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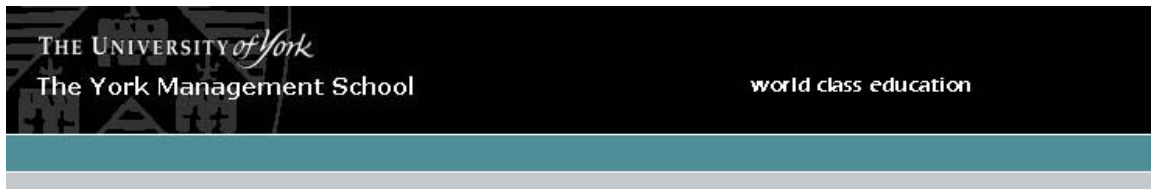
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**Lines of Flight: Everyday Resistance along  
England's Backbone**

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considered preliminary**

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# **Lines of Flight: Everyday Resistance along England's Backbone**

## **Abstract**

The visual and the cultural impact of 'social industry' has made a permanent impression on the landscape and on individual minds, whether for ill or for good, particularly in the Peak and Pennines region of northern England. In the current research we examine this impact and consider how both its visible and less apparent effects took hold and how they set in motion an ongoing process of productive/consumptive estrangement from life's primordial forces, which continue to be alien and obscure, or else appear arcane and overly nostalgic to present-day life. Drawing on the methodology of a short film (incorporating narrative and verse) and using rock climbing as an illustration, we will invoke several, radically dynamic 'lines of flight' to open up and articulate an aesthetic appreciation of concrete experience in the fight against coding and to engender a call for action and passion so that we might come to a renewed belief in free activity, which can prompt us, in turn, to think about how we live and work and how we might change things.

## **Lines of Flight: Everyday Resistance along England's Backbone**

Hill-stone was content  
To be cut, to be carted  
And fixed in its new place.

It let itself be conscripted  
Into mills. And it stayed in position  
Defending this slavery against all.

It forgot its wild roots  
Its earth song  
In cement and the drum song of looms.

(Ted Hughes, from *Hill-Stone Was Content*)

### **Introduction**

In our frenzied contemporary world, ordinary life confronts an essential tension between continuity and disconnection. At home, and especially at work, everyone is forced to hold in check social structures such as family, occupation, firm, job, wage and community, even though the predictability and hence power of these traditional pillars has diminished almost to the point of obscurity (Beck, 1992). In many ways, this system of disciplinary coordinates might actually be part of the very problem that it has been designed to address. Surrounded by these supposed centres of authority, about which we have only the loosest grasp, there is a marked imbalance between the importance accorded to formal work and organisation and the neglected value of more creative action. The consequence is that life's primordial forces and flows appear increasingly alien and inaccessible.

In accordance with Beck (1992), it should be recognised that the elements of this tension cannot in fact be separated. The feeling of disconnection actually exists only as part of the ongoing work to shape and maintain personal identities in contemporary, 'reflexive' society. The problem is that continuity and disconnectedness are not neatly distinguishable. There is no clean subdivision, for example, between work, home and leisure. These are not like artificial periods, called by a morning bell or precisely measured out by a prominent factory clock, neither are

they separate terms that have become far removed from concrete experience. On this view, society is not distinct from nature, rather, everyday experience constantly intermingles economic enterprise, domestic activity, and recreational escape as ‘one and the same essential reality’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 5).

We invoke this whole as a totality of actual bodily (re) actions and passions that are based on several once productive places and a few ‘intensely lived experiences’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). We offer a particular view of attempts to break the holds of present-day post-industrial society’s fixed coding in order to experiment with new flows that rework the necessary connections between industry, the countryside and the city. Drawing on the visual methodology of a *short film* (incorporating narrative and verse) and using solo rock climbing as an illustration, we explore the particular social industry of the Peak and Pennines region of northern England (England’s backbone) and place it within the historical and contemporary context of the desolate and yet profoundly melancholic beauty of the surrounding moorland landscape.

We will do this by creating several extreme lines of escape that make new use, quite literally, of arcane spaces on the side of the road; quarries and moorland outcrops, once bustling with industry and organisation, but now obsolete, derelict and deserted. By doing so we show how such lines of flight are relevant today, how they can be used to open up new readings of work and life in both modern industrial and present-day post-industrial societies, and how, by participating in their novel flows, we can develop insights and create opportunities for ever new connections in the field of direct human experience.

## **The Regional Transformation of Work**

Between 1724 and 1727 Daniel Defoe published the three volumes of his magnificent travel treatise *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*. In volume three he drew attention to the counties of Derbyshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire, and particularly to the range of hills that are now called the Peak and Pennines region of northern England – England’s backbone:

‘This, perhaps, is the most desolate, wild, and abandoned country in all England. The mountains of the Peak ... seem to be but the beginning of wonders to this part of the country, and but the beginning of mountains, or, if you will, as the lower rounds of a ladder ... It is from this ridge of mountains that all the rivers in the north of England take their rise, ... in short, this whole country, however mountainous, and that no sooner we were down one hill but we mounted another, is yet infinitely full of people; those people all full of business ... This business is the clothing trade, for the convenience of which the houses are thus scattered and spread upon the sides of the hills, as above, even from the bottom to the top; the reason is this; such has been the bounty of nature to this otherwise frightful country, that two things essential to the business, as well as to the ease of the people are found here, and that in a situation which I never saw the like of in any part of England; and, I believe, the like is not to be seen so contrived in any part of the world; I mean coals and running water upon the tops of the highest hills: This seems to have been directed by the wise hand of Providence for the very purpose which is now served by it, namely, the manufactures ...’ (Defoe, 1989: 170-174).

