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Deleuze Against Control: Fictioning to Myth-Science

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Our ability to resist control, or our submission to it, has to be assessed at the level of our every move. We need both creativity and a people. (Deleuze, 1995a: 176)

Introduction: Deleuze and Control Societies

The complexity and heterogeneity of subjectivity is being increasingly reduced and standardized through various economic and political constraints, but also via accompanying images, narratives and other forms of control. The last ten years in particular – especially with the arrival of web 2.0 – have seen an acceleration (in terms of both production and dissemination) of these dominant representations: put bluntly, even our unconscious is being colonized by a mediascape that masquerades as participatory. In such a homogenized ‘post-internet’ context contemporary art’s ability to produce different images and narratives – its power of fictioning – can take on a political character. Indeed, in our current moment, when alternative and resistant strategies for life and living can be stymied, art (and aesthetic practices more broadly) can offer up other resources – other models for an increasingly hemmed in existence.

In what follows I attempt to stake out some of the conceptual terrain of these kinds of expanded art practice – what I call (following Sun Ra and the artist Mike Kelley) myth-science – through recourse to Gilles Deleuze’s short polemical essay ‘Postscript on Control Societies’ and the accompanying interview (in the book *Negotiations*) on ‘Control and Becoming’.¹ Although twenty years old these two short pieces remain highly prescient in terms of their diagnosis of our contemporary moment, whilst also offering up a veritable armoury for any practice that might pitch itself against control. The interview in particular contains a condensed version of many of the inventive concepts of *A Thousand Plateaus* as well as an overview of Deleuzian thought in general. That said, in the Postscript we also encounter a Deleuze more sober, and at times pessimistic, than the one of the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* books. The joy and affirmative tone of the collaborations with Felix Guattari gives way to a polemic that, if not a lament, certainly has something of the Frankfurt School diagnostic about it, especially in its attention to the increasingly technologically determined nature of society and how such advances, although at first an apparent positive move away from previous, harsher, regimes, have brought their own more insidious and intricate issues and problems.

For Deleuze it is William Burroughs who first identifies and names this new kind of society that is ‘knocking on the door’ of those Disciplinary ones analyzed by Michel Foucault. Control Societies

¹ In relation to Sun Ra (and Afrofuturism more generally) see Kodwo Eshun’s *More Brilliant than the Sun* (Eshun, 1998), especially Chapter 9 ‘Synthesizing the Omniverse’, pp. 154-63. Mike Kelley, in an essay on Olaf Fahlstrom, links the term more particularly to the fictioning aspect of contemporary art practice, especially in its expanded form (Kelley, 1995).

are characterized by modulation rather than confinement: continuous monitoring and ongoing assessment replace discrete temporal segmentation – and, in terms of the proliferation of image worlds I mentioned above, there is the superseding of the analogical by the digital with the emergence of different kinds of cybernetic machine leading to the computer. In fact, one gets the feeling that Deleuze’s short essay is itself a letter to the future; certainly the sense is that it will be the generations after his own, which is to say ours, that will have to fully attend to the various twists and turns, the feints and bluffs – the snakes as Deleuze calls them – which, in some parts of the world, are increasingly replacing the more straightforward strategies of power of previous societies.²

Indeed, Deleuze’s predictions, have, by and large, been accurate and Control Society – at least in the First World – is now at least one definition of our own networked present. ‘Big Data’ is enabling ever more sophisticated pattern recognition which is resulting in pre-emptive politics and marketing strategies that determine our behavior and our ‘choices’ (see Savat 2009). Social Media has further tightened the coils of the snake. In fact, web 2.0 – with its stock of images and narratives (and the employment of algorithmic logics ‘behind the scenes’) – is an especially insidious example of the snake’s forked tongue insofar as it dictates the very terms of our participation (despite its claims we remain, as Guy Debord might say, spectators on our lives). Nevertheless, despite this pessimism we also find in Deleuze’s essay something else that does hark back to a book like *A Thousand Plateaus*: a call to look to what has been opened up by these ‘new’ developments – or, at least, to the possibilities of resistance that, for Deleuze, will always and everywhere accompany control, understood as our latest form of capitalism. As he remarks towards the end of the Postscript – in a counterpoint to resignation and any melancholic paralysis: ‘It’s not a question of worrying or hoping for the best, but of finding new weapons’ (Deleuze, 1995a: 178).

