

### A Psychoanalytic Reading of Cyberspace: Problematizing the Digitalization of Oedipus Complex and the Dialectic of Subjectivity and Castration in the Cyberspace

Karimzadeh, Abdollah

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Karimzadeh, A. (2019). A Psychoanalytic Reading of Cyberspace: Problematizing the Digitalization of Oedipus Complex and the Dialectic of Subjectivity and Castration in the Cyberspace. *Journal of Cyberspace Studies*, 3(1), 43-58. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jcss.2019.272039.1032>

#### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-NC Lizenz (Namensnennung-Nicht-kommerziell) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/deed.de>

#### Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY-NC Licence (Attribution-NonCommercial). For more information see:  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>

## A Psychoanalytic Reading of Cyberspace: Problematizing the Digitalization of Oedipus Complex and the Dialectic of Subjectivity and Castration in the Cyberspace

Abdollah Karimzadeh

(Received 22 November 2018; accepted 30 December 2018)

### Abstract

In the present paper, a translational model to psychoanalyze the cyberspace is presented with the argument that cyberspace is a translated version of human unconscious that projects both our unfulfilled desires and suppressed anxieties. This Freudian-based line of argument is followed by *Lacanian* (1950s) and *Zizekian* (2004) psychoanalysis to problematize the digitalization of Oedipus complex and the dialectic of castration and subjectivity within the cyberspace. By adopting a fuzzy logic-based approach, it is argued that cyberspace has both a panopticon-like and synopticon-like structure. The former is Oedipal in that it induces a sense of paranoia in the subjects and makes them symbolically castrated, but the latter is anti-Oedipal in that it promotes indeterminacy and pushes the subjects to the climax of self-subjectivity and subversion of the Oedipally determined identities. This is a counterargument to Zizek's (2004) strong view that cyberspace is essentially anti-Oedipal, a transition from the symbolic castration structure to the post-Oedipal libidinal economy. The central argument of the paper is that cyberspace is the realm of both the Imaginary and Symbolic Orders where both the pleasure and morality principles are at work and access to the Real Order is maximized.

**Keywords:** anti-oedipus, digitalization of Oedipus complex, panopticon, psychoanalysis, Schizoanalysis, subjectivity, symbolic castration, synopticon.

**Abdollah Karimzadeh:** Assistant Professor, Department of English Language & Literature, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran- Email: akarimzadeh@ut.ac.ir



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (CC BY NC), which permits distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited and is not used for commercial purposes.

## Introduction

As all assumptions of the psychoanalysis discourse are based on the existence of an entity termed “unconscious”, in order to psychoanalyze the cyberspace, we need to assume an unconscious for it. Then the question striking in the mind is where the unconscious of the cyberspace is. To problematize this question, the present paper uses insights from psychoanalysis to argue that cyberspace is an extension of the human unconscious as Marshall McLuhan (1964) views the media as an extension of the human body. The central argument here is that the cyberspace is a translation of the human unconscious and thus an intertextual relationship between these two can be assumed. With this line of argument at hand, the human unconscious can be viewed as a “prototext” (the source text) and the cyberspace as a “metatext” (the target text). Since the metatext repeats the prototext in terms of content and form, it is concluded that the contents of the human unconscious have been transcreated in the cyberspace. In other words, our unfulfilled dreams, anxieties, and desires in the real life that have been suppressed and pushed deep into our unconscious constitute the contents of the cyberspace. With this hypothesis at hand, the current paper would see cyberspace as a projection of our neurosis and psychosis and as an extension of our psychic life.

As a translation of our unconscious, the cyberspace is a dream-like world where our unfulfilled dreams can realize and where our desires (even those desires that are regarded as taboos and accordingly are suppressed in real life by the force of the official discourse) can find a chance to be fulfilled. To borrow the Freudian terminology, it is a space where the objects of our desires are accessible with no extent and this makes the cyberspace a space of abundance and presence where such concepts as “lack” and “absence” (as requirements for the birth of subjectivity) are out of question. The matter is that the satisfaction and fulfilment of desires in this space include all our internal drives ranging from “desire for pleasure and adventurism” to “desire for information” and so forth. Thus, in order to problematize the unconscious of the cyberspace, some conceptual and intellectual toolkits from psychoanalysis theory are needed. These toolkits and insights can be drawn from Freud, who is the initiator of psychoanalysis theory.

