



Part of the series Synthetic Fabrication: The Myth of the Politics-to-Come

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Missing

The Millennium is ten years out, but for Baudrillard it might as well have already happened. The eclipsing of the communists' historical dream by globalized flows of floating capital and information ushered in a cold, glacial stasis: the enveloping of any sense of forward momentum by the simulation of what had once been real events. As ubiquitous media begins to seep down to every crack and crevice and the whirlwind fades into the sensation of an odd vertigo, the only question Baudrillard finds himself capable of asking is this: "What do we do now that the orgy is over?"

This orgy is the apex of modernity rendered as the endpoint of a dynamic process — "the moment when modernity exploded upon us, the moment of liberation in every sphere."¹ To be after the orgy is to be caught in a situation in which there is nothing left to do, because everything that has been sought has been obtained. There is no euphoria to be found here, only terminal freeze-out. "Now all we can do is simulate the orgy, simulate liberation."

A similar feeling haunts the pages of Deleuze and Guattari's final joint-work, *What is Philosophy*, written in what Guattari described as "the winter years". Without rising to a Baudrillardian hysteria at the sight of information technology, the two decried the universalization of communication that was occurring in their moment. "We do not lack communication", they wrote. "On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation. We lack resistance to the present."² For Baudrillard, such a resistance is all but impossible: the arrival of the simulated end of history instantly liquidates any capacity for movement within it. Deleuze and Guattari, by contrast, find in the inauguration of this new time the capacity "for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist".³

By making such a suggestion, a series of questions is posed: who are these people, how do they arise, and what do they do? The answer is, as always, far more complicated than the questions themselves, and can be found in the strange and unclear relationship between, on the one hand, the development of techno-economic forces, and on the other the generation of the *political myth*. Such are the building blocks of a *synthetic politics*, a recombinant form of political subjectivity and structural framing indicative of the realization of the *untimely*.



It can be said that the myth follows in the wake of techno-economic development. Although the orgy might not be over for Deleuze and Guattari, the irreversible supremacy of a globalized megamachine is a concern that can be tracked across their whole output, particularly in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. In *Anti-Oedipus*, capitalism is treated as an end-point, an “apparently victorious” system that reassembles everything that has existed.⁴ In a more esoteric register, the infamous ‘accelerationist passage’ hints at this as well by invoking Nietzsche’s affirmation of the levelling process driven by the development of society into a vast industrial clockwork, while in *A Thousand Plateaus* the spread of capitalism is recast in terms of a war machine that overtakes the world’s nation states and subordinates them to itself.⁵

The dynamics found in Nietzsche’s account and Deleuze and Guattari’s own are one and the same. The former’s affirmation of industrial levelling arises from the anticipation of a mysterious ‘new type’ of person, a “strong of the future” that will emerge from this process. For the latter, the victory of capitalism — or the war machine — provides the fertile soil from which new, mutant formations will grow:

We have watched the war machine grow stronger and stronger, as in a science fiction story; we have seen it assign as its objective a peace more terrifying than fascist death; we have seen it maintain or instigate the most terrible local wars as part of itself; we have seen it set its sights on a new type of enemy, no longer another State, or even another regime, but the “unspecified enemy’... Yet the very conditions that make the State or World war machine possible, in other words, constant capital (resources and equipment) and human variable capital, continually recreate the unexpected possibilities for counterattack, unforeseen initiatives determining revolutionary, popular, minority, mutant machines.⁶

Nietzsche’s Strong of the Future and the “revolutionary, popular, minority, mutant machines” spoken of here appear throughout Deleuze’s work — both with and without Guattari — as the “people who are missing”, a “people to come”. If capitalism comes at the end, the prophetic fulfillment of these people coming to pass does not denote the actualization of a new historical plateau, but a movement that breaks outside of history, that uses global, integrated capitalism as the raw materials for new formations. Deleuze and Guattari’s portrait of capitalism is one of a



metasystem that operates through a kind of double-bind, or a machine that carries out a reciprocal process of stratification and destratification on either side of itself. It unleashes radical energies in the volleys of a deterritorialization that is only *relative*, as it becomes subjected to a subsequent and compensatory reterritorialization. The people to come, however, stake out a position on the path of *absolute* deterritorialization, and thus find themselves in remarkable affinity with the *primary process* lurking below and beyond all other secondary processes.

