

Anonymity



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Insinuation, The Underground Current of Incoherence

Radicalism's tame but dignified existence in the early parts of nineteenth century America was a triumph for well-reasoned order. Immigrant intellectuals spread the heady ideals of socialism across the newly-opened frontier, founding mutualist or collectivist factory towns across Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana and establishing revolutionary societies and educational clubs in New York City, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Allergic to lawbreaking and violence, the communalists set out to foster the best-ordered and most-moral dimensions of utopian society. But as corruption and industry grew inseparable, a new radical energy gathered in the darker corners of society. While the socialists kept outrunning the company mines and industrial looms, a growing underclass either unwilling or unable to escape the greed of indecent men toiled away.

*Only a short decade after the Great War, the polite pretensions of American radicalism fell away. This shift was due to two things: first, the Panic of 1873, which threw hundreds of thousands of workers into destitution and unleashed their fury; and second, the arrival of anarchists. It takes the entrance of a protagonist, Johann Most, a fiery German anarchist, to give shape to the turbulence. Inspired by Most, a persuasive orator with scorching rhetoric, anarchists and other radicals brought 'propaganda by the deed' to America. 'Propaganda by the deed,' an idea on the lips of the European radicals of the time, is derived from the earlier Italian socialist Carlo Pisacane, who argues that "Ideas spring from deeds and not the other way around," so that "conspiracies, plots, and attempted uprisings" are more effective propaganda "than a thousand volumes penned by doctrinarians who are the real blight upon our country and the entire world" (Graham, *Anarchism*, 68).*

*A determined Most found propaganda by the deed straightforward and published fiery celebrations of the growing practice of anarchist regicide – and these writings often landed in him jail. After a year and a half stay in an English jail for praising the assassination of Alexander II of Russia, Most immigrated to the United States and soon published a pamphlet entitled Science of Revolutionary Warfare—A Manual of Instruction in the Use and Preparation of Nitroglycerine, Dynamite, Gun-Cotton, Fulminating Mercury, Bombs, Fuses, Poisons, etc, etc. Among these tools of destruction, he had a clear weapon of choice: dynamite. Writing in the *Parsons's Alarm*, Most declared his love: "Dynamite! Of all the good stuff, that is the stuff! Stuff several pounds of this sublime stuff into an inch pipe (gas or water pipe), plug up both ends, insert a cap with a fuse attached, place this in the immediate vicinity of a lot of rich*

loafers who live by the sweat of other people's brows, and light the fuse. A most cheerful and gratifying result will follow. ... It is a genuine boon for the disinherited, while it brings terror and fear to the robbers. A pound of this good stuff beats a bushel of ballots all hollow – and don't you forget it!" So with the arrival of Most, his dynamite, and propaganda by the deed, the anarchist siege against robber barons and the forces of the State commenced.

*Striking fear in hearts of the three enemies of classical anarchism – The Church, The State, and Capital – radicals committed a remarkable number of regicides and other assassinations from the late 1870s through the early twentieth century. Yet the practice was not universally accepted in radical circles: pacifists, social democrats, and pragmatists hotly debated the principles and effectiveness of attacks on power. Paul Rouse, French socialist and the first to coin the phrase propaganda by the deed, plays down violence when describing the concept's realisation. "Propaganda by the deed is a mighty means of rousing the popular consciousness," he writes, because it serves as the pragmatism of the possible: as the masses are naturally skeptical of any idea as long it remains abstract, one must actually start a commune or a factory and "let the instruments of production be placed in the hands of the workers, let the workers and their families move into salubrious accommodation and the idlers be tossed into the streets," after which the idea will "spring to life" and "march, in flesh and blood, at the head of the people" (Graham, *Anarchism*, 151). Echoing Rouse's possibilism, Gustav Landauer argues that "no language can be loud and decisive enough for the uplifting of our compatriots, so that they may be incited out of their engrained daily drudgery," and thus the seeds of a new society must be prefigured in actual reality to entice others to join (139). Propaganda by the deed thus has two intentionally distinct valences as either creative violence or persuasive prefiguration; one masks its anonymous force to avoid capture while the other loudly boasts about itself.*

*Our contemporary times are replete with radicals who have found their own boastful propaganda. Anarchists such as David Graeber speak about a new generation of activists that came of age during the anti-globalization movement who practice propaganda by prefiguration that 'builds a new society in the shell of the old' (as the popular IWW phrase goes). These 'New Anarchists,' as they are called, practice social justice and deep democracy although they cannot hum even a bar of *The Internationale*. Yet missing from this description are many radical tendencies that draw on the first valence of propaganda by the deed – to name a few, there are civilisation-hating anarcho-primitivists, destruction-loving anarcho-queers, democracy-averse nihilists, and anti-organisational insurrectionists. There are many reasons why those elements*

are often disavowed or even denied by their radical relatives but one is obvious: these dissident tendencies draw their power from a dangerous source that resists legibility. Rather than constructing their propagandistic appeals on images of a well-ordered society constituted by a moral majority, these hidden elements draw on deeper and darker desires of nonexistence and disappearance. However, this opposition – the reasonable proposals of social anarchists and the excesses of their darker offspring – is stale, so perhaps there is a way to break through.

Is there a power of truth that is not just the truth of power? asks Gilles Deleuze (Foucault, 94-95). Written alternately in the language of anarchism: what is the propaganda by the deed if it is not just the deed of propaganda? The answer is found in a mode of communication whereby actions ‘speak for themselves’ – actions that need not be owned, named, or explained. Actions as expression without speaking subjects. Expressions that speak reason but do not prefigure. Expressions that speak passions but are not feelings. The expression that lingers when the thing expressed is nowhere to be found. In short: the force of anonymity. That is today’s dark propaganda by the deed.

