

A Short Application of Deleuze and Guattari's 'Schizoanalysis' on Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*

Iraj Montashery

Islamic Open University, Lahijan Branch, Iran

Email: iraj.montashery@gmail.com

Abstract— Deleuze and Guattari are appreciators of madness. They developed a politics of schizophrenia. Therefore the ultimate aim of their politics is to return humankind to a sense of being a passionate animal. They celebrate the pre-symbolic stage of fusional relationships, of primordial, direct and unmediated desire. They argue that man is a desiring machine. In their view, there are two types of desire, the paranoid and the schizophrenic; and of these two modes of desire, they celebrate and exalt the schizophrenic's affinity to the Imaginary, to fusional relationships and to flux. They idealize Lacan's concept of the Imaginary (pre-oedipal, pre-linguistic stage); taking his orders of subjectivity (the Imaginary and the Symbolic) as backgrounds, Deleuze and Guattari developed a new theory called Schizoanalysis. Shedding light on Clarissa's life from this perspective, Clarissa's self is seen in continual flux and becoming, rather than a self that has succumbed to law. Through the diversity of new becomings, Clarissa opens experience up to new beginnings. Her incessant parties are emblematic of her unending desire to combine, to love and to be loved. Her desires are the sources and constituent of her real life. Clarissa's desire to be a schizo can also be delineated in her symbolic relationship and identification with her double, the shell-shocked Septimus Warren Smith.

Key Words—Schizoanalysis; Desire; Becoming; The Symbolic; The Imaginary

1. A Short Summary of the Novel

To refresh readers and critics' mind and to pave the way to unravel Clarissa Dalloway's subjectivity, a short summary which has been beautifully provided by Harris (450-451) seems indispensable:

What plot exists revolves around Clarissa Dalloway's day preparation for an important dinner party, which will include England's Prime Minister. The setting is in post-World War I London; unity of time is preserved as Big Ben tolls the passing of the hours. As she begins a day of necessary errands, the narrative begins. She remembers her girlhood and a young lover whom she rejected, and she meets an old friend who will be attending the party and who flatters her and makes her feel young again; this causes more musing about her youthful suitor, Peter Walsh. Her

thoughts are fragmented as she walks; they include what she is now and what she might have been, anxiety about her young daughter and her future, and thoughts about a limousine which, obviously carrying a member of royal family, has impact on her and everyone who views it.

While Clarissa shops, Septimus Smith is introduced, a suicidal young man whom Clarissa does not know and will not meet, but who will later affect her deeply. At home, Clarissa is disturbed to find that her husband will lunch with a social rival and has a surprise visit from Peter Walsh. They chat civilly, but their thoughts reveal that their early love affair still remains as a strong and loving connection.

Septimus, now mentally ill, visits Sir William Bradshaw, a doctor, who advises a sanatorium for Septimus. Septimus and his wife return to their flat in Bloomsbury and it is in his dialogue with his wife and his internal monologue that readers are painfully aware of his anxiety and his mental

deterioration. It is not possible for him to get rid of his own loneliness. He goes mad because he has lost all sense of contact with other people, and he is driven into the isolated emptiness of himself.

As Clarissa's party begins, details of the wines, food, and guests are related through the thoughts of the servants. Clarissa is simultaneously happy as well anxious for social success. When Dr. Bradshaw appears late, because of Septimus's death, she is torn between pity for a young dead man and rage that his action casts a pall on her happiness. In a solitary internal monologue, we can sense her responses to both the terror and beauty of life, with death as its natural ending.

