Groups of Militant Insanity versus the Videopolice: The Schizoanalysis of Radical Italian Audiovisual Media Culture as Post-Media Assemblages

Michael Goddard

This chapter will apply Félix Guattari's concepts of minor cinema and the post-media era to explore how anti-psychiatry was taken up both in cinematic culture in Italy in the 1970s and also by the Radio Alice free radio station, focussing on the cinematic work of Marco Bellocchio, Elio Petri and Alberto Grifi, especially. While Grifi's film *Anna* (Grifi and Sarchielli 1975) is a relatively well-known anti-psychiatric video experiment, a schizoanalytic approach runs through his 1970s work in proximity with the creative autonomia movement that also gave rise to Radio Alice. However, these currents were already present in key works of Marco Bellocchio and Elio Petri, especially in *Fists in the Pocket* (Bellocchio 1965), *Matti da slegare* (*Fit to be Untied*, 1975) and *La classe operaia va in paradiso* (Petri 1971). In the latter, sound is especially significant to indicate the schizoanalytic inter-relations between class struggle, sexuality and psychic states presented as explicitly machinic and this would also form the basis for Radio Alice's reinvention of radio as delirious machinery for a militant destabilization of the state, capital and the mass media. In many of these media phenomena, it is not just an anti-psychiatric representation expressed but a minor politics in tune with the transformation of cinema, video and radio into schizoanalytic ecologies breaking down the distinctions between producers, technologies and consumers, albeit more effectively in some cases than others. If this 'militant insanity' of creative autonomist practices lost out in the end to the video police in the form of both mass arrests and repression and the rise of Berlusconi's media empire, it provides a rich legacy for the potential reinvention of the postmedia era in the 21st century. This chapter will, first of all, give an account of Felix Guattari's concepts of minor cinema in proximity to a range of international examples that are broadly anti-psychiatric. It will then present the anti-psychiatric work of Franco Basaglia described by

Guattari as a 'guerrilla psychiatrist' as an essential background to media practices and social movements informed by this anti-psychiatric current. Finally, it will present case studies both from the abovementioned filmmakers and Radio Alice as the contours of schizoanalytic audiovisual media practices with relevance to both the present and the future of postmedia.

Félix Guattari and the Cinema of Anti-Psychiatry

As Gary Genosko has indicated (Genosko 2009: 134), unfortunately, Felix Guattari devoted only a few pieces of writing to the cinema in general or individual films, yet what he did write is highly significant in its use of a symptomatological approach, entirely free of the vestigial auteurism of Deleuze's cinema books with their focus on the works of great directors. This is particularly apparent in the short essay, 'The Poor Man's Couch' (Guattari 1996a: 155-166), in which Guattari claims that cinema provides a mass equivalent of the psychoanalytic cure. For this reason, psychoanalysts are singularly unable to grasp cinematic symptomatologies since the cinema constitutes 'a normalization of the social imaginary that is irreducible to familialist and Oedipal models' (1996a: 155). The shift from the reductive Freudian readings of unconscious meanings to Lacanian structuralist readings in terms of the signifier is, for Guattari, no great advance in psychoanalytic attempts to diagnose the cinema, going directly against the huge effect these analyses had on the development of film theory at the time Guattari was writing. Disputing especially Metz's approach to the cinema as being structured in a similar manner to the Lacanian unconscious 'like a language', through an assembly of syntagmatic chains, Guattari argues that cinema's 'montage of a-signifying semiotic chains of intensities, movements and multiplicities fundamentally tends to free it from the signifying grid' (1996a: 161). This is not to say that Guattari has a utopian view of cinema, which he, in fact, says is just as repressive as psychoanalysis, only in a completely different manner. What

cinema – at least in its commercial forms – offers is a machinic, 'inexpensive drug' (1996a: 162) that, in its own way, works on the unconscious. Instead of paying for a professional witness as in psychoanalysis, at the cinema, the audience pays less money to be 'invaded by subjective arrangements with blurry contours [...] that, in principle, have no lasting effects' (1996a: 163). In practice, what is enacted by cinema does have effects in that it models forms of subjective mutation, which remain as traces of the cinematic 'session', just as other narcotics do. As a machinic narcotic, cinema is a giant and much more effective process for the production of normalization than the psychoanalytic cure but, paradoxically, it does this via a process of complete subjective deterritorialization. For this reason, cinema is both 'the best and the worst' that modern capitalist societies offer their subjects and contains within its machinic production of subjectivity liberating potentials: 'a film that could shake free of its function of adaptational drugging could have unimaginable liberating effects on an entirely different scale to those produced by books' (1996a: 164). This is because cinematic language is a living language that, while for the most part turned towards repressive ends, is uniquely able to capture and express processes of psychic semiotization and therefore could become 'a cinema of combat, attacking dominant values in the present state of things' (1996a: 165).