A dangerous current flows through propaganda by the deed. It circulates below the streets of the Metropolis without paying the tolls set up by possessive individualism. To survive, it must remain hidden, anonymous, as Empire, through the power of the Spectacle, silently reduces sense to the mere expression of personal ownership. This is because the power of this existential liberalism lies in its image of the subject: separate and subjective, each subject is presented as a master of a self-contained world made up of nothing but a series of choices (Anonymous, *Call*, Scholium II). Caught between the needs of biopolitical management and a system of compulsory visibility, there is only one mode of communication that Empire makes officially available to its subjects: confession, the noisy baring of the soul. The consummate existential individual communicates by publicly expressing their private interests, and moreover, by taking personal ownership for them as if revealing a truth unique to their particular existence. Accordingly, the Metropolis does not create a private hell for each subject – it merely sets out vortices in a turbulent sea of difference to trap individuals. Yet Empire strains when guiding subjects to these traps, as there are forms of expression that flow right past the machines of subjection. Expression flows beneath and around the subject and thus constitutes an undertow or riptide that only sometimes leads to the vortexes that traps it. And this is where danger arrives, for everything that swims through Hjelmselv’s net and avoids nibbling on Lacan’s fishhook expresses the potential of an event that cannot be contained by a

subject.^[1] When expression explodes onto the scene like a crashing wave, the event rushes past ownership to flood the Metropolis with images, affects, and signs. And it is in this chaotic surge of expression that propaganda by the deed delivers a great dangerous potential and overwhelms Empire's subtle management of difference.

Burroughs is no doubt right when he says that language is a virus. Language infects humans like an alien intruder – arriving as an external force that can be captured but never fully tamed. The virus infects its host through fragments from passing conversations on the bus, garbled text messages from a friend, billboards mostly ignored, and webpages only skimmed. In fact, most humans spread the virus without even stopping to understand what they are doing. “Your wife looked at you with a funny expression. And this morning the mailman handed you a letter from the IRS and crossed his fingers. Then you stepped in a pile of dog shit. You saw two sticks on the sidewalk positioned like the hands of a watch. They were whispering behind your back when you arrived at the office. It doesn't matter what it means, it's still signifying” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 112). At its core, language shows that expression contains a simple imperative: self-replication. And it is because of this tendency toward dissemination, often detached from or even contrary to truth or understanding, that most of the Metropolis inoculates itself through sceptical cynicism, which neutralises the intensity of the new with the knowing repetition of a dull prefabricated self. Yet some communication slips past this cynicism by evading the public gaze of the Spectacle. Rumour, allusion, and innuendo propagate without a definite subject and thus anonymously fill the hearts and minds of the Metropolis without broadcasting from a pinpointable location; these ignoble forms of expression spread through contagion, which thrives on mutated or deformed transmissions.^[2] Among the most furtive modes of communication is insinuation, which provides a dangerous hint without giving away the whole conspiracy. While providing poor material for fact, insinuations travel quickly and build a heightened need for action as they deform. And it is thus insinuation that may transmit the plague that brings down Empire.

As a mode of communication that gives forces to anonymity, insinuation lends itself to a novel politics of articulation. Its politics is neither that of persuasion nor the presentation of facts, which are the forms of rhetoric used by authoritarians and liberals, respectively, but the anonymous subversion of indiscernibility. To further clarify, persuasion is employed by authoritarians to enrol you in their form of association, often through fear and alarmism. A nest of such associations entwine the Metropolis, but their incomplete strands are always coming apart because Empire does not draw lines as the Modern State did –

Empire's fragmentary subjection guarantees that there are friends, enemies, allies, and foes inside everyone. In spite of this fragmentation, however, there are still paranoiacs who maintain the party line, and the result of their imagined associations is always the same: they either implode under the weight of inconsistency or explode their milieu with the fury of a million minute distinctions. Alternately, the presentation of facts is a naive liberal belief that 'the truth sets you free.' It is evident that the politics informed by its worn motto 'speak truth to power' no longer works – (if it ever did) – for “truth isn't outside power or lacking in power . . . truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular forms of power... it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media)...” (Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 131-132).

In the Metropolis, the question should be inverted: it is not 'what truth works?' but 'why is illusion so effective?' Insinuation provides a response through the assertion that language starts with “the transmission of the word as order-word, not the communication of a sign as information” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 77). Therefore, signs “are never univocal packets of information but rather affective charges,” which suggests a practice of reading that “consists in the appropriation of signs through free and indirect discourse – properly 'free' and 'indirect' to the degree that emitting singularities are respected as capable of new expressions and connections” (Smith, “Deleuze's Ethics of Reading,” 49). Language is thus not meant to be believed but to be obeyed. And insinuation, itself a form of language, demonstrates this force of anonymity without recourse to either of the two poles of sovereignty. It is expressed in graffiti that 'just appears' in the absence of an obvious author to announce Empire's incomplete control over the Metropolis and to take sides in the Spectacle's war of appearances. And as insinuation spreads through the Metropolis, it resists the control of organisation structures and refuses to build the party; it spreads the virus and mutates as it interacts with every new host. At most, insinuation builds an “Imaginary Party” – a party of negativity that renounces any positive form and whose conspirators only communicate through insinuation. The object of the Imaginary Party is thus not to build a united front against Empire but to gather “an ensemble of conditions such that domination succumbs as quickly and as largely as possible to the progressive paralysis to which its paranoia condemns it” (Tiqqun, “Theses on the Imaginary Party,” 59-60). The Imaginary Party does not appear as a concentrated force, then, so when

its actions are attributed to someone or something, they are simply blamed on ‘madmen,’ ‘barbarians,’ ‘irresponsible individuals,’ and anyone else fed up with society. This is how the insinuations of the Imaginary Party have been able to hide in the shadow of every recent political rebellion, from Egypt to Greece – for they do not help in a swift seizure of the state but blaze paths that mimic the strange drift of aesthetic revolutions, which are sometimes sudden and at other times slow.

Insinuation’s transmissions are not always received clearly; it confuses those who cannot understand communication when it is stripped of its rational kernel. Even without reason, insinuation can still connect with chains of association, though whatever insinuation becomes associated with is only fastened to it through external relation. Images are perhaps the most suitable vehicle for insinuation, then, as they resist signification in order to remain receptive, which allows them to shed layers of interpretation almost as easily as they accumulate them. Yet insinuation is possible with any medium that communicates intensity. Describing expression in terms of intensity may appear strange to those who imagine language to be at the root of communication, however, as they focus on the meaning passed either from mouth to ear or from text to eye – but language is only one way to communicate the world, and it is a flighty one at that. Consider a few other forms of expression: dance demonstrates that the movement of bodies can tug at the heart; painting challenges the viewer to utilise every one of their organs as an eye; and music sets life itself to rhythm and pitch.^[3] Each form brings together expression and sensation in its own way. And as each combination thrives in different circumstances, insinuation is most suited to the most elusive sensations of the Metropolis. This is because Empire’s circulation depends on the Spectacle creating subjects that are transparent conductors of information, on which it depends on for positivities to use in biopolitical management. Insinuation, in contrast, raises words to a degree of intensity that avoids the amputated consistency of clear speech but builds a longer sustain than a piercing scream. Instead of communicating through exchange within Empire’s system of equivalence, insinuation sends a charge whose message, when intelligible, is often tangential, unreliable, contingent, contaminated, or unextractable. Yet the question remains: is its wild and uncontrollable force suitable for politics?