It is unsurprising, then, that Deleuze pulls the motif of the missing, futural people from the work of the modernist avant-garde, themselves a reflection of the irresistible tug of techno-economic development that began accelerating into escape velocity in the wake of the industrial revolution. They appear in Mallarmé's lamentations that there is not yet a people ready for his *Livre* ("The Book"), an ambitious work-to-be that would serve as a 'pure work' capable of encompassing "all existing relations between everything". Traces of their presence can be glimpsed again in the writings of Franz Kafka, who for Deleuze and Guattari articulated a political program for a people with neither history nor voice, a people who are themselves missing. "The literary machine... becomes the relay for a revolutionary machine-to-come, not at all for ideological reasons but because the literary machine alone is determined to fill the collective enunciation that is lacking elsewhere in this milieu: literature is the people's concern."⁷ And finally, they arise in Paul Klee's *On Modern Art*, which directly parallels Mallarmé's disjunction between total art and a potential people that enter into relations with it:

Sometimes I dream of a work of really great breadth, ranging through the whole region of element, object, meaning, and style.
This, I fear, will remain a dream, but it is a good thing that even now to bear the possibility occasionally in mind.
Nothing can be rushed. It must grow, it should grow of itself, and if the time ever comes for that work — then so much the better!
We must go on seeking it!
We have found parts, but not the whole!
We still lack the ultimate power, for:
the people are not with us.⁸

One might add to this trinity Artaud's litany of 'mad artists' and transgressive voyagers (amongst



which he, of course, counted himself), Rimbaud's delirious self-identification with a pantheon of eternally 'inferior races', and even particular variants of the modernist trope of the New Man, especially when invoked to describe the rootless, vagabond populations who abandon their home territories for new horizons and intensities. Such people and groups help compose the *minoritarian* population of Toynbee's "society without a history", his term for the mobile, nomadic populations who strive to evade, yet often undergo capture and subordination by, the State.⁹ If history aligns with the State and its memory-order, then the nomads and minoritarians find themselves swept up in the turbulent flux of becoming, passing from the State's homeostatic order to creative disequilibrium predicated on an anti-memory.

It is clear that art plays an essential role in this forgetting. "Memory plays a small part in art... It is not memory that is needed but a complex material that is not found in memory but in words and sounds: 'Memory, I hate you'".¹⁰ Memory is a matter of organization, the cumulative order of the past laying claim to the present. Art, by contrast, is a matter of disassembly and recombination: it takes the orders of historical memory and cuts them up, rearranging them into hybridized, bastard bodies: such is the birth of new, mutant forms. By doing so the concerns of art (modern art, in particular) are not with the impact of the past on the present, but with prying open the present to the future in a way that profoundly transforms the present. This movement is what is at stake in the formation of a people who have not yet existed.

The Powers of the False

The lengthiest treatment of the people to come is found in Deleuze's exploration of the connection between the advent of the untimely and modernist art in *Cinema 2: The Time Image*. His primary concern here is with what he calls the *powers of the false*; while film is the primary mechanism through which he explores this concept, it is applicable to all forms of art that are based on the production of the new. The increased artificialization that had so frightened Baudrillard takes front and center: it is not only that art produces something false, but it emerges from a reality that is itself increasingly falsified. In this eclipsing of the world there occurs a "raising [of] the false to power" which allows "life [to free] itself of appearances as well as truth".¹¹ What is being described here is precisely the Nietzschean levelling process, the pulverization of the dominant orders of representation that leaves in its wake only *forces* in movement. And while truth might be an impossibility, Deleuze writes, this moment is imbued with the explosive energy of modernity,



precisely as captured by the various artists and denizens of the avant-garde. It is this figure, the artist-as-creator, that moves to the fore:

