Deleuze and Guattari and the Future of Politics: Science Fiction, Protocols and the People to Come

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Abstract

When is the future? Is it to come or is it already here? This question serves as the frame for three further questions: why is utopia a bad concept and in what way is fabulation its superior counterpart? If the object of fabulation is the creation of a people to come, how do we get from the present to the future? And what is a people to come? The answers are (1) that the future is both now and to come, now as the becoming-revolutionary of our present and to come as the goal of our becoming; (2) utopia is a bad concept because it posits a pre-formed blueprint of the future, whereas a genuinely creative future has no predetermined shape and fabulation is the means whereby a creative future may be generated; (3) the movement from the revolutionary present toward a people to come proceeds via the protocol, which provides reference points for an experiment which exceeds our capacities to foresee; (4) a people to come is a collectivity that reconfigures group relations in a polity superior to the present, but it is not a utopian collectivity without differences, conflicts and political issues. Science fiction formulates protocols of the politics of a people to come, and Octavia Butler's science fiction is especially valuable in disclosing the relationship between fabulation and the invention of a people to come.

Keywords: fabulation, utopia, politics, science fiction, protocols, Octavia Butler

My purpose is first, to reflect on the concept of fabulation as the invention of a people to come, and then to consider the manifestation of the concept in science fiction, or as it is sometimes called, speculative fiction – a term I prefer to the former. Rather than speak abstractly about the genre as a whole, I will concentrate on a limited corpus: the fiction of Octavia Butler, the first and still, I believe, the foremost African-American female exponent of speculative fiction. My inquiry will be guided by four questions, the first of which will serve as the general context in which questions two, three and four are situated. The first question is: when is the future? The second: why is utopia a bad concept and in what way is fabulation its superior counterpart? Question number three: if the object of fabulation is the creation of a people to come, how do we get from here and now to there and then, from the present to the future? And question four: what is a people to come? Octavia Butler's fiction will be especially helpful in thinking about a people to come as a literary element, that is, as a component of the possible, the plane of composition, the realm in which the event takes finite, material form in order to create the infinite in its own special way.

From the point of view of common sense, the question 'When is the future?' must seem absurd – the future is the future, and it is what will happen, in contradistinction to what has already happened and what is happening now. But as we all know too well, common sense is no guide to the thought of Deleuze. If we look at *Difference and Repetition* (1994), we may distinguish three futures, one for each of the three passive syntheses of time. In the first synthesis, that of the present, the future is something like the forward edge of a moving present. A common but mistaken concept of time is that of a line of infinite points, each point representing a present 'now'. Such a conception leads to Zeno's paradoxes, to which Bergson responds by positing time as composed of indivisible movements. The present in this regard contains many points along a line, and in that sense we can say that the present is a contraction of past, present and future within a single movement. Husserl makes essentially the same point when speaking of the retention of the past and protension of the future in a moving present. The present contracts chunks of time, as it were, and in theory the present contraction could be infinite – and indeed, the Stoics said that the present of the gods included all time. But other creatures have limited capacities for contraction, and hence they reach a point of fatigue. The rhythm of any entity's contractions of the present marks the pattern of that entity's powers and fatigue. Cells, organs and organism all have different

capacities for contracting the present, such that bacteria, the heart, insects and whales inhabit different presents. But for all of them, there is a future of the present, the leading edge or avant-garde of each temporal contraction on its way toward the limit of fatigue.

In the second synthesis of the past, the past coexists with the present as a virtual double and continues to exist in itself as a retention of all virtual presents within an ever-expanding field of the past. Since the present always passes, it must pass into something which will continue to be doubled by the virtual past, which in turn will perpetually retain itself. In this regard, the past pre-exists the present as its necessary condition, and thus, there is a future of the past. (My explanation here is truncated and inadequate, admittedly, but sufficient for the present purposes.)

The third passive synthesis is that of the future. The third synthesis is a pure form of time which 'unfounds' time and splits the subject, or 'I'. But as James Williams has so eloquently shown, the third synthesis is not simply time out of joint, '*hors de ses gondes*', but also a cut, an assembly (*un ensemble*), an ordering and a seriation. The third synthesis as a novel action requires a cut, a caesura in time, which produces a before and an after. The cut must assemble the before and after within itself, but also tear them apart. Once torn apart, an ordering of before, cut and after emerges. The cut produces an asymmetrical division in which the before and after are incommensurable. As asymmetrical elements, the before and after are thus distinguished not simply as an order, but as a series (see Williams 2011: 79–112).

We may say, then, that there is a future of the present as contraction, a future of the past as retention and precondition, and a future of the future as cut, assembly, ordering and seriation. But why raise these issues? When Deleuze speaks of a people to come, he often cites Paul Klee's remark that 'the people are missing', '*c'est le peuple qui manque*'. The implication seems clear: in the present there is no people, and the people to come, *le peuple à venir*, is only possible in some future that has not yet arrived. In *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari say that philosophy creates a plane of immanence and that 'deterritorialisation of such a plane does not preclude reterritorialisation but posits it as the creation of a future new earth [*une nouvelle terre à venir*]' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 88). Philosophy works '*to summon forth a new earth, a new people*' (99; emphasis in original). Philosophy's problem is that '*We lack resistance to the present*... Art and philosophy converge at this point: the constitution of an earth and a people that are lacking as the correlate of creation' (108; emphasis in original). And yet, Deleuze and Guattari also say that philosophical thought is a matter of

acting counter to the past, and therefore on the present, for the benefit, let us hope, of a future – but the future is not a historical future, not even a utopian history, it is the infinite Now, the *nun* that Plato already distinguished from every present: the Intensive or Untimely, not an instant but a becoming. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 112)

For Foucault, they observe,

what matters is the difference between the present and the actual. The actual is not what we are but, rather, what we become, what we are in the process of becoming – that is to say, the Other, our becoming-other … It is not that the actual is the utopian prefiguration of a future that is still part of our history. Rather, it is the now of our becoming. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 112)

It would seem, therefore, that the new earth and new people are also present, that the future is now – but, of course, that now is an infinite Now, the Nietzschean Untimely, the time of our 'becoming', the time of Aion. 'When is the future?', then, is a serious question when considering *un peuple à venir*. Is such a people 'to come', or is it 'at hand', that is, in the process of becoming in an Untimely Now? I will speak further about this issue when addressing my fourth question: what is a people to come?