Insinuation’s effects are anything but clear, but that is what distinguishes it from the Spectacle’s preferred mode of communication. To gain the upper hand against the Spectacle, insinuation cannot have truck with most forms of thought. In particular, political projects premised on clear demands, ‘best practices,’ and rational rules of government have little use for the murkiness of insinuation. The

triumph of liberalism, and in turn the Social State, was the result of governance becoming purely presentist. By casting history aside, the Social State declared that the government that rules best is the government with the greatest capacity to extend the present (Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 217-223). And while liberalism allows seemingly incommensurate approaches and world-views to coexist, it does so by requiring a minimum degree of coherence. Without a speaking subject to hold accountable, insinuation may thus be the raw material for a politics detached from or even contrary to the State. Its anonymity escapes the coherent channels through which the Social State irrigates its capacities – functions such as agriculture, industry, and trade, and apparatuses such as the army, courts, and administration – and either disperses, seeping through the cracks to fill underground reservoirs of power beyond the gaze of the Spectacle, or accumulates, forming rivers whose uncontrolled fragments of words, images, and thoughts feed a sea of difference with currents too strong for Biopower to pilot. This is why conspiracy and deviance are two of the greatest enemies to Modern and Social States. Empire, however, transmutes the State's struggle against underground reservoirs of power and unpredictable currents of differences into the building blocks of the Metropolis. Lacking the State's allergy to insinuation, Empire often finds ways to put the products of insinuation to use. This is because Empire establishes consistency and not coherence, and consistency concretely connects elements by avoiding homogeneity so as to respect the differences of disparate elements (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 507). Empire thus uses the products of insinuation to make the Metropolis an estuary, a transitional zone, which connects flows and regulates their access to the outside. Without coherence to prevent the incursion of the outside, however, the Metropolis is pushed past its limits and becomes saturated. Marketers call it 'clutter' – and they are always trying to break through it. Following the intersection of consistency and saturation, not coherence and conduction, the political question thus takes on a compositional valence: what combinations of insinuation feed reservoirs that remain untapped by Empire? And what anarchic explosion of forces will drown Empire?

Guerrilla, The Force of Liberation

Recognising the force of insinuation, The Red Army Faction impugns the German government and press in their first major text, The Urban Guerrilla Concept, writing that "some people want to use these lies to prove that we're stupid, unreliable, careless, or crazy" and therefore "encourage people to oppose us," which causes them difficulties because "it's not easy to clear things up with

denials, even when they're true" (P5). But instead of waging their own war of propaganda, the group denounces anyone who spreads rumors, claiming that "in reality, they are irrelevant to us" because "they are only consumers," and that "we want nothing to do with these gossipmongers, for whom the anti-imperialist struggle is a coffee klatch" (P5).

What the RAF thus provides is their own anonymous communication: operating clandestinely, the group stole cars, robbed banks, broke prisoners out of jail, assassinated former-Nazi officials, and bombed the military, the police, and the press. In that way, the RAF approached expression as crude materialists whose voice were bullets and bombs, even if they later provided communiques to endow their expressions with a little more meaning.

To most, the RAF's gestures must appear futile, as they were not strong enough to overthrow the government and did not present a public organisation to build mass membership. Yet the novelty of the RAF was that its members fashioned their way of life into liberation struggles against Empire even without a colonial power to expel. In particular, they adopted the perspective of military strategists whose life and death scenarios had little room for self-abnegation or ineffective action. Moreover, they developed a form of action that broke with the State's politics of compromise and its monopoly on the use of violence.

The RAF does not serve as a model, however. Although they gained substantial popular support, especially among German youth, most of the RAF was quickly liquidated because of the intensity with which they approached the struggle; similar situations played out in the Europe, North America, and elsewhere. What the RAF does point to, however, is the conceptual innovation possible when insinuation is taken beyond mere idle talk – most notably, a politics of clandestinity derived from guerrilla war, but one that avoids hardening into an army.

The basic requirement for a guerrilla war is a rural population, at least according to its theorists. Following a line from Mao through the classic texts on the guerrilla, we find that the key to victory is a rural population's semi-autonomy from the politics of the metropole, a separation that hides and sustains the guerrilla. As one Maoist maxim goes, 'the guerrilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea.' This gives the appearance of the guerrilla as an architect of insinuation who sharpens the people into a political force. But to clarify, the guerrilla neither takes the peasants' lead nor develops them into a revolutionary force – though both remain a strategic option – but uses rural areas and their residents for material support. What the rural enables is an autonomous way of life from which the guerrilla constructs a base. And because

the base is independent, it provides a reliable means of subsistence and draws the enemy out into the countryside where the guerrilla's use of terrain is at its greatest advantage. The people are thus not the object of propaganda but the cover used by the guerrilla to evade retaliation. And as a result of the guerrilla blending in with the rural population, the enemy is left with few options for identifying, containing, or eliminating the guerrilla. At their most drastic, commanders thus resort to 'draining the pond to catch the fish.' Ultimately, guerrilla war is a clandestine operation premised on the power of escape, which serves as the decisive element in asymmetric warfare. Guerrilla distils escape in three basic principles for defeating a superior enemy: an autonomous way of life, the advantage of terrain, and indistinguishability.

Though guerrilla was once effective against the State, it cannot lead the struggle against Empire. The conditions have shifted from those present in the middle of the 20th century as Empire abolishes the boundary between the urban and the rural to form the Metropolis. It is not a totalising shift, as there are still many small ponds across the globe in which guerrilla still swim, but self-sufficient peasants are quickly drying up as a resource. Latin American theorists have been aware of this problem, as their thinner rural populations act differently than those in Asia, and they have designed their own liberation struggles accordingly (Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?*, 50-53; Guillén, *Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla*, 284-286). Focoism, a largely failed project, was formulated after the Cuban Revolution to draw Mao's three-stage developmental model of guerrilla war into a single small nucleus of militants which leads by recruiting, organising, and attacking in rural terrain while simultaneously forming a subservient nucleus of politics in the metropole (Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?*, 75-78). Though many theorists jettison a substantial amount of focoism, most retain the theory of 'armed propaganda' whereby militants do not wait for the right conditions to begin but use armed struggle as a political expression that will itself ripen the conditions. Elevating the strategic role of the city due to its function as the seat of political power, the theory of the urban guerrilla marries armed propaganda with its political aim of political revolution. This theoretical shift, from the rural to the urban, is based on a strategic gamble: that the urban way of life, terrain, and camouflage are politically superior its rural counterparts.

