trumped!
remote|control, 2 trojan horses (and 3 knocks)

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Neoliberalism has been on the rise at least since the mid-1980s. The economization of the social and the increasing globalization of capital show all the characteristics of a neoliberal governmentality, as Michel Foucault has analyzed it (cf. Foucault 2008). Gilles Deleuze described this process as a new transformation of the disciplinary society into a control society, which he briefly sketched and described in his far-sighted and 'prophetic' essay (cf. Deleuze 1992). However, it is not just as if Deleuze is saying "Fuck ould Foucault, move over." Rather, Deleuze shows that Foucault's analysis revealed that the disciplinary society (with its heyday in the 18th, 19th, and much of the 20th century) was only the actual (still present but disappearing) of the then pertinent predicament, whereas the society of control was already chomping at the virtual bits. 'Control' here designates a change in politics, economy, and episteme.

This is not the place to detail the ways in which Deleuze envisioned this transformation (others will do that with much more expertise). In a more playful way, I just want to cherry-pick some observations from Deleuze's essay and relate it to – you've guessed it – Donald J. Trump, who, at the 30th birthday of Deleuze's essay, will presumably still be President of the United States of America (or Trumpistan, as some may call it).

trumped!

"The operation of markets is now the instrument of social control and forms the impudent breed of our masters" (Deleuze 1992: 6). The lineage of this breed runs through both Gordon Gekko ("Greed, for lack of a better word, is good") and Trump, both cinema/pop culture and politics alike – in fact, "[i]f the most idiotic television game shows are so successful, it's because they express the corporate situation with great precision" (4). If there was one idiotic game show that was even more precise than others, because (unwillingly?) prophetic, it was *The Apprentice*, a reality show that was running for 15 seasons from 2004 to 2017 – with Donald Trump being the host until 2015. In a way,

this series can be said to have paved the way for Trump into the Oval Office. When the show started, Trump's fame had dwindled, he was a mere C-lebrity, "a garish figure of local interest – a punch line on Page Six" (Keefe 2019: n.p.). Not only could this series be seen as an 'apprenticeship' for Trump's presidency (or, more precisely, the very presidency of the Trump type); it also shows the 'tightrope dance' (or twisted temporality) that Trump is involved in (about which more later). Suffice to say at this point that Trump is playing two games at once: on the one hand, the 'disciplinary society' game of 'apprenticeship' – a feudal trademark if there ever was one: on the other hand, the 'society of control' game of constant surveillance and 'training on the job' that creates the twisted allure (does it?) of that show. When Deleuze describes the modulation that control is as "a self-deforming cast" (1992: 4), he is of course setting it off from the static and fixed molds of Foucault's disciplinary enclosures. But mind you: in the day and age of *America's Got Talent*, *America's Next Topmodel*, and, yes – *The Apprentice*, the term 'cast' might also ring a different bell, and with that sound in your head, the 'self-deforming cast' almost reads like a nod to *The Apprentice*'s host and his crew. *The Apprentice* and the *45th Presidency* thus appear to be modulations of the same axiomatic: be a Jack of 2 Trades at the same time, play both discipline and control.

Control society's capitalism "is no longer a capitalism for production but for the product, which is to say, for being sold or marketed" (Deleuze 1992: 6). Hence Trump. Underneath all his entrepreneur's (and Robber Baron's) business transactions, this serial logic basically was there to establish the brand Trump, a brand that now has also invaded the White House: the Oval Office, sponsored by TRUMP, paid programming, which is only 'reasonable' given the fact that – also very practically – the Oval Office is only a branch of Trump Tower: "I'm not a businessman, I'm a business, man"[1] (Jay-Z | Kanye West | Donald J. Trump).[2] Speaking of brands – the best-selling slogan of TRUMP of course is "Make America Great Again" (which, like a radio jingle or annoying ringtone, creates a penetrating earworm). However, this promise to return to a glorious past is in itself an old (American) hat (and, in fact, so is Deleuze's image of the serpent).[3]

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[1] The nice thing about "I'm not a businessman, I'm a business, man" is that the oscillation between being a contradictory statement and being no contradictory statement is basically related to this being heard or read – smells a bit like difference … Jay D is in the house! And, on top, this also perfectly illustrates the *modus operandi* of Trump, as I am pointing out in this short essay.
[2] And here Trump's initial J. reveals its close proximity to J. (Jay) Gatsby – another self-made man whose fame and fortune is tied to a shady past and underworldly contacts.
[3] In his 'Postscript,' Deleuze makes a distinction between the mole and the serpent – that is, between two regimes of power: "The old monetary mole is the animal of the space of enclosure, but the serpent is that of the societies of control" (Deleuze 1992: 6).