Now to my second question: why is utopia a bad concept and in what way is fabulation its superior counterpart? Deleuze makes explicit the relationship between utopia and fabulation in a 1990 interview with Toni Negri. There he says 'Utopia isn't the right concept: it's more a question of "fabulation" in which a people and art both share. We ought to take up Bergson's notion of fabulation and give it a political meaning' (Deleuze 1995: 174). Why is utopia not 'the right concept', or as Deleuze and Guattari put it in *What Is Philosophy?*, 'not a good concept' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 110)? In the fourth chapter of *What Is Philosophy?*, when the subject of a new earth and a new people is addressed, for a while Deleuze and Guattari use the word 'utopia' without apology. They remark that

utopia is what links philosophy with its own epoch, with European capitalism, but also already with the Greek city. In each case it is with utopia that philosophy becomes political and takes the criticism of its own time to its highest point. Utopia does not split off from infinite movement: etymologically it stands for absolute deterritorialisation but always at the critical point at which it is connected with the present relative milieu, and especially with the forces stifled by this milieu. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 99–100; emphasis in original)

Yet reservations soon emerge, as they state, 'The word utopia therefore designates *that conjunction of philosophy, or the concept, with the present milieu* – political philosophy (however, in view of the mutilated meaning public opinion has given to it, perhaps *utopia* is not the best word)' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 100; emphasis in original). The initial problem, then, is one of public opinion and degraded usage. But beneath such superficial misconstruction lurks a deeper potential for misunderstanding: 'Utopia is not a good concept because even when opposed to History it is still subject to it and lodged within it as an ideal or motivation' (110). As an ideal, utopia functions as a kind of Platonic Idea, something above this world, static and perfect. If utopia is a motivation, then it is something external to action, something aimed for as a goal. We might add that utopias frequently are spatial rather than temporal – places, rather than times.[1] The architecture of utopias is often complete and contained, and processes take place within their spatial confines as components of a self-regulated system. In all these regards, utopias are the antithesis of becoming, process and movement toward a future that is genuinely new and thus inherently unpredictable, defiant of any mapping. Motivation cannot be external to the process of becoming, and becoming cannot be goal-directed.

Fabulation is a superior concept because its essence is to activate the 'powers of the false', to falsify orthodox truths in the process of generating emergent truths. To fabulate, in Pierre Perrault's words, is to 'legend *in flagrante delicto*' (cited in Deleuze 1989: 150; translation modified), and in doing so, to summon forth a 'people to come'. As Deleuze says in *Negotiations*, what we have to do is catch someone else 'legending',

> 'caught in the act of legending'. Then a minority discourse, with one or many speakers, takes shape. We here come upon what Bergson calls 'fabulation'... To catch someone in the act of legending [*Prendre les gens en flagrant délit de légender*] is to catch the movement of constitution of a people. A people isn't something already there. A people, in a way, is what's missing, as Paul Klee used to say. (Deleuze 1995: 125–6)

Fabulation does not presume an ideal, nor does it have an external goal as its motivation. It is its own end, an irreducibly temporal process of becoming-other that is open-ended, and if it is a process of summoning forth a future people, it is one that cannot move beyond itself without involving the participation of a collectivity in its action. Fabulation commences with resistance, since 'to create is to resist' (Deleuze and

Guattari 1994: 110), but if it is resistance to the present in the hope of a better future, that future cannot be predicted, nor can its superiority to the present be assured. Yet one might ask, do we simply start blindly becoming, with no coordinates, no point of inception? This brings me to my third question: if the object of fabulation is the creation of a people to come, how do we get from here and now to there and then, from the present to the future? Let us remember first, that if the becoming of fabulation involves resistance, such resistance is always contingent and specific. One resists the intolerable where one finds it, when one can no longer tolerate it – hence, the point of inception is no problem. But what about the coordinates of becoming? Here, I would like to suggest that protocols of experimentation can provide a certain scaffolding for resistance. Deleuze and Guattari state that 'To think is to experiment', although they add that 'experimentation is always that which is in the process of coming about – the new, remarkable, and interesting that replace the appearance of truth and are more demanding than it is' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 111). Yet experimentation is not a haphazard activity. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari find in Kafka's letters to Felice

> a prodigious operation by which [Kafka] translates this horror [of impending matrimony] into a *topography of obstacles* (where to go? how to arrive? Prague, Vienna, Berlin?). The Surveyor. And also the other operation by which he enumerates a numbered *list of conditions* that the subject of the statement thinks can dissipate horror when, in fact, it is this very horror in the subject of the enunciation that inspires them (a Life Plan, or a Life Program, à la Kleist). (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 31–2; emphasis in original)