The urban guerrilla concept offers a powerful diagnostic for the subversion of the Metropolis. As Biopower and the Spectacle stitch together the urban and the rural into the dense fabric of the Metropolis, the separation between town and country that enabled peasant insurrections collapses. Upon closer investigation, however, the historical record of urban guerrilla operations is also mixed at best, which renders it a bad model for political action. What the theory of urban guerrilla

diagnoses, however, are fractures within the urban that can be exploited in clandestine struggle against the Metropolis. In particular, the urban guerrilla leverages the contingency, density, and clutter of the Metropolis. To capitalise on each of these weaknesses, the urban guerrilla utilises them as both points of antagonism and also forms of escape, elevating withdrawal to the primary objective in the process of attack. And because the Metropolis provides ample opportunities for escape, it offers its enemies the means for its own destruction. Escape is not the product of the guerrilla, as if they opened up escape routes; rather, the guerrilla is escape itself – an army in perpetual retreat that wields withdrawal as an offensive force. If the politics of the future is to avoid the same grisly fate of the guerrilla, however, it may employ escape like the guerrilla – but to bring life where the guerrilla too often only caused death.

The guerrilla way of life. The success of the guerrilla depends on transforming anthropology into a weapon unto itself – “in revolutionary war the human is always superior to military hardware” (Guillén, *Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla*, 279; trans. modified). Guerrilla theorists depict this transformation in various mixtures of conservative and progressive forces. On the one hand, there are the conservative theorists, such as Mao, who imagine the guerrilla to spring from souls of an oppressed people like a natural reaction to an exterior threat that enables a nation “inferior in army and military equipment” to turn their “conditions of terrain, climate, and society in general” against an imperialist oppressor as “obstacles to his progress” and used “to advantage by those who oppose him” (*On Guerrilla Warfare*, 42). On the other, there are progressivists, such as Che, who see the guerrilla as an agent not of solidarity but creative evolution in the human condition where the guerrilla is a “guiding angel” whose shared “longing of the people for liberation” directs their conversion into an “ascetic” soldier and “social reformer” that fights for a revolutionary new humanity (*Guerrilla Warfare*). But regardless of the origin of power, whether from conserving life or liberating it, the theory puts forth the guerrilla as the effect of discipline. The theory further proposes that it is discipline alone that separates the guerrilla from the mere criminal. The criminal selfishly preys on oppressors and the oppressed alike with the only goal being their own profit. In contrast, the guerrilla lives simply and expropriates resources from the rich and powerful in order to build up the forces that distract, demoralise, and drive away the enemy (Marighella, *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla*, 4). The guerrilla thus shares the fruits of expropriation with allies, which teaches those not directly engaged in the struggle to enjoy it nonetheless.

Yet in the Metropolis, it is difficult to maintain the hardness necessary to remain a guerrilla. “The city is a cemetery” the revolutionary declares, because its

inhabitants lose sight of the struggle as they must live as consumers and inevitably let slip “the vital importance of a square yard of nylon cloth, a can of gun grease, a pound of salt or sugar, a pair of boots” – a disregard not driven by malevolent indifference but an irreducible difference in the conditions of thought, action, and ultimately life itself (Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?*, 69, 70-71). Diminishing hardness is an effect of Biopower, which develops softness through a power that produces more than it represses. Empire thus casts the guerrilla into a sea of difference where the hardness of discipline become a burden; for the shattered masses no longer appear as a people, but as the molecular movements of the Metropolis, leaving the guerrilla to make wooden ideological appeals for a humanity no longer there. Guillén, veteran of the Spanish Civil War, recognises the need for innovation. “Strategy,” he writes, “is not created by geniuses or by generals, but by the development of the productive forces, the logic of events and the weight of history” that now point almost exclusively to one place: the city (Guillén, *Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla*, 240). The most promising avenue for success is thus not the lightning victory but “the strategy of the artichoke:” “to eat at the enemy bit by bit, and through brief and surprise encounters of encirclement and annihilation to live off the enemy’s arms, munitions, and paramilitary effects” (250-1). Furthermore, in place of the disciplined ascetics of the rural guerrilla, the urban fighter must possess initiative, mobility, flexibility, versatility, and command of any situation (Marighella, *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla*, 5). These characteristics are responsive to the subjective life of the Metropolis, which is experienced by subjects as an unending stream of accidents and coincidences. Yet these accidents and coincidences are merely the expression of the river of contingency that flows through the Metropolis – the vital force of renewal that is only barely kept in check by the careful watch of the Spectacle and the immense management of Biopower.

The urban guerrilla is the embodiment of contingency made into a revolutionary force, as the guerrilla does not try to foresee everything or wait for orders but instead embraces the duty of initiative: a duty “to act, to find adequate solutions for each problem they face, and to retreat” (Marighella, *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla*, 5; trans. modified). Thus with every rise in unemployment, social outrage, and cultural discontent, the urban guerrilla does not respond by “encouraging them to demonstrate in the streets just to be trampled by the horses of the police” or “temporarily stopping thousands of them with a barricade” but to “strike unexpectedly here and there with superiority of arms and numbers” (Guillén, *Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla*, 240; trans. modified). And it is with the power of the unexpected that the guerrilla wages armed propaganda, for the

goal is to mire the enemy in confusion, much like the disabling power of insinuation. The urban guerrilla is caught in the same fog and can choke while navigating between the hardness that granted victory to their rural counterparts and the softness required to operate in the Metropolis. It is here that most have faltered. Yet when the guerrilla is considered a progressive force, which liberates rather than conserves, then a different route can be plotted – this time between living and struggling that leads neither to the softness of the Metropolis nor the hardness of the guerrilla. And this new form of life does not seek to unify the people but unleash a deluge of contingency against Empire. And to do so, it must shape the force of escape into a weapon of liberation that, like the guerrilla, moves with the fluidity of water and the ease of the blowing wind but whose movements become as automatic as the daily humiliations of life in the Metropolis.