Once Upon a Time, Thomas Hobbes' model of the commonwealth had taken its name and image from a gigantic coiling serpent, the biblical Leviathan. A hundred years later, in 1754, at a time when the 'representational Body|Politic'[4] had already become part and parcel of the political rhetoric, another serpent, one that was native to the English Colonies on the American Continent – a rattlesnake – made its appearance in what is considered to be the first American political cartoon, authored by Benjamin Franklin.[5] France, England's long-time enemy and challenger for control of North America, had, with the assistance of Native American allies, scored a series of victories over English colonial troops from the backcountry of Virginia through New England. These widespread attacks by the French from Canada and their Indian allies led to a call for unity of America's colonies. Following Major George Washington's surrender to the French, Franklin, in the May 9 edition of his *Pennsylvania Gazette*, depicted the British colonies as a dismembered snake. The snake's body was cut into eight pieces, representing the colonies, the curves of her body suggesting the Eastern coastline's shape, and the labels on its eight segments are in geographical order, from 'N.E.' – New England – at its head to 'S.C.' – South Carolina – at its tail. The motto underneath reads "JOIN, or DIE." Franklin presumably chose the image of the rattlesnake because of the popular myth that a snake that had been cut in two would come to life again if the pieces were joined before sunset.[6] Franklin, as a representative in the Albany Congress, published this image and the article a few weeks before the Congress in order to promote his *Albany Plan of Union*, in which he put forward the idea that a "*union of the colonies is absolutely necessary for their preservation*" (1987: 383). Ultimately, the Plan was not ratified, as none of the colonies was willing to transfer authority to a centralist power. In Franklin's attempt at unification, one can already see at work what was later to become the first national motto of the United States of America: *E Pluribus Unum – Out of Many, One*.

The interrelation of individuality and collectivity, the multitude of members and the unity of a 'legal person,' that had been at the heart of Hobbes' *Leviathan* also defined the

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[4] For an extended discussion of that term, cf. Herzogenrath 2010.

[5] For a history of Franklin's cartoon and its vicissitudes, cf. Matthews 1906.

[6] More than twenty years later, in December 1775, Franklin, under the pseudonym 'An American Guesser,' commented on 'The Rattle-Snake as a Symbol of America.' In this 'Letter to the Editor' of *The Pennsylvania Journal*, he pointed out the rattle-snake's "vigilance . . . magnanimity and true courage," properties that made the rattle-snake a generic *American* symbol, of the "temper and conduct of America" (Franklin 1987: 745).

problematics of American politics at Franklin's time. Hobbes starts with the *Pluribus* and resolves it in a representational *Unum* (only to discard the *Pluribus* later on, as I will demonstrate), showing unity and wholeness not so much as a *cause*, but as an *effect* to be achieved. Franklin adopted this 'directionality' in various political woodcuts. Franklin's snake, however, confronts us with a different scenario, which in its political rhetoric is all the more powerful: here, not only are the colonies *not* seen as artificial (as in Hobbes' 'Artificial man'), but as a 'natural body,' an organism – in contrast to Hobbes, who showed the Body|Politic as a composite body, finding its unity in the act of representation (thus, in 'artifice'), Franklin also reverses the temporality: the image of the snake points to a unity that was there at the beginning, has been *dis*membered, and has to be subsequently re-united again. Not growing towards unity as an *effect*, Franklin's emblem shows unity as a phantasmatic *starting-point* to be *re*-established – wholeness and unity are here regarded as the *natural* state of being, are envisioned as a mythical origin to which America has to return if it wants to survive.