The reference to Kleist is intriguing, if in need of further clarification. In several letters to his half-sister, Ulrike, Kleist does indeed speak of the need for a *Lebensplan*, a life plan, but he seems to mean something quite mundane. He tells his sister that he cannot achieve anything if he does not have a plan for his life. He then complains in subsequent letters that he cannot create a satisfactory plan, that one plan soon gives way to another, and once adopted, each plan proves inoperable. But Deleuze and Guattari give this innocuous concept of a life plan a more interesting sense. They see the life plan as a programme for experimentation, which suggests that Kafka's 'topography of obstacles' and 'list of conditions' are also elements of an experimental protocol. In *Dialogues*, Deleuze contrasts French literature with minor literature, in which there is no longer

the infinite account of interpretations which are always slightly disgusting, but finite processes of experimentation [*des procès finis d'expérimentation*], protocols of experience [*protocoles d'expérience*]. Kleist and Kafka spent their time making programs for life [*programmes de vie*]. Programmes are not manifestos – still less are they phantasms, *but means of providing reference points for an experiment which exceeds our capacities to foresee.* (Deleuze and Parnet: 2002: 47–8; emphasis in original)[2]

What, then, are the coordinates of resistance? They are the 'reference points for an experiment that exceeds our capacities to foresee', and it is by way of such reference points, such protocols, that we may move from the present toward the future. It is worth noting that in *Anti-Oedipus*, something of this experimental spirit is invoked indirectly in Deleuze and Guattari's remarks about utopias. The elaborate plans, structures and proposed institutions of utopian thinkers are not maps of achieved perfection. Rather, they say,

> the great socialist utopias of the nineteenth century function . . . not as ideal model but as group fantasies – that is, as agents of the real productivity of desire, making it possible to disinvest the current social field, to 'deinstitutionalise' it, to further the revolutionary institution of desire itself. (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 30–1)

As they remark at another point in their text, 'if we must still speak of utopia in this sense, à la Fourier, it is most assuredly not as an ideal model, but as revolutionary action and passion' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 63).[3]

And now my fourth question: what is a people to come? In the concluding paragraph of *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari offer an image of philosophy, science and the arts as brains submerged in chaos. And in this submersion, they say, 'it seems that there is extracted from chaos the shadow of the "people to come" in the form that art, but also philosophy and science, summon forth: mass-people, world-people, brain-people, chaos-people' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 218). In *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze says that the people to come is

> a minor people, eternally minor, taken up in a becoming-revolutionary. Perhaps it exists only in the atoms of the writer, a bastard people, inferior, dominated, always in becoming, always incomplete. *Bastard* no longer designates a familial state, but the process of drift of the races. I am a beast, I am a Negro of an inferior race for all eternity. (Deleuze 1997: 4)

The ultimate aim of literature, says Deleuze, 'is to set free . . . the creation of a health, [the] invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life' (Deleuze 1997: 4). We might note that the 'people to come' is in

many ways a version of the 'subject-group' of *Anti-Oedipus*, 'a group whose libidinal investments are themselves revolutionary' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 348).

The people to come, then, seems to be simply resistance that initiates group becoming toward an unknowable future. In this regard, any actually fully formed 'people' would seem to be a utopian collectivity, and the process of resistance a movement toward an impossible goal. Perhaps no one has more vociferously and thoroughly made the case for such a reading of the concept of the people to come than Philippe Mengue, and his critique is worth examining in detail, since it reveals many of the ways in which Deleuze's thought is often misconstrued.

Mengue finds a decidedly anti-democratic strain in Deleuze, which he attributes to a latent leftist radicalism and an aristocratic scorn for the masses. Micropolitics, he asserts, 'risks sinking into a pragmatic vitalism of subversion, which encloses micropolitics in an avant-gardism that is nothing more than the last burst of an exhausted modernism' (Mengue 2003: 203). In this view, micropolitics proves to be a rejection of the realm of true politics, which is one of *doxa*, negotiation and compromise. The 'radical dissidence' of Deleuzian micropolitics, claims Mengue, 'leads to the impasse of the retreat of the political, and, finally, to the abstract and indeterminate retreat into the vain and utopian waiting for a Revolution and a "people to come"' (204). What Deleuze seeks is a 'metapolitics' above the messiness of genuine politics, a collectivity that is a '*totality* which is in principle' incapable of 'any possible realization', a human community that is 'radically new (whatever the form one attributes to it), in which humans would be "other" (desire for an "other" human) because they would lead an "other life", in an "other society" (one of total and faultless peace, justice, liberty and equality)' (192; emphasis in original). This is what Deleuze seeks when he calls for a 'new earth' and a 'new people'.

Deleuzian micropolitics, nomadism, the untimely Event, resistance to the intolerable, the people to come – all, in Mengue's reading, are symptoms of an unconscious idealism and a scorn for the unavoidable imperfections of genuine politics. What Deleuze refuses to recognise is 'the undeniable fact that the juridico-political order is *forever situated in the impossibility of fully satisfying human desire as such*' (Mengue 2003: 193; emphasis in original). Given the inherent constraints of the political, Mengue judges democracy to be the best system for conducting politics. The political is by nature a domain of opinion, and the best one can hope for in any political system is 'a little *solidarity* and *consensus* concerning what needs to be done, here-now' (52; emphasis

in original). Deleuze's contempt for *doxa* and discussion constitutes contempt for democracy, since in the democratic public space, opinions are put forward, discussed, critiqued, reformulated, amalgamated in compromised formulations, and once temporarily formed, left open to an endless process of future discussion. This *is* the thought of the *polis*, in which 'opinions become *views* to discuss, their authors become *friends* or citizens' (53; emphasis in original). Such friendship is not formed to seek 'knowledge or truth, but for something that is also beautiful, and which requires wisdom – friendship that links and creates harmony in disharmony itself, "discordant harmony" ["*l'accord discordant*"], not among the faculties of the mind, but among humans and their opinions' (54). A true understanding of politics and democracy shows that 'political *doxa* can be "right." Granted, not "true" or even "remarkable" (even if it might prove to be so eventually), but acceptable, allowable – at a given moment for a given assembly or community' (56).

