

Gilles Deleuze

Seminar on the Apparatuses of Capture and War Machines, 1979-1980

Lecture 05, 15 January 1980

Transcribed by Annabelle Dufourcq; augmented transcription, Charles J. Stivale

English Translation, Charles J. Stivale¹

... [Caligula], he takes his guard to a beach, far from Rome. And there, he divides them in two, he divides his guard in two. He makes them collect seashells, and he orders them to fight each other. We tell ourselves: "Really, things are not going well, Caligula" [*Laughter*]. And then he comes back. Fine. This is the Caligula aspect seen by Albert Camus. This is the delirious interpretation of Caligula. I don't mean that... it's wrong or he's wrong, no, not at all. Maybe why not? Maybe ... Rational legal, political interpretation, politico-legal interpretation; Latin scholars notice that the same word designates "shell" and certain war machines.

Well, it's enough to think about that to think that Sallust's text is perhaps a text of satire, is intentionally satirical, because everything becomes a little coherent.² Let's assume -- we risk nothing in assuming since we don't know, [*Laughter*] so... -- let's assume -- but it happened all the time -- that Caligula felt that part of his guard was preparing something suspicious, a revolt. He takes all his guard far from Rome, near the sea and, there, he does not make them collect shells, he is not..., he is not all the same at this level, he has the war machines gathered together that part of the guard possesses, the part under suspicion. And then he has the part under suspicion exterminated by the other part. Everything becomes... a banality, very great rational banality, that is, he stifles a revolt, and then he returns to Rome after having liquidated part of his guard. This becomes crystal clear. Fine.

What does that mean? Is it one or is it the other? I would say neither one nor the other, ultimately. Because ... we have to keep this sphere of ambiguity, the rise of the ambiguous sphere. The rise of the ambiguous sphere, that's exactly it. I can interpret everything either within a determination of private subjectivity, that is, madness, the most private aspect of subjectivity, or within an objective public determination. But, in fact, there are all kinds of regimes, that we will consider, which define themselves as straddling sides, because it's not that they create a kind of synthesis at all, a mixing of the public and private, but that they impose a sphere that is not reducible to one or the other. This is what I call: "the sphere of relations of personal dependency."

At that point, then, perhaps Paul Veyne's title, "Sperm and Blood," would take on an even more general meaning.³ Take feudalism. It's really with feudalism... -- there are pages, there, immediately, by [Jules] Michelet which are splendid,⁴ on the way in which the French monarchy was constituted, where he says: the kings of France are quite odd; they manage, they manage their kingly seeds really like..., like some kinds of shopkeepers. What do they operate with? It's there..., it's... Michelet credits Louis XI with that, but it started before Louis XI, he says: what is

brilliant about Louis XI is that, really, weddings, inheritances, become the objective instruments of a form of politics. You will tell me: it was always like that. I don't know if, at that point, there isn't a kind of mutation through which marriages, inheritances, really become the active and creative factors of a new type of power that is being created at that era -- for example, the power of the monarch which is not at all the same as the power of the archaic despot -- that it all emerges... uh... in that form (in the Roman Empire, it emerged in another form), this sphere, this sphere that must be defined as, each time, the shifting determination of the relations of personal dependency. So, you can... -- we never stop sliding back and forth -- sometimes account for it objectively, and that's not correct, sometimes account for it in a simply subjective way ("the delirium of the Caesars"), that's not correct either. There is quite something else in all that. So, we would try to ... [Deleuze does not finish]

But, if you will, I am finally getting to my problem, it's really ... well, what ... what's going on? How do we come to this, with this emergence of a new type of relationship that we are provisionally calling -- we'll see next time if we can clarify it -- but that we are provisionally calling "the sphere of relations of personal dependency"? Once again, whether it is, ... so, this is quite varied: personal dependency in relation to the Emperor evolved in the case of the Roman Empire, in relation to... to the lord (*seigneur*) in the case of feudalism -- that's an entirely different type; I am not mixing them up -- in relation to the monarch in the French monarchy, what they have in common is that they are figures of the relation of personal dependency. Once again, it is not people (*personnes*) who account for the constancy of relations of personal dependency within a society. This is specific. It seems to me that we need a concept of the relation of personal dependency that really makes it ..., that gives it a specific consistency. So, I would say: but who is... who is really at this level? We really need to manage to specify this sphere, this sphere of personal dependency. So, I'm stopping at this point because I want you to think about this for next time; what time is it?