In his seminal book *Interpretation of Dreams* (2015), Freud argues that the contents of our dreams consist of unfulfilled wishes and suppressed anxieties. That is to say, dreams are the embodiment of those desires or anxieties which were not given the chance to manifest

themselves in our consciousness. On the basis of this argument, this paper postulates that the dream-like cyberspace also manifests human internal desires and anxieties, such that the human anxiety for losing his/her object of desires (as one of our earliest internal anxieties) has been projected into this space. This anxiety which creates in us a sense of void compels us to compensate and make up for all the gaps and dead-ends of our real life in the cyberspace. As an example, the fear that we may lose the freedom of speech or democracy in our real life has been projected into the democratic world of the cyberspace. Because of this projection, when a newspaper is banned or freedom of speech is suppressed in real life, we can easily bridge this gap in the cyberspace. Or when our natural desires and sexual drives are suppressed in real life, they can be easily compensated for in the cyberspace. Accordingly, cyberspace is a projection of our unfulfilled desires and suppressed anxieties in real life. Obviously, this does not mean that cyberspace has removed and taken away all our anxieties because some new anxieties have been brought about by this space in turn which De Kerckhove (2009) terms them as “E-pathologies”. Some of these E-pathologies according to De Kerckhove are as follows:

- E-lag: feeling guilty about not being able to respond to hundreds of unanswered emails awaiting us,
- Claustrophobic Sense: the phobia resulting from the time-space compression in the cyberspace,
- Fear of virus attacks: the anxiety that our data may be deleted,
- Fear of hackers: the anxiety that our personal data may be accessed by hackers,
- Nostalgia for originality: the anxiety that nothing in the cyberspace is original. It suffices here to mention that Walter Benjamin (1986), the German cultural critic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had termed the digital age as the “mechanical reproduction of artworks” in which the “aura” of originality becomes a nostalgia. The same argument has been followed by Baudrillard in his *theory of simulacra* according to which in the digital era, everything is a copy of a copy with no real originality.
- Passworditis: the anxiety that we may forget a variety of passwords needed for logging into our various user accounts,
- Paranoia for the panoptic-like structure of the cyberspace: this structure which will be discussed in the following sections of this paper creates in our unconscious the anxiety that our digital activities and google searching may be controlled or kept under surveillance.

- Radical indeterminacy and uncertainty in the cyberspace: this uncertainty originates from the fact that in the cyberspace, we can never make sure of the real identity of our online friends. Nor can we make sure if we are dealing with a robot and digital persona, or with a real person.

With respect to these E-pathologies, it is argued that though the cyberspace has managed to fulfill our dreams and fantasies, it has brought about such modern anxieties and phobias as well. This is in line with our central argument that cyberspace is a translation of our unconscious and psychic life. With this argument at hand, in the following sections, the psychic mechanisms of the cyberspace as the main concern of this paper are explored through the lenses of Lacanian, Zizekian and Deleuzian psychoanalysis in a bid to discuss the mechanisms of subjectivity, power and resistance in the cyberspace. This would lead us to the discussion on the politics and poetics of subjectivity in cyberspace, which is a central debate in cyberspace policy studies.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Cyberspace Studies is a nascent academic discourse that is making an attempt to present a new epistemology of the whatness of cyberspace which has become one of the componential structures of our individual and collective life. Since its inception in the 1990s, it has undergone three waves according to Silver (2000). These waves have empowered and enlarged the discourse by introducing paradigm shifts and new approaches. One of the silent zones in this academic discourse that can make a big contribution is psychoanalysis. Although Zizek in 2004 took the first steps to reread the cyberspace through the lenses of psychoanalysis, it remains under-researched by the scholars of cyberspace studies despite the fact that it can present a new epistemology and novel insights into the politics and poetics of subjectivity in the cyberspace. To bridge this gap and in order to make a contribution to this silent zone, the current paper sets out to present a “translational model” for the cyberspace on the basis of psychoanalysis theory in a bid to problematize the unconscious of the cyberspace. This model can make it possible for us to discuss such psychic mechanisms as subjectivity and resistance within the cyberspace. Although Zizek (2004) has touched upon this topic, his strong view that cyberspace is a transition from the symbolic castration structure into a post-Oedipal libidinal economy is debatable due to the fact that it subverts all the underlying postulations of the cyberspace policymakers who are in

