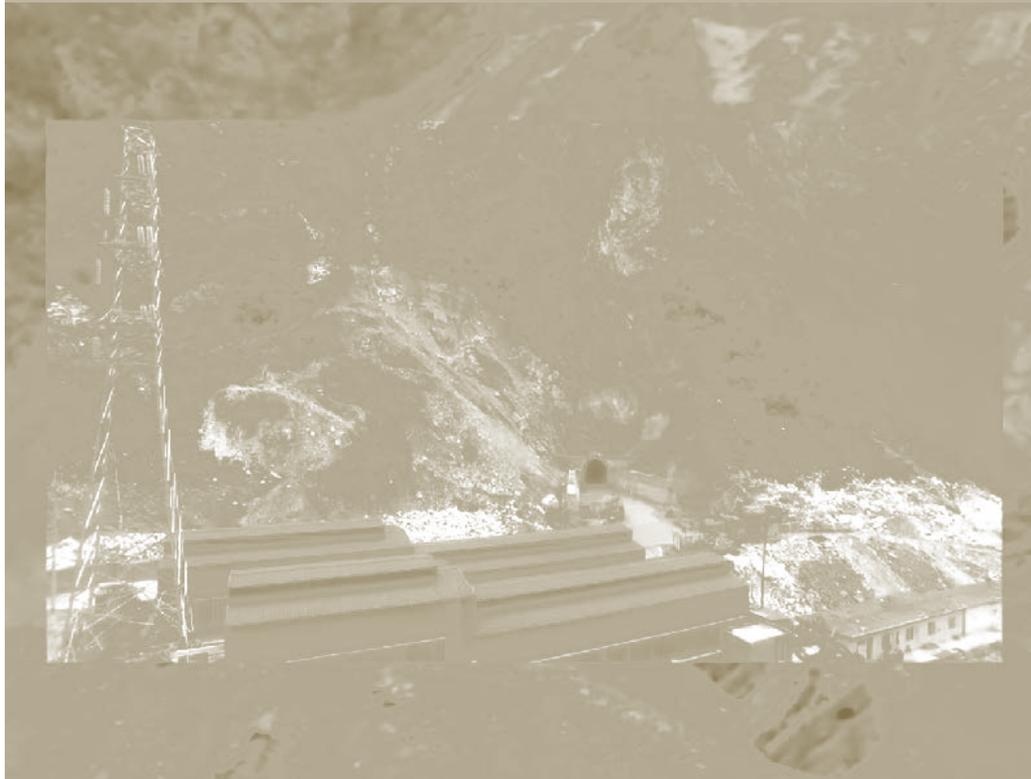


Fictioning Five Heads  
(on the Art—Anthropology Hybrid)  
*Simon O'Sullivan*



### 1. *Exchange, Interferences and Fictioning*

What kinds of exchange happen between art and anthropology? Certainly, it might be that one of these fields of practice has a “take”—from its own particular perspective and using its own operating procedures and protocols—on the other: an anthropological take on art; an artistic take on anthropology. In such cases, although there is a look elsewhere, disciplinary boundaries tend to be respected, distinct identities are, in general, maintained. Such interdisciplinary exchanges are part of University discourse. Might there, however, be other, more blurred and perhaps more secret exchanges between different disciplines? Exchanges that are not necessarily sanctioned, or which interfere with business-as-usual? At the very end of their last work together Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari address these more “intrinsic” interferences (as they call them), in this case between philosophy, art and science (which, for Deleuze and Guattari, are less disciplines than distinct forms of thought). Here:

concepts and conceptual personae seem to leave a plane of immanence that would correspond to them, so as to slip among the functions and partial observers, or among the sensations and aesthetic figures, on another plane ... These slidings are so subtle ... that we find ourselves on complex planes that are difficult to qualify.<sup>1</sup>