Thus, Franklin's image is on the one hand a 'wrong' or misleading one, insofar as there was no such thing as previous unity. On the other hand, of course, the ideological impact of Franklin's reterritorialization of a previous wholeness was much stronger in that it claimed and stated cohesion *before* it was actually there, thus urging a *return* to a former wholeness, and constituting an 'outside enemy' ultimately responsible for the "*present* disunited State" (Franklin 1987: 376) of the colonies. Franklin's 'cartoon,' then, presents history encoded in visual shorthand.[7]

If now Trump promises to Make America Great Again, he, on the one hand, draws the trump (sic!) of 'the good old days,' before the advent of neoliberal exploitation, before big time capitalists (like him) ruined the country and opened the floodgates for nasty and unwashed immigrants, when men were still real men that could "grab 'em by the pussy" and get away with it. But what joins this motto to an 'aspirational fascism' (the term is Bill Connolly's) is the underlying nationalist narrative (or: myth) of 'rebirth' (after all, it's *America*, not the USA, and it's *great AGAIN*): Everything's Gonna Be Alt-Right.

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[7] A temporality similar to the one operative in Franklin's snake-device is also at work in the Declaration of Independence. This 'founding document' – seemingly simple and straightforward – presents a whole chain of interrelated and retroactive representations. Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration on behalf of a committee appointed by the Continental Congress. Thus, Jefferson speaks for a Committee that represents Congress, a Congress, in turn, of representatives of 'one people' that at the very moment of declaration is neither 'one' nor 'a people.' In a lecture to mark the Bicentennial of the American Declaration of Independence in 1976, Derrida attempted a reading of the Declaration in terms of the performative act of *founding an institution*. In asking "*who signs, and with what so-called proper name, the declarative act*" (1986: 10), Derrida links his critique of the concept of the author to a particular temporality. With regard to the 'We' of the Declaration, he writes: "But this people does not exist. They do *not* exist as an entity, it does *not* exist, *before* this declaration, not *as such*. If it gives birth to itself, as free and independent subject, as possible signer, this can hold only in the act of the signature. The signature invents the signer." (1986: 10, emphasis in the original)

Franklin and Trump thus share a rhetoric, the rhetoric of what one might call "the non-referential 'again'." But whereas in Franklin, this rhetoric was still close to a 'democratic project' (maybe, at least … there might be an integral connection between democracy and fascism),[8] in Trump it is hardsubbed into a new kind of obvious reactionary populism.

POTUS claims to speak for the 'little people,' those frustrated and angry at the elites, but the 'for' in 'to speak for' here does not mean 'on behalf of,' but 'instead of;' the more so since Trump is part of that 'impudent breed' that is responsible for all which he now claims to be against.[9] He is the cause of precisely the effects he criticizes. He claims to speak with 'the people's' voice, but it's all a ventriloquist's act, an acoustic illusion, a *trump l'oreille* by the book. There must also be an optical counterpart to this, a *trump l'oeil* … my best bet is his hairdo … but shall all you conspiracy theorists answer the question what this hair of his means. Maybe it reveals his asymmetry, the paradox and conundrum he embodies – being simultaneously reactionary (which is obvious in his politics) and 'progressive' (in his neoliberal entrepreneurship).

remote|control

Which is to say, in the lingo of Deleuze's essay: Trump surfs on the cusp between 'discipline' and 'control.' In his case, 'controlling' also rhymes with 'trolling,' as his hair-raising internet presence testifies. And yet: isn't it remarkable that the ramble, rage and rally against the neoliberal signs of the times (society of control) is performed through the use of the very means of those times (digital technology)? But that's yet another story …

Here, I want to invent a new verb, a fictive (fake news!) verb – 'to remote,' meaning: to remove, to distance from. remote|control thus can be read as either 'to do away with' control (with the – very real – specter of neoliberal control society), but also to control from a remote place (the common sense meaning of remote control) … or to do both at the same time. Trump promises to undo the effects of the society of control by a return to the molds of the disciplinary society, 'when everything was easy and great.' Deleuze himself commented that "[c]ompared with the approaching forms of ceaseless control in open sites, we may come to see the harshest confinement as part of a wonderful happy past" (1995: 175) – of course, confinement of others, hence the appeal of Trump's Mexi-

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[8] Cf. Deleuze 1995: 173: "There's no democratic state that's not compromised to the very core by its part in generating human misery."