Defoe’s excellent description of the busy, early industrial scene toward the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century was a view of the Peak and Pennines region before the onset of concentrated industrial mechanisation. As he pointed out, this particular landscape was well suited to early domestic cloth production, given the availability of the two necessary ingredients for business: easy to come by coal and fast running water. Nonetheless, following successive Enclosure Acts of Parliament, regional crises affecting the domestic system of manufacture when spinning and weaving were done at home and the concentration of water-powered machinery, land workers and handloom weavers were eventually compelled to enter the nascent mills and factories as abstract, calculable labour-power, in order to operate the machine-based industrial looms (Gregory, 1982).

Two of the earliest regional examples of the new industrial manufactories were Sir Richard Arkwright’s water powered cotton mill, established on the river Derwent at Cromford in Derbyshire and Jedidiah Strutt’s great cotton mill, built along the same lines further down the valley at Belper. Arkwright’s new factory, which began producing cotton in 1772, was one of the earliest and by 1789 the original 5-storey mill buildings had become a large industrial complex employing up to 1000 men, women and children. Dating from 1776, Strutt’s mill embodied revolutionary social and technical ideas and by 1803 the North Mill at Belper was completed using state-



of-the-art fireproof brick materials and cast iron frames. These early industrialists with their concentrated machine system, pioneering buildings, use of mass wage-labour and adjacent 'company' villages, became models for large-scale factory production in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century industrial landscape. At the same time they heralded the miracle of modern times and an unprecedented rise in wealth for established clothiers and enterprising cotton merchants, but also ushered in an era of soul-destroying exploitation for many weaving families.

The continuous and unlimited production of the new 'manufactories', combined with the increasing use of steam power in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, led to a new and intense concentration of much larger-scale industry and of the labour-power to operate it. Industry spread to the towns surrounding the Peak and Pennine hills, causing them to grow into large, densely populated cities. Defoe (1989) notes how Sheffield and Barnsley, eminent for the production of iron, steel and coal, had their buildings blackened by the continued smoke of the crucibles and forges. He similarly describes Bradford, Leeds and Manchester, where lace and woollen manufacture take place 'amidst the hundreds of backyard workshops, belching chimneys and loading wharves' (Darley, 2003: 17), so that 'everyway to the right hand and the left, the country appears busy, diligent, and even in a hurry of work ... A noble scene of industry and application' (Defoe, 1989: 177).

William Wordsworth (1814), however, did not share the same vision of 'nobility' and was clearly unhappy with this burgeoning industrial scene. Writing in the eighth book of *The Excursion*, he says:

Meanwhile, at social Industry's command  
How quick, how vast an increase. From the germ  
Of some poor hamlet, rapidly produced  
Here a huge town, continuous and compact  
Hiding the face of earth for leagues - and there,  
Where not a habitation stood before,  
Abodes of men irregularly massed  
Like trees in forests, - spread through spacious tracts.  
O'er which the smoke of unremitting fires  
Hangs permanent, and plentiful as wreaths  
Of vapour glittering in the morning sun.  
And, wheresoe'er the traveller turns his steps

He sees the barren wilderness erased,  
Or disappearing ...

Despite Wordsworth's indignation, the mills and other 'manufactories' had, by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, become the dominant features of the Peak and Pennine landscape. The new factories were 'flagships' (Darley, 2003), demonstrating the power of industrial capital's 'command' as it surged forward. At this point the traditional system of small artisan families satisfying their own needs had largely disappeared, erased by an industrial labour process that required huge numbers of workers (of whatever gender or age), toiling within Blake's 'dark Satanic mills' (Thompson, 1966) to the new rhythms and accelerated speed of manufacture in capitalist markets; a scene little changed until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century:

Soundlessly down across the counties, out of the resonant gloom  
That wraps the north in stupor and purple travels the deep, slow boom  
Of the man-life north-imprisoned, shut in the hum of the purpled steel  
As it spins to sleep on its motion, drugged dense in the sleep of the wheel.

Out of the sleep, from the gloom of motion, soundlessly, somnambule  
Moans and booms the soul of a people imprisoned, asleep in the rule  
Of the strong machine that runs mesmeric, booming the spell of its word  
Upon them and moving them helpless, mechanic, their will to its will deferred.

(D.H. Lawrence, from *North Country*)

## **The Continuity of Life in Industrial Modernity**

On an individual plane, the growth of industry and commerce from the late-18th century gradually relegated traditional rural skills and ways of life to a bygone era and weakened society's connection with nature's seasonal rhythms. The experience of work became more 'conscripted' by an industrial 'time structure' that demanded participation (Littler, 1985: 4). Factory masters often siphoned labour from rural artisan and agricultural families, as well as from the wives and children of local miners. Wages were higher than for traditional craft and agricultural work – at least when trade was good – and many families continued to supplement traditional incomes with factory work. Nonetheless, the modern factory workplace was unremitting; it felt increasingly alien and provided no guarantee of security. When

trade was brisk, for example, Arkwright's mills operated on a 6-day system of two 12-hour shifts, with Sunday being the only day off. If trade stagnated the workforce could be summarily dismissed, or wages arbitrarily reduced, until trade picked up again. This particular transformation of the local work experience was connected to a much wider transformation in the regional economy during this period. Travelling north to Sheffield, Barnsley, Bradford, Leeds and Manchester, as Defoe did, the transition from the traditional rural to the new industrial system and the increasing vulnerability of factory life would have been easily observable through the rising smoke of the burgeoning urban scene.