Ironically, democracy is the most fully Deleuzian of politics, claims Mengue. 'Democratic politics alone is without foundation, because it is the only possible logic in the fact of the plurality and rivalry of opinions and political actions' (Mengue 2003: 47). Deleuze's antipathy toward democracy betrays a hidden longing for the foundation of a stable, ideal political order. Mengue concurs with Deleuze that thought is a confrontation with chaos, but chaos, for Mengue, is a gap, lack, the void. 'Philosophical thought, in its ultimate dimension, never ceases to think about chaos, to think about its *gap* (*béance*)' (198; emphasis in original). What characterises democracy is that it explicitly takes into account what Mengue calls '*the hole* [*trou*] *of the political*' (199; emphasis in original). What is fundamental in democracy is

> the clear and explicit consciousness – and which is said, and never ceases to be said in all tones, from lamentation to exaltation – of its absence of foundation. Democracy is the only political form in which power is 'sworn to remain in search of its foundation.' It goes forth from an absence, a lacuna in *knowledge*. (Mengue 2003: 199; emphasis in original)

Deleuze retreats from this absence and instead posits a counter-absence, the missing people (*le peuple qui manque* – literally, the people who 'lack', who 'are lacking'). The people to come, then, is for Mengue nothing more than an attempt to fill this lack and thereby put an end to genuine politics, which must permanently deal with its own constitutive lack.

Mengue is correct that Deleuze speaks disparagingly of democracy, especially late in his life. He also consistently declares war on all

forms of *doxa*, and he frequently admits that he despairs when others ask him to 'discuss' philosophical issues. But it is not at all certain that Deleuze's critique of democracy signals a total rejection of the concept itself; rather, his critique is directed against democracy as it is practiced in the West. The polemical and perhaps exaggerated tone of his remarks – most often proffered in interviews, a venue that seeks a wider audience than that of professional philosophers alone – is meant to counter the complacency and self-satisfaction implicit in standard political discourse in contemporary democracies. Likewise, his critique of *doxa* is a critique of the commonplace, that which goes without saying, the thoughtless, mindless slogans of received wisdom. What Mengue labels 'opinion' is much broader than that, and there is no indication that Deleuze rejects the exchange and mutual examination of serious views about politics and the political. He despairs of 'discussion' because discussion all too often is a matter of egotistical combat, an effort to defeat the opponent in a battle of fixed commitments and positions. In that sense, discussion is the opposite of exchange and cooperative interaction, a mere contestation of competing ideologies, fixed forms of *doxa*. Throughout his work, Deleuze shows a willingness to examine others' ideas, and he welcomes exchange that might lead to the emergence of something new. Deleuze embraces interaction with others in the form of 'interference' and 'intercession',[4] which could easily been seen as types of discussion (in Mengue's broad sense of the term). Such interference and intercession aim at 'resonance' among forces and the emergence of new truths via the 'powers of the false' (Deleuze 1995: 125–6). Deleuze nowhere suggests that processes of interference, intercession, resonance and exchange cannot take place in the domain of the political. And despite the apparent utopian aura of the term 'people to come', such a people, I believe, is ultimately not one that has reached the perfection of an ideal society – whether that of total liberty, equality, benevolence, harmony or justice.

There is certainly something of an anarchic strain to Deleuze's concepts of nomadism, the war machine and becoming. But he insistently reminds us that deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation always occur ceaselessly and simultaneously. Further, he recognises the dangers of unbridled deterritorialisation. Absolute deterritorialisation is the leading edge of innovation and creativity, but it must be engaged with caution, not with mindless and total abandon. Mengue's characterisation of chaos as lack, gap or absence is not Deleuze's. For Deleuze, chaos is plenitude, but a fullness that perpetually issues forth in temporary and provisional forms of organisation. Chaos's absolute deterritorialisation

is inseparable from processes of reterritorialisation, and such reterritorialisations themselves oscillate between movements toward relative deterritorialisation and returns to homeostatic forms. As Simondon argues, the ubiquitous process of nature is that of individuation, an actualisation of metastability in locally stable entities, those entities themselves simultaneously sustaining elements of metastability that make them vital, living and changing entities. Chaos and its differentiation are immanent and inextricable, and the becoming of the world is always a liminal phenomenon, at the interface of absolute chaos and the restricted chaos of half-stable, half-metastable processes of individuation. Thought, for Deleuze, is like the cosmos, 'at the edge of chaos', as Jeffrey Bell (2006) aptly puts it. When Deleuze and Guattari say that thought must confront chaos, it is not in order to vanquish chaos, but to delineate a plane of consistency that makes chaos productive and usable, a force of creativity. The invention of a people to come entails an engagement with a chaotic plane of consistency, and when viewed exclusively in terms of its movement toward the new, it seems anarchic. But just as thought aims at creating concepts, so the invention of a people to come is directed toward something that is not absolutely chaotic and anarchic, toward some form of collectivity that is simultaneously metastable and temporarily stable, always engaged in processes of negotiation, dissolution and reformation.