[9] Cf. e.g. Guattari 2000: 41: "In the field of social ecology, men like Donald Trump are permitted to proliferate freely, like another species of algae, taking over entire districts of New York and Atlantic City; he 'redevelops' by raising rents, thereby driving out tens of thousands of poor families, most of whom are condemned to homelessness, becoming the equivalent of the dead fish of environmental ecology."

can Wall. Deleuze's call "to look for new weapons" (1992: 4) is answered by Trump with the recourse to a *very old* weapon: disciplinary society.

2 trojan horses (& 3 knocks)

I want to finish by pointing out the two Trojan Horses (& 3 knocks) of this essay's title.

First Trojan Horse

First, the Trumpian Trojan Horse, which I already pointed out: Trump on the one hand plays with and even contributes to all the parameters of the society of control, while at the same time promising a return to the principles of the disciplinary society. What is important here, I argue, is the return to a very specific moment in the history of the disciplinary society.

First Knock.

In their collaborative *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari sense that Kafka anticipated the "[d]iabolical powers [...] [which] brush up against the doors and rejoice already from the fact that they will arrive soon" (Kafka qtd. in Deleuze/Guattari 1986: 12n5) – "the American technocratic apparatus or the Russian bureaucracy or the machinery of fascism" (1986: 12). In a way, with this first knock the society of control already rears its ugly head – here fascism already announces itself on the world stage, and fascism here can be precisely understood as the unholy marriage of disciplinary methods and a mode of uber-technocracy that finds its peak in the 'smooth' and most efficient logic of the death camps.

Second Knock.

Quote Deleuze:

> To be sure, there are all kinds of things left over from disciplinary societies, and this for years on end, but we know already that we are in societies of another sort that should be called, to use the term put forth by William Burroughs – whom Foucault admired greatly – societies of control. (1998: 17)

Thus, Burroughs proposes the term 'societies of control' for "the new forces knocking at the door" (Deleuze 1992: 4). This second, Burroughsian knock is the moment where Deleuze senses that the mechanisms of control are beginning to 'emancipate' themselves from the tight grip of the disciplinary mode – between Kafka's and Burroughs' knock lies

the whole poisoned era of European Fascism[10] and its aftermath. Trump, with his conflicting double-play of similarly alluding to both types – discipline and control – very precisely refers to the moment of the first knock, I argue, which is yet another aspect that makes him a candidate for an 'aspirational fascism.'

Second Trojan Horse

... and yet, a third knock ...

The second Trojan Horse my title is hinting at is one of my own construction. I would like to end this short vignette not with a bang, not even a whimper – but with the following CfP I have smuggled in here. Because there is a third knock that I want to point out: almost like a direct response to Kafka's sensing of the 'diabolical powers,' Siegfried Kracauer, in his study *From Caligari to Hitler*, also saw anticipations of the rise to power of Hitler and National Socialism, being (more or less subtly) displayed in German (popular) culture of the era preceding Nazi Germany – in the films of the Weimar Republic.

And here I think a rehash of that book for our times might be called for – films shot around the Millennium depicting not only the dangers of total surveillance and digital tyranny [e.g., *The Net* (1995), *Enemy of the State* (1998), *The Matrix* (1999), *Eagle Eye* (2008) etc.], but also films/TV-series depicting (real or fictional) tyrannies or (Semi-)Fascist states [*The Hunger Games* trilogy (2012-15), *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017-) etc.]. Something along the lines of *From Coriolanus Snow to Trump … And Beyond* (and perhaps this does not even have to be limited to the United States …). Thus, if anyone's interested, contact me at herzogenrath@em.uni-frankfurt.de

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[10] Fascism in itself could be seen as 'the worst of both worlds' of the two regimes of the disciplinary and the sovereign mode of control.

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