A student: Twelve forty-five.

Deleuze: Who is the man of the sphere of personal dependency? Listen to me carefully. In the end -- Twelve forty-five? Oh, we're running out of time -- Who is it? Well, it seems to me that he is ... -- you could say; I'm summarizing this -- he is someone whose historical determination is of colossal importance. He's the person that laments, he's the man of the lament. He is the one who causes this sphere of personal dependency to emerge. What does that mean? And why "the man of the lament"? Is he going to have as great a historical significance as I am saying, the man of the lament? And who is doing the lamenting in the story? We have to know who is lamenting. All unfortunate people complain. But the unfortunate can be quite varied; they can be aristocrats who have lost power, they can be... oppressed peasants, oppressed people, it can be... So, it varies. When it's an oppressed aristocrat, his lament ... [Pause] uh, no, [he's] an outcast, someone who has lost power, all that, his lament doesn't have the same name. When people lament, it's not ... it's not ... it's not the same thing. Fine. But, through all these variations, is there a certain situation of the lament within history? This is what I want you to ... think about for next time. Who is the man of the lament?⁵

I am selecting a hypothesis borrowed from an author whom I find very, very strong, very ... a Hungarian Marxist, a specialist of the Chinese Empire about whom I spoke during another year, called [Ferenc] Tökei, t-o umlaut-k-e-i. A lot of his writing is ... either translated ... well, published in French. I am thinking of a very beautiful text by him of about forty pages: "Birth of the Chinese Elegy", "Birth of the Chinese Elegy".⁶ And Tökei's thesis is that the Chinese elegy ... What is the elegy? It's the art of the lament. The elegy is the song of mourning, and the elegy spans history. Moreover, the elegy spans lyrical values. Who are the great lyric poets? There are tragic poets, there are epic poets, but what is lyricism made of? Lyricism has a kind..., two, two fundamental tonalities: the satiric tonality and the elegiac tonality. And these are not the same rhythms; there are satirical rhythms, there are elegiac rhythms. For example, for those who remember the treatises on versification, what is called the couplet, the couplet is a typically elegiac rhythm, invented by poets referred to as "elegiac" poets. Sometimes these same poets have part of their work within satire, part of their work ... But these are the two great poles of lyricism. It will continue until Victor Hugo, these two great poles, two great lyrical poles.

And in what way does satire develop? With the supremely poetic values of insult. [Pause] Satire is the lyrical development of insult and the rhythmic development of insult. Insulting has very great rhythmic values. You just have to look at the popular forms of insult; there are very, very great rhythmic values of insults, eh. Someone knows how to insult when he has a good sense of rhythm. If he doesn't have a good sense of rhythm, he might as well not even try. [Laughter] Good. There are many languages of insults ... At the time of the Revolution, there were languages ..., or just before the Revolution, there were languages of insults from which the revolutionary newspapers would benefit, for example, *Père Duchesne*'s newspaper, which is a derivative of those pre-revolutionary languages which were entirely made up of insults. Awesome. Latin satirists have a ... have a sense of rhythmic insult there, which is fantastic, fantastic, fantastic. So, that's what satire is. And the elegy is the lyrical development of the lament.

And very oddly, there are combinations between lament and insult. It may be the same man who ... at the extreme, it is the same man who yields the lament and who yields the insult, and with what humor and what rhythmic value, then, of the lament ... So, if I am saying laments, yes, they span history, I could list the kinds of laments. Great laments are expressed, and then ... But this is annoying, because it's ... it's up to you to think about this, right, for next time; I'd like you to ... [Pause]

Okay, I'm making a list, even an absurd one. There, we see immediately, there is an epic lament. The epic lament is usually when the epic has ... lost its relevance. It's an effort, the epic lament is an effort to reactivate the epic. In the late Roman Empire, they try to resuscitate the epic, not necessarily excellent, right, but then, it becomes... a plaintive epic: "Ah, in the old days ... Ah, the decadence nowadays ...", etc. There's a kind of elegiac pole for the epic, right? The epic lament is formed, ... for example, even with very great authors like... Well, no matter, especially since I haven't read them. [Laughter]