Anthropology itself is already a complex plane, a mixture of concepts and functions (which is to say, a social science), but what happens when aesthetic figures also interfere in this intrinsic manner? There are precedents: the “ethnopoetics” of Carlos Castaneda’s *Teachings of Don Juan*, for example (itself a touchstone for Deleuze and Guattari); or William Burroughs’ fabulated epistolary *The Yage Letters*. Both of these are complex works that disrupt any clear lines of demarcation between anthro-

pology and art (and it is no coincidence that both also concern travel and experiments in drug use). But there are many other examples where fiction upsets representational logics; or when an art practice interferes in the very materials and archives—the field-work—of the social sciences, so as to disable and dissemble any claims to objectivity or privileged overview. Here disciplinary rules and procedures are often discarded, and other, more idiosyncratic protocols put in to play. Certainly, when art interferes in this manner the very idea of “reality” can be put in question. Might these different kinds of interferences, especially when they are materially instantiated, be called a form of fictioning?

### 2. *Mythopoesis and the People to Come*

This question also relates to art’s mythopoetic function, understood here as its capacity to produce other narratives and image-worlds out of the “what-is.” Mythopoesis can take different forms and be used for different purposes. Indeed, it seems crucial today, as in relatively recent history, to demarcate a fascist production of myth from other more emancipatory exercises. In *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari are also keen to demarcate fascist myths from what they see as more libertarian enterprises. This involves the demarcation of transcendent utopias—those that set up an origin/telos and/or another world that doubles our own—from those more immanent ones which are connected to the present milieu. A demarcation that can be difficult in that it is not always entirely clear where one category of utopia ends and the other begins (once again clear lines of identification are difficult to maintain). Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari remark, perhaps

all concepts include this grey zone and indiscernibility where for a moment the combatants on the ground are

confused, and the thinker's tired eyes mistakes the one for the other - not only the German for a Greek but the fascist for a creator of existence and freedom.<sup>2</sup>

For Deleuze and Guattari, Heidegger's philosophy is a case in point: "He got the wrong people, earth, and blood. For the race summoned forth by art or philosophy is not the one that claims to be pure but rather an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic and irremediably minor race."<sup>3</sup> In any project of mythopoesis, especially where it is linked to a resurgent nationalism, these warnings need heeding. Certainly, it is not a pure-bred or "chosen" people that hold out the promise of something different, but rather a hybrid people (or even non-human "people") that is decidedly impure. It is this "becoming minor" that opposes itself to the standardized molar—and major—model of a white (and solely heterosexual) man; the fully-functioning unit of western modernity (a model that, in fact, no single body is able to live up to).

### *3. Landscape and the Magical Mode of Existence*

Landscape can play its part in this mythopoesis. In fact, it is often the way in which landscape—broadly construed—is itself fictioned that helps produce myth: images and narrative can be overlaid on a given terrain in order to animate it in different ways. This is the case for the surface of the earth, especially where there is evidence of other modes of existence (or residual cultures), but also for its depths. Archaeology, as anthropology's twin, can, in a similar manner, "reveal" a different story to a hegemonic present. There is also the extraction of oil, coal and other minerals that fuels industrialization and capitalism, as well as the identity of a people. This utilization of the "infinite reserve" of nature runs from early smiths—a pre-capitalist industry—to the extraction of rare minerals for the "must have" commodities of our advance form

of capitalism. Invariably there is here a myth of progress as these extraction technologies become more "efficient." It is also here that a contemporary contra-mythopoesis might combine with more ecological concerns: what new myths are appropriate and adequate to our Anthropocene? What different stories do we need to tell?

Following Gilbert Simondon (whose writing attends to technical objects but also to the phase shifts between different modes of existence), a landscape can also offer up privileged points—five hills for example—which operate as mediating points between humans and nature. Points of passage and communication between the finite and infinite.<sup>4</sup> For Simondon this structuring of the landscape follows from a magical mode of existence that came before technicity (and religion), but which survives in various places and practices. It is also a prior mode of existence that gestures towards a future mode to come (the latter is how Simondon understands aesthetics). Fictioning can involve these loops backwards and forwards in time, circuits that are often activated by a journey or pilgrimage of some kind across and into a landscape.