The new industrial labour process clearly had a considerable element of material insecurity as well as a constraining and repetitive time and motion about it. The deadening framework of machine minding work and the 'diabolical rhythms' (Linhart, 1985: 117) of working on assembly lines – the endless pressure not to fall behind – gradually enveloped and anaesthetized the worker (Linhart, 1985). In structural terms the means of wealth production became increasingly distanced from workers' experiences, and this, together with the deskilling character of the work itself, served to remove control by the labour force over the means of production.

In this sense, the increasingly dehumanised and repetitive nature of labour did not stop with the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century industrial enterprise, but continues to shape the fluid, flexible and pluralized forms of work, destandardised work places, working hours and job tenure, including forms of 'underemployment', in the post-industrial present (Beck, 1992; Bauman, 1998). Whatever our feelings about the contemporary post-industrial labour process, the experience of work it bears with it often reminds us of the transformation of economy and society of the industrial past – (often) marginalised workers are still being exploited, and people everywhere still feel estranged from their work, from nature and from each other.

Today, the white-collar labour process exchanges the alienation of the line for long hours at demanding and over socialised work – why do we work so hard? An increasing number of salaried service workers, as well as highly paid professionals and managerial workers, are forced to participate in role patterns associated with often subjugating conditions (Lyng, 1990). For example, with current trends of

globalisation and network organizations, free-floating, locally unbound, universalised corporations try to maximize their employees' skills and time to achieve their goals. Employers see no reason why their staff should not be contactable 24/7, why they should not work during those hours spent on planes or trains, waiting in airports and stations, or hidden in distant hotels (Wood, 2005) – what can I squeeze into the schedule? The result is that 'people become resigned to a daily drudge, going from day to day, week to week, year to year, and before they know where they are they are drawing their pension' (Littler, 1985: 6):

The wages of work is cash.  
The wages of cash is want more cash.  
The wages of want more cash is vicious competition.  
The wages of vicious competition is – the world we live in.

The work-cash-want circle is the vicious circle  
that ever turned men into fiends.

Earning a wage is a prison occupation  
and a wage earner is a sort of gaol-bird.  
Earning a salary is a prison overseer's job,  
a gaoler instead of a gaol-bird ...

This is called universal freedom.

(D.H. Lawrence, from *Wages*)

## **Being in Control**

Through the 20th century and right up to present-day post-industrial society, people have looked for some relief from the 'vicious circle' of both waged and salaried occupations. Ironically, this search has led many to explore a short term 'fix' in the form of a new type of consumer-orientated constraint. The response by a greater part of the population to the alienating conditions of the modern workplace has been an increasing preoccupation with the consumption imperative of the capitalist economy, in which everyone is invited to 'buy, buy, and buy!' (Bauman, 1998).

This present-day constraint is characterised by weakening ties with family, occupation and community, where individuals are becoming increasingly isolated from the

secure, although often *repressive*, social structures that bound life and thinking in early industrial modernity (Beck, 1992). In response to this alienation, following Michel Foucault (1980), among others, a much more highly developed practice of social *stimulation* has developed, in which individuals have to deal with an increased number of personal decisions and choices about their personal identities (Beck, 1992). The inevitable vulnerability resulting from this ongoing ‘Identity work’ means judgements have to be made about which goods and services are relevant to one’s personal identification and which are not. Compared to the forms of power and hence social control exercised *exclusively* through modern industrial processes of *production*, the present-day system of decisions and choices relies on *inclusivity* and ongoing *consumption* to make it more effective. As a consequence, it is the ease of circulation of the relevant goods and services that becomes the key cultural form in the contemporary world. As every successful present-day post-industrial corporation knows, goods and services now need positioning to be bought. The production of consumption, as Marx perceptively anticipated, artificially creates the *desire* for particular goods or services as more important than the actual goods or services themselves.

One observable symptom of this transition is the development of shopping centres such as Meadowhall, which was built on the site of many of the former steel mills to the north east of Sheffield. Since opening in 1990, Meadowhall has turned once thriving sites of production into a ‘temple of consumption’ (Bauman, 2001). Like an imagined ideal community, selective about whom it admits, this well supervised, properly surveyed and managed ‘land of shoppertunity’ promises access, at least by association, for shoppers who can now afford part of the imaginary lifestyle that identity relevant consumer brands connote:

Down by the surly Don flows  
We drove, my love and I,  
To see the lights, the artificial lights  
Of the Meadowhall mall  
And its bleeping tills  
And its artificial sights,  
Its artificial sights.

Razed now the works and furnaces  
Where steel built a city.

Now its empire of rust is shiny  
Clean, green and hollow like a stage-set  
Resurrected by the money  
Of a bus-buster's grease-monkey  
Who made himself then made this mall  
With twenty mill  
Of spare cash ...  
Oh no, my love, I'll never tell  
The grandkids  
What we did here.  
How the Disney Store and Warner Village  
And the Mediterranean Oasis  
Mark the graves of bodies and the tombs of souls.  
The redundo's gone and I must let them lie  
Beneath the living death of this retail hell.