It must also be granted that Deleuze and Guattari's call for the creation of a 'new earth' and a 'new people' has a millennial aura about it, but such newness need not be ideal, simply better than what we have at present. Ian Buchanan makes a useful distinction between utopia as a process and utopia as 'a place, a mythical island in an unknown sea' (Buchanan 2000: 164),[5] a distinction that Eugene Holland has framed as an opposition between 'utopia as a fixed "product"' and 'what may be called "utopianism as a process"' (Holland 2006: 217), both arguing that Deleuze and Guattari advocate the latter rather than the former. By maintaining the designation 'utopian' in characterising this process, Buchanan and Holland establish a degree of continuity between Marxist and leftist traditions of thought, a continuity that is suggested in *What Is Philosophy?* when Deleuze and Guattari say that philosophy's effort '*to summon forth a new earth, a new people*' is 'closer to what Adorno calls "negative dialectics" and to what the Frankfurt School called "utopian"' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 99; emphasis in original), and when Deleuze and Guattari affirm Ernst Bloch's distinction between 'authoritarian utopias, or utopias of transcendence, and immanent, revolutionary, libertarian utopias' (100).

(Buchanan and Holland's notion of utopianism as process, in fact, seems roughly equivalent to Bloch's 'immanent, revolutionary, libertarian' utopianism.) What Buchanan and Holland emphasise is the initial phase of the emergence of new possibilities for life through resistance to the present and 'the *diagnosis* of becomings in every passing present' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 113; emphasis in original), a phase that is undoubtedly central to Deleuze and Guattari's thought, but one that can easily be misconstrued as simply anarchistic and a nostalgic remnant of Deleuze and Guattari's immature May 1968 radicalism (which is Mengue's reading of this phase).

In a trenchant and extended critique of Mengue, Paul Patton proposes an argument in line with my own, remarking that Deleuze and Guattari's 'political philosophy is not so utopian that it is completely disconnected from the normative and conceptual horizons of the present' (Patton 2010: 162), for which reason Patton, in another essay, adopts Rawls's distinction between an 'extravagant utopianism' and a 'realistic utopianism', arguing that Rawls's advocacy of a realistic utopianism is one shared by Deleuze and Guattari (186).[6] Patton systematically demonstrates that Deleuze's negative assessments of democracy are not expressions of a fundamental antipathy to the broad concept of democracy as 'a form of society characterized by the absence of class or caste privilege and by the implementation of the egalitarian principle of the equal worth of individuals such that no person's life, beliefs, or values are inherently worth more than those of anyone else', nor necessarily to a narrow sense of democracy as 'a form of government in which the governed exercise control over governmental bodies and their policies, typically through regular and fair elections' (164). Patton demonstrates that it is on the basis of such a broad conception of democracy that Deleuze formulates his critique of contemporary democracies, which claim to be democratic in both senses of the word, but which in fact are neither. Patton concedes that 'the Deleuzian theory of micropolitics is only a partial account of the process of political decision making', but such incompleteness does not indicate antipathy, 'and there is no reason to suppose that Deleuzian theory proposes an alternative rather than a supplement to democratic political theory' (167). In a parallel fashion, Patton rebuts Mengue's claim that Deleuze's critical remarks about 'human rights' express a blanket hostility to the normative principles of fairness and justice purportedly endorsed in the concept, but claims instead that Deleuze is critiquing the function of the term 'human rights' in contemporary discourse as well as the ways in which this concept purportedly is implemented.

What is crucial in Patton's analysis is that Deleuze's critiques are not to be taken as endorsements of lawlessness and anarchy. Deleuze focuses on the failures of contemporary governmental and judicial institutions and on philosophy's task of critiquing those institutions and initiating a process of 'thinking otherwise'. Deleuze does not address broad questions of the means whereby justice and equality might be actualised, and it is for this reason that Patton proposes that we extend Deleuze's analysis and consider the general institutional conditions under which the fundamental principles of justice and equality might be articulated. Put bluntly, Deleuzian political philosophy should be seen as an endorsement of democracy and a justice which may be actualised through a proper use of law.[7] Patton's effort to extend and complete Deleuzian political analysis, in my judgement, is an attempt to answer the oft-posed question: what do we do if the revolution succeeds? What do we do if a becoming results in something approaching an actual 'people', a viable collectivity? A key to approaching these questions is to recall that Deleuze characterises the invention of a people to come not simply as a becoming-minor of resistance, but also as the invention of alternative modes of existence, new possibilities of life (Deleuze 1997: 4).

Clearly, if we want to theorise further about a different collectivity, we must rethink the notion of such a people as merely an accursed race defined by resistance. Were this characterisation of the people to come the sole means of describing this collectivity, the concept might well be construed as one that is defined from without. An accursed race, as constituted by the sanctioned, dominant race, and the centrality of resistance invite a conception of the people to come as solely a people *against* something. All of this smacks of Hegelian negation and even of Nietzschean *ressentiment* and the negative Will to Power. We must also reject any idealistic conception of the people to come, in which universal harmony prevails and the rule of consensus puts an end to any genuine politics. In *Anti-Oedipus*, when Deleuze and Guattari discuss 'subject groups', they cite with approval Jean-Pierre Faye's assertion that in genuinely revolutionary groups, 'What counts, what is effective in our opinion, is not such and such a group, but rather the dispersion or the Diaspora produced by their splinterings *éclats*', a position they see as asserting 'the necessarily polyvocal character of subject-groups and their writing' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 349). 'Subject-groups' possess heterogeneous desires, since collectivities are multiplicities, not aggregates that form an amorphous mass (like the fascist mobs that so fascinated and frightened Canetti in *Crowds and*

Power [1984]).[8] If indeed collectivities are heterogeneous multiplicities, then they must incorporate genuine differences, that is, differences that make a difference, and hence differences that signal conflict and the need for resolution or some form of mutual accommodation of differing interests and desires. The people to come, in short, will be a people perpetually generating differences, potential asymmetries of power, and sites of resistance for those who find themselves faced with the intolerable. The means whereby differences are negotiated, we hope, will be better than those currently in effect. No matter what social order emerges in a process of becoming, there will be a politics of the future, and that politics will not be defined from the outside, but from within the people to come *as that people continues its becoming*.