Only the creative artist takes the power of the false to a degree which is realized, not in form, but in transformation. There is no longer truth or appearance... What the artists is, is creator of truth, because truth is not to be achieved, formed, or reproduced; it is to be created. There is no truth other than the creation of the New: creativity, emergence, what Melville called 'shape' in contrast to form. Art is the continual production of shapes, reliefs, projections.¹²

Deleuze's point of reference (one that he shares, in fact, with Baudrillard) is a short chapter in Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols* entitled "How the 'True World' Finally Became Fiction: History of an Error".¹³ Lasting no longer than a page, this chapter provides a history running from the time of the Greeks up through modernity, noting a passage that runs through the rise of Christianity and its subsequent unsettling by the forces of scientific reason. The essential thing to grasp in this history, Nietzsche suggests, is the subsumption of the 'true world' by the mythic, configured here as fiction or fable. In the beginning, the true world was "attainable for the wise, the devout, the virtuous", who are themselves living within it. With Christianity, however, the true world becomes mystified and no longer attainable in this life. It is the promise made to the wise, devout, and virtuous. But this marks no end in its progression: the mystification continues, and the promise of the true world cannot be fulfilled because it has become unprovable, as the philosophy of Kant illustrates.

At the "first yawnings of reason" and the "[r]ooster's crow of positivism" the true world appears unattainable, and thus, in a subsequent turn, becomes "an idea with no use anymore". There is no longer necessity nor capacity for such an idea; even if people may still tread the old paths out of habit, it is threatened with ejection outright. This is precisely what comes to pass in the final stage, which for Nietzsche marks the "high point of humanity", and is nothing short of the overcoming of the human by the *overman* and the transvaluation of all existing values. The point at which Kant arrives, when the true world becomes unprovable, is the Death of God. It follows, then, that the completion of this process in its final stage is the Death of Man.¹⁴ "We have done away with the true world," Nietzsche writes, before asking "what world is left over? The apparent one, maybe... But no!



Along with the true world, we have done away with the apparent!”¹⁵

In his essay “Nietzsche, Polytheism, and Parody”, Klossowski describes how the “refabulation of the world” found in *Twilight of the Idols* works in conjunction with the eternal return.¹⁶ For Klossowski, the process being indexed by Nietzsche is nothing short of an “ontological catastrophe” in which the One is overturned and dissolved in the writhing sea of the Many. No longer held in place by the transcendent law of God — and his emissary, Man — identity explodes outwards and into a kaleidoscopic delirium as it detaches from the stratification of memory (such is the infernal logic of the time-schizzed utterance “I am all the names in history”). Klossowski suggests that this also entails the formation of new religions: “the eternal return of all things also wills the return of the gods”.¹⁷ The becoming-fable of the world, in other words, charts an exit or egress from historical time into a new mythic time.

Deleuze tracks this line into the political by finding in the artist the one who leverages the powers of the false — understood here in conjunction with the mythic age of the untimely — to call forth new forms. There is nothing in these powers that makes them inherently future-facing and transformative, much less politically radical; they can lead to disaster and the suppression of the truly new just as easily as they can to something liberatory. In the case of disaster, Deleuze himself seems to find this to be the far more likely outcome: “There is only a slim chance, so great is the capacity of nihilism to overcome it, for exhausted life to get control of the New from its birth, and for completed forms to ossify metamorphosis and to reconstitute models and copies. The power of the false is delicate, allowing itself to be recaptured by frogs and scorpions.”¹⁸ Nonetheless, “[w]hat Nietzsche had shown [was] that the ideal of the true was the most profound fiction”. When the people to come are forecast by the avant-garde, it is precisely this principle that is being invoked.

Legending

The chief example Deleuze provides for this process is Pierre Perrault’s 1963 film *Pour la suite du monde*. A native of Quebec, Perrault’s starting point was the recognition that his country and society was colonized and overcoded by the legacy of the French empire. Even speech was coded by the dictates of “correct French”, itself a reflection of an age of monarchism and centralization of power. Quebec, in other words, was an ostensibly independent political, social, and cultural territory that nonetheless was caught in the pincers of a master that had passed into something else.