pursuit of the symbolic castration of the subjects in the cyberspace. To resolve this problem, the current paper argues that cyberspace should be viewed as a continuum from Oedipal to the post-Oedipal libidinal economy with an augmented degree of subjectivity, but the subjects still undergo a symbolic castration due to the panopticon-like structure of this space.

### **Research Questions**

In order to problematize the main concern of this paper, the following questions are formulated:

- Q1.** How can the cyberspace be psychoanalyzed and schizoanalyzed?
- Q2.** How do the mechanisms of subjectivity and resistance function within the cyberspace from the perspective of psychoanalysis and Schizoanalysis?
- Q3.** What are the implications of the psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic reading of the cyberspace for the cyberspace policy studies?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The present paper situates itself within the discourses of psychoanalysis and Schizoanalysis with a focus on the dialectic of subjectivity and castration within the cyberspace. To this end, subjectivity in the cyberspace is discussed through the lenses of Freud, Lacan, Žižek, and Deleuze as key figures in psychoanalysis. Since subjectivity is closely related to such concepts as power, resistance, agency and castration, these mechanisms are also explored in the light of Foucauldian epistemology. Freud's structure of the human psyche, Lacan's register theory of the symbolic-real-imaginary orders, and Žižek's view on cyberspace as a post-Oedipal structure, Foucault's notion of the panopticon, Mathiesen's notion of synopticon and Deleuzian shift from psychoanalysis to Schizoanalysis with the notion of anti-Oedipus constitute the theoretical backbone of this paper. It is aimed at deepening insights into the politics and poetics of subjectivity in the cyberspace.

### **Method**

This paper is descriptive and analytical by nature. It seeks out to reread and rethink critically the cyberspace in the light of some well-established theories in psychoanalysis. To do so, it uses insights from translation theory to present a new epistemology for the assumed unconscious of the cyberspace. Accordingly, parallels are drawn

between the human unconscious as the prototext (the source text) and the cyberspace as the metatext (the target text) to make the argument that cyberspace is a translation of the human unconscious. With this argument at hand, the contents of the human unconscious and the psychic mechanisms that are at work within it are explored in a bid to shed light on the dialectic of subjectivity and castration in the cyberspace. To problematize this dialectic, a fuzzy logic-based approach is adopted and the cyberspace is taken to be a continuum from oedipal to the post-oedipal extremes. Through this approach, the Oedipal/post-Oedipal binary opposition is subverted to break away from the dialectical pattern of thinking about the cyberspace. Since this paper is descriptive, providing empirical and quantitative data are beyond the scope of it.

### ***A Lacanian and Zizekian Reading of the Cyberspace***

The majority of Lacanian psychoanalysis revolves around the issue of subject formation and the function of the unconscious in the process of the subjectivity. Lacan's theory of subject formation and subjectivity foregrounds the function of language in the formation of the subject. It distinguishes between the pre-linguistic and post-linguistic phases by introducing three registers in the unconscious: The Imaginary Order, The Symbolic Order, and The Real Order (Evans, 1996: 115). In the pre-linguistic phase (or the Imaginary Order which initiates concurrent with the mirror stage), the infant has not yet learned the rules of language, thus being unable to talk. It cannot understand and describe the world around it through language, therefore, all its perceptions are based on imagination. Being in the Imaginary Order is equal to living a life with mental images. It implies the identification with the mother and this sense of identity produces pleasure in the subject (Eagleton, 1997: 143). During this phase, the would-be subject does not have a sense of distinction between subject and object or between the self and other. All things around it seem to be a whole entity with no clear-cut boundaries. Even it is imagined that the body parts and the immediate things around are not separate from each other. In fact, the world around is imagined to be the extension of the body. The Imaginary order according to Lacan is the order of "presence", "abundance", Jouissance (enjoyment) and "pleasure", because in the imaginary order, all of the desires and drives are satisfied and there is no sign of suppression or castration. The imaginary order comes to an end when the infant is weaned from breastfeeding.

