have had false sensations and perceptions and I have believed in them.

This leads Deleuze and Guattari into a discussion of Carlos Castaneda, unconcerned with the scientific critiques of Castaneda's ethnographic methods. Ciguri, in Artaud's book, is quite like discussions of soma in the *Rig Veda*, simultaneously plant, deity, and experience of ingesting it. The process blurs the limits of the body in the world, the body as separate from the world.

At its final pragmatic level, schizoanalysis potentially challenges the directionality of psychedelic "mind-manifesting," making us in our nomadic lines of flight witnesses to ourselves as sacrificial *dépense*. Only in this place does one shed the individual will and affirm chance, when one's self becomes the dice to feel the aleatory capable of constellating. Only after moving through abstract machines to desiring machines does schizoanalysis break out of being just another structural model.

Conclusion

Let me return now to the last sentence of my thesis. I made the claim that the historical context around Vincennes is often lost on American readers, who perceive the French intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s as a kind of legendary canon while missing the point that what made them revolutionary is ironically what is

⁴⁰ Ibid., 155.

non-existent in American academia.

What, exactly, am I claiming is non-existent? Along with François Cusset, I think I would claim that the political ties that structuralism had to Marxian critique by way of Althusser, as Deleuze points out in *Difference and Repetition*, are non-existent in contemporary American society, despite the attempts of Occupy movements and Bernie Sanders supporters. They, like their more conservative liberal peers who backed Hillary Clinton, are still addicted to a logic of the externalized wish-fulfillment of individual and subjective “wills.”

Those perspectives mistake their privileged liberal fantasies for reality and when confronted with the bubble they live in attempt change the rules of a game they agreed to and lost after the fact. This “do-over” mentality achieves nothing but a normalized, capitalistic buffer blinded to the ejaculations of the schizophrenic. Even the president who is about to leave office encouraged the nation in a condescendingly paternalistic voice that “we” Americans would show “the world” what a peaceful transition to rightwing power ought to be: submit through a politics of respectability to the cocks they will shove down your throats. And the flipside, which some predict, that an impeachment will occur before the first term is up, only rely on a politics of respectability and not a demand for justice, which would be forming barricades like the Paris commune.

We are not becoming animals, in Deleuze’s terms, we are already domesticated chattel.

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