(Stephen Linstead, from *Meadowhall*)

Whether constrained and conscripted by the mesmerising boom of the machines, or hyper-stimulated by 'postmodern' consumer culture's imploratory invective to 'buy great stuff', the inevitable result is that the incessant search for 'Self' continues to be defined by an external and increasingly artificial world that leaves many feeling anxious and unsatisfied; 'a slow death of hope in a sea of headaches, backaches and tranquillisers' (Littler, 1985: 7). In either case, the popular desire for some short-term relief blurs the sight of the more important and authentic connection with the compensating forces and enchanting flows of 'life's beauty'.

He's a twentieth century boy  
With his hands on the rails  
Trying not to be sick again  
And holding on for tomorrow

(Blur, from *For Tomorrow*)

This prompts the question: if we don't like it, what are *we* going to do about it? There are many possibilities open to us, but one option we are *not* going to dwell on is the alienating experience of work and life in northern industrial England, nor the seductive 'desire path' of the global consumer society *per se*. Neither do we want to draw attention to the blasted wasteland created by past and present day

industrialisation in the otherwise ‘silent and desolate’ beauty of the surrounding moorland. To the contrary, we are concerned precisely with showing how all these feelings and occurrences are connected. By making use of the considerable sublimity on the threshold of the urban landscape, we want to experiment with ‘deterritorialising flows’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) – points of intensity – that overcome dominant codes, which can lead elsewhere, and through which the field of human experience ‘assumes a more relational character’ (Lyng, 1990: 882).

### **What is a Line of Flight?**

A line of flight or of escape is a concept developed by the continental philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the militant intellectual Felix Guattari, in their successive works on schizophrenia and capitalism (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983; 1987). They present lines of flight as creative and liberating escapes, which, although available to us at any time and capable of leading in manifold directions, off the usual routes and away from the dominant coding of ‘social Industry's command’, are not easily named and described. In fact, lines of flight refuse to be bounded; there are no settled objective states so to delimit them without establishing a new well-defined code to make the delimitation. Put otherwise, because a line of flight outside a dominant code can change the sense of what that code means, its change can alter the whole of the reality within the given system (Williams, 2009). Consider, for instance, the rise of street protests in the aftermath of Iran's disputed presidential elections, or the collective outrage around the United Kingdom Members of Parliament's (MPs) expenses claims. Each of these accumulations of energy or action has been deployed against their respective political realities and may well bring about a radical break from them in the form of a long-term disconnection. Whether or not they succeed in doing so, or are reabsorbed by vast government bureaucracies and the forces of law – the Iranian State has already instigated a brutal crackdown on the opposition movement's protests – these literal lines of flight certainly have produced a decoding of their current political situations. What is more, they always have the capacity to change tack, to slip away and to reconnect elsewhere.

Lines of flight are thus ongoing processes that can be described only fleetingly and incompletely. It is their nature to change and to change again, always establishing connections and opening new passages; linking separate realms without distinction (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). Following a line of flight thus means thinking and acting ‘off the grid’ and ‘outside’ expected centres of interest. By doing so, attention is drawn to the range of alternative networks and unorthodox places from which to experiment with new and creative transformations and actions. As such, lines of flight are discontinuities, disruptions, splits or fractures that intercede in and break through the tedium of lives and the uniformity of things, changing the nature and significance of familiar histories and given situations as they interact along the way (Deleuze 1993).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) urge us to recognise lines of creative and liberating escape as a cultural force that scrambles and confuses the judicial forms of coding saturating modern life in post-industrial society – for example, the everyday rules and regulations that delineate between socially acceptable and unacceptable practices. Thus, lines of flight express an opening of the future and the possibility of something new (Linstead and Thanem 2007; Williams 2003). Nonetheless, in a postmodern world that already challenges a broad array of repressive discourses and judicial forms of power, to what extent can lines of flight or escape *continue* to provide instances of thinking and acting ‘outside of the box’? Have they lost their subversive character and should they be seen, perhaps inevitably, as the quite normal tendency of present-day post-industrial society?

The postmodern worldview denotes a transitive reality, transformations in everyday human action and social relations. The emphasis on consumption and instant gratification, new forms of cultural experience and the important productive role of language and visual images on the conduct of everyday life, all connote movement-as-reality and bring out the indivisible continuity of assimilation and appropriation characterising contemporary capitalist exchange in the world market. Take, for example, how the illicit and counter cultural pleasures and practices of 1990’s ‘raves’ have become channelled into more predictable urban ‘clubbing’ experiences, produced and consumed in carefully managed and regulated environments (Goulding et al, 2008). To make the point otherwise, rather than fundamentally disrupting



society, to what extent might lines of flight or escape actually reaffirm and support long-term social cohesion?

Precisely because our frenzied contemporary world exhibits a taste for scrambling and confusing codes, it now seems impossible to stand outside of, escape from, or else to engage politically and actively with its affects. For example, urban clubbers drop the same pills and wear 'uniform' fashions (Goulding et al, 2008) and schizoid escapists like surfers have their peak experiences 'mediated' – a euphemism, perhaps, for individual desires being 'fulfilled' – through products fostered and promoted by supranational corporations. In other words, whether or not the counter cultural, creative framings of lines of flight do invoke a suspension of the (risk-averse) coding of everyday life, or are as carefully produced and managed as any other commodity, they must be seen as a part of present-day post-industrial society – escape is always 'on the cusp' and in relation to a prior set of constrained attitudes to which it responds. No matter how rebellious you are to begin with, the commercial world will see an opportunity to market products. As a result, 'escapist' groups become identified with and by these products.