This is where I find Octavia Butler's fiction helpful. Science fiction is above all other genres primarily a literature of the future. Dystopian fiction is always set in a near future, and speculative fictions of various sorts, utopian or not, are generally set in a future time. This holds true for Butler's works as well. She endorses the common view that science fiction 'uses science, extrapolates from science as we know it to science as it might be[,] to technology as it might be' (Butler 2010: 84). But her speculations take a specific form that is especially germane to our concerns. She recalls in one interview that

> when I was in my teens, a group of us used to talk about our hopes and dreams, and someone would always ask, 'If you could do anything you wanted to do, no holds barred, what would you do?' I'd answer that I wanted to live forever and breed people – which didn't go over all that well with my friends. (Butler 2010: 18)

In fact, all of Butler's fiction is directed toward the invention of a people to come. When asked in another interview if she tries to create new types of communities in her writings, she replies, 'I'd say more that I don't try to create communities; I always automatically create community' (Butler 2010: 111). And those communities often literally involve new people – hybrids, genetic alterations, parasite-induced mutations, and so on.

The five-novel Patternmaster Series spans several centuries, from the late-eighteenth century to some distant, undesignated future.[9] The first novel tells of Doro, a four thousand year-old Nubian mutant who has gained the power of immortality, but only at the cost of inhabiting a succession of human bodies and discarding their empty, dead shells when he enters a new body. He has undertaken a eugenics project to breed other mutant beings with exceptional powers, and in the course of

his wanderings he has encountered Anyanwu, a central-African woman who has lived for four hundred years, healing others and maintaining a rejuvenated form without possessing other bodies. She comes under the sway of Doro and becomes part of his breeding programme. In the second novel, which takes place in the twentieth century, successful mutant humans are finally created, and they develop 'the pattern', a psychic force field that greatly enhances the powers of all its participant members. Doro tries to maintain control of the pattern, but in a struggle with his daughter he is defeated and killed. In successive generations, the pattern masters sponsor journeys to other planets, and following one such expedition a returning astronaut brings an alien virus that genetically alters its human hosts and induces mutant offspring whose appearance combines human, feline and porcine characteristics in an otherwise monstrous form. These mutant becomings-animal are labelled 'Clayarks', and their characteristics seem those of pack animals with intuitive intelligence and territorial aggressivity. In the concluding novel (actually the first one written) set in the distant future, the established order consists of a feudal aristocracy of pattern masters, the servant class of humans who are totally dominated by the mind control of the pattern masters, and the feral Clayarks who roam the wilds outside patternist settlements. This, then, is the ultimate configuration of the series' 'people to come'.

Butler's two Parable novels, *Parable of the Sower* (1993b) and *Parable of the Talents* (1998), are at once her most dystopian and most utopian fictions. Set in the near future of a collapsed American society, the novels envision a world of ecological degradation, technological breakdown and widespread poverty and drug addiction. Gated communities have become walled fortresses surrounded by masses of homeless derelicts, most of whom are desperate, many violent, and some addicted to substances like 'pyro', a designer drug that went out of control and created humans who gain intense sexual pleasure from setting fires and especially from incinerating other humans. The teenaged heroine, Lauren, must flee when her walled enclave is overrun, and throughout the first novel she walks the interstate highway I-5 (now only used by pedestrians) from Los Angeles to northern California. Along the way, she gathers other survivors and brings them together through her self-generated personal religion, Earthseed, in which she teaches two basic lessons: first, that 'God is change', and that being shaped by and shaping God are the sole means of becoming-other in a productive fashion in this new world; and second, that our species' destiny is to inhabit other planets. Eventually, she and her incipient community, which she

consistently calls 'her people', settle in a secluded part of northern California, and there they form the community of Acorn, something like a communal collective. In the second novel, fundamentalist Christian paramilitary forces raid Acorn, kill most of its inhabitants, and enslave the surviving women via 'slave collars' that induce powerful, debilitating electrical impulses at the first sign of resistance to their captors. Lauren stages a successful revolt, and the inhabitants of Acorn flee and disperse. She learns that spreading the movement of Acorn cannot proceed via the proliferation of isolated communal settlements, but must focus on the ideas of her religion, since the spread of ideas is much more difficult to control than the physical spread of concrete bodies, and since the specifics of Acorn's socio-economic organisation are subordinate to the ultimate goals of the religion. Eventually she succeeds in forming a broad network of community groups of various kinds, many of them integrated into urban environments and partially enmeshed in capitalist market institutions. The movement gains economic power, helps fuel widespread economic recovery and the restoration of a modicum of socio-political cohesion on the continent of North America, and achieves a certain institutional prominence and autonomy. At this stage, the 'people to come' are no longer practitioners of a counter-capitalist communal socio-political culture, but exponents of the religion of Earthseed, and with economic success they are able to begin the pursuit of their ultimate goal: to leave earth and colonise other planets. Lauren's initial inspiration in formulating this component of the Earthseed project was the belief that humans can only form a viable community by uniting in a collective cause that leads to struggle against an alien and challenging environment. Hence, the community of the people to come issues in a creative line of flight, but that line of flight is to other worlds, since humans cannot coexist peacefully on this world alone – a conclusion which, for those of us condemned to remain on earth, signals a decidedly non-utopian future.