The decisiveness of terrain. The guerrilla is mobile and avoids direct conflict. This is because the guerrilla cannot afford the narcissism of political activists who fight only for moral victories. So accustomed to losing, some activists invented a way of winning that parades their weaknesses in front of a higher authority to secure their pity – a ritual of liberalism that Nietzsche ridicules as slave morality. The theory of guerrilla, in contrast, pinpoints a weakness that can be made into a decisive advantage and compensates for the rest. For the guerrilla, the weakness is the avoidance of direct conflict, an exceptional case in regular combat, which is made orthodox and governed by a strategic principle: the guerrilla should only engage the enemy at a time and place of their own choosing, and only if success is guaranteed. The tactic of the minuet ‘dance’ is an elaboration of this principle: the guerrilla force encircles an advancing column from the four points of a compass but far enough away to avoid encirclement or suffering casualties; the couple begins their dance when one of the guerrilla points attacks and draws out the enemy, after which the guerrilla then falls back to attack from a new safe point – and thus the guerrilla leads by escape (Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*). And it is with knowledge of the terrain that the guerrilla dances the movements of life; imaginatively creating new combinations of dispersion, concentration, and the constant change of position, the guerrilla dances to the cadence of organic life’s interaction with its environment. The guerrilla, like insinuation, thus grows in power as it learns new rhythms of advancement and withdrawal – awakening its own strength as it draws its partner away from the source of their power one step at a time. It is the choreography of escape that then distinguishes guerrilla warfare from “armed self-defence,” which immobilises life rather than setting it free, and thus suffers from “a profusion of admirable sacrifices,” “of wasted heroism leading nowhere” – that is, “leading anywhere except to the conquest of

political power” (Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?*, 29).[4] Instead, the guerrilla is an offensive force, as it strikes at difficult-to-defend positions but is exclusively clandestine and not equipped to defend or occupy space. Moreover, the environment is the guerrilla’s most powerful offensive weapon, for the guerrilla uses it to exact a military cost from any occupying force – “if the enemy is concentrated, it loses ground; if it is scattered, it loses strength” (49). At its absolute limit, the guerrilla force becomes fully realised when all territory is indefensible and the emergence of a new people or a new power is thus inevitable.

The terrain of the Metropolis requires strategic innovation as it is not like the countryside, yet new manoeuvres can still be a variation on the standard movement of dispersion, concentration, and change of position. The Latin American theorists developed one such variation, which was necessary because of the difference between the thinness of the populations of their mountain regions and the overpopulation of cities and villages in Asian countries that won guerrilla wars, such as Vietnam or China, and their tightly-knit indigenous populations who are sceptical of all outsiders – imperialists and revolutionaries alike (Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?*, 50-53). The Metropolis poses a problem similar to Latin America’s mountains because the small parts of the rural preserved by Empire are not only watched by suspicious locals but are also connected by modern roads, electrified by nuclear power, connected by cell-phone towers, and globally-positioned by satellites. Even as Empire networks and controls the rural, whose previous autonomy made it an outside and therefore the perfect staging ground for the guerrilla, a different terrain of struggle emerges as a new outside within the Metropolis – slums – which share many characteristics with the countryside. In particular, slums are a site of underdevelopment created by Empire’s management through abandonment. And it is from that abandonment that a new, crueller form of autonomy arises bearing the potential to disrupt the operations of the Metropolis. Contemporary military theorists have noticed this risk, noting that:

because of their warren-like alleys and unpaved roads, the slums have become as impregnable to the security forces as a rural insurgent’s jungle or forest base. The police are unable to enter these areas, much less control them. The insurgents thus seek to sever the government’s authority over its cities and thereby to weaken both its resolve to govern and its support from the people, the aim being to eventually take power, first in the cities and then in the rest of the country (Taw and Hoffman, “The Urbanisation of Insurgency: The Potential Challenge to US Army Operations,” 74).

The most relevant characteristic of slums are their density. As the Latin American

theorists note, it is the density of Asian villages that allowed their guerrilla to 'swim like fish' among the people – something that their own mountains were unable to provide. In the density of the Metropolis, guerrillas have been able to employ tactics similar to those used in the countryside. Brazilian students, for instance, have used a street tactic much like the minuet whereby coordinated teams of protesters would alternately attack and withdraw against advancing lines of police, as well as the 'the net within the net,' which draws police squads designated to snatch an individual into a crowd far enough for them to be surrounded, looted, and immobilised (Marighella, *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla*, 24-25). In spite of the difference of terrain, the urban guerrilla ultimately navigates density in the same way as its rural predecessor: the urban guerrilla becomes a friend of density in order to maintain the same advantages – mobility and flexibility – and becomes a student of density to realise the same strategic principles – knowing where and when to strike so success is the only conceivable outcome and is certain to fulfil the twin goals of neutralising the enemy's repressive forces and expropriating resources to expand the forces of liberation.

Escape remains the greatest challenge to politics created by the Metropolis. As every theory of guerrilla warfare maintains, escape is fundamental because it establishes how direct conflict is avoided. Rural warfare only needs a crude concept of escape, as combat occurs in an 'open field' that radiates outward from nearly any point in the advancing enemy's column. In the Metropolis, however, the Spectacle casts a gaze that touches nearly everything, at least in part – even what is abandoned by the nourishing power of Biopower. Therefore, the urban guerrilla cannot depend on density to prevent their encirclement, as the open field does, but only on situations porous enough to provide escape routes unknown to the authorities. In fact, these escape routes are so important that the guerrilla must not operate when there is no escape plan, "since to do so will prevent them from breaking through the net which the enemy will surely try to throw around them" (Marighella, *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla*, 25). If escape routes are established, then politics can develop by way of the guerrilla, which identifies terrains of struggle that afford the mobility and flexibility necessary for the movement of dispersion, concentration, and escape. Such a terrain can be found in the Metropolis where there is density, which is often located in zones of abandonment. Even as the goals of this politics may parallel those of the urban guerrilla, which are the neutralisation of repressive forces and the expropriation of force for the powers of liberation, it must develop a new form of escape to avoid their fate; for the history of urban action shows that most guerrillas rose like lions only to be hunted, killed, or caged.