To explore the essential tension between escape and constraint more closely we will create a few lines of flight based on intensely lived experiences that stick out from the mundane and the regular, which take us by surprise and appear unlikely from within coded (constrained) ways of thinking. Our aim is not so much to explain what a line of flight means as to show how it works and what it can do in the way of opening up new readings of our experiences of work 'au milieu': *in context* and *in between* old and new industrial and post-industrial landscapes.

In order to do this, we carry out a filmic refraction of a particular, qualitative relationship between the landscape, environment and people – the 'social industry' – of the Peak and Pennines region of northern England. The dynamic interaction we envisage involves a process of divesting ourselves from the strictly meaningless experience of work (abstract and calculable waged and salaried labour) in (post)industrial society, so that rich investments of deeper quality and greater significance can have the chance to rise elsewhere; in this case through some 'solo'

(unroped) ascents of a chosen miscellany of hill-stone rock climbs – lines of flight – on the surrounding, melancholic moors.

## **The Rural Landscape**

The desolate moors and plunging valleys of the Peak and Pennines have played an important socio-economic role for centuries. Certainly, the natural beauty of this countryside did not go unnoticed by our predecessors and the moorland hills remain visitor honey-pots today. Hill walking and rock climbing, in particular, have enjoyed popularity as pastimes in this wilderness region since at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, although, because most of the land was privately owned until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, access to areas of open country was limited and strictly preserved. Even then, historically located general relations of social control continued to determine access and, up until World War II, the tightly-knit upper-middle-classes dominated participation (viz. the Lakeland based *Fell and Rock Climbing Club*, founded in 1906). Nonetheless, the combination of political activism and increased public interest in the outdoors led to a mass trespass onto open countryside in 1932 and, by the 1950s, to a new breed of climbers and walkers, many from quite ordinary working class backgrounds in the large industrial towns and cities, who began to explore the nearby dales and moors.

The Peak and Pennines has become famous for technical rock climbing since that time, not least because the short and easy access, relative to other mountainous country in Britain, allows the keen climber or rambler to reach any near rock outcrop or summit quickly. This makes the area perfect for catching one's breath against the humdrum routines of the assembly line, or else the hurly burly demands work makes (inside and outside the firm) on life and time (thinking about it as well as doing it) (Beck, 1992). It even provides places to experiment with new and creative activities. For example, rather than accepting the economic idleness and social abandonment of being 'out of work' in a northern mill town, 'unemployed bums' might transform a rural moorland quarry 'from what was once a thriving place of work, and then a vast, silent ugly space, [to] a place of leisure for the weekend climber' (Pritchard, 1997: 15).

Technically, the solo climber has enormous freedom of movement, being unencumbered by, but also without the assurance of, specialised equipment. It is rock climbing in its purest and most deterritorialised form – a decoded, visceral flow that sweeps us up and takes us away from an otherwise repressive and judicial world; a neurotic world increasingly preoccupied with public safety, which dreams of a ‘risk-free’ existence, or else postulates the concept of ‘risk’ as a systematic way of dealing with (recoding) lines of escape as a subversive or deviant form of consumption. Take, for example, the substitution of ‘intensely lived’ climbing experiences – often solitary, mid-week and on deserted moorland outcrops – for ‘lifeless’ talk of grades, pre-practice and safety mats (Hoey, 2009).

These debates and oppositions on risk appear to position solo rock climbing as an exemplary ‘edgework’ experience (Lyng, 1990). Edgework is defined as voluntary risk taking and includes ‘actively seeking experiences that involve a high potential for personal injury or death’ (Lyng, 1990: 851-852). There are certainly clear parallels: solo rock climbing is at once quite revelatory, simultaneously a celebration of beauty, pattern and technique. It can often lead to a sense of authenticity accompanied by a state of focused attention, deep concentration and a merging of the individual with the experience (Lyng, 1990). Although it can also provide a painful exploration of our darker fears and attendant insecurities – one can easily fall (sometimes literally) into a Hell of ones own making – solo rock climbing can act as a therapeutic response to the vicious circle of present-day post-industrial life.

Lyng’s (1990: 869) social-psychological analysis correctly ‘directs critical attention to the divisions and separations of post-industrial society’. Furthermore he, quite properly, takes care to conceptualise edgework as occurring ‘only *with* constrained (necessary) activity as its basis’ (Lyng, 1990: 868, added emphasis). Nonetheless, he looks to do so within, rather than in response to, the notion of the need for ‘a *unified* definition of self’ (Lyng, 1990: 870, added emphasis). On Lyng’s analysis participation in edgework is seen as the result of being *denied* ‘an opportunity for creative, skilful, self-determining action’ (Lyng, 1990: 877), or else is sought out as *compensation* by those individuals without the means for, or else perhaps whom have become alienated from, economic or other sanctioned activity. In this respect Lyng’s approach seems to bolster rather than undermine the popular (psychological)

reductionism that assumes edgeworking to be a neurotic's reaction to a series of narcissistic or environmental *lacks* and the pathologies and suffering these entail – the *sickness* of schizophrenia, the *ego-loss* as a result of being denied opportunities, or else the compensating *cure* for many of life's *insecurities*.