So, ... well, that would be the whole domain of the epic lament. The tragic lament, with tragedy... you know that tragedy adopts the lament, ... Greek tragedy... I am quoting like that,

from memory: "Oyeoyeoye oye oyeoyeoye eya popeya eya popeya ..." [Deleuze wails] Good, you feel that this is a lament. [Laughter] Did you feel it? No, but anyway, I expressed it very ... too cheerfully. [Laughter] I expressed it too cheerfully. I'll start again: [Laughter] "Ah ahah aaaah aaaah." Good. [Laughter] But, here too, we can see that the tragic actor does not possess the essence of the lament. Why? It's the chorus that expresses laments. In tragedy, it's the chorus. The chorus which, in the end, is in a certain way, excluded from the tragedy, aahh... which is there as witnessing a kind of... I don't know what it witnesses, but... fine, it intervenes when... when we have time to involve it; it intervenes in the form of the great lament. Oedipus does not lament, but the choir, well then: "Ooye, oye oye, oye, what's wrong with him, poor Oedipus? What's going to happen to him?... Oh ooooh oh oh ..." Good. Greek tragedy contains the finest lament texts that exist, but the lament is not pure therein since it is caught in the tragic element just like the lament was caught in the epic element.

There's a whole different kind of lament, so, in a whole different civilization, it's the ... relig... ... the prophetic lament. The prophetic lament, the prophet never ceases lamenting. And, in that way, the prophet belongs to a great model which is Job, Job's lament. Job's lament [*inaudible words*], Job's lament when he calls out to God: "So, what now? So, what now? What, me? What?" The prophet's long lament is very, very important; it's not the tragic lament, it's not the epic lament.

You have the popular lament which gives rise to the complaint ... You have plenty of laments. But the lament becomes pure in its elegiac role. The great poets of the lament are the elegiacs. These are neither the tragedians, nor the epics. Who is it? First of all, this is the whole tradition of the Greeks. The epics... are spoken about... for the Greeks, of tragedy, but considered as equal to the great tragedies and of ... and of Homer, and from the epic, there is the series of Greek elegiac poets. And there are medallions, there are [*inaudible word*] of medallions here: one side for ... Homer and one side for a great elegiac. Latin poetry which is one of the things... there, well, one of the only men in France today capable of speaking fully of this is precisely Paul Veyne,... because he has, I don't know by what gift, he has a sense of what they contributed to rhythm, about the rhythmic value of these poets. This is the great series: Catullus, Ovid, Tibullus, Propertius, for whom a part of the work is made up of elegies, with rhythms, so with a fundamental rhythmic invention.

And all that, I am saying: who is it... [Deleuze does not finish] I'm returning to my question. If the elegy is really the lyrical form of the lament, that is, the form in which the lament appears in its purest form, who in history is lamenting? Well, that's an answer that may interest you, at least Tōkei's answer, which shows it -- I am not saying in general -- for the Chinese elegy. Well, he said: who is the one who is basically lamenting in the Chinese Empire? It's neither the outcast nor the imprisoned man; it's the freed slave. Neither the oppressed ... nor the outlaw, nor the oppressed, nor the ... I don't know what; it's the freed slave. The Chinese elegiac genre begins with the importance assumed by this very, very curious historical figure: the freed slave. Fine. So, will this... maybe this will reconnect some things for us.

And the elegiac, the elegiac poet, we can say: he sometimes saw himself as outlawed. Take, for example then, the truly personal form of the lament: the amorous elegy. The elegy will be spoken

by ... There is an elegy as soon as there is mourning, as soon as there is a lament, as soon as there is a poetic lament. And take the ... the ... the amorous elegy: the elegiac poet pours forth his lament, right, his grandiose lyrical and rhythmic lament as a function of a whole constellation of situations in which, one by one, he presents himself as being rejected by the beloved, that is, cast out, oppressed by the beloved who abuses her power. But different from the outcast and also different from the oppressed, there is: the excluded one, [and] this is not the same thing, the character of the freed slave who feels excluded. The excluded one is the freed slave; he experiences himself as excluded.