Butler's masterpiece, the *Xenogenesis Trilogy*,[10] provides the fullest and most intriguing account of various becomings, the invention of a new people, and the establishment of alternative modes of existence and possibilities of life. After a global nuclear holocaust, a small number of humans have survived in suspended animation, thanks to the intervention of an alien species called the Oankali, who have saved the humans and gradually detoxified the earth for recolonisation. The Oankali, who call themselves genetic 'traders', search for interesting life forms, and when they find them, engage them in the collective procreation of hybrid organisms. The Oankali have three sexes: male,

female and ooloi, the ooloi being a definite 'it', not some male–female combination. The Oankali have saved the humans in order to mate with male and female humans in pentads of a human male and female couple, an Oankali male and female couple, and one Oankali ooloi. Each ooloi, by combining the genetic materials of the human and Oankali couples, and then manipulating those materials through use of its vast, cosmic stock of genetic materials gathered by generations of ooloi on countless planets and preserved in the ooloi's special organ called its Yashi, fashions human-born and Oankali-born 'constructs' who then go on to produce further iterations of a new, hybrid people. The first novel recounts the initial resuscitation of humans and the formation of pentads for settlement on earth. The second and third novels trace the development of Oankali family units and construct children on earth.

Many readers have seen the Oankali as utopian beings. They value life and embrace difference. They naturally heal, their relationships are nurturing, they cannot cause pain without feeling that pain themselves, their connections to the environment are all-embracing and ecologically sound, and they govern the collectivity through consensus. Yet others have argued that the Oankali are insidious beings, one critic labelling them symbols of neoliberal capitalist globalisation. They embrace difference, but in Oankali constructs the organelle that inhabits every cell of the Oankali (the word 'Oankali' is also the name of that organelle) is present in every construct cell as well. The Oankali only *seem* to surrender their identity. Whatever hybrids they fashion continue to have a fundamental Oankali identity. They are like global capital, capable of embracing everything and assimilating it within the capitalist machine. Disturbing as well is the human–ooloi relationship. The ooloi injects its 'ooloi substance' when in contact with humans, and that substance, while deeply pleasurable and healing, also is intensely addictive, and it makes the human male and female incapable of physically touching one another. The entirety of Oankali culture is based on neurochemical bonding, and their consensus only occurs because of those bonds. Unlike the familial bonds of humans, the Oankali bonds preclude conflict among males. No male, female or ooloi need fear that a partner will be taken, since the ooloi has chemically marked the couple as its own. Hence, the political order of the Oankali, humans and constructs is one of consensus and non-violence, but made possible only through addiction and the deep control of ooloi intermediaries.

In all of Butler's novels, she invents a people to come. In each case, new modes of existence and possibilities of life are delineated. But in all of them, politics continues. The new possibilities are not

necessarily better, just different. The socio-political structures include versions of primitive collectivism, family-centred social networks, feudal class relations, master–slave institutions and international ecumenical movements. If we add to the mix the world of Butler's last novel, *Fledging (2005)*, we would have examples of tribal cultures, matrilineal and patrilineal settlements, and mixtures of polyandry and polygamy with various forms of homo- and heterosexual alliances. Each novel is a form of experimentation, an investigation of the possible outcomes of becoming-other and thereby creating a people to come. As experimentation, each novel introduces a protocol, a *'means of providing reference points for an experiment which exceeds our capacities to foresee'*. This I regard as an important positive function of science fiction, one way in which art renders concrete the realm of the possible. In this way, fiction promotes the thought of a people to come as something that actually might take any number of definite forms, and perhaps may assist us in *our* attempts to imagine, invent and enact alternative modes of existence, new possibilities of life.

Notes

1. In *Spaces of Hope*, David Harvey makes a useful distinction between 'the utopianism of social process' and 'utopias as spatial form'. If there is a utopian strain in Deleuze (and, with sufficient qualification, one could say that indeed there is), it would be such a 'utopianism of social process'. See especially Harvey 2010: 164–81.

2. In the second essay of *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 'Louis Wolfson; or the Procedure [*procédé*]', Deleuze assigns a negative connotation to the word 'protocol', opposing it to the term 'procedure'. Deleuze's essay is devoted to two books by the schizophrenic Louis Wolfson, *Le Schizo et les langues* and *Ma mère musicienne est morte*. Deleuze is fascinated by the mental gymnastics Wolfson performs in transforming words via various foreign languages in order to defend himself from malignant influences in his environment. Deleuze argues, however, that Wolfson, unlike Raymond Roussel and Antonin Artaud, is not an artist in his linguistic experimentation. 'Wolfson's book, however, is not a literary work, and does not claim to be a poem. What turns Roussel's procedure into a work of art is the fact that the interval between the original sentence and its conversion is filled with marvelously proliferating stories, which make the starting point recede until it is entirely hidden... But there is nothing similar in Wolfson: between the word to be converted and words of the conversion, and in the conversions themselves, there is nothing but a void, an interval that is lived as pathogenic or pathological... The transformations never reach the grandiose level of an event, but remain mired in their accidental circumstances and empirical actualizations. The procedure thus remains a protocol. The linguistic procedure operates in a void, and never links up with a vital process capable of producing a vision' (Deleuze 1997: 10–11). It is worth noting that in the original version of 'Louis Wolfson; or the Procedure', which Deleuze published as a preface to Wolfson's *Le Schizo et les langues* (1970) and titled

'Schizologie', no such distinction between 'protocol' and 'procedure' exists. In the opening paragraph of the original preface, Deleuze says that 'One of the great originalities of this book is that it sets forth a protocol of experimentation or activity' (this sentence is retained in the 1993 version of the essay). But Deleuze clearly is simply offering a synonym for 'procedure' when he speaks of Wolfson as a practitioner of 'a protocol of experimentation or activity'. Only in 1993 does Deleuze make use of that opening sentence later in the essay to contrast protocols and procedures (and the sentence contrasting the two is the only sentence in the 1993 essay that addresses that distinction). Clearly, 'protocol' was a positive term for Deleuze in 1970, and it remained so in the 1977 text of *Dialogues*, where 'protocol' is treated as a synonym of 'process' ['*procès*, a cognate of *procédé*']. (We might note that the words *procès*, *processus* and *procédé* appear frequently in Deleuze's works, and often in related if not interchangeable ways.)