Guattari's examples range from obscure anti-psychiatric documentaries to the works of then relatively unknown American filmmakers like David Lynch and Terence Malick. What Guattari's cinematic examples share is that in his reading of them, they all elaborate non-normative processes of desire, capable in principle of countering the normalization processes of both commercial cinema and psychoanalysis. For example, Guattari indicates several examples that could constitute a cinema of anti-psychiatry or see in a film like Malick's *Badlands* (1973), a profound process of *amour fou* or schizo-desire worthy of the best productions of the surrealists (Guattari 1996a: 167-176).

One arena to begin is in what could be called anti-psychiatric documentaries such as *Asylum* (Robinson 1972), which Guattari discusses in passing along with Ken Loach's fictional *Family Life* (1971) as 'indirectly reveal[ing] an anti-psychiatric current' for a 'substantial audience' (Guattari 1996a: 177). Guattari was much less ambivalently enthusiastic about the March 11 Collective film *Matti da slegare* (*Fit to be Untied*, Silvano Agnosti, Marco Bellocchio, Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli, 1975), which documented the experience of one of Franco Basaglia's anti-institutional projects in the Parma Psychiatric hospital. Guattari was considerably more sympathetic to Basaglia than to R. D. Laing whose English version of anti-psychiatry is the subject of *Asylum* and related more to the former in his own practice at La Borde clinic, devoting a significant review essay to his work in which he labelled him affirmatively as a 'Guerrilla Psychiatrist' (Guattari 1996b: 42-45).[1] What is notable in this film is that it goes further in affirming the speech and experience of all the participants and, unlike in *Asylum*, this is able to impact the very production of the film itself. According to Guattari, 'it is the people involved who really get the chance to speak […] children, educators, psychiatrists, militant groups […] each sequence, each shot, was collectively discussed during the editing' (Guattari 1996a: 178-179). What is striking in this film is the integration of the perspectives of psychiatric patients and industrial workers and the ways relations are set up between them beyond institutional boundaries. For Guattari, this film is exemplary not only of the potentials of anti-psychiatry but also of minor cinema, in its potential to exceed other modes of political communication in becoming a '"cinema of combat" [or] a form of expression and struggle' (1996a: 178, 179) against dominant representations. In this regard, it is worth noting that the collective's subsequent project was a television series oriented around cinema itself, *La macchina cinema* (*The Cinema Machine*, 1979), in which instead of a psychiatric institution, it was a whole range of aspects of the institutional machinery and subjective experience of cinema that were critically examined as industrial production of

subjectivity for the masses, very much in line with Guattari's insights about 'The Poor Man's Couch'.

The Roots of Italian Antipsychiatry and Militant Insanity

The title of this chapter comes from an extraordinary film *Dinni e la Normalina, ovvero la videopolizia psichiatrica contro i sedicenti nuclei di follìa militante* (*Dinni and Normalina or the psychiatric video police against the so-called groups of militant insanity*, 1978) by Alberto Grifi, a filmmaker very close to the Creative Autonomia movement and with a specific interest in the antipsychiatry movement. The film is part agit-prop militant cinema and part documentary on the international meeting against repression held in Bologna in the wake of the shutting down of Radio Alice and the imprisonment or exile of its main animators as part of a broader crackdown on the Autonomia movement under the guise of anti-terrorism. The film presents a radical strategy on the part of the 'video police' to extract dissent at its roots and restore normality, presented in terms of psychiatric repression and hence in an anti-psychiatric framework.

To fully grasp what is going on in this film, it is necessary to go back over a decade, to the hot 1970s in Italy that was strongly expressed in the film and audiovisual culture, and indeed even further to the roots of Italian anti-psychiatry itself in the pioneering work of Franco Basaglia.