My own essay ends with a case study – of Burroughs’ ‘cut-up’ technique – but ahead of this follows a more abstract and technical programme of connecting certain concepts extracted from the above mentioned interview (each section begins with a quote taken from there) alongside further references to other works by Deleuze and Guattari. The intention is to map out the contours of an artistic war machine (the new weapons) that might also play a role in the more ethico-political function of the constitution of a people (or, what Deleuze in the interview calls ‘subjectification’).³

² In fact, it might be more accurate to say that we are living in societies that operate by both Discipline and Control (with the former playing the preeminent role in more repressive regimes, the latter in more ‘democratic’ ones). David Savat has convincingly argued that these two modes of power not only use the same ‘writing machines’ (databases) but that Deleuze’s ‘dividual’ – understood less as object, than as ‘objectile’ – is itself a ‘product’ of the two modes of power in combination (treated as both form and flow as it were) (Savat, 2009). Savat’s essay concerns itself specifically with the modes of operation (and instruments) of Control Societies, but it also gestures towards a parallel project which would be concerned with those forms of subjectivity (or, the ‘superject’) that might live against control. It is here that I would situate my own essay insofar as it attempts to move from diagnosis to strategy.

³ In fact, Deleuze suggests that this subjectification might be operative without a subject as such (when the latter is understood as a particular – static – configuration) and more akin to the irruption of an event (Deleuze, 1995: 176). Deleuze also suggests that this subjectification as event is what constitutes the brain – understood as itself a set of machinic processes that cannot be simply reduced to the object of typical science (being more like an extended – rhizomatic – network that extends out into the world). Subjectification, in this sense, is the experimentation with different kinds of connections and leaps, different kinds of thought that,

The New Weapons

In reflecting on our contemporary moment – in ‘Control and Becoming’ – Deleuze turns to Marx and to the Marxist analysis of capitalism, but is also very much concerned with the terrain and terminology of *A Thousand Plateaus*, introducing three new conceptual categories (which are also found there) that might be said to determine, for Deleuze, the operating protocols of any new weapons. These are as follows:

i. Lines of flight

You see we think any society is defined not so much by its contradictions as by its lines of flight, it flees all over the place, and its very interesting to try and follow the lines of flight taking shape at some particular moment or other. (Deleuze, 1995a: 171)

Lines of flight are the cutting edge of any given assemblage (broadly understood as a collection of heterogeneous elements in relation with one another), and, in this sense, are as much a name for capitalism’s own advanced operating probes as they for anything straightforwardly resistant to the latter. They are to do with experimentation – with invention and innovation – and thus also with the overcoming of limits and boundaries. More generally they imply a move out of a given territory, and, as such, we might also call these lines of flight deterritorialisations. In fact, for Deleuze and Guattari, capitalism names two moments or movements: a primary one of deterritorialisation and then a secondary one of reterritorialisation that captures and siphons off surplus value from this prior moment (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 222-40). This, we might say, is the ontological terrain of any new form of control, but also of any ‘resistance’ to it (Hardt and Negri make this explicit in their suggestion that hitherto – within Critical Theory – it was the second moment that was critiqued (as in ideology or institutional critique), but that now it might be more a question, following Deleuze, of strategically affirming the first moment (of ontological production and creativity) (see Hardt and Negri, 2000, pp. 69-90).