The necessity of camouflage. The guerrilla demonstrates the importance of selective engagement, which affirms the strategic importance of visibility, anonymity, and escape. In contrast to its enemy, who strains to defend occupied territory, the guerrilla is born in the shadows and grows under the cover of secrecy (Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?*, 41). And while the guerrilla in part relies on its enemy for arms and ammunition, it does not draw its political force from the same coherent identity but instead produces a temporary consistency: the flash of an image that swiftly appears with an explosive force only to immediately recede. The guerrilla thus affirms the potential of difference, whose singular acts must only be produced once, in contrast to reproduction, which is how the State expands its coherent identity over and over again (Lazzarato, *Capital-Labour to Capital-Life*, 200-205). This difference was amplified during Italy's tumultuous Years of Lead, when numerous armed guerrillas simply imitated the state while others dispersed "in a multiplicity of foci, like so many *rifts* in the capitalist whole" (Tiqqun, *This Is Not A Program*, 84). These rifts were filled by "radio stations, bands, celebration, riots, and squats" that did not exist as occupations but as an empty architecture of indistinction, informality, and semi-secrecy that became anonymous, that is "signed with fake names, a different one each time," and thus "unattributable, soluble in the sea of *Autonomia*" (84-85).^[5] These operations did not speak with the voice of a coherence of a subject, but rather, their frequency and intensity formed a consistency that nonetheless, "like so many marks etched in the half-light," left but mere traces of authorship and militancy and thus constituted a multi-faceted offensive "more formidable" than their hardened counterparts in the armed ranks of the *Brigate Rosse* and *Prima Linea* (85). The non-coherence of the autonomous elements therefore outlined the struggle, which was not simply between revolutionary and conservative forces, but a different way of doing politics. On one side was the coherence of Italian state "derived from popular Italian perceptions that the authority of the state was genuine and effective and that it used morally correct means for reasonable and fair purposes," and on the other was a diffusion of fragmented appearances that formed "a certain intensity in the circulation of bodies between all of [its] points" (Manwaring, *Shadows of Things Past*, 7; Tiqqun, *This is Not a Program*, 85).

Controlling terrain in the city is difficult for the guerrilla. In the city as much as the countryside, the night is a greater friend to the guerrilla than its enemy. Therefore, "if at night the city belongs to the guerrilla and, in part, to the police by day," then it becomes a battle of endurance rather than a show of strength (Guillén, *Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla*, 241). There are many parts of the Metropolis that appear as dark as a moonless night even when the sun is shining

its brightest, for anonymity is to the Metropolis as the cover of nighttime is to the city. Within the density of the Metropolis, abandoned zones shield activity from the prying eyes of Empire. It is in these zones that underworlds emerge to address the daily needs of residents whose precarious lives benefit from less legal interactions. Yet some of the best hiding spots are in the heart of the Metropolis. Clutter, for instance, temporarily creates cover for movement. Furthermore, the theory of the guerrilla illustrates the importance of time. If mobile, one can move through clutter fast enough to avoid being singled out by the watchful eye of the Spectacle or the calculating management of Biopower (Marighella, *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla*, 15-17). As the guerrilla shows, subverting the Metropolis does not occur by occupying its space but by embodying the time of politics. In the face of the perpetual present established by Empire, the guerrilla controls time and thus free space from the enemy. And because the guerrilla need not reproduce its actions, as it is not tied to defending or extending any particular space or time, it has a greater degree of freedom. The guerrilla thus turns the byproducts of Empire, namely zones of abandonment and clutter, into camouflage for offensive strikes against the Metropolis.

The offensive use of camouflage orients politics away from the Spectacle, which limits politics to the space of appearance, to the underground movement of forces not descendent from the State. The guerrilla initiates this shift by establishing an indistinguishability between themselves and everyone else. Once the guerrilla becomes imperceptible, their actions are no longer viewed as the actions of a crank, madman, or criminal against the public but as the concrete expression of sentiments held by many – every act ‘signs itself,’ claiming responsibility for itself “through its particular *how*” and “through its specific meaning in situation,” rendering it immediately discernible (Tiqqun, *This Is Not A Program*, 85). This underground force thus exposes itself to political scrutiny even when hiding its source. The guerrilla therefore lives as the expression of others or dies as a solitary individual – which is to say that the guerrilla renounces the notion of the revolutionary subject and instead gives force to the non-subject as it is becoming-revolutionary (85). Imperceptibility is difficult to maintain, however, as the enemy of the guerrilla realises its power and retaliates by personalising whatever it faces, which confines problems to isolated subjects and represents their actions as individual dysfunctions. Although guerrillas are imperceptible, so is Empire. That is to say: Empire has a proper name and can still be known in its effects, just as an ocean, a wind, a season, or an hour exist without becoming a subject or object, but it appears without a coherence (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 261-263). And to the extent that Empire does appear, it is only through management and circulation, whose temporary consistencies are only the effects

of its existence. The imperceptibility of the guerrilla and Empire differ, however, in appearance. While Empire maintains the appearance of neutrality, the guerrilla invites their enemy to “attack wildly” and paints them “as utterly black and without a single virtue” (Red Army Faction, *Urban Guerrilla Concept*). The reason is that such a bald characterisation of the guerrilla draws a clear line between the guerrilla and its enemy and substantiates that the guerrilla has won “spectacular successes” (Red Army Faction, *Urban Guerrilla Concept*). This desire to be caricatured demonstrates how the guerrilla uses the strength of an enemy – its near-monopoly on the mass communication – as its greatest weakness, as the enemy’s strength can be shown to be mere bluster (Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?*, 52). When imperceptible attacks lead to grand overreaction by the enemy, the image of an unassailable enemy vanishes. While the enemy had previously fostered fear and humility – a deference produced less by Empire’s sober supporters than its pessimistic critics – the guerrilla shatters this unassailability, propagandising the guerrilla’s strength while turning habits of respect for the enemy into belittling mockery. To strip away unassailability, radical politics does not need to follow the militarised path of the guerrilla, however, it only needs to evince the consistency of its intensity. And in that way, there are alternative means to spread the assailability of Empire that avoid liquidation.

