

DELEUZE AND THE SCHIZOANALYSIS OF FEMINISM

ALLIANCES AND ALLIES

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CHAPTER 6 TO HAVE DONE WITH SEXUALITY: SCHIZOANALYSIS AND THE PROBLEM OF QUEER-FEMINIST ALLIANCES

Nir Kedem

Shortly after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari stated, "Schizoanalysis has one single aim—to get revolutionary, artistic, and analytic machines working as parts, cogs, of one another" (Deleuze 1995: 24). Finding a way for such machines to fit together as components of a revolutionary process requires establishing transversal unity between the parts, yet "unification must occur through analysis" (Deleuze 2004: 199). Working out the nature of such unity and how to achieve it defines the approach taken here in regard to the volume's themes. I am particularly interested in how schizoanalysis may enable a queer-feminist alliance without reducing the one to the other (nor deriving either from a larger "whole"), allowing them to retain their differences and disputes yet to carve new paths for both to produce ever-widening new coalitions that function as forces of social transformation in multiple contexts.

Alliances between queer and feminist theories have tended to be uneasy and have known mostly ruptures. Three years after the publication of the inaugural special issue of *differences* announcing the birth of queer theory, another special issue reflected critically on the emerging tensions between feminism and queer theory. Despite their apparent commonalities, the editors gathered that the two are "something of an unmatched pair" (Weed 1997: vii) and characterized their encounter as strange and surprising rather than mutually empowering. Instead of a fruitful alliance opening up new ways for political thought and action, feminists were disappointed to find in queer theory a reductive representation of "a strange feminism, stripped of its contentious elements, its internal contradictions, its multiplicity" (ix). Judith Butler's opening piece criticized queer theory for appropriating sexuality as its exclusive "proper object," a dubious move that served as a foundational justification for queer theory's methodological autonomy by producing an image of a devalued feminism utilized by queer theory to differentiate itself; a feminism deemed inapt to theorize sexuality, and which was thus ascribed exclusively to the study of gender (Butler 1997). In the 1997 revised article, Butler contextualized her critique as a reflexive engagement with/in feminism designed to create alternative ways of thinking, which "would overcome [feminism's] complicity in heterosexist presuppositions and mark an alliance with lesbian and gay struggles" (2). However, proceeding attempts to think productively and critically about the relations between gender, sexual difference, and sexuality have tended to occur more in feminism, as well as in lesbian thought and transgender studies, than in queer theory (Rudy 2000; Richardson 2006; Jagose 2009;

Marinucci 2010). Butler's critique echoes the argument put forth by queer theorists who argued against a conception of queer theory as a theory of sexuality, and who therefore underscored the "indeterminate" rather than "sexual" sense of queer.¹ Although fewer today insist on an exclusively queer theorization of sexuality independently of any feminist framework (Halley 2006), the category of sexuality has become queer theory's foundation and most treasured of concepts through the conflation of the indeterminate with the sexual sense in the concept of queer; a move that has effectively generalized the concept of sexuality as queer theory's "true" form of foundational difference—that is, sexuality's supposedly inherent indeterminacy.

By making it one of its increasingly uncritical concepts, queer theory has been facilitating the coagulation of sexuality into an impediment to alliances with feminism. It has become an analytic machine whose dominant function is to sexualize everything (history, language, culture, the arts)—to make sexuality both the cause and end of theory and politics, a first and last principle. It has long forgotten that this function is not revolutionary in itself; that it had originated in the activist response to the terrors of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States, in that queer activism that could not have succeeded without making broad alliances with feminists, lesbians, people of color, and so many others.² Schizoanalysis was conceived as a project for such alliances, as Deleuze said (1995: 22). In order to understand what allying ourselves with schizoanalysis entails, I offer a detailed account of the role sex and sexuality play in *Anti-Oedipus*. My aim is to show that schizoanalysis may function as a new means to ally the feminist and queer analytic machines by effecting a radical desexualization of queer theory—a utopian gesture designed to liberate queer theory from its transcendental illusions, that is, from the concept of sexuality itself. In so doing, schizoanalysis offers a solution to a problem posited by Foucault, who seems to have set what remains today the greatest challenge to queer theory: "[I]t is not enough to liberate sexuality; we also have to liberate ourselves ... from the very notion of sexuality" (Foucault 2011: 388). Thus, schizoanalysis can be said to be desexualizing in a specific sense: it does not operate as a reactionary call for anti-sexual asceticism, nor as a denial of sexual pleasures, practices, politics, and lifestyles, but rather as a refusal of sexuality inasmuch as it functions as a privileged analytical category and an exclusive foundation of political resistance, for the real positive power of queer is the threat it poses to sexuality, not as sexuality.