Lines of flight then foreground a logic of **movement and speed**. In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms the first of these is extensive (to do with objects in space: ‘Movement designates the relative character of a body considered as “one”, and which goes from point to point’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 381)), the second intensive (involving a register of the subjective: ‘*speed, on the contrary, constitutes the absolute character of a body whose irreducible parts (atoms) occupy or fill a smooth space in the manner of a vortex*’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 381)). This twin definition is found in *A Thousand Plateaus* where, in fact, it is really speed – alongside the idea of an ‘imperceptible movement’ (beneath or above a given perceptual threshold) – that is characteristic of the line of

we might say, produce different thought-subjects (and not the single, cohesive and centered-subject favoured by control – or, indeed, a more fluid subject that nevertheless remains tied to the typical and dogmatic image of thought (and prevailing market)). I lay out the mechanics of this – and other Deleuze-Guattarian ideas on subjectivity – in more detail in Chapter 5, ‘Desiring-Machines, Chaoids, Probe-heads: Towards a Speculative Subjectivity (Deleuze and Guattari)’, of my book *On the Production of Subjectivity* (O’Sullivan, 2012: 169-202)

flight. In *Anti-Oedipus* on the other hand, and in relation to capitalism per se, a more straightforward idea of extensive movement is still determining of these experimental probes.

In terms of some recent debates in continental philosophy and politics we might suggest that lines of flight operate through acceleration (with the caveat that some accelerationist thinkers pitch their understanding of this latter term against any Deleuzian concept of speed).⁴ Certainly the important passage from *Anti-Oedipus* that to a certain extent initiated what has become known as ‘accelerationism’ refers precisely to this particular topography of capitalism, and to the idea that rather than resisting the latter it might be a question of going in the opposite direction: ‘To go still further, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialisation’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 239). ‘For perhaps the flows are not deterritorialised enough, not decoded enough ... not to withdraw from the process, but ... to “accelerate the process,” as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven’t seen anything yet’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 239-40). I will be returning – briefly – to accelerationism at the end of my essay, but it is worth remarking here that art practice might also orientate itself in this forward direction: not as withdrawal or critique (at least as its primary moment) but on – or as – an experimental line of flight.

ii. Minorities

A minority, on the other hand, has no model, it’s a becoming, a process. One might say the majority is nobody. Everybody’s caught, one way or another, in a minority becoming that would lead them into unknown paths if they opted to follow it through. (Deleuze, 1995a: 173)

Minorities are not based on identity (as, for example, with class (at least when this is thought as stable and molar)), but, as it were, on a common lacking of (molar) identity. A minority is not then to do with number (it is not necessarily smaller), but to do with a model – the major – that it refuses, departs from or, more simply, cannot live up to. We are all minorities in this sense. But the minor also names a strategic operation – as in the becoming-minor of a major language. In Deleuze and Guattari’s *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, written between *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, this operation involves three interconnected aspects or procedures (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1986: 16-18): 1. The foregrounding of the affective character of language (or a stuttering and stammering of the major and an undoing of typical sense); 2. The connecting to a non-oedipal

⁴ See, for example, Alex Williams’ discussion of the difference between speed and acceleration in his ‘Escape Velocities’ (Williams, 2014). Speed, for Williams, is tied to capitalist axiomatics (as is the case, Williams argues, in Nick Land’s writings (that Follow Deleuze and Guattari)); acceleration, on the other hand, involves new forms of conceptual navigation (as in Reza Negarestani’s work) and new images of the human as hyper-rational being (as in Ray Brassier’s). There is more to be teased out here insofar as it is not clear whether the more intensive character of speed – the ‘stationary voyage’ – has been factored into this distinction: the question, it seems to me, is whether rational thought generally, and new forms of conceptual navigation more specifically, are characterized by movement or by speed (in the terms I have laid out above) (Williams’ comments on the specifically geometric character of conceptual navigation would suggest the former). I attend in more detail to some of the accelerationist writing of Brassier and Negarestani – in relation to myth-science and what I call mythotechnesis – in my forthcoming essay ‘Accelerationism, Prometheanism and Mythotechnesis (O’Sullivan, 2016a).

and non-domestic outside (a principal of collectivity and alliance); and 3. A future-orientation (a minor literature is *for* a people-yet-to-come).