The fact that Lyng's (1990) categorisation of the concept of edgework focuses simultaneously on a reductive and yet apparently inexhaustible series of dualisms, both internal to the individual and in the external social environment – impulse/institution, real/unreal, spontaneity/constraint, etc. – also means that the more subtle aspects of the concrete experience of solo rock climbing are actually neglected. It is worth considering whether such a sublime and profound experience is inaccessible to socio-scientific investigation alone. Lyng's (1990) lack of attention to the concrete immediacy of edgeworkers' experiences is certainly a limitation of his formal analysis. This is not to say concrete experience cannot or should not be expressed, however. On the contrary, in order to do justice to the physical feelings at its very heart, we might need to begin to articulate more 'poetic exclamations' (Grego, 2008: 9):

As if to live were not  
Following the curve of a planet or controlled water  
But a leap in the dark, a tangent, a stray shot.  
It is this we learn after so many failures,  
The building of castles in sand, of queens in snow,  
That we cannot make any corner in life or in life's beauty,  
That no river is a river which does not flow.

(Louis MacNeice, from *Autumn Journal*)

There is certainly a great deal of difference between our awareness of physical feelings as they flow and the conceptual judgements that can be made about their characteristics. Physical feelings engender actions and passions, here and now. But in and of themselves they often lack sufficient expression. On the other hand, failure to attend to these simple feelings normally impoverishes attempts at explanation. The purpose of our short film is precisely to integrate these two concerns. Our proposal is to bring physical feelings back into play by directing attention to the subtle and

usually invisible feelings constituting the concretely lived experience of solo rock climbing, which are too easily disregarded by formal concepts such as edgework.

## **Refracting the Real**

In choosing a filmic representation, our goal is to produce, rather than to simply express, the adventure and sheer joy of resisting and escaping (post)industrial work's oppressive control and tranquillising effects, even if only for a moment or two. We are interested particularly in making 'a leap in the dark', going off at 'a tangent', and taking 'a stray shot'. We deliberately present solo rock climbing as a kind of 'trembling' or as the 'intersection' (Linstead and Thanem, 2007) that runs through the black and smoky industrial towns of Wordsworth's indignation and the 'wild roots' of the moorland 'hill-stone' outcrops, which, large or small, are available to all of us at any time, and are places to experiment and perhaps help ease the constraint of 'social industry's command'.

The film itself provides a simplified approach to lines of flight. We present four integrated case studies, each purposefully chosen in order to illuminate an aspect of lines of flight in the context of everyday events. This method is useful because each case study is able to combine (condense) thematic exploration with concrete experiences and rich contexts as they are actually lived.

### ***Permutations at Black Rock***

Black Rock is an isolated gritstone outcrop standing proudly on a hill above the sturdy industrial village of Cromford, on the southern edge of the Peak District National Park. Its impressive promontory affords a splendid view across the Derwent valley and is plainly visible from Sir Richard Arkwright's original cotton mill, over which it seems to superintend. A now defunct industrial railway passes just below the outcrop and the rocks themselves sit adjacent a steep incline originally used for transporting quarry stone down to a junction, where the former railway met the canal. Across from the Black Rock crag is a modern quarry producing crushed limestone for road building and concrete manufacture. This large operation is a highly visible and often

aural reminder (especially when the explosives charged to break up the stone are detonated) of the valley's continuing industry.

Although not beautiful in the classical sense – certainly not according to the doctrine of beauty John Ruskin, the esteemed 19th century cultural critic, was writing about – Black Rock is the perfect place to find and join a line of escape. It is a spectacular situation, whose variety, whilst typifying the environmental degradation resulting from the impact of technology and commerce, also serves to remind us that lines of flight can occur only *in relation* with the coding of 'social industry' that subjugates them.

Our need to blast the natural environment in pursuit of short-term economic objectives certainly is symptomatic of our alienation from nature, but because everyday experience is lived within systems we should make no hard distinctions between the relatively independent spheres of 'industry' and 'environment'. We cannot read all social activity out of nature, and quarrying is as much a part of the natural environment as the nearby outcrop, sculpted by the wind and rain. Arkwright's original mill buildings and model factory village, both of which might well have been built from the crag's weathered rock, are parts of the system too, as is the 19<sup>th</sup> Century railway and right up to the still in operation quarry; all permute the qualitative interaction between social industry *and* the natural environment. Industry has extracted its raw materials from nature, but its sites can also 'return' to nature, not through the same short-term mentality that caused the degradation in the first place, nor because of some nostalgic focus on industrial heritage (see below), but because each has leaked into the other, creating a landscape without discernible beginnings or ends.

In an essay calling for the reattachment with, rather than the dislocation and detachment from, nature, the American intellectual Ralph Waldo Emerson (1982: 269) makes the point succinctly. He observes how 'those who are esteemed umpires of taste', such as Ruskin, might too easily:

' ... see the factory-village, and the railway, and fancy that the poetry of the landscape is broken up by these; for these works of art are not yet consecrated

in their reading; but the poet sees them fall within the great Order not less than the beehive, or the spider's geometrical web. Nature adopts them very fast into her vital circles, and the gliding train of cars she loves like her own.'

It is precisely a poet's sense of the whole of Nature *without* dislocations and detachments that draws us to the consideration of how a small piece of industry's refuse, such as the simple 'slab' of rock along the path of the old railway line, can be transformed into a popular 'boulder problem', or, how, after so many failures, the short physical sequence, consisting of a succession of separate, discrete chalk marks up the curving arête of the massive nose that one sees when first approaching the crag, is experienced, suddenly, as a continuous flow of movement.