Basaglia, now widely known as 'the man who closed the asylums' (See Foot 2015), was a psychiatrist with a strong educational background in phenomenological and existential philosophy, especially the work of Heidegger and Sartre. His studies also engaged with new critiques of psychiatric institutions, such as the work of Erving Goffman (*Asylums,* 1991) and Michel Foucault (*Madness and Civilisation,* 1960). When he arrived at his first posting as director of the mental hospital at Gorizia in 1961, at that time a typically archaic and brutal

mental asylum (Italian psychiatry and the state having been resistant to even the modest reforms that had already taken place in other contexts), he was disgusted by what he found there: 'locked doors only partly successful in muffling the weeping and screams of the patients, many of them lying nude and powerless in their excrement' (Basaglia in Davidson, Rakfeldt and Strauss 2015: 158). He then set out on a project of 'de-institutionalisation' which proceeded step by step to remove all of the disciplinary apparatus of the asylum one measure at a time, a process he referred to as 'the institution negated'. While this mirrored tendencies and critiques of psychiatry in the US, Great Britain and France, it was pursued as an almost guerrilla struggle by Besaglia, ultimately leading to the passing of a law in 1978 to not only dismantle and outlaw all existing asylums but prevent their future reinstatement. The implementation of this law, however, took at least two decades.

What was notable about his strategy was the way it was conducted within the very system it was setting out to destroy; Basaglia held a position of power as the director of a regional asylum, originally considered a dead-end job of no significance and hence providing the opportunity to dismantle not only the Gorizia asylum but the asylum system as a whole. This proceeded through the attraction of a strong team of young psychiatrists who would work at Gorizia temporarily and then continue this work in other hospitals, thereby virally disseminating Basaglia's project of de-institutionalization. According to Felix Guattari, in Basaglia's key text *L'istituzione negata* (*The Institution Negated*, 1968), 'A war of liberation, waged for ten years, to overthrow the institution is presented to us in terms of militant struggle […] There is straightaway a violent refusal of all scientific pseudo neutrality in this domain which is, for the authors, eminently political' (Guattari 1996b: 43). For Basaglia and his colleagues, drawing on the existentialist and anti-psychiatric sources already mentioned, most of the symptoms of mental illness were, in fact, the effects of the asylum system itself and the alienation of control and autonomy it enforced was seen as leading directly to mental

alienation; in other words, mental illness was presented as a social and above all a political issue. The project of opening the walls of the asylum to the outside in every possible respect also made it a hub of activism, bringing it into contact with the rising wave of radical politics in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s to the extent that the contestation over the asylum and its de-institutionalization became a metaphor for revolutionary politics more generally. This was especially the case for the *Autonomia* movement, which, at least in its more creative currents, directly took on some key aspects of anti-psychiatry in its formulation of a revolutionary project, at least as much if not more about the production of subjectivity as it was about the material, objective class relations.

Anti-Psychiatric Tendencies in Italian Cinema: Marco Bellocchio and Elio Petri

The involvement of Bellocchio in the March 11 Collective *Fit to be Untied* documentary was hardly accidental as he had been pursuing a broadly anti-psychiatric approach throughout his fictional film career, beginning most explosively with his first film, *Fists in the Pocket* (1965). Throughout Bellocchio's films of the 1960s and 70s, social critique is filtered through the subjective experience of repression and alienation at the hands of a range of institutional structures such as the family (*Fists in the Pocket*), the education system (*In the Name of the Father,* 1971), the press (*Slap the Monster on Page One,* 1972) and the Army (*Victory March,* 1976). While all of these films have anti-psychiatric tendencies to lesser or greater extents, it is really *Fists in the Pocket* that these are most explicitly and provocatively expressed. Centred around a bourgeois family of a blind mother and four adult children, this is a film that examines the family through a focus on gesture, as implied by the title. Rather than a simple ideological critique, the film shows the contradictory and hypocritical desires traversing the family structure as Alessandro engineers the 'accidental' deaths first of his mother then of his

disabled brother. He does this 'for' his older brother Augusto, the only one who has a seemingly 'normal' life with outside work and a fiancée. Augusto's repressed desires to be liberated from his 'abnormal' family are enacted by his younger brother, who ultimately dies himself from an epileptic seizure, which his sister, who he has also attempted to kill, does nothing about. As Karl Schoonover puts it: 'The deaths in this film occur through surprisingly gentle and unspectacular means: the tap of a finger, the gentle coaxing of a head slipped underwater and, finally, the decision to stay in bed and do nothing. According to Bellocchio's view of the film, "violence arises and breeds in a refusal to accept reality"' (Schoonover 2006). This gestural madness that reaches its apotheosis in Alessandro's epileptic seizure was reflected in the bold cinematic style of the film, which involved abrupt and non-realist editing, at times, almost approaching Soviet avant-garde practices of 'intellectual montage'. However, the montage here is not confined to a purely political or social plane but operates on a plane of desire and psychoses, echoing and amplifying the familial tensions within the scenario as a form of collective articulation of group psychosis. Later Bellocchio would not only make the already mentioned collective anti-psychiatric film *Fit to be Untied* but also enter into collective psychoanalysis with the controversial therapist Marco Fagioli, who subsequently collaborated on several of Bellocchio's films in the 1980s.