In terms of 2. and 3., a minor literature is always already political (any individual therein is always connected to larger social assemblages) and always a collective enunciation (insofar as a minor literature expresses ‘another possible community’ and forges ‘the means for another consciousness and another sensibility’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986: 17).⁵ Indeed, the literary – or more generally artistic – machine is, in this sense, also a revolutionary machine.⁶ Art, we might say, is like the forward hurled pre-cursor of politics – again, a line of flight – but also one that deterritorialises the major. This is to use the ‘what is’ in a different and experimental manner. It links to what Deleuze says in the interview about the ‘untimely’ nature of an event that is concerned with becomings that are irreducible to past configurations (or any given historical conditions).⁷ Becomings are an irruption of the new in this sense.⁸

Minorities then foreground a **stuttering and becoming** of the major. Indeed, we might make the claim here that a line of flight that is not minor – that does not stutter and stammer, does not depart from the major – is just the typical operating fringe of more majoritarian assemblages and territories. A caveat to this – following my remarks above – is the more complex and insidious idea (the snakes once again) that capitalism – at its furthest reaches, its sharpest points – is also minoritarian, or, at least, utilizes certain logics of the minor, for example in the capacity to abandon models (of, for example, the typical commodity-object or, indeed, the usual consumer-subject). We might make the more specific claim then – again, following my remarks above – that the minor is that which foregrounds becomings (and, as such, a certain intensive speed) that in themselves operate against reterritorialisations (the more regulative speeds of the market) when these are attempts to fix and extract surplus value from deterritorialisations. Art involves the production of the new, but only when this is also a stuttering and stammering of the given.

iii. War machines

⁵ In terms of the first of these aspects – the stuttering and stammering character of a minor literature and the relation of this to art practice – see Ola Stahl’s essay in this issue and also Chapter 2, ‘Art and the Political: Minor Literature, the War Machine and the Production of Subjectivity’, of my book *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari* (O’Sullivan, 2009: 69-97). This book also contains the beginnings of my thoughts about art as myth-science (144-53), and, more generally, tracks through the implications of Deleuze (and Deleuze and Guattari’s) thought for contemporary art practice.

⁶ Although there is not the space to go into this here, Deleuze’s idea of a minor – third-world –cinema (that ‘contributes to the invention of a people’) might be said to operate as a connector between the artistic and political machine – and, as such, might also contribute to the idea of fictioning or myth-science as an expanded art practice (see Deleuze, 1989: 217). (Thanks to Ola Stahl for this point).

⁷ To quote Deleuze:

What history grasps in an event is the ways it’s actualized in particular circumstances; the event’s becoming is beyond the scope of history. History isn’t experimental, it’s just the set of more or less negative preconditions that make it possible to experiment with something beyond history. (Deleuze, 1995: 170)

⁸ For a more detailed discussion of becoming – in relation to fictioning – see my forthcoming essay ‘Memories of a Deleuzian: To Think is Always to Follow the Witches Flight’ (O’Sullivan, 2016b).

...finding a characterization of ‘war machines’ that’s nothing to do with war but to do with a particular way of occupying, taking up, space-time, or inventing new space-times: revolutionary moments ... artistic movements too, are war-machines in this sense. (Deleuze, 1995a: 172)

The concept of the war machine involves both a spatio-temporal aspect (the occupying of a different space-time) and an organizational aspect (the actual composition of the machine, with its own particular speeds and slownesses). A war machine is then to do with both **duration and composition**: it operates on – or as – a line of flight, but it is also a processual work of construction. As such, and as Deleuze remarks, art movements – and could we also add specific art practices? – might be war machines (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995a, 172). War is only the concern of these machines insofar as they inevitably clash with a state machine that is intent on striating the smooth space that is the war machine’s milieu (one thinks here, for example, of the increasing privatization of public space and the responses to this (or, indeed, the ‘enclosure’ of a once wild web)). How has a particular space-time been composed and then how is it deployed – or pitched – within and against the world as given (or more dominant space-time)? These are the key determining factors of an ‘engaged’ art practice.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari go into more detail about the composition of these machines and their complex relation to both war and the state. Indeed, the state, although wary, often appropriates – or ‘employs’ – a radically exterior war machine (it does not have such machines of its own). In these moments war becomes the machine’s object and a line of abolition is drawn. However, it is always an uneasy marriage insofar as a war machine, in its essence, involves something different: the ‘drawing of a creative line of flight, the composition of a smooth space and ... the movement of people in that space’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 422). Any critique – ‘against the state and against the worldwide axiomatic expressed by States’ – is an important, but secondary effect of this prior creative impulse (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 422).