2. Deleuze and Guattari's Schizoanalysis and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*

Veena Sharma (2012) in her article entitled "Literary Work and the Mind: Approaching psychoanalytical Theory" Notes that:

Psychoanalysis today has become a psychology of the self, although there are wide differences in the way different schools address the self: British object-relations, Kohut's self-psychology, Lacan's return to a verbal psychoanalysis. (172)

For Michel Foucault, the construction of subject is inflected differently as I have argued in my article "A Multidisciplinary Approach for the Construction of Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*" (2012):

Foucault's works in the 1960's focused on discourse and language as the constructors of subjectivity; But in his later works he shifted from linguistic determination to the view that individuals are constituted by power relations; power as the ultimate principle of social reality. (294)

The present study which is considered part of a repertoire for psychoanalytic studies moves away from major and dominant schools of psychoanalysis in its perspective towards the construction of subject. Deleuze and Guattari have developed a challenging version of psychoanalytic theory and the way the subject is constructed which does not easily pertain to the dominant psychoanalytic theories of the past. In their views life is a flow of becoming. Life is desire, and desire is the expansion of life through new becomings. Desire, for Deleuze, is productive and creative. "Desire does not begin from lack-- desiring what we do not have. Desire begins from connection; life strives to preserve and enhance itself and does so by connecting with other desires." (Colebrook

91) As a point of departure in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa's great desire for connection through her parties is evident: "and she felt if only they could be brought together; so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create;" (Dalloway 89) "to have famous people about her; great names"; (89). Both Richard, her husband and Peter, her girlhood lover, criticize her for her parties; but she does not mind. "What she liked was simply life." (89). Deleuze provides us with further possibilities for experience. Why should man accept deep-rooted conventions and values? What stops man from creating new desires or new images of what it is to be? Why should people confine themselves to the fixed images of men and women, why not become other?

Deleuze and Guattari argue that man is a desiring machine. In their view, there are two types of desire, the paranoid and the schizophrenic; and of these two modes of desire, they celebrate and exalt the schizophrenic's affinity to the Imaginary, to fusional relationships and to flux. Deleuze and Guattari idealize Lacan's concept of the Imaginary (pre-oedipal, pre-linguistic stage). They also see the transition into the Symbolic (Language, culture, and society) as a loss. They see child's entrance into structure and society as a tragedy. They argue that: "[o]nly a return to the Imaginary can spell the end of socio-political repression, of the dictatorship of the Symbolic. For Deleuze and Guattari the really important condition is schizophrenic." (Sarup 102) Taking Lacan's orders of subjectivity (the Imaginary and the Symbolic) as backgrounds, Deleuze and Guattari developed a new theory called Schizoanalysis.

Their Schizoanalysis – a material psychiatry is a close textual method for the reading of texts. Schizoanalysis means the liberation of desire. Their 'schizo' is a way of thinking a life not restricted by any fixed norm or image of self (Colebrook 5). Shedding light on Clarissa's life from this perspective, Clarissa's self is seen in continual flux and becoming, rather than a self that has succumbed to law. Through the diversity of new becomings, Clarissa opens experience up to new beginnings. Her interminable desire for connection and communication can be traced in her demeanour and temperament. Her incessant parties are emblematic of her unending desire to combine, to love and to be loved. Her desires are the sources and constituent of her real life. In Deleuze and Guattari's theory, reality is what one's desire fabricates. But since Clarissa is in the Symbolic order, her self is in continual flux and becoming; hence her self is fragmentary and divided. Her continuous desires have been frustrated by adamant and predetermined laws of society and language. Therefore Clarissa because of being in the Symbolic order is not a schizo. The schizo lies in the Imaginary. The schizo, according to Deleuze and Guattari:

Produces himself as a free man, irresponsible, solitary, and joyous, finally able to say and

do something simple in his own name, without asking permission; a desire lacking nothing, a flux that overcomes barriers and codes, a name that no longer designates any ego whatever. He has simply ceased being afraid of becoming mad (Sarup 104).

Clarissa's desire to be a schizo can be delineated in her symbolic relationship and identification with her double, the shell-shocked Septimus Warren Smith. One of Virginia Woolf's notes on *Mrs Dalloway* reveals her original intention to present the world "as seen by the sane and the insane side by side" (Levenson 18). And she intended their relationship to be not only parallel but also complementary.

Septimus is neither in the Symbolic nor in the Imaginary order. He desires to be a schizo in the Imaginary. But already he has entered into the tragic world of the Symbolic order; and therefore he is now unable to fully enter into the Imaginary and consequently suffers damnably.