1. Schizoanalysis and the Use of Sexuality

Deleuze and Guattari remarked that they have always been functionalists (Deleuze 1995: 21–2). This functionalism, or the question of use, attests to the pragmatic nature of their work, particularly schizoanalysis. The pragmatic task before us is examining whether schizoanalysis could make queer and feminist analytic machines the working parts of other machines without compromising their respective differences and independent operations. The question is then what sort of alliances, queer-feminist or otherwise, does schizoanalysis make possible? At what cost? To what end? The answers

will be determined firstly by specifying ends and secondly by defining a working method. Outlining the conditions of possibility for such alliances is the goal of this essay; my working method is to experiment with schizoanalysis as a theoretical toolbox to be used to this end, whereby experimentation means a revaluation of the schizoanalytic use of the concepts of sex and sexuality, all the more in light of the tensions animating the relationships between queer and feminist machines.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, there are no sex nor sexuality "in general," as abstract self-contained and ready-made concepts or categories; rather, there are only uses of sex and sexuality in relation to the productive unconscious, deemed either illegitimate (or transcendent) in the psychoanalytic system, or legitimate (immanent) in the schizoanalytic system. In the machinic terminology of schizoanalysis, sex and sexuality refer to the unconscious dynamism (the syntheses of desire) of production from the standpoint of libidinal economy. Sex, in the singular, exists only as an organ-machine, or a partial object that is not exclusively a sexual organ.³ Schizoanalysis considers the division of sex into male and female a false psychoanalytic reduction that privileges the genitals over other organs. An organ functions as an interceptor that gives or receives a flow—sexuality, or libidinal energy. But speaking of an organ/a sex is valid only analytically, for, Deleuze and Guattari insist, organs are machinic arrangements of other partial objects and flows. One's sex never refers to a single sexual organ or the reproductive system exclusively; organs are always organ-machines set in relation to one another, which together form a heterogeneous chain of machines. Sex in the singular, then, is already a multiplicity of interconnected organ-machines, a displaced image of the "*n* sexes," while sexuality in the singular is a displaced image of "trans-sexuality." Schizoanalysis effects a displacement of one set of terms in favor of another: instead of sex and sexuality, it refers to *n* sexes (which are not necessarily either male or female) and trans-sexuality (which is not necessarily homosexual or heterosexual).⁴

That Deleuze and Guattari reemploy Deleuze's reading of Proust and its conceptualization of sex and sexuality, so as to explain the formation of desiring-machines, is a fact that went mostly unnoticed in the literature. However, the Proustian theory of sexuality has three functions in *Anti-Oedipus*: (1) it explains the non-totalizing unity of the machines, which enables Deleuze and Guattari, (2) to deduce the legitimate and illegitimate uses of the connective synthesis, and thus (3) to present the ramifications of the psychoanalytic illegitimate use of the syntheses as it is expressed in the social field. I will account for the Proustian theory of sexuality in *Proust and Signs* before returning to examine these three functions.

The problem of fitting machines together as working parts of one another preoccupied Deleuze in the second part added to *Proust and Signs* in 1972. In a roundtable discussion on Proust, Deleuze succinctly described it as "the idea that things or people or groups do not communicate" (2007: 39). What is characteristically of interest for Deleuze here is the question of the very possibility of communication—what could serve as a principle that explains the formation of communication between noncommunicating terms? How are we to explain the genesis of communication, but immanently? The Proustian theory is a means to uncover such a genetic principle. Indeed, everything is sexed and