For Deleuze and Guattari, and in terms of actual composition, it is Kleist’s writing machine (and in particular *Penthesilea*) that most accurately depicts the different speeds – and impersonal affects – of the war machine involving as it does ‘a succession of flights of madness and catatonic freezes in which no subjective interiority remains’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 356). In the war machine everything is always already exterior, involving a different kind of rhythm – a composition of becomings – to the state machine (and, indeed, to those forms of life produced by the latter). The war machine is also necessarily collective in character involving decentralized bands or packs, ‘groups of the rhizome type’ which are ‘formally distinct from all state apparatuses or their equivalents which are instead what structure centralized societies’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 358). But here pack also applies to the molecularity on the other side as it were, to the multiplicity of different speeds and affects that constitute any given ‘individual’. A single artist might be a pack in this sense.

In the plateau on the war machine Deleuze and Guattari also write about a nomad – or minor – science that is ‘nourished’ by this machine (and involved in more hydraulic and non-hylomorphic models of matter), as well as to a more general nomadology that opposes state knowledge. Indeed, they go further, pitching a more nomadic form of thought against the dominant image of thought (or

its state form). Once again Kleist, alongside Nietzsche and Artaud are the crucial figures of this stammering ‘counterthought’ that both destroys previous images but also connects with an exterior – or the forces of the outside (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 376-78).⁹ Could this nomadic thought be characterized as a kind of myth-science insofar as it also often involves recourse to, and a mobilization of, those images and narratives – fictions – overlooked and occluded by dominant state forms?¹⁰ I will return to this idea below.

Although not specifically linked to the idea of new weapons, Deleuze introduces two further concepts towards the end of the interview that are also useful in providing a more focused idea of myth-science as a kind of fictioning:

iv. Fabulation

Art is resistance: it resists death, slavery, infamy, shame. But a people can't worry about art. How is a people created, through what terrible sufferings? When a people's created, it's through its own resources, but in a way that links up with something in art ... or links up art to what it lacked. Utopia isn't the right concept: it's more a question of 'fabulation' in which a people and art both share. (Deleuze, 1995a: 174)

Another name for this fabulation, I want to suggest here (and have developed elsewhere) is myth-science.¹¹ This is the **imagining and imaging** of alternatives, but also their insertion into reality – to augment or disrupt the latter. As Deleuze remarks, this is not the same as utopia – that can work to defer the production of a new people (always the receding horizon), but something more pragmatic. It is linked to the idea of a minor literature (of giving voice to a people-yet-to-come) insofar as it is a collective enunciation (even if there is just one author). Art, we might say, calls forth the production of another world that is appropriate and adequate to its own depictions (however ‘abstract’ these might be).¹²

On the face of it there cannot but be a representational aspect to this kind of fictioning – a picturing and a story (at least of some kind) – but there is also a tendency to produce something different to those more standardized (and market driven) image-worlds typically on offer. Myth-science, in this sense, is not simply an escape from prevailing conditions insofar as it impacts back on reality, setting up further conditions – or contours and coordination points – for the production of a people (and how they might live). In fact, any production of subjectivity necessarily involves narratives and images and, as such, we might say, more specifically, that fictioning – as myth-science – offers up a different sequence and script (once again, Burroughs' artistic practice is a good case study of

⁹ See also Jon K. Shaw's essay in this issue.

¹⁰ I will be returning to this idea of the mobilization of aspects of the past in and against the present in a further essay on ‘Myth-Science as Residual Culture and Magical Thinking’ (in relation to the writings of Raymond Williams and Gilbert Simondon).