Thus, experiencing life as a flow, or as the interpenetrating relationship of production, distribution and consumption, as Deleuze and Guattari (1983) might contend, is not about preserving some kind of reverent appreciation for nature's sanctity, rather, it is about the sense of freedom to connect and the quality of our imagination to communicate myriad more possibilities.

### *All Cut from One Piece*

Millstone-grit is a coarse, sedimentary sandstone uniquely exposed near the tops of the Peak and Pennine hills. It was worked extensively in the early modern era to produce grindstones for industry and quarried stone for building materials. As a result, the exterior walls of many of the public buildings in the surrounding towns and cities such as Sheffield, Bradford and Leeds, for instance, were built with stone obtained from quarries on the nearby hillsides.

People have probably always used the local stone to produce and create new assemblages, some of them good, such as great civic and commercial buildings, some not so good, including grim early modern industrial slums, and some outright vile, such as the speculatively built retail and industrial parks of the present-day. All, however, could be cut from the same piece of grit. Whether the results were good, bad, or indifferent, the quarry site opened up to supply the building stone, once bustling with industry and organisation, when closed becomes obsolete, derelict and deserted; an arcane space left on the side of the road. The quarries and their spoil-

heaps remain as the last remnants of an industrial past, with characteristic sheer faces that could only be the result of working by the quarryman's tools and discarded millstones made and left behind at the quarry site.

Although it could not be called specifically an industrial landscape, the many old quarries along the Burbage Valley in the north east of the Peak District National Park in particular, provide visible signs of how early modern industry irrevocably changed the face of the moorland terrain. There is no clearer sign of this changed landscape than at the prominent, flat topped outcrop rock known as Higger Tor. Standing on top of one of the seven hills surrounding nearby Sheffield and overlooking an ancient iron-age hill fort at the head of the Valley, Higger Tor has the advantage of being easily accessible and nowadays lies adjacent to a modern road that climbs steadily out of the city. This ease of access possibly meant the transportation of quarry products could be done quickly, but it has definitely enabled generations of would-be 'escapees' to wander onto the outcrop easily. In effect, these blasted remnants of an industrial past are 'returned' to the natural environment. Here, again, it is important to conceptualise the relationship. 'Nature', transformed by the quarrying activity, sparked the curiosity of climbers who extended their search for adventure to these new lines of escape.

### ***Let's Go Climbing!***

'M. Birch, Leeds 6, 1943' is a small piece of graffiti found at Almscliff, a conspicuous tor of gritstone sitting high on a ridge above the lower reaches of Wharfedale in West Yorkshire and about 10 miles north of Leeds. We know very little about Michael Birch himself, apart from when and where he lived and to where he enjoyed a line of escape from the bombed-out buildings of the wartime city. Perhaps he had his curiosity for adventure kindled when he was taken first to Almscliff as a primary aged boy in 1943 and allowed to explore and play amongst the many caves and fissures the rocks provide?

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, Leeds was an urban sprawl of industrial and commercial manufactories. Principal among these was Montague Burton's tailoring factory in the Burmantofts district of the city. The Burton's chain consisted of more than 600 shops



by the mid 1950's, but declined with subsequent changes in fashion and retail culture. At its height, the huge Art Deco detailed 'flagship' factory employed over 10,000 men and women and was the largest textile manufactory in the world, making some 30,000 suits per week. Perhaps Michael Birch, born in the early 1930's and living in the neighbouring district of Headingley, worked there too? Moreover, inspired by his boyhood adventures, it is possible he escaped to Almscliff after a week spent in this crowded and grimy northern city.

Throughout the 20th Century, Almscliff has been a popular attraction for ordinary working people from Leeds and the West Yorkshire conurbation. This dramatic crag, with its 360-degree panorama from the top of the ridge, has an almost inexhaustible supply of boulder problems and small routes for practising some climbing moves, or performing 'mind boggling gymnastics' on one of its imposing faces. Today, Almscliff offers a thrilling release, swinging high above the wind:

I caught this morning's minion, king-  
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding  
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding  
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing  
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,  
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding  
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding  
Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

(Gerard Manley Hopkins, from *The Windhover*)

### *New Uses for Old Places*

'Cleanliness is the image of modern industry, as grime was of its predecessor'  
(Darley, 2003: 198)

The place and character of work, concentrated in large scale mills and factory halls has certainly changed since the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Contemporary architecture and the growth in technology, such as Internet software design and electronic positioning devices, now enable large numbers of people increasingly to be geographically independent of traditional offices and workplaces. The transformation of present-day

work 'from gatherings of people under the same roof to networks of electronically connected individuals' (Tsoukas, 1992: 443) has meant the gradual abandonment and obsolescence of large-scale work buildings, 'which, like the dinosaurs of the industrial age, would more and more serve only to remind us of a dying epoch' (Beck, 1992: 142-143).

Coinciding with this climate of decline in British industry and manufacturing is the rise of a new 'Heritage Industry' (Hewison, 1987). Because traditional heavy industries such as coal mining or steel manufacturing have been lost, all that remains are the memories and the remnants to turn into museums and heritage centres, which blend heritage and nostalgia into a jumble of indefinite eras (Hewison, 1987). Nowhere is the nostalgic focus on industrial heritage clearer than in northern England, where many former mills have been stripped out and had their stonework renovated to offer congenial spaces for living, working and leisure. Arkwright's original mills and Strutt's 'fire-proofed' buildings, for instance, have both been restored to their former glory and are now part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The old machinery has been turned into visitor attractions and the once derelict textile warehouses and other buildings have become museums, visitor centres, craft shops and cafés. Compare this nostalgic reworking of 'glorious' buildings, however, with the opposite approach that has been adopted in much of the South Yorkshire coalfield, where 'almost every trace of former activity [was] erased as if to wipe away memories of mining and the bitter disputes that hastened its end' (Darley, 2003: 208).