The initiation of the weaning process is in fact a shift from the



pre-linguistic to the post-linguistic phase. As a result of this shift, the infant gets introduced to the concept of “loss” and “lack”. Henceforth, the “presence”, “abundance”, *Jouissance*, “pleasure” and fulfillment in the Imaginary Order is replaced with suppression under the Oedipal law. This suppressive law is a prerequisite for the initiation of the subjectivity. In fact, subjectivity is an outcome of the suppression through which the infant steps into the Symbolic Order and turns into a subject (Eagleton, 1997: 143). Prior to subject formation, the infant is still in the Imaginary Order with all its desires gratified and fulfilled. Subjectivity initiates when the father intervenes in the infant’s desire for the mother and suppresses it. This intervention and the primal suppression by the father whom Lacan calls “Object Petit A” (the big Other) turns the mother into “object petit a” (the little other). Thus, the identification with the mother in the Imaginary Order is replaced with a sense of otherness. The otherization process is a sign of stepping into the Symbolic Order that marks the initiation of the infant into the phase of subjectivity where establishing a border between subject and object or between nature and culture becomes possible. Within the Symbolic Order, the father (the capital-O other) is identified with the law and authority (the authority of the father is embodied in the concept of the Oedipal complex; Bertens, 2007: 161). For this reason, Lacan terms the symbolic order as “the law of the father”. The symbolic big other in Lacan’s view can refer to any authoritative power and/or knowledge (whether that of God, the official discourse in the society, social norms, state, science, culture, etc.). The lower case-o in the little other implies that the relation between the subject and the mother in the imaginary order is totally personal; however, the relation between the subject and the others in the symbolic order is social and interpersonal. Anything reviving the forgotten memory of the pre-linguistic identity with the mother in the subject’s unconscious can stand for “object petit a”. Therefore, “object petit a” in Lacan’s view refers to any unattainable object of desire. Within the context of this paper, it will be argued that the cyberspace functions as the “object petit a”, because it makes all objects of our desires accessible.

Before touching upon our analysis of the cyberspace from the perspective of the Lacanian psychoanalysis, it seems necessary to discuss in brief the function of the “Real Order” as well. Similar to Zizekian line of argument, we contend that the cyberspace is a manifestation of the Lacanian “Real Order”. The reason for this contention is that the Imaginary and the Symbolic Orders are mechanisms to restrain



the “Real Order” which is the most inaccessible sphere of our psychic experiences. It contains a variety of unattainable objects of desire or “objects petit a”, all symbolizing the primal loss (separation from the mother). Unlike the symbolic order that represents loss/lack and absence, the “Real Order” represents presence and abundance where all our objects of desire are accessible. The “Real Order” includes realities that are inexpressible and cannot be verbalized by language (a system of signs and symbols that initiates the Symbolic Order). It strongly resists against symbolization, thus challenging the symbolic order which is basically governed by symbols, norms and laws, all accessible to us through language. Once we begin to use language and step into the constructed world of the symbols, we get disconnected with the Real Order, because the Real Order resists against the symbolization (Bertens, 2007: 161). To experience the “Real Order”, we need to remove the language as a barrier and think about the universe without the medium of language which is almost impossible. When we as subjects step into the symbolic order, we come to the understanding that the realities are hidden behind the veil of discursive systems and that language is the major factor in keeping us out of touch with reality. Having discussed Lacan’s theory of register, now it is time to reread the cyberspace from the perspective of this theory in a bid to present a new epistemology for the field of cyberspace studies which is in a dire need to meet the intellectual needs of the academia. As mentioned in the previous sections, the tradition of rethinking the cyberspace through the lenses of the psychoanalytic discourse has been laid down by Zizek since 2004, but this tradition has remained a silent zone in the body of research on cyberspace.