¹¹ See especially O'Sullivan, 2014b, but also O'Sullivan 2014a, 2015 and 2016a; and also Burrows and O'Sullivan, 2014.

¹² I briefly attend to this world-building character of contemporary art (especially in relation to the increasing ubiquity of digital imaging and editing technologies) in my essay ‘Art Practice as Fictioning (or, Myth-Science)’ (O'Sullivan, 2014b).

this). It is also in this way that this fictioning also demonstrates – as a refraction – the fictional nature of any and all so-called reality.

v. Vacuoles of noncommunication

Maybe speech and communication have been corrupted. They're thoroughly permeated by money – and not by accident but by their very nature. We've got to hijack speech. Creating has always been something different from communication. The key thing is to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control. (Deleuze, 1995a: 175)

To a certain extent this fifth concept is the opposite to the line of flight – at least apparently – insofar as it involves a kind of deceleration (circuit breakers). But, crucially, a slowing down on one register (in terms of perceptible movement) is the necessary precondition for allowing a different kind of speed at another (something more imperceptible). In fact, it seems to me – strategically – that it is always a question of mobilizing different speeds at different times (and especially, again, of resisting a certain regulative speed determined by the market). A slowing down of extensive movement can allow/be the cover for the increase in an intensive speed of thought (when this is also understood as a material practice).¹³

These vacuoles also involve turning away from dominant regimes of communication (they are not concerned with typical 'meaning') and their attendant profit driven logics. This refusal to participate in the dissemination of 'information' can in and of itself release the creative impulse (see Deleuze, 2006). Here, art can be a name for the pinnacle of these dominant regimes (the art market), but also, in its radical form, a name for that which resists them. It might also be the case that vacuoles of non-communication are not always completely mute. Dada for example was an extreme example of the refusal to mean – or, indeed, to sell – but was certainly not silent. A vacuole is selective in what it allows through – both in and out. What Dada did let through was precisely non-sense when this was also the germ of a new kind of sense and thus of new kind of subject appropriate to it. Adding this component to our myth-science concept foregrounds its **noncommunicative and creative** aspect. It stops making sense which means it can start doing something else.

To recap: myth-science, at least as I have attempted to define it as a particular practice of fictioning, is a projecting and pitching of *fabulation* against dominant reality (the **imagining and imaging** of alternatives). It operates as, or on, a *line of flight*, as a deterritorialisation (it involves a specific kind of **movement and speed**), but also concerns the deployment of narratives for *minorities* (a **stuttering and becoming** of the major). It is characterized by a different logic of **duration and composition** from the state which in itself implies the occupation of a different space-time (it is a

¹³ As Deleuze and Guattari suggest in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

The nomad knows how to wait, he has infinite patience. Immobility and speed, catatonia and rush, a 'stationary process', station as process ... (It is therefore not surprising that reference has been made to spiritual voyages effected without relative movement, but in intensity, in one place: these are part of nomadism). (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988 381)

war machine). It is not to do with dominant signifying regimes – it refuses to mean in this sense – but is **noncommunicative and creative** (operating as a *vacuole*).

Conclusion: Belief in the World

What we most lack is a belief in the world, we've quite lost the world, its been taken from us. If you believe in the world you precipitate events, however inconspicuous, that elude control, you engender new space-times, however small their surface or volume. (Deleuze, 1995a: 176)

What would it mean to believe in the world? It seems to me that it would be to believe that another world is indeed possible (besides the one of 'Capitalist Realism' as Mark Fisher puts it (Fisher, 2012)). It would be to maintain a kind of Spinozist faith in the potential of a body – understood in its most expanded (and compound) form – and thus, following Spinoza, also of the potential of thought itself (again, understood as a creative practice). And that both – body and thought – are always capable of more than the reductive account given of them by common sense and typical consciousness – or indeed social media and neoliberal marketing strategies (the locus of these last two defining contemporary mechanisms of control).