### *4. Time and the Transit between Times*

And what if time were not sequential anyway? Or, at least, what if linear time—the uni-directional movement from a past to a present to a future—was itself a very particular mythopoesis (or, to say it differently, is implicated in certain narratives)? Birth, school, work, death; commodities, careers and their various promises; progress, from earlier to later, from primitive to more advanced; time passing, ultimately anchored in western syntax and grammar. Might we be living a certain mythopoesis that brings with it a certain experience of time? And, importantly, has the latter, now, finally, run its course?

Indeed, from other perspectives there is a co-presence of past, present and future; different lines of causality running parallel

and with different points of intersection (certainly this was William Burroughs' understanding of the Mayan form of time). Here there are lines and points that are, perhaps, linked to those lines and points in a landscape (rituals and festivals at certain places at certain times mark these intersections and possibilities of transit). Might the art-anthropology hybrid be an appropriate probe-head to experimentally follow lines? To track and tack between these points? Or, perhaps, such an experimental practice will seize on elements of a past (again, those residual cultures) and of a future-to-come (more emergent ones)—anything away from this present—so as to produce a different world, and, with that, a different kind of subject—or non-subject?—appropriate and adequate to that world.

##### *5. Channeling and the Fiction of the Self*

There is a western idea of a pre-modern channeling function (that can involve a colonial gaze), but there are also the West's own channeling functions where technology is mobilized so as to access something beyond the known (new financial instruments such as derivatives, for example, are a form of divination that arise from advanced computation). It is here that different forms of non-human intelligence meet: animals and animism; machines and machine-fictioning. More generally, and besides its ongoing construction of its various "others," there is also the West's increasing need for different modes and models of existence beyond those offered by neoliberalism. How then to disentangle these different ideas and images, these different narratives and myths—to decolonize the past, present and future—so as to disable a white western gaze, but also so as not to lose sight of any real alternatives to a moribund present?

In order to begin this work a side-stepping of the self is required so that something else might come though (the self being the locus, at least in the West, of these dominant myths). This is a

disabling of conscious intention (and perhaps typical consciousness), so as to channel other forces and entities. Such channeling dovetails with those speculative accounts within neuroscience of a "subjectivity without self." This is to see the western self as a form of fictioning—and thus to open the possibility of inhabiting other fictions, of shuttling between different ways of being in the world. If this involves a turn to the past and to various residual cultures it will be one that guards against those archaic forms that have been co-opted by the dominant culture and which reinstate a fixed image of the human (and, as such, stymie any channeling function). If it involves a look into the future then this will not simply be a celebration of capitalist technologies which so often mobilize an image of what's to come—that is, an accelerated representation of what's already here.

Again, perhaps then this is a key function of the art-anthropology hybrid: to tease apart those myths and modes that are genuinely emancipatory from other accounts which themselves help prop up dominant regimes, and further to look carefully at our own investment in the latter. This myth-science is also to begin the work of diagramming other hybrid modes and subjectivities and, in that, to allow a "performance fictioning" of other realities. Certainly, when such fictions are instantiated and embodied within the real—as in artistic production—then the real itself is shown up as a fiction. It is specifically in this strange nesting function, a proliferation of fictions within fictions, that we see the five heads of the art-anthropology hybrid do its important work.

- 1 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (London: Verso, 1994), 217.
- 2 Ibid., 109.
- 3 Ibid., *What is Philosophy?*, 109.
- 4 See Gilbert Simondon, (extract of) "On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects" (1958), trans. N. Mellamphy, D. Mellamphy and N. B. Mellamphy, *Deleuze Studies* Vol. 5, no. 3 (2011): 407–24.

## Harnessing Fortune North of the North Pole

Head 5

Rebecca Empson  
with Dolgor Ser Od & Marc Schmitz

KFS devices list and description of use, KFS device, candles, wet-wipes, box of matches, water bottle, reading group text, Aura Cleansing centre details and contact info, contact info for shaman reading group, ethnographic text

### Sound

Banker/shaman.MP3

Hushiin Zui Reading group 1st April.MP3

Hushiin Zui Reading group 2nd April.MP3

Hushiin Zui Reading group 3rd April.MP3

### Digital jpgs

Aura/Money-calling rituals 2015–16

Coal trucks and mining

Fieldnotes, Lombard/Porn shops 2015–16

Reading group materials,

Scale models at OT 2016 & ownership signs