3. At two points in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari come close to embracing the term 'utopian' themselves. In the first, they cite with approval an extended passage from Pierre Klossowski, praising him as the philosopher who has most fully described the schizoid dimension of desire, 'but still within the category of an active utopia' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 367–8). At another point, they pose the rhetorical question, 'In what sense does the schizoid investment constitute ... a real investment of the sociohistorical field, and not a simple utopia?' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 367). In my judgement, however, these passages still indicate an underlying resistance to adopting the term 'utopian' to describe their own position.

4. In *Negotiations*, where Deleuze elaborates on the concept of 'intercessors' (translated as 'mediators' by Joughin), Deleuze introduces the concept by saying, 'The important thing has never been to accompany the movement of one's neighbor, but to make one's own movement. If no one begins, no one budges. Interferences are also not exchange: everything takes place through gift or capture' (Deleuze 1995: 125, translation modified). For some reason, Joughin renders '*Les interférences*' as 'interplay', which obscures an important element in Deleuze's concept of intercession. Intercession and mediation can easily be thought of as relatively peaceful, cooperative activities, whereas interference suggests, if not violent opposition and conflict, at least a meeting of different forces that is less than irenic. The addition of 'interference' to 'intercession' counters the tendency to read intercession as a utopian process. Likewise, Joughin's decision to translate '*capture*' as 'taking' tends to reduce an agonistic process to a gentler form of interaction. Finally, Joughin's choice of 'giving and taking' as equivalents of 'gift and capture' obscures Deleuze's implicit reference to traditional cultures (termed 'primitive' in *Anti-Oedipus*), in which entities pass from one individual according to the logic of the gift, as delineated by Marcel Mauss, or through capture in war, as well as Deleuze's allusion to the Nietzschean master's affirmative will to power in *The Genealogy of Morals*, a will that proceeds via the donation of value.

5. One of the more insightful aspects of Buchanan's *Deleuzism* is the correlation he draws between the utopian strain in Deleuze and Guattari and the concept of utopia developed by Fredric Jameson (see Buchanan 2000: 164–9). Buchanan also provides incisive commentary on the utopian dimension of *Anti-Oedipus* in *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: A Reader's Guide* (2008; see especially pp. 124–32.)

6. Both Holland and Patton cite Deleuze and Guattari's statement in *What Is Philosophy?* that 'The word utopia therefore designates *that conjunction of philosophy, or the concept, with the present milieu*' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 100), but neither includes the parenthetic remark that completes the

sentence: '*however, in view of the mutilated meaning public opinion has given to it, perhaps utopia is not the best use of the word*', and neither makes use of Deleuze's remark in *Negotiations* suggesting that utopia be replaced by the concept of 'fabulation'. I do not see this as an oversight or a mistake, however. Deleuze and Guattari make frequent reference to fabulation in Chapter Seven of *What Is Philosophy?*, which concerns the arts, whereas the comments on utopia occur in the Fourth Chapter, 'Geophilosophy', which is focused on philosophy. In *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari emphasise the qualitative differences between philosophy and the arts, which suggests, I believe, that even though 'utopia is not the best word' in philosophy or the arts, the concept of fabulation should replace that of utopia only in the arts, and that some other, never specified term might be used instead of 'utopia' in philosophy. Since Deleuze and Guattari never provide such a term, it seems reasonable to propose such terms as 'utopia as process' or 'realistic utopia' as means of delineating the bad use of 'utopia' from those more in keeping with Deleuze and Guattari's non-idealistic, processual conception of utopian change.

7. Laurent de Sutter makes a related argument in his *Deleuze: La Pratique du droit* (2009). De Sutter differentiates between a critical and a clinical conception of law in Deleuze, the former generating Deleuze's frequent critiques of law, the latter, only vaguely sketched late in Deleuze's career, suggesting the possibility of a positive conception of law. De Sutter argues that Hume's conception of institutions as vehicles for the establishment and expansion of social relations, which Deleuze discusses in his early *Expression and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, is implicit in Deleuze's endorsement of jurisprudence, which de Sutter glosses as a positive mode of expanding the sphere of law in ways that promote genuine equality and fairness. See especially pp. 63–106.

8. Hardt and Negri distinguish among a 'people', which 'has traditionally been a unitary conception'; the 'masses', which, while being 'composed of all types and sorts', within which 'all differences are submerged and drowned'; and the 'multitude', which 'is composed of innumerable internal differences' (Hardt and Negri 2004: xiv). My reading of Deleuze's 'people to come' is in accord with Hardt and Negri's 'multitude'.

9. The volume *Seed to Harvest* (1993a) contains four of the five Patternist novels. The fifth, *Survivor* (1978), is the one work Butler has expressed displeasure with, for which reason she chose to omit it from *Seed to Harvest*. (In my view, Butler's evaluation of the novel is unnecessarily harsh, and in fact, the novel is equally as interesting and engaging as the other works in the series.)

10. The three novels of the trilogy – *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988) and *Imago* (1989) – have been reprinted in a single volume, titled *Lilith's Brood* (1989).

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