In a paper entitled *What Can Psychoanalysis Tell Us about Cyberspace*, Zizek (2004) has applied Lacan’s theory of register to present a new paradigm for rethinking the cyberspace. In this paper, Zizek postulates that cyberspace is based on a libidinal economy. By this exposition, he means that in the cyberspace, the subjects are jettisoned into the pre-Symbolic Order (the pre-linguistic and the Imaginary Orders) and thus losing the symbolic distance (the space that is created due to the symbolic castration by the Oedipal law). This exposition may lead one to draw the induction that Zizek rejects the digitalization of the Oedipal structure and views the cyberspace as a post-Oedipal space into which the subjects are swallowed as if they enter into an incestuous relationship with it which is tantamount to the mother-infant relationship in the Imaginary Order. Zizek’s contention is that there is no suppressive force or castrating structure

in the cyberspace (which is an epitome of the imaginary order with the cyberspace users as the unsubjected infant and the cyberspace itself as the mother) to prevent the subject from entering into an incestuous relation, which is doomed to suppression under the Oedipal law governing the symbolic order. This line of argument leads Zizek to the conclusion that no symbolic castration of subjects takes place within the cyberspace. For him, the cyberspace is a space within which the Real and the Imaginary Orders overlap. As a consequence, the subjects within this space cannot distinguish the boundaries between the reality and the fantasy (hallucination of the reality), as if they are suffering from schizophrenia.

For Zizek, the cyberspace has the potential of emancipating the subjects, because it empowers the subjects by giving them the chance to be released from the phallogocentric Oedipal law which is dominant in the Symbolic Order. Zizek argues that the cyberspace is a manifestation of the “Real Order” or the Imaginary Order in which the boundaries between the real self and the digital persona or the “lived bodies” and “digital bodies” are blurred and all the limitations and restrictions in the Symbolic Order are removed. Under the phallogocentric Oedipal system, the subject’s gender identity is determined and fixed once the subject enters into the Symbolic Order. In Lacanian terminology, the law of father gives the subjects male or female identities. The subjects should yield themselves to this symbolic law, otherwise, they will be interpellated by the dominant discourse as Althusser puts it. In the Oedipal system, those who do not yield themselves to the totalitarian Oedipal law, are doomed to be viewed as sexual pervers with abnormal sexual behaviors. For this reason, all subjects under the Oedipal structure should be symbolically castrated. But adopting Zizekian line of argument will result in the contention that within the cyberspace, the disciplined lived bodies in the normative Oedipal structure turn into undisciplined post-Oedipal digital bodies that never undergo interpellation and castration. Accordingly, they can achieve a climax of self-subjectivity by entering into the play of deconstructing and reconstructing their Oedipally pre-established identities and assuming multiple undetermined identities. As an example, males can pretend to be females and vice versa. It is due to this radical indeterminacy in the cyberspace that the digital bodies feel a sense of being uncastrated and thus intensify their subjectivity and agency by such counter-discursive (anti-Oedipal) practices as *female self-representation* and the *male gaze* within the cyberspace as will be discussed later in this paper. These counter-discursive

practices can be a reaction and a resistance against the suppressive Oedipal structure of the official discourse outside the cyberspace.

In his book *Is Oedipus Online? Siting Freud after Freud*, Flieger (2005) presents a counterargument to the Zizekian view. He argues that the Oedipal law in the cyberspace is not suspended, rather the Oedipal system of subjectification continues to be at work within the cyberspace as well. According to this Fliegerian argument, the cyberspace, which is an extension of the physical real world follows the same rules and laws governing the offline social relations. Thus, in the cyberspace, Oedipus is online and the implication of this exposition is that the subjects within the cyberspace are symbolically castrated. This castration does not allow the subjects to return to the pre-linguistic phase (the Imaginary Order), where there is no restriction for the fulfilment of the desires. The present paper takes up a middle ground between these two extremes by adopting a fuzzy-logic-based approach to rethinking the cyberspace. On the basis of this approach which promotes the “both/and” pattern of thought instead of binary oppositions like pre-Oedipal/post-Oedipal, it can be argued that the cyberspace is a cultural fuzzy logic that is both Oedipal and anti-Oedipal or a continuum of pre-Oedipal and post-Oedipal (Lacanian pre-linguistic and post-linguistic phases) where we can experience all the three orders formulated in Lacanian register theory. This reasoning stems from our central argument that the cyberspace is a translation of the human unconscious in which all these three orders of the psychic life are experienced. This soft view can resolve the controversy over the bipolarity discussed above.