Perrault's goal was the transformation of this situation, one that would entail the movement of the Quebecois people as an inferior people into a liberated people. *Pour la suite du monde* pushes back against the linguistic coding of high French by deploying localized dialects, and in place of European traditions, an older communal heritage is revived.

Perrault's goal, however, was not simply to swap the domination by the historical memory of the French empire with a resuscitated domestic traditionalism. The feedback between his artistic experimentation, the weight of history, and his real collaborators was intended to spark a process of becoming that would lead to the emergence of something authentically new and experimental. By calling upon the powers of the false to work through the questions of identity and political activity, Perrault was playing a game with *myths* — and yet he “[did] not want to give birth yet again to myths”, as he later wrote.¹⁹ Instead, passing through this process aimed “to allow people to give birth to themselves, to avoid myths, to escape customs, to elude Writings. I would like people to write themselves while liberating themselves from Writing.”

This process was called “legending” by Perrault. For Deleuze it is “fabulation”, the creation and transmission of stories or fables. His use of the concept has not, aside from the excellent writings of Ronald Bogue,²⁰ received much attention in the annals of Deleuze studies; the more prevalent notion of fabulation is the one provided by the late literary theorist Robert Scholes, who described it as an “emphasis on the art of the designer.”²¹ This fabulation is one interested in style and the way it operates, particularly in certain strains of postmodernism — namely, *metamodernism* — that turns away from strict realism to blend actual life with the magical or fantastic in order to destabilize the narrative form and turn it towards an open horizon. While Deleuze's fabulation bears some superficial resemblances with that of Scholes (both critique the orders of representation and look towards a shift away from old modes), the stakes are much higher in the former than the latter. In an essay on T.E. Lawrence titled “The Shame and the Glory”, Deleuze describes a “fabulation machine” that produces an image that “has a life of its own”, continually growing from an initial projection of forms of life onto reality. It is “always stitched together”, a patchwork image that serves as a “machine for manufacturing giants.”²²

The fabulation of Scholes is a celebration of the designer or artist. In Deleuze's work, the designer or artist are themselves *designed* in an open-ended process. Despite being creators, they are also conduits through which something flows and sets off cascading phase-shifts in the real. He finds T.E. Lawrence emblematic in this regard: here was a person — a British military officer, no less! —



who had to position himself among the subjected people and let their struggles wash over him, allowing him to become part of that war machine, before he can find the ability to write. And when he writes, it resonates with an incomplete transformation that traces of flux of becoming. Lawrence's work is not a self-serving tale of British adventurism, but a mythic exploration of a revolutionary group subjectivity that has cut straight through his own center: "Lawrence speaks Arabic, he dresses and lives like an Arab, even under torture he cries out in Arabic, but he does not imitate the Arabs, he never renounces his difference, which he already experiences as a betrayal... Lawrence's undertaking is a cold and concerted destruction of the ego, carried to its limit. Every mine he plants also explodes within himself, he is himself the bomb he detonates."²³

Lawrence is thus like the enigmatic figure of the far-seer described in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Far-seers may begin as "collaborators with the most rigid and cruelest project of control", in a manner akin to Lawrence's initial deployment as a representative of British imperial interests. Similar to Perrault's own flight from French imperialism, Lawrence exits the coding of the British empire to join up with the Arab revolutionary machine — just as the far-seer "will abandon his or her segment and start walking across a narrow overpass above the dark abyss".²⁴ As Bogue points out, Deleuze would later describe Foucault as a seer and clairvoyant due to his unique ability to sift through the murky byways of history in order to turn it back against itself, to use history "for something else: as Nietzsche said, to act against the times... in favor, I hope, of a time to come."²⁵ This description resonates in kind with Perrault's experimentation with a suppressed history in order to allow people to 'write themselves', as well as Lawrence's betrayal of his own history by embracing in part the nomadic past of the Arabic people.