According to Lacan, schizophrenia emerges from the failure of the infant to enter fully into the realm of the Symbolic (speech and language). Accordingly, he does not have any notions about language's past or future, and is condemned to live in a perpetual present. Septimus is insane. He is made of the Symbolic order. He is standing on razor's edge. He is oscillating in the frontiers of the Symbolic and the Imaginary.

According to Sarup (1988) Deleuze and Guattari are appreciators of madness. They developed a politics of schizophrenia. They view schizophrenia as a privileging experience, in so far the schizophrenic is not trapped within the oedipal prison. Therefore the ultimate aim of their politics is to return humankind's freedom, to a sense of being a passionate animal. They celebrate the pre-symbolic stage of fusional relationships, of primordial, direct and unmediated desire. They look to children and above all to the mad as examples of people in touch with the Imaginary. They argue that children, primitive peoples and, most of all, mad people have not yet been fully oedipalized, that is they have not fully entered into the Symbolic (Sarup 102). Worded differently, these people are in the state in which society has not yet entered them. In short, they glorify the schizophrenic's or mad's closeness to the Imaginary, to fusional relationships, to that original sense of fullness and non-separation. Septimus's purgatorial oscillation between the Symbolic and the Imaginary is responsible for his present sufferings. Unlike schizophrenic person, he has sense of the past. He suffers enormously remembering Evans' death. He considers himself somehow responsible for his friend's death; thus he has been unable to strike a right balance between the two orders of subjectivity and consequently has lost his self and identity. Moreover, he is responsible for his wife who wants to start a family. In order to fulfill his new desire of being a schizo in the Imaginary order, Septimus must undergo a new becoming,

which is death; death of the body. This last choice can be regarded as a resumption of the Imaginary order; as a point of departure to leave the excruciating world of the Symbolic order. Clarissa's life is a continual becoming. Once faced with the failure of her parties, failure of being 'the perfect hostess' and by extension failure of her fixed subjectivity and identity, she desires to be a schizo in the Imaginary. And this has been delineated meticulously through her symbolic identification with a schizo-like figure, Septimus. To become other than herself, Clarissa must undergo a new becoming, that is identification with insane Septimus; becoming him. This becoming is promising in that it opens up the probability of returning to the Imaginary order. Her 'death of the soul' corresponds with Septimus' death of the body; and therefore, through identification with Septimus, she is looking for a new becoming through death. Both Septimus and Clarissa are happy while contemplating on death: both of them recall Shakespearean phrases, "If it were now to die, 't were now to be most happy" (Dalloway 134), and "Fear no more the heat of the sun" (135); Septimus utters these phrases a little before his suicide, and Clarissa repeats them, a little before the end of her party when she accepts the gift of his death. Their symbolic happy reunion is implicative of the possibility of the return to the Imaginary and being a schizo free from all responsibilities and entanglements of the Symbolic order. Divided and fragmentary, Clarissa has been also forced to kill her passionate self in the Symbolic order; now she has been offered the chance to go back to her passionate self and seek refuge in fusional relationships of the Imaginary order.

References

- C. Colebrook, Gills Deleuze. London: Routledge, 2002.
- I. Montashery, "A Multidisciplinary Approach for the Construction of Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*". *Advances in Asian Social Science*: Vol.1. No. 3, June 2012.
- L. L. Harris, *Characters in twentieth – century Literature*. London: Gale Research Inc. 1990.
- M. D. Levenson, *Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse*. New York: Monarch Press, 1966.
- M. Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Poststructuralism and Postmodernism*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988.
- V. Sharma, "Literary Work and the Mind: Approaching psychoanalytical Theory". *Advances in Asian Social Science*: Vol.1. No. 2, June 2012.
- V. Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*. Wordsworth, 1996.

Biography of the Author



Dr. Iraj Montashery has obtained his PhD degree in English Literature from UPM with 'distinction'. He is currently an assistant professor at Open University of Lahijan, Iran. He is also a member of Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain. His main research interests are psychoanalysis, feminism, gender and narrative studies.