If the continuum of pre-linguistic and post-linguistic phases in the cyberspace is assumed, then it can be viewed as both a *panoptic* and *synoptic* space. The former is Oedipal, but the latter is anti-Oedipal. Panoptic is a concept borrowed from Foucault (1975) and synoptic has been borrowed from Mathiesen (1997). The panoptic structure as a technology of discipline had been proposed by Foucault for the symbolic castration of the prisoners. It is a structure similar to a control tower that induces a kind of castration anxiety among the prisoners because the prisoners imagine that they are constantly being controlled by the warders inside the control tower. Here, the warders are the, subjects but the prisoners are the objects of the gaze. However, in the synoptic structure as proposed by Thomas Mathiesen in his *Viewer Society*, both the prisoners and the warders are simultaneously subjects and objects of the gaze. It is simply a reciprocal system of control. Through these concepts and the

proposed continuum which is based on the Lacanian psychoanalysis, the mechanism of subjectivity within the cyberspace can be analyzed with fuzzy logic. With this logic, we can get out of the two extremes expounded by Žižek and Flieger as a binary opposition. According to this logic, the cyberspace is both oedipal and anti-oedipal. It is oedipal because it has a panoptic-like structure that can produce in the users of the cyberspace castration anxiety by inducing in them a hallucination and a sense of paranoia that there is a control center to keep their online activities under surveillance. This induced sense of paranoia can act as a technology of discipline (or the oedipal law), thus making them docile and symbolically castrated subjects who yield to the authority of the law (the symbolic order). On the other hand, it is anti-oedipal, because it has the potentiality of turning the panoptic-like structure of the symbolic order in the physical world into a synoptic-like structure in the digitalized world, where the gaze of the other is subverted into a dialectical gaze. As a result of this dialectic, the objects and subjects of the gaze become the same and thus power circulates through a system of competing discursive relationships as a dialectic of agency and constraint.

One of the prime examples for the dialectic of agency and constraint, which is a reaction against the practice of castration in the symbolic order, can be seen in the visual narratives and the self-representation of the female subjects in the social media through their profile pictures. A glance at these visual narratives indicates that the female subjects have an orientation to a *grotesque representation* and *symbolic inversion* of traditional gender stereotypes by adopting male gestures and postures just for the purpose of representing their agency and subjectivity. In these visual narratives, the young women usually subvert the dress codes imposed by the symbolic order to minimize the scopophilic visual pleasure of the male gaze and subvert the male subjects who make the female body their object of scopophilia -the terminologies have been borrowed from Laura Mulvey (2003) who is a pro-Lacanian scholar. Through this subversive act which has become possible thanks to the cyberspace, the masculinized gaze is challenged and the females turn into subjects of gaze rather than being objects of the male gaze. This subversion and the symbolic inversion of the subjects and objects of the gaze in the cyberspace is indicative of the fact that cyberspace can also be anti-oedipal, a transition from the symbolic castration structure to the post-Oedipal libidinal economy as Žižek puts it. Thus, the cyberspace can be perceived as a liminal space with a panoptic and synoptic structure fluctuating between Oedipal

and anti-Oedipal. This liminality makes it possible for the users to experience all three Lacanian registers that constitute the psychic life of the subjects. The anti-Oedipal extreme of the cyberspace makes it possible for us to reread it from the perspective of Schizoanalysis as well. Accordingly, in the next section of the paper, an attempt is made to shift from the psychoanalysis to the Schizoanalysis of the cyberspace.