Elio Petri was another filmmaker working at the same time who in several films emphasised the intertwining of political power, psychosis and sexual desires. This amalgam was barely visible in his work in the 1950s and 60s, although the sci-fi film *The Tenth Victim* (1965) – a kind of contemporary (rather than set in the future) urban *The Hunger Games* (2012) – in which contestants must kill or be killed by randomly selected others, was a premonition of his future development. In the 1970s, he made a series of four films which, as in the work of Bellocchio, explored the interconnections between social institutions, desire and power in an anti-psychiatric and anti-oedipal manner. The most well-known of these was *Investigation of*

a Citizen above Suspicion (1970)*,* which showed a police inspector who violently murders his mistress and manipulates the evidence so a student radical will be suspected. He then leads the inquiry back towards himself, ultimately even confessing to the crime to his superiors, who nevertheless exonerate him since he is above suspicion. This was, of course, his intention in the first place. Like *Fists in the Pocket,* this is a study of proto-Fascism, as facilitated by contemporary authoritarian institutions in a 'liberal' society. If both the psychology and the politics are fairly rudimentary, what is of more interest is the soundtrack and editing style which again reflects the excessive subjective experience presented within the film.

In *Lulu the Tool* (*La Class Operaio va in Paradiso*), there is a much more astute political analysis that is directly linked to an exploration of a schizoid personality. The main character is initially a much-despised over-productive worker, whose excessive speed leads to the raising of production quotas at the expense of the workers' health and safety. From the beginning, the film presents the industrial noise and rhythms of the factory as a de-subjectifying force and Lulu as a machinic relay who takes the rhythm of the machines he works with directly into the spheres of his intimate relationships and political worldview, a machinism that goes through a complete breakdown after he experiences a traumatic accident at work. As a result of this industrial accident, he engages with the radical students who have been protesting outside the factory and adopts their radical critique, which has consequences for both his working and personal life. He gets fired from the factory, and his girlfriend and son leave him, leading to mental disintegration. This is prefigured in key scenes in which Lulu visits his friend and former worker Militina. In this scene, in particular, there is an almost documentary quality and a political analysis of madness, clearly influenced by Basagalia's ideas. Lulu's machinic schizoid subjectivity is indicated largely via discordant sound that goes from the machines on the factory floor to ultimately invade his entire psyche and his various relations with work, sexuality and politics, which become progressively

destabilised and characterized by noise. As such, it can be seen as an update with respect to 1970s Italian political movements and Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), which was cited affirmatively in the schizoanalysis section of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*: 'as the schizophrenic line of escape or breakthrough, and the process of deterriotiralisation, with its machinic indices' (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 348). This important precursor aside, there has perhaps never been a more explicitly schizoanalytic film than *Lulu the Tool* as it traces several of the dynamics outlined in *Anti-Oedipus* (1984) from the proliferation of desiring-machines both in and out of work and then, via their machinic breakdown, an elaboration of both the negative and positive tasks of schizoanalysis in Lulu's adoption of a revolutionary perspective (see Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 354-417).

Schizoanalysis in Grifi's Cinema

Perhaps the apotheosis of this proximity between anti-psychiatry, schizoanalysis and autonomist politics was the film *Anna* (1975), directed by Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli, even if it was situated far from any recognizable clinical practice. One day, in the late 1960s, the actor Massimo Sarchielli met Anna near Piazza Navona in Rome. Anna was a sixteen-year-old girl, pregnant and visibly under the influence of drugs; escaping from several suicide attempts and constant depressive periods, she had nevertheless rejected the interventions of reform institutions and had recently escaped from the last of these. Sarchielli decided to take care of her and took her to his house. Initially taking notes on the girl's behaviour, he began to record her with the idea of eventually making a film. Since he was an inexperienced director, he asked his friend Alberto Grifi to collaborate on the project. Grifi was already becoming known as an innovative and experimental filmmaker, making films related to the situationist critique of the spectacle and conducting early experiments in video