In summary, guerrilla theory outlines the strategic principles for a politics built around the concept of escape. The sober, strategic character of guerrilla theory also distinguishes its clandestine potential from more spontaneous protests, such as punks and runaways who simply ‘go it alone’ to refuse assimilation, as well as the politics of compromise, such as power brokers and activists who articulate their demands in the already-existing halls of power. Moreover, escape is not an abstract ideal in guerrilla theory but a practical force – a distinction with enough difference to goad Guy Debord to insist, “I am not a philosopher, I am a strategist!” (quoted in Agamben, “Metropolis,” 1). And in turn, guerrilla theory establishes escape as a strategic principle for inclusion in any planning, process, and procedure – ‘escape must be guaranteed’ means determining ‘how does escape ensure victory?’, ‘what are the available tactics for escape?’, and ‘which escape route will be taken?’

To be clear: this is not a suggestion to practice guerrilla warfare. Everywhere that the Metropolis spreads, it makes all previous forms of guerrilla warfare obsolete. The subversion of the Metropolis may be clandestine; it will not be through military means but through a battle of intensities. The weaknesses of the Metropolis cannot be exploited through armed propaganda without ending in death. As the history of guerrilla warfare demonstrates, escape, when it raises

anonymity to a strategic principle, can bring success to a forces inferior in numbers, arms, and training. To share in the history of success, the struggle against Empire must adapt its tactics to fit the new terrain of the Metropolis, namely its contingency, density, and clutter. This struggle can derive advantages from the same elements as the guerrilla by transforming the products of Empire into the means for its destruction: a way of life, knowledge of terrain, and camouflaged operations. And with these strategic advantages, the struggle against Empire throws off the nightmare of cynical politics and begins revolutionary dreaming once again.

Digital Subversions, New Strategies for Struggle

*Degenerate hacker Case is down and out. This protagonist was unable to jack into cyberspace after getting his hand caught in the till and now wanders the Japanese underworld as an addict in the search of a cure to get back into the matrix. Although he is outside Tokyo, it is not the outskirts – everything is connected, just some parts have older streets and some areas have no official names. In this world, cities are not distinct dots on the maps but dissolve into their own regions. The Sprawl, for instance, covers all of the eastern United States from Boston to Atlanta. There is no day or night but a permanent grey that emanates from an artificial sky cast over each artificial environment. It is a place where ‘the actors change but the play remains the same.’ As Case laments, it was like “a deranged experiment” with a bored researcher “who kept one thumb permanently on the fast-forward button” and whose cruel rules are: “stop hustling and you sank without a trace, but move a little too swiftly and you’d break the fragile surface tension of the black market; either way, you were gone” (Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 7). Moreover, cyberspace has taken over much of people’s lives: “Cyberspace: A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts... a graphical representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding...” (51).*

The Metropolis is rendered most vividly in these cyberpunk underworlds – places where giant corporations control the world, ubiquitous technology drastically changes the face of humankind, and low-lives commit actions that cascade into monumental change. These fictional places serve as dramatizations of our own stolen time and thus update noir’s savage depiction of doomed characters languishing in the Social State to Empire’s triumphant

*reign over the wastelands of digital culture. Most importantly, cyberpunk draws on computers as engines of difference. Thus, by installing the computer as the core literary device, the genre offers a dystopian contrast to liberal existentialism. Instead of celebrating difference as an iron-clad vehicle for pluralist harmony, these worlds draw startlingly dark depictions of cultures digitally saturated by difference but plunged deeper into futuristic miseries. Moreover, because *The Sprawl* mirrors our own Metropolis, it points to the transformation of escape – gone is the extensive form of escape to communes in the woods, and immediately relevant are all its intensive forms. Perhaps it is these intersecting planes of intensity that will deliver something worthy of Foucault’s search for a force of truth that is not just force itself.*

The Metropolis is not a representation abstracted from contemporary media technologies; but if “history progresses at the speed of its weapons systems,” then the architecture of the Metropolis is no doubt structured by informatisation, which is the biopolitical medium through which Empire wages its war of movement (Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 90). And it is for this reason that the Metropolis should be described in the same terms as network culture, which is characterised by an abundance of information and an acceleration of informational character (Terranova, *Network Culture*, 1). But the information utilised is quite specific in three distinct ways: as “the relation of signal to noise,” “a measure of the uncertainty or entropy of a system,” and “a nonlinear and nondeterministic relationship between the microscopic and the macroscopic levels of a physical system” – all of which find corollaries in culture (9). Moreover, the reconfigured terrain of network culture also shifts the potential objectives of revolutionary politics, as the Luddite dream of sabotaging or crippling infrastructure on a mass scale is unthinkable and cyberterrorism by political-motivated radicals is rare (Krapp, *Noise Channels*, 49-51). Instead, network culture motivates digital actions that gain cultural expression through a tactical use of media that “signifies the intervention and disruption of a dominant semiotic regime, the temporary creation of a situation in which signs, messages, and narratives are set into play and critical thinking becomes possible” (Raley, *Tactical Media*, 6). Such a cultural characterisation of the political potentials within network culture, which focuses on expression and not the struggle within information itself, threatens to ruin tactical media where the guerrilla failed as well – by “confusing tactics and strategy” (Guillén, *The Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla*, 257). Moreover, many of the mediums of digital culture are not well suited for tactical media’s emphasis on persuasion or the presentation of facts – the internet, for instance, is a breeding ground for conspiracy and insinuation, as the sheer volume of participants and incredible speed of information

accumulation means that in the time it takes to put one conspiratorial theory to bed, the raw material for many more will have already begun circulating (Dyson, “End of the Official Story,” 20). There is a way to cut through this confusion, however: if politics considers how “the content of any medium is always another medium,” then it can develop a strategy to wrestle simultaneously with the technologies of the Metropolis and the world of digital culture, which demands a shift from signs to signals and from semiotics to physics (McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 8). Media and literary studies have outlined theories for such a multi-dimensional shift, demonstrating the different operations of speech, writing, and code. Now it is time to combine those theories into a strategy to be used in the struggle against the Metropolis