### **Schizoanalysis of the Cyberspace**

In the book *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1983) replace psychoanalysis with Schizoanalysis (a post-structuralist psychoanalysis) as a centrifugal discourse to criticize the capitalist system and any suppressive, totalitarian and centripetal discourses. Through Schizoanalysis, they expound the political, revolutionary and subversive nature of the desire. They criticize the oedipal system for its being a suppressive and totalitarian discourse. For them, the Post-Oedipal system (anti-Oedipus) is the best tool for resistance against any suppressive system. Since the suppression of desires by the Oedipal system is regarded a precondition for the formation of the unconscious and the consequential birth of subjectivity by the structuralist psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari criticize it, for this way of thinking carries normative ideas or demands about how people should function. They redefine the unconscious as a “desiring-machine”, a productive force that has the capacity of dismantling any suppressive system seeking to take the desires under its control. Such a machine according to them can mass-produce multiple desires as a reaction to the suppression of desires by the Oedipal system. Desiring-machines are infinitely productive forces that constitute our subjective experience of reality, the world that we know every day, replete with language, concepts (the symbolic order) and emotions. Symbolic systems according to them are seeking to bring the desires under their own control in a bid to tame and domesticate them. To this end, such systems territorialize the desires through ideological and political structures such as religion, family, schools, media and so on. Nevertheless, as an anti-oedipal discourse, Schizoanalysis puts an emphasis on “deterritorialized desires” a reaction against the territorialization of desires which can produce castrated subjects. Deterritorialized desires according to them are fluid desires that are flowing in different directions, not yielding to any fixed and well-established structure. Such desires can never be contained and suppressed, because they resist against any

symbolic castration. Now with this insight from the Schizoanalysis at hand, the question is how cyberspace can be interpreted through a schizoanalytic criticism.

As discussed in the previous section, for Žižek the cyberspace is essentially anti-Oedipal in that instead of producing symbolically castrated subjects, it can produce subjects with full agency. Such untamed subjects strongly resist the suppression of any desires, wishes and fantasies. They never yield themselves with docility to domesticating mechanisms (as the oedipal system is) or to the technologies of discipline as Foucault puts it. This Žižekian argument is in line with the tenets of the Schizoanalysis which legitimizes the anti-Oedipus. The anti-Oedipality of the cyberspace implies the idea that the cyberspace is totally based on the “pleasure principle”, not on the oedipalizing “morality principle”. Then, unlike in the physical world where the Real Order is out of the reach due to the influence of the oedipal law (the symbolic order), the cyberspace is totally the realm of the Real Order where sensual images, messages and imagination are constantly running.

A schizoanalytic reading of the cyberspace will lead us to the induction that our desires in the cyberspace are deterritorialized. This deterritorialization is not limited to our sensual desires and imaginations, rather, it includes our political desires as well. As discussed earlier, the political desires of the subjects in the real world are generally victimized and domesticated by suppressive systems (the symbolic order); however, the subjects in the cyberspace turn into desiring machines to subvert any symbolic order in the real world by mass-producing political and sensual desires that have a revolutionary and subversive nature. This strong view of the cyberspace held by Žižek may lead us to draw the conclusion that the cyberspace is a space of radical chaos and disorder where the subjects are totally centrifugal and where all the norms and rules of the symbolic order are suspended, but in our soft view which is based on the fuzzy logic, the subjects within the cyberspace fluctuate between two extremes of being symbolically castrated and being desiring machines. The sense of being a desiring machine pushes them to the utmost degree of subjectivity and agency, but the sense of claustrophobia induced by the panopticon-like structure of the cyberspace creates a sense of anxiety and paranoia in them and the very sense minimizes their degree of subjectivity. For this reason, this paper refutes Žižek’s strong view that the cyberspace is a transition from a symbolic castration structure to a post-Oedipal libidinal economy. Accordingly, our counterargument



is that this space is still Oedipal and this oedipality makes the subjects be symbolically castrated. This argument has significant implications for cyberspace policy studies which is after normativity, regularity and stability rather than chaos and disorder.