and special effects. Later he would direct the film *Il Festival del proletariato giovanile al Parco Lambro* (*The Festival of Proletarian Youth at Parco Lambro*, 1976) documenting a key moment of the developing youth counter-culture and the Creative Autonomia movement. Grifi agreed to participate, and they started filming in 1972 and 1973, amassing eleven hours of video recordings, part of which was transferred to 16mm using a device of Grifi's own construction and resulting in a film of almost four hours. This was released in 1975 to a highly controversial reception due to the intimacy, apparent extreme realism, and at the same time manipulation of both of the film and the events transpiring in front of the camera. Located somewhere between the inheritance of Italian Neorealism (Grifi had extensive contact with Cesare Zavattini, 'the old man of Italian Neorealism') and yet-to-be developed reality television, this film is an uncomfortable document of an intersubjective 'therapeutic' process that is highly troubling. Referring to one of the most notorious sequences in the film of Anna in the shower while heavily pregnant, Andréa Picard wrote: 'Troubling in more ways than one, [certain images] sometimes surpass their aesthetic worth and lodge themselves into the annals of memory where they continue to reverberate and disturb long after being encountered' (2013). But it would be a mistake to simply see in this film the prolongation of the aesthetics of Neorealism and direct cinema. It is also a work that defies genres in its combination of documentation and re-enactment, and also one in which the technologies used are highly significant. Grifi had already demonstrated his interest in bricolage by assembling found footage in films like *Verifica Incerta* (1965), which prefigured a whole wave of experimental films and later video art with its humorous repetitions of title and action sequences from numerous Hollywood films. Such experimentation was continued in projects like *Transfert per camera verso Virulenta* (1967) and *Orgonauti, Evivva!* (1970), which experimented with special effects such as colour diffraction and spatial distortion via mirrors and filters, again using equipment that Grifi had developed himself. This experimentation was

not limited to images, however, but also involved the soundtrack with up to seven different sound channels being superimposed in the earlier film. In the latter film, the attempt was rather to recreate via distorted imagery the effects of ingesting psychotropic substances. Certainly, Grifi moved away from this pure artistic research in the 1970s, in Annamaria Licciardello's words rejecting 'any interest in artistic activities that are not capable of disturbing the "meaningless" reality of everyday life' (Licciardello 2008: 189). It is in this lineage that, despite appearances, *Anna* needs to be understood in the following terms: 'Anna is a true and proper cinematographic experiment that constitutes a unique moment in the history of Italian cinema, and a limit-example of direct cinema' (Licciardello 2008: 189). Certainly, this brought the project into dialogue with questions of realism inherited from both direct cinema and Neorealism, but above all, it was the fabrication of a kind of machinery to convert the extremity of subjectivity and everyday life that Anna represented, into durational imagery, in an entirely new way, given the primitive development of analogue video at this moment in time. Grifi was fully aware of these technological conditions, which he saw as indispensable to the production of a film that was able to do away with the usual cinematic conditions of the cost of film stock, lighting and production crews, thereby allowing for an entirely autonomous mode of production and level of intimacy with the film's protagonists.

Anna is therefore as much a socio-political portrait of its time as a psychological one, and rather constitutes the first step in the 'anthropology of disobedience' that Grifi would continue to develop around events on the borders of the Autonomia movement itself, and tellingly by means of a feminist intervention into a mass anti-psychiatric meeting in 1977 (*Lia*, 1977). Contrary to the work of Marco Bellochio, seen by Gary Genosko as the epitome of Guattarian minor cinema, Grifi's work took place in direct proximity to the Creative Autonomia movement itself, resulting in such delirious titles as the already mentioned *Dinni e la Normalina*. As such, this work traces both the phenomenon of Autonomia and its new

subjective practices, as well as their subsequent repression. A process that was directly related to the experience of the Bologna free radio station, Radio Alice.

The Media Ecology of Radio Alice

Italy's first free pirate radio station, Bologna's Radio Alice, clearly derived its name from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2010), but this naming was no mere accident; in part, a reference to Gilles Deleuze's reading of Lewis Carroll and nonsense in *The Logic of Sense* (Deleuze 1990), the name Alice announced this radio's desire to go beyond the rational limits of communication and politics in the directions of a surrealistic play with sense and nonsense, to produce a desiring form of political communication in which poetic delirium would have as much of a place as political events, or further, a space in which false information could produce real events. What was at stake was not the mere expression of a political line but the invention of new forms of communication drawing on sources as diverse as the historical-artistic avant-gardes, Deleuze and Guattarian philosophy, situationist practice and of course, *Alice in Wonderland* itself.