Ultimately this is what fictioning as myth-science proclaims: a belief that something else is possible – and that, as such, we are capable of more. More specifically it suggests that in art practice – in its most expanded forms – we also have a practical elaboration of this belief.¹⁴ This is not exactly the production of this other world (as Deleuze remarks this is the business of politics), but a kind of preview of this other place. In the above I suggested that art might operate as a pre-cursor of politics, but we might also characterize it as a backward hurled fragment of a possible future. Again, as Deleuze suggest in the quote above, utopia is not quite the right word as it suggests something too far off, too far removed from the world as it is.¹⁵ Fictioning as myth-science is rather a practice that, although future-orientated, instantiates a difference here and now.¹⁶

In a present in which our dreamtimes are co-opted to sell commodities and lifestyles, this production of new and different kinds of narratives and images, as I mentioned in my introduction, can become in and of itself politically charged. Here art's ability to produce that which was previously unseen and unheard, untimely images that speak back to us – as if they came from an elsewhere – is especially important and, again, takes on a militant character. These other, perhaps stranger, image-worlds and fictions – intended but also not intended – call forth a different kind of subjectivity (one masked, we might say, by more dominant – and standardized – models). They

¹⁴ MacKay and Avaneissen make a similar call – in their Introduction to *#Accelerate* – for 'new science-fictional practices, if not necessarily in literary form' (MacKay and Avaneissen, 2014: 37).

¹⁵ For more philosophical detail on this critique of utopia – as well as an intriguing footnote to the work of Ernst Bloch as a thinker of a more immanent concept of utopia – see Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 99-100.

¹⁶ I attend to a case study of this kind of time-loop – the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit's concept of 'hyperstition' – in this essay's companion piece, 'Hyperstition, Accelerationism and Myth-Science' (O'Sullivan, 2015).

speak not to us, but to something within us (or, to the collectivity that we are ‘behind’ any molar identity).¹⁷

Again, these practices will maintain a critical edge against ‘reality’ insofar as in the very offering of an alternative they cannot but refuse more dominant parameters and protocols. Indeed, fictioning in this sense is a kind of ‘weaponisation’ of fiction *per se*. It is no longer simply an escape from, or panacea for, the existing conditions, but something sharper: the material exploration of other imaginary possibilities in the here and now. As far as this goes fictioning as myth-science is just the latest incarnation of Dada, echoed by the Situationists, then by Burroughs. Its opening gambit – that I have attempted to conceptually elaborate in this short essay – might simply be: Nothing is true, everything is permitted.

Coda: Burroughs and the Cut-Up

When you cut in to the present the future leaks out. (Burroughs, 2014)

Deleuze was at the infamous ‘Schizo-Culture’ conference at Columbia University in 1975 – an encounter between French desiring-thought and American counter-culture – and no doubt heard Burroughs’ talk on ‘The Limits of Control’, which, along with Burroughs’ other writings no doubt influenced his own thesis on Societies of Control. Burroughs makes the key claim in that talk that it is through words that control is exercised – as a form of persuasion, often involving concession giving, but also deceit, or, we might say, fictions that are passed off as ‘real’. For Burroughs, although its hard to identify who, precisely, is doing the controlling, it is the mass media – itself a kind of fictioning machine – that he sees as especially culpable. Fiction – in the guise of typical communication and the dissemination of information – operates here as a strategy of control.

Burroughs’ own technique of the cut-up was then an operation against control, a stuttering and stammering – a deterritorialisation – of typical representation, pitched against the dominant fictioning-machine and its productions or what Jean-Francois Lyotard once called the ‘reality effect’. Indeed, Lyotard was also at the Schizo-Culture event. Did he also have Burroughs and the cut-up in mind (alongside more canonical art practices) when writing about the avant-garde function of art as that which disrupts this production of reality? Certainly, this reality effect, for Lyotard, was produced by a certain logical syntax and sequencing of both words and images (see Lyotard, 1984: 74). The cut-up, precisely, disrupts – and re-arranges – this consensual world.

In fact, in so far as typical grammar and syntax produces a certain linearity and temporal progression, then the cut-up invents very different durations – a stuttering of homogenous and standardized capitalist time. Indeed, the breaks and jumps – but also the repetitions and layering – of the cut-up novels produce a very different kind of space-time (following Bryan Gysin, we might also say the cut-up is a form of space-time travel in this sense). In Deleuzian terms, the cut-up operates as a kind of vacuole, but also opens up a smooth space within the striated. It functions as a war machine.