In our fuzzy logic-based approach to the cyberspace, the subjects are never passive and sterile (totally castrated), rather they are active subjects that can act as a counterbalance between the pleasure and morality principles or between the Imaginary (the Real) and the Symbolic Orders. The implication of this exposition is that the digital subjects are neither docile and disciplined nor uncastrated and untamed. Through the cyberspace, they can subversively reverse the power relations in real life as explained above in our discussion on the dialectic of gaze. They can also subvert the discourse of power or any centripetal discourse that suppresses the dissident voices by self-expressing, anti-Oedipalizing and counter discursive practices that can give voice to them. But such practices are not tolerated by the symbolic order and thus are suppressed through spatial manipulations on the part of the discourse of the power. Since the subjects are not passive, the dialectic of subjectivity and constraint continues; however, most of the time they both reach a point of compromise. Therefore, the cyberspace is the realm of both the imaginary and symbolic orders where access to Real order is facilitated and the possibility to fulfill the unfulfilled desire is minimized.

## Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt was made to apply the discourses of psychoanalysis and Schizoanalysis for rethinking and rereading the cyberspace and the question of subjectivity, power and resistance wherein. To do so, there was a need to hypothesize an unconscious for the cyberspace, because all assumptions of the discourse of psychoanalysis are based on the existence of an unconscious. Accordingly, a new model termed as “a translational model for cyberspace” was introduced and on the basis of this model, it was argued that cyberspace is a translated version of human unconscious. This line of thought was followed by the argument that the cyberspace is a projection of human real psychic life wherein all our unfulfilled dreams and desires in the real life become fulfilled and all the shortcomings of the real life are compensated. This is true for political desires as well which are closely related to the discourse of power, resistance and subjectivity. This debate, which is a main concern in cyberspace policy studies was problematized



through the lenses of psychoanalysis and Schizoanalysis to rethink the way the mechanisms of power, resistance and subjectivity are at work in the cyberspace. The main finding of this critical debate is that cyberspace is a continuum from Oedipal to the Post-Oedipal libidinal economy and as a result, we witness simultaneously the symbolic castration of the subjects and the augmentation in the degree of their subjectivity. Accordingly, the cyberspace is a dialectic of castration and subjectivity pushed by two extremes of Oedipus and anti-Oedipus. The former is producing docile and disciplined bodies, but the latter is producing political bodies (subjects) that are seeking out to resist against any suppressive act through their subjectivity. Since the cyberspace is a translation of human unconscious, all the structures proposed for visualizing the unconscious including Freud's triple model of id-ego-superego and Lacan's three registers are applicable to the cyberspace.

## References

- Benjamin, A. (1986). The Decline of Art: Benjamin's Aura. In *Oxford Art Journal*, 9(2): 30-35. doi:10.1093/oxartj/9.2.30 .
- Bertens, H. (2007). *Literary Theory: The Basics*. New York: Routledge.
- De Kerckhove, D. (2009). *The Body Electric: E-addiction, Penelope Complex, E-lag and Other E-pathologies*. Barcelona: Internet Interdisciplinary Institute.
- Deleuze, G. et al. (1983). *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus*. Vol. 1, trans. F. Hurley, et al. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Eagleton, T. (1997). *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. 2 nd Ed. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Evans, D. (1996). *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Flieger, J.A. (2005). *Is Oedipus Online?: Siting Freud After Freud*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Freud, S. (1955). Beyond the Pleasure Principle. In D. Strachey, et al. (Eds.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. vol. XVIII, London: The Hogarth Press, pp. 1-64.
- McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Mathiesen, T. (1997). The Viewer Society: Michel Foucault's Panopticon Revisited. In *Theoretical Criminology*, 1(2): 215-234. doi:10.1177/1362480697001002003.
- Mulvey, L. (2003). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. In L. Braudy &

- M. Cohen (Eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*.
- Silver, D. (2000). Looking Backwards, Looking Forward: Cyberculture Studies 1990–2000. In D. Gauntlett (Ed.), *Web Studies: Rewiring Media Studies for the Digital Age*, pp. 19–30, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zizek, S. (2004). What Can Psychoanalysis Tell Us about Cyberspace? In *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 91(6): 801-830.