In this context, it is worth asking why Alice was invoked as the name of the first and most significant of the free radio stations. The choice of the name Alice had several meanings for the animators of Radio Alice; as a figure of both youthful curiosity and femininity but also and more crucially as a reference to nonsense, paradox and unconscious desires. In a recent reflection on Radio Alice, its former animators write: 'The choice of Lewis Carroll's fictional heroine was pointed; Alice was heavily linked to the world of feminine symbolism but also to the upside-down logic of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. Next to Carroll, as a second godfather, the group selected the Deleuze of *The Logic of Sense*, a book which deciphered the paradoxes of identity encountered by Carroll's heroine as a metaphor

for the loss of identity (for Deleuze, Alice wanted to be outside all logic, and the mirror – as the symbol of identity – had to be continually crossed over)' (Berardi et al. 2009: 78). The several tributaries flowing into the constitution of Radio Alice included the reinvention of the semiotic experimentation practised by the historical avant-garde, already evident in the practice of the Creative Autonomy movement, situationist media interventions and pranks and theoretical attempts to grasp the transformations both real and potential of technologically mediated communication in the work of Umberto Eco, Hans Magnus Enszensberger and Jean Baudrillard. However, undoubtedly the key reference point was the schizoanalytic perspectives of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1984), whose machinic, molecular revolution Alice attempted to materialize via generating a mode of expression that would be a cross between sense and nonsense, the personal/intimate and the social/collective, becoming a radical media ecology or, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, a 'collective assemblage of enunciation'.

So how exactly did Alice employ nonsense as a form of technologically mediated mode of free communication? The point was, first of all, to open political communication to all those elements that would normally be excluded as non-political, whether because they were too personal, too banal or too strange. According to its animators, Alice transmitted: 'music, news, blossoming gardens, rants, inventions, discoveries, recipes, horoscopes, magic potions [...] messages, massages, lies' (Berardi et al. 2009: 82). This seemingly Borgesian impossible list in relation to the norms of radio contents was a deliberate attempt to exceed the limits of what radio mediated communication could become, rather than merely using radio as a megaphone for a pre-established politics; as observers like Eco noted at the time, the very openness to the banal and the absurd was, in fact, Alice's politics. More than this, the reference to lies was far from accidental; one of the key ways Alice challenged existing modes of political discourse was to reject the idea of political communication as the

revelation of 'political truth', by exposing the lies of power and thus, its serious pedagogical function. Instead, Alice made use of lies, in the form of ludic pranks such as impersonating key politicians, in order to provoke political events following the dictum that 'false information can provoke real events'. It is clear to see that in these and other practices, Alice was clearly inspired by the desire to cross the looking glass in a Carrollian fashion, to employ paradox, nonsense and play to escape the well-worn rhetorics of stable political positions and to open the radio station up to the maximum of unfiltered popular speech. Nevertheless, this was not simply a matter of play or comedy but the serious attempts to articulate the struggles of the Autonomia movement with a powerful means of communication and feedback, without any attempt to organize or control it. This is why Radio Alice was so demonized by the authorities as the amplifier of the movement, all the more suspect for its lack of adherence to norms of political organization, even those of the far left. As such, Radio Alice was performing a type of translation of Carroll's *Alice*, but one that like Artaud's schizophrenic reading was also transforming its meaning; one could say that despite or maybe because of the proximity to a schizoanalytic reading of Alice, a new Alice emerged, Alice as a subversive, a revolutionary anti-psychiatric Alice, whose play with sense and nonsense was directly articulated to challenge the official, dominant semiosis of the state, media and conventional modes of political representation.

Given these Deleuzo-Guattarian connections, it is not completely surprising that in the late 1970s, Guattari devoted several texts to the phenomena of popular free radio, especially stations in Italy. For Guattari, the politics articulated around Radio Alice was not a mere shift away from the traditional apparatus of struggles such as the communist party, which have become completely compromised with the state in favour of new micropolitical groupings such as gay liberation or the women's movement; these new groupings are no less susceptible to becoming reterritorializations finding their institutional place in the manufacture of

consensus. As he puts it, 'there is a miniaturization of forms of expression and of forms of struggle, but no reason to think that one can arrange to meet at a specific place for the molecular revolution to happen' (1996a: 82). While Guattari does not state it explicitly here, this corresponds very closely to the rejection of even micropolitical identities or political forms such as Organized Autonomia enacted by Radio Alice; it was not just a question of giving space for excluded and marginalized subjects such as the young, homosexuals, women, the unemployed and others to speak but rather of generating a collective assemblage of enunciation allowing for the maximum of transversal connections and subjective transformations between all these emergent subjectivities. Guattari refers to Alice as 'a generalized revolution, conjunction of sexual, relational, aesthetic and scientific revolutions all making cross-overs, markings and currents of deterritorialization' (1996a: 84). Rather than pointing to a new revolutionary media form, the experimentation of Radio Alice was a machine for the production of new forms of sensibility and sociability, the very intangible qualities constitutive of both the molecular revolution and what he calls elsewhere the post-media era (Guattari 1996b: 103–104).