Such are the stakes for fabulation, a hallucinatory process of simultaneous unveiling and falsification that is the "function proper to art". This picture is, however, quite incomplete (for our purposes here, at least). To reiterate an earlier point, the artist or designer is not the principal actor in this process; they are neither Prometheus nor vanguard. They are but a temporal conduit through which history and social subjection flow into becoming, mixing into an emergent bricolage. Fabulation itself seems to come from elsewhere. Indeed, the relationship between the artist and the invention of a people is directly tied to the war machine's capacity for counter-attack being contingent on the full development of capitalist production: art, Deleuze and Guattari write in *Anti-Oedipus*, joins with science as forces that 'fall out' from, or get pushed into overdrive by, the advances in capitalist deterritorialization. This not only foreshadows the theory advanced in *What Is Philosophy* (that philosophy, entering into a circuit with science and art to create the new, is



capable of going beyond capitalism), but calls back to Klossowski's exegesis on Nietzsche, wherein art and science are essential components in a 'conspiracy' that entails the levelling of society through industrial development (a topic that will soon be treated here).

It follows, then, that there is a distinctive relationship between fabulation and capitalism. Before unpacking this, however, it is important to trace out Deleuze's conceptual source for this process. This would be the writings of Henri Bergson, particularly his 1932 book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. It is here that the full dimensions of fabulation can be understood: not simply an emergent process that occurs on occasion, but a structure that underpins political reality itself. It is also worthwhile to track the influence of Bergson's philosophy on Georges Sorel who, while not a figure that Deleuze draws upon, offers a striking account of the relationship between myth, politics, and capitalist development that can shed light on the ultimate implications of Deleuze's theory. The task of constructing such a genealogy will proceed in Part 1 of the present essay.

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1. Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena* (London: Verso Books, 1990), 3.
2. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 108.
3. Ibid.
4. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 139.
5. In a fragment from 1887, Nietzsche writes that "Once we possess common economic management of the earth that will soon be inevitable, mankind will be able to find its best meaning as a machine in service of this economy — as a tremendous clockwork, composed of ever smaller, ever more subtly 'adapted' gears...". The incorporation of the human into the machine is described as a "dwarfing and adaptation"; in what we may call the 'accelerationist fragment', due to its enigmatic invocation in *Anti-Oedipus*, this dwarfing is rendered as a "homogenizing of European man" that "should not be obstructed", but sped up. See Friedrich Nietzsche *The*



- Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 463, 477-478.
6. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi
 7. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 17-18.
 8. Paul Klee, *On Modern Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), 54-55.
 9. Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History: Abridgment of Volume I-VI* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), 169; quoted in Christian Kerslake, "Becoming Against History: Deleuze, Toynbee, and Vitalist Historiography", *Parrhesia*, No. 4 (2008), 17. https://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia04/parrhesia04_kerslake.pdf.
 10. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 168.
 11. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 145.
 12. Ibid., 147.
 13. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols: Or, How to Philosophize with the Hammer*, trans. Richard Polt (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 23-24.
 14. Deleuze writes that "[w]e distort Nietzsche when we make him into the thinker who wrote about the death of God. It is Feuerbach who is the last thinker of the death of God: he shows that since God has never been anything but the unfold of man, man must fold and refold God." Man as such cannot properly exist until God is dead, but as soon as God is rendered as dead, man will be tending towards death right at this moment of his birth. "...where can man find a guarantee of identity in the absence of God?" See Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1989),
 15. Nietzsche, *Twilight of Idols*, 24.
 16. Pierre Klossowski, *Such a Deathly Desire* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 103.



17. Ibid., 121.
18. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 147.
19. Pierre Perrault, "Cinema du reel et cinema du fiction: vraie ou fausse distinction? Dialogue et Pierre Perrault et Rene Allio", in *Ecritures de Pierre Perrault: Actes du colloque "gens de paroles"* (Quebec, 1983), 54; quoted in Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze's Way: Essays in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 100.
20. See Ibid., as well as Ronald Bogue, *Deleuzian Fabulation and the Scars of History*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).
21. Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 197), 3.
22. Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, (London: Verso Books, 1998), 118.
23. Ibid., 117.
24. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 202.
25. Bogue, *Deleuze's Way*, 105.