¹⁷ This understanding of art practice – as a kind of holding pattern (giving consistency and cohesion) for points of collapse – is laid out in more detail in my co-written essay (with David Burrows) ‘S/Z or Art as Non-Schizoanalysis’ (Burrows and O’Sullivan, 2014).

The cut-up also produces different images – often startling – that appear to come from somewhere else (and that then speak back to their progenitor).¹⁸ This is a side stepping of typical authorship (the mobilization of chance – a contact with an outside to the subject – alongside processes of selection and editing) and the insertion of the writer into the more inhuman semiotic chain of the unconscious (when this is both signifying and asignifying). What it means is that one produces something that has not been wholly intended. Is this not the goal of all art? To produce something that is by the self, but not of the self at the same time? Insofar as the key element of reality – as produced by the dominant fictioning-machines – is the constituted subject who lives and reproduces that reality, then this circumnavigation of the self opens up a new world and a new kind of subject appropriate to that world. J. G. Ballard (himself a master of myth-science) once remarked that with the ‘Nova Trilogy’ Burroughs was producing a new mythography – and, indeed, Burroughs himself refers to the later ‘Cities of the Red Night’ trilogy as a ‘mythography for the space age’. It seems to me that Burroughs was indeed involved in a kind of myth-science: intent on breaking dominant – major – myths, but also producing new minor myths for a people-yet-to-come.

I mentioned the important contemporary debates around accelerationism towards the beginning of my essay, and, indeed, it seems to me that someone like Burroughs operates as a key corrective to any over emphasis on reason and rationality as progenitors of any new kind of human for a post-capitalist world. The Promethean impulse – if it really is to produce something new – will need to take account of these other space-time explorations – these different fictionings that have an impact beyond the realm of art *per se*.¹⁹ In relation to this, and as a final note to this Coda, we might point to Genesis P. Orridge’s interest in ‘behavioral cut-ups’ that take Burroughs principles out of the literary form and into lived life (see Orridge, 1992). For Orridge this cut-up as strategy for life was precisely a form of magick when this, again, names both a disruption of consensual reality and the production of alternatives (including an alternative production of subjectivity). This is to live against control – or, at least, to probe its limits. For Orridge it is ritual and performance art – as with his own *COUM Transmissions* and later *Psychic TV* – that is able to navigate this terrain insofar as both involve the deployment of these alternative narratives alongside experimental actions in the world. Myth-science is a war machine, but also a kind of ‘performance fiction’ in this sense.²⁰ It

¹⁸ And, in this sense, the cut-up has something in common with Francis Bacon’s painting, at least as Deleuze writes about it, in the careful utilization of chance and collapse (or chaos) so as to scramble the given (the figurative) and allow another world to emerge (the figural) (see especially Deleuze, 2003: 99-110) (Thanks to Jon K. Shaw for this connection).

¹⁹ In terms of the contemporary instantiation of this rational Prometheanism see especially the essays by Negarestani and Brassier in Mackay and Avaneissen, 2014: 425-66 and 467-88. For more detail on my particular rejoinder – in relation to myth-science – see my extended critical review of that book (O’Sullivan, 2014a).

²⁰ The term ‘Performance Fictions’ was coined by David Burrows to describe a number of recent contemporary art practices in London (see Burrows, 2011). See also the writings of John Russell that also develop a concept of fictioning in relation to art writing and contemporary art practice – especially his own (an indicative example is ‘Autonomy is Not Worth the Paper it is Written On’ (Russell, 2012)). The present essay owes much to my own ongoing collaboration (and performance fiction) with Burrows, *Plastique Fantastique* (see www.plastiquefantastique.org). I am indebted more directly to Burrows for turning me towards Burroughs.

has left the written page (or indeed the gallery and studio) to become a way of life: a mode of aesthetic existence against control.

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