Guattari is somewhat more specific about these practices in the essay 'Popular Free Radio' (1996a: 74–78). In this essay, instead of the question of why Italy, he asks why radio? Why not Super 8 film or cable TV? The answer for Guattari is not technical but rather micropolitical. If media in their dominant usages can be seen as massive machines for the production of consensual subjectivity, then it is those media that can constitute an alternate production of subjectivity that will be the most amenable to a post-media transformation. Radio at this time had not only the technical advantage of lightweight replaceable technology but, more importantly, it could be used to create a self-referential feedback loop of political communication between producers and receivers, tending towards breaking down the distinctions between them: 'the totality of technical and human means available must permit

the establishment of a veritable feedback loop between the auditors and the broadcast team: whether through direct intervention by phone, through opening studio doors, through interviews or programmes based on listener made cassettes' (1996a: 75). Radio Alice, in particular, developed new ways of articulating radio and telephonic networks to generate a collective and influential approach to the production of news: 'News was provided live by whoever called the radio, without any filter or editing' (Berardi et al. 2009: 81). For Guattari, such strategies of feedback generated a distributed media ecology, well beyond the transmissions themselves: 'We realize [with Radio Alice] that radio constitutes but one central element of a whole range of communication means, from informal encounters in the Piazza Maggiore to the daily newspaper – via billboards, mural paintings, posters, leaflets, meetings, community activities, festivals etc.' (Guattari 1996a: 75). In other words, it was less the question of the subversive use of a technical media form than the generation of a media or rather post-media ecology, that is, a self-referential network for an unforeseen processual production of subjectivity amplifying itself via technical means. The terms Guattari uses for post-media may seem misleading or even naïve if taken to imply that participatory media based on many-to-many communication are somehow transparent and unmediated, which is certainly disproved by the contemporary phenomena of the Internet and the World Wide Web – which is now thoroughly occupied by all kinds of corporate enterprises. However, if a post-media ecology is understood more as being 'post-mass media models of communication', proposing instead an alternative networked model of cybernetic organization that is collective and participatory, and that scrambles dominant media codes along with the roles of producers and consumers, then all radical media ecologies are in this sense 'post-media', which is not to say they are unmediated.

What this type of radio achieved most of all was the short-circuiting of representation in both the aesthetic sense of representing the social realities they dealt with and in the political sense

of the delegate or the authorised spokesperson, in favour of generating a space of direct communication in which, as Guattari put it, 'it is as if, in some immense, permanent meeting place – given the size of the potential audience – anyone, even the most hesitant, even those with the weakest voices, suddenly have the possibility of expressing themselves whenever they wanted. In these conditions, one can expect certain truths to find a new matter of expression' (1996a: 76). In this sense, Radio Alice was also an intervention into the language of media; the transformation from what Guattari calls the police languages of the managerial milieu and the University to a direct language of desire:

> Direct speech, living speech, full of confidence, but also hesitation, contradiction, indeed even absurdity, is charged with desire. And it is always this aspect of desire that spokespeople, commentators and bureaucrats of every stamp tend to reduce, to filter. [...] Languages of desire invent new means and tend to lead straight to action; they begin by 'touching', by provoking laughter, by moving people, and then they make people want to 'move out', towards those who speak and toward those stakes of concern to them. (1996a: 76–77)

Conclusions: From Radio Alice and Schizoanalytic Cinema to Digital Postmedia Assemblages

It is this activating dimension of popular free radio that most distinguishes it from the usual pacifying operations of the mass media and that also posed the greatest threat to the authorities; if people were just sitting at home listening to strange political broadcasts or being urged to participate in conventional, organized political actions such as demonstrations that would be tolerable, but once you start mobilizing a massive and unpredictable political affectivity and subjectivation that is autonomous, self-referential and self-reinforcing, then

this is a cause for panic on the part of the forces of social order, as was amply demonstrated in Bologna in 1977. But its implications go well beyond free radio and the specific situation of Italy in the 1970s.

What Guattari's engagement with free radio tells us most of all about radical media ecologies, not only historical ones such as Radio Alice but also in the present, is that they are not something that can be given in advance or determined by a specific form of media technology or political organization; they are instead a process of the production of subjectivity, the becoming of a collective assemblage of enunciation whose starting point is the emptiness and coerciveness of the normalizing production of subjectivity that the mass media enact. While the cinematic examples cited earlier were perhaps not as horizontal or open post-media assemblages as Radio Alice, they nevertheless constitute steps in a similar direction, allowing for a conjugation between schizoanalysis, work and the production of An-Oedipal subjectivity. These examples considered as schizoanalytic media ecologies, therefore, serve as exemplary instances of potential media ecological practice, in its political, subjective and ethico-aesthetic dimensions: in other words, it is less the question of the subversive use of technical media forms than the generation of a media or rather post-media network, that is a self-referential network for an unforeseen processual and political production of subjectivity amplifying itself via technical means. This is more rather than less applicable and possible in relation to Internet-mediated modes of many to many communication today as it was in relation to radio, cinema or video practices in the 1970s.