This extraordinary difference in strategies raises several interesting questions. For example, why is the presentation of the industrial past to new generations so selective? What are the 'politics of patronage' (Hewison, 1987) funding contemporary heritage and governing the choice of which of the industrial buildings that remain should be intended for museums and heritage centres, which should be converted into loft apartments and prestige offices or reverted 'back into flatted factories and workspaces' (Darley, 2003: 200), and which should remain empty, or else be completely demolished? Why is it that some acts of heritage are possible, or, perhaps more importantly, popular, but others are not? Or, why some industries are worthy of memorial, whilst others are considered best forgotten? In the quest for authenticity, how is the production of heritage consumed? Implicit in these questions is the broader

matter of why some instances of reuse and regeneration are sanctioned, sanitised, and packaged, whilst others must be constrained, or else have to remain illicit? One can imagine, for example, a group of skateboarders or contemporary urban freestylers making new uses from old places practicing their back-flips, 360-wallhops, and speed-vaults, etc., setting off alarms and annoying the authorities in affluent regional 'spa' resorts such as Harrogate or Ilkley.

Ilkley, in particular, is a triumph of 'Englishness', whose main industry, both during the days of the spas, but also since their demise in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, is tourism. Synonymous with Yorkshire, Ilkley is popular particularly with pensioners, who stroll along the town's wide parade of shops and take afternoon tea in 'Bettys' renowned tearooms. Meanwhile, in addition to the older generation enjoying familiar heritage and younger freeform practitioners looking for alternative routes and journeys and places to experiment, Ilkley is also a favourite venue for rock climbers.

The Ilkley crags can be seen on the edge of the moor overlooking the town and a glance south reveals the prominent profiles of the Cow and Calf buttress and gigantic boulder respectively, which are home to some very high standard ascents. Behind lie the sheer gritstone walls of an obsolete quarry and facing out from these is a striking thin seam giving the superb and strenuous *Wellington Crack*, said to be one of the hardest gritstone routes yet climbed when it was first ascended in 1975. Even today it remains an impending line that captures very well the passions and emotions of the climber's mind, 'inflamed and carried away by his thought, to that degree that he ... heeds only this one dream, which holds him like an insanity' (Emerson, 1982: 278).

## **Conclusion**

The visual and the cultural impact of 'social industry' have made a permanent impression on the landscape and on individual minds. As early as the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Defoe drew attention to the hurry of business, which was transforming lives whether for ill or for good, particularly in the Peak and Pennines region of northern England. In the above discussion we have examined this impact and considered how both its visible and less apparent effects took hold and how they set in motion an

ongoing process of productive/consumptive estrangement from life's primordial forces, which continue to be alien and obscure, or else appear arcane and overly nostalgic, to contemporary life.

In the short term we have to recognise the reality of social industry as it is. Whether because of the humdrum or over socialised nature of abstract and calculable waged and salaried labour, the meaning of work in everyday, (post)industrial life has always produced alienating and individualising effects. The destructive consequences of the resulting disconnection are now partially ameliorated by a widening area of predictable consumption experiences (Goulding et al, 1998). Unfortunately, the 'quick fix' combination of consumerism and individuality, in which the conduct of everyone is now caught and tormented by desires not yet sensed (Bauman, 1998), continues to be inadequate, in that it replaces experiences *concretely lived*, and the connective relations to the actual world they have to offer, with a reality *abstract and independent* of ourselves.

At the same time, we have explored how the opposite situation can be brought about: *a propos* how concretely lived experiences can produce a (temporary) suspension of society's discontinuities. We have pointed out how individuals can resist the expressions of socio-political power that alienate them (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983) and stressed the importance of a reunification with the natural environment. Drawing on the visual methodology of a short film and using solo rock climbing as an illustration, we have contributed a new presentation, invoking several, short 'lines of flight', that can better open up and articulate an aesthetic appreciation of concrete experience in the name of the fight against coding and engender a call for action and passion as part of the 'healing' process.

Lines of flight are radically dynamic and open ended. This quality, together with the awareness that we can resist the analytical and political force that 'robs us of power' and 'teaches us to desire our own repression' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: xx) means it is possible we can come to a renewed belief in free activity, which can prompt us, in turn, to think about how we live and work and how we might change things:

‘He thought it must be a feeling of endless bliss to be in contact with the profound life of every form, to have a soul for rocks, metal, water, and plants, to take into himself, as in a dream, every element of nature, like flowers that breathe with the waxing and waning of the moon’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 2).

In conclusion, it is possible to tell this story in many different ways. By encouraging the reunification of people with their natural environment, we hope we have contributed to the ongoing discussion about the quality of personal life in post-industrial society. Equally importantly, we hope the aesthetic appreciation of being connected with Life, as a political subject, has the capacity to change the predictable and superficial realm of mass social consumption. Finally, of course, we also hope the possibilities of concrete experiences actually lived can be simply enjoyed as such.

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