So, it is ... [Deleuze does not finish] Hence ... hence the idiotic story, the freed slave who says: "ah, I would have preferred to remain a slave", that's quite idiotic. But let the freed slave, for example, in the examples Tökei analyzes very well, experience himself as excluded. The operation of emancipation is an operation that is very, very important at the same time. Is it not this which, at the same time, will be at the center of the lament, and of a lament that is much more effective than it seems, because it will lead to the rise of this new type of relations, the relations of people and of personal dependency in which, there, the freed slave will discover himself as a true master, not at all as someone who is dependent? If the sphere of the relation of personal dependency is initiated, it's the freed slave or something like that who becomes the master. And he is the one who will lead the Emperor's *consilium*, he is the one who will lead the Emperor's *fiscus*. Maybe, right? In the end, there would be a whole domain to finish ..., to give you something to work on between now and next week.

I am jumping to another register: what if we tried then to prepare a course or research study on these problems of the lament? There is in psychiatry ... the ... psychiatry is full of lamenters. And there are three great laments -- there are some students here working on this already, I don't know if they'll want to talk about it ... huh?

A woman student: Next week.

Deleuze: Good, good, good, there are the three great laments which correspond to ... to what we call the great contemporary neuroses, or what were called: the lament of the hypochondriac, the lament of the melancholic, and the lament of the depressive, and these are not at all the same, right? They are not the same. The depressive lament, we would have to invent rhythmic values. These are not the same rhythmic values; these are not the same rhythms. So, that would be too easy, an easy hypothesis, so we can't, but it would have been nice. It's that the real lament would be that of the melancholic, right, because he's the one who sees himself as excluded, whereas the hypochondriac is not... It's not the pure lament because, he, he experiences himself much more as outcast; the depressive, he experiences himself much more as oppressed, imprisoned. It's so easy that it's false, right, so it can't be true.

So, we draw this to an end, that's it. There we are, fine. You think about that, that's where we are. There you have it. [End of tape] [20: 21]

Notes

¹ This is only a 20-minute segment of the complete session of 15 January 1980, and given that there are no sessions available from December nor from 8 January, it is possible that there are several sessions missing from the recordings (e.g. 4 Dec, 11 Dec, 18 Dec, and 8 Jan). However, by comparing the material included in this fragment for the session's end to the material in session 4, one notes that the respective references in each session corresponding to *A Thousand Plateaus* do not constitute a significant gap in the development from plateau 13, "Proposition XII. Capture" (pp. 437-448) in session 4 to the same plateau, the start of "Proposition XIII. The State and its forms" (pp. 448-452) in session 5. Still, in session 6, Deleuze seems to backtrack to the second half of Proposition XII, possibly suggesting Deleuze's awareness of gaps in his presentation.

² Sallust, or Gaius Sallustius Crispus, was a Roman historian from the first century BCE. However, since he lived during the century preceding the era of Caligula, this is perhaps a reference to Suetonius. See Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves (London: Cassell, 1957). [Reference furnished with our gratitude by David Lapoujade, *Sur l'appareil d'État et la machine de guerre* (Paris: Minuit, 2025) – Trans.]

³ Paul Veyne was a French historian, a specialist in ancient Rome. However, no title that I could find by Veyne corresponds to the title cited by Deleuze. Veyne's major publication prior to this session is *Bread and Circuses* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1976; 1993 translation), on the practice of gifts in the Roman Empire. However, given that further on in the session, Deleuze speaks of forms of poetic elegy, there is perhaps a link between Veyne's mysterious title and another book by Veyne, on Roman erotic elegy (*L'Élegie érotique romaine* [Paris : Le Seuil, 1983]) that was published admittedly after this seminar, but sections of which may have already been published prior to the book's publication.

⁴ This is no doubt a reference to the major historical work by Jules Michelet, the multi-volume *L'Histoire de France*.

⁵ The lament is a frequent topic for Deleuze, not only in the following sessions of this seminar, but also here and there throughout the other seminars, notably in several seminars on Leibniz, notably 24 February and 19 May 1987, and also in the eight-hour interview, *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* (Gilles Deleuze, *From A to Z*).

⁶ As Deleuze says, Ferenc Tökei is a Hungarian sinologist; his book, untranslated into English, was published in French translation by Gallimard in 1967.