References

Basaglia, F. (1968), *L'istituzione negata*, Turin: Einaudi.

Berardi, F., M. Jacquemet and G. Vitali (2009), *Ethereal Shadows: Communications and Power in Contemporary Italy,* New York: Autonomedia.

Carroll, L. (2010), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* New York: Collins.

Davidson, L., J. Rakfeldt and J. Strauss, eds (2010), *The Roots of the Recovery Movement in Psychiatry: Lessons Learned*, Oxford: John Wiley and Sons.

Foot, J. (2015), *The Man Who Closed the Asylums: Franco Basaglia and the Revolution in Mental Health Care*, London: Verso

Deleuze, G. (1990), *The Logic of Sense,* trans. M. Lester and C. Stivale, New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (1984), *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem and H. R. Lane, London: Continuum.

Foucault, M. (2006 [1961]), *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason,* London: Vintage Books.

Genosko, G. (2009), *Félix Guattari: A Critical Introduction*, London: Pluto Press.

Goffman, E. (1991 [1961]), *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates,* London: Penguin.

Guattari, F. (1996a), *Soft Subversions,* trans. D. L. Sweet and C. Wiener, New York: Semiotext(e).

Guattari, F. (1996b) *The Guattari Reader*, ed. G. Genosko, Oxford: Blackwell.

Licciardello, A. (2008), 'Sul cinema di Alberto Grifi [On Alberto Grifi's Cinema]', in L. Caminiti and S. Bianchi (eds), *Gli autonomi Vol. 3*, 184–193, Rome: DeriveApprodi.

Picard, A. (2012), 'Disappearances After the Revolution: On Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli's Anna', *Cinema Scope 50*. Available online: http://cinema-

scope.com/columns/filmart-disappearances-after-the-revolution/ (accessed 1 September 2020).

Schoonover, K. (2006), '*Fists in the Pockets*', *Senses of Cinema* 40. Available online: https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2006/cteq/fists-in-the-pocket/ (accessed 1 September 2020).

Films Cited

Anna (Dir. A. Grifi and M. Sarchielli, 1975).

Asylum (Dir. P. Robinson, 1972).

Badlands (Dir. T. Malick, 1973).

Dinni e la Normalina, ovvero la videopolizia psichiatrica contro i sedicenti gruppi di follia militante [Dinni and Normalini, or the Psychiatric Videopolice Against the So-called Groups of Militant Insanity] (Dir. A. Grifi, 1978).

Family Life (Dir. K. Loach, 1971).

Il Festival del proletariato giovanile al Parco Lambro [The Festival of Proletarian Youth at Lambro Park] (Dir. Alberto Grifi, 1976).

Indagine su un 21cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto [Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion] (Dir. E. Petri, 1970).

I pugni in tasca [Fists in the Pocket] (Dir. M. Bellocchio, 1965)

La classe operaia va in paradiso [Lulu the Tool] (Dir. E. Petri, 1971)

La decima vittima [The 10th Victim] (Dir. Elio Petri, 1965).

La macchina cinema [The Cinema Machine] (Dir. S. Agnosti, M. Bellocchio, S. Petraglia, S. Rulli, 1978).

Lia (Dir. A. Grifi, 1977).

Marcia trionfale [Victory March] (Dir. M. Bellocchio, 1976).

Matti da slegare [Fit to be Untied] (Dir. S. Agnosti, M. Bellocchio, S. Petraglia, S. Rulli, 1975).

Modern Times (Dir. C. Chaplin, 1936).

Nel nome del padre [In the Name of the Father] (Dir. M. Bellocchio, 1971).

Orgonauti, Evivva! (Dir. A. Grifi, 1970).

Sbatti il monstro in prima pagina [Slap the Monster on Page One] (Dir. M. Bellocchio, 1972).

Transfert per camera verso Virulentia (Dir. A. Grifi, 1967)

Verifica incerta [Uncertain Verification] (Dir. G. Baruchello and A. Grifi, 1965).

---

[1] For Guattari's critique of what he saw as the excesses of Laing's approach at Kingsley Hall, see Guattari, 1996b, 'The Divided Laing' and 'Mary Barnes' Trip' in Genosko ed., *The Guattari Reader,* Oxford: Blackwell, 37–41, 46–54.