The strategic principles of guerrilla theory can thus be resurrected to guide anonymous forces in the struggle against the digital culture of the Metropolis even if guerrilla warfare cannot. In the Metropolis, anonymity is not just a force of subversion. In fact, Empire realises itself as an anonymous force, for it won the Cold War not with an arms race but by precipitously melting into a distributive network. As the Red Army Faction notes, it is this anonymity that is the target, as “neither Marx nor Lenin nor Rosa Luxemburg nor Mao had to deal with *Bild* readers, television viewers, car drivers, the psychological conditioning of young students, high school reforms, advertising, the radio, mail order sales, loan contracts, ‘quality of life,’ etc.,” which disperses the State into a diffuse Empire that cannot be combated as “an openly fascist” enemy but as a “system in the metropole” that “reproduces itself through an ongoing offensive against the people’s psyche” (“The Black September Action in Munich,” 223). Yet it would be wrong to imagine Empire’s offensive as dehumanising. Rather, it is non-human. From the algorithms governing Wall Street financial transactions to the Obama Campaign’s voter prediction models, material objects are interpreted like information on the internet: inhuman movements “recorded in a myriad of different locations (log files, server statistics, email boxes)” treated as “the clustering of descriptive information around a specific user” and devoid of a real identity (Galloway, *Protocol*, 69). Once fully rendered within this new strategic environment, cultural politics then becomes a struggle over information theory’s concept of communication: the accurate reproduction of an encoded signal across a media channel (telephony, radio, computing) – which reintroduces the question of materiality. It was with respect to materiality that the guerrilla first found its strategic advantage, and so it is here that the guerrilla’s three advantages reappear in terms of media effects: the accidents and coincidences of contingency plague the digital as bugs and glitches, which easily turn into errors and exploits; density creates mobility and flexibility within digital oversaturation, where spam

and 'big data' make overload possible; and the clutter of the Metropolis that provides the cover of camouflage is found in the opposition of signal and noise of information theory, which both covers-up and disrupts through distortion and loss.

In spite of the pervasiveness of glitch, oversaturation, and noise, early imagery of the cyberpunk hacker as guerrilla warrior against faceless corporations has not been realised. Instead, numerous cultures have celebrated these digital byproducts, with glitch giving rise to jarring video game art, oversaturation causing a boom in information miners and data hoarders, and noise creating a distinctive form of post-punk music (Krapp, *Noise Channels*). The problem with these cultural expressions is that they give an identity and voice to these forces rather than circulate its anonymous force. The effect is that force is slowed down to be made local and bounded, which causes it to either drown after being "overwhelmed by the open network ecology" of oceanic difference or get marooned on "a self-contained and self-referential archipelago of the like-minded" (Terranova, *Network Culture*, 70). Perhaps today's cyberpunk console cowboys have already become inhuman, vanishing into "evanescent and mobile informational islands" of peer-to-peer media pirates that appear and disappear, "springing out of nowhere" to send signals, only to dissolve as soon as the frantic transactions are carried out" (70). Whether or not these pirates constitute a serious threat, it is clear that the struggle against Empire does not unfold in the antagonism between a revolutionary subject and an easily identified occupying power within the carefully delineated territory of a nation-state. The lack of a spatial solution itself is a consequence of the Metropolis, for it stretches out like the open system of the Internet – a common space that grows through differentiation but also divergence and thus operates as a diagram whose basic function is communicative: the overcoming of incompatibilities (42). And if the guerrilla then exists in digital culture, albeit transformed, its strategy of withdrawal can utilise connective divergence rather than spatial distance. There are already instances of this divergence, as seen in various subcultures of glitch and noise, but they do not weaponise incompatibility, which must be done if divergence is to be utilised in a strategy of offensive escape. How to weaponise incompatibility, however, is the question that remains.

Just as the guerrilla makes use of contingency, the glitch introduces accidents into the heart of the Metropolis. The glitch is an unexpected moment where a passing fault disrupts a system but fails to crash it. These transitory events are irritating nuisances but common enough that they are routinely ignored, for glitches are still a deviation from the predetermined outcome – in short, an error. And although not immediately catastrophic, these errors indicate the possibility

of a deeper problem beneath, whether it be incorrect software, invalid inputs, or hardware malfunction. Thus there are those who choose not to ignore glitches. For developers, chasing glitches is motivated by the desire to clear the bugs out of the system. But for others, the glitch signals the potential for an exploit. In general, an exploit replicates the guerrilla strategy of turning something to one's advantage; so in video games a glitch can exploit grant a player powers not intended by the developers. As culture takes on characteristics of the digital, social, or economic glitches can hint at exploits that exist as "a resonant flaw designed to resist, threaten, and ultimately desert the dominant political diagram" (Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*, 21). While culture has a different architecture than that of a computer, exploits are holes generated by the hypercomplexity of any technical system that makes such systems vulnerable to penetration and change. Given that the oceanic difference of the Metropolis expands through complexity, exploits must exist throughout it. And most importantly, the exploit hijacks an already existing system, it turns the already existing power differentials in that system to its advantage so it does not have to introduce its own (21). The search for new antagonisms in the digital life of the Metropolis must then begin with tracking down glitches and other traces of exploits.

The struggle continues with the hunt for a new terrain of struggle. If it is density that allows the guerrilla to maintain the dance of concentration and dispersion, oversaturation serves a similar function in the Metropolis. Through the twin forces of Biopower and the Spectacle, Empire has collected an enormous amount of data about the behaviours, habits, and preferences of the Metropolis. The residents of the Metropolis thus live in an environment with a high degree of exposure. But every data-gathering process suffers from overaccumulation at the point when the cost of transforming the raw data into useful information is more than its predicted payout. Furthermore, if the speed by which Empire poses the limits of the Metropolis is matched only by the swiftness in which it overcomes them, then its accelerating integration of information is both its greatest strength but also a potential weakness (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 230-232; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 436-437; 463). This vulnerability:

is not the result of society's inability to integrate its marginal phenomena; on the contrary, it stems from an overcapacity for integration and standardisation. When this happens, societies which seem all-powerful are destabilised from within, with serious consequences, for the more efforts the system makes to organise itself in order to get rid of its anomalies, the further it will take its logic of over-organisation, and the more it will nourish the outgrowth of those anomalies (Baudrillard, "A Perverse Logic," 6).

The terrain of the Metropolis is therefore caught in the tension between exposure and overaccumulation that sometimes gives way to overload. The Metropolis is thus most exposed to choreography crafted to manipulate its openness and speed to create temporary escape routes. In contrast to the guerrilla, the overloaded Metropolis leaks time more than space. Just as cyberpunk's adrenaline-fueled hacking scenes illustrate, the terrain of the Metropolis makes space subservient to time – depicted most vividly in the dramatic ticking down of a clock. Adapting the minuet to digital culture, it is conceivable that temporary misapprehension and incomprehensibility could be used for the same strategic purposes as in its guerrilla form: lessening the reactionary forces of the enemy and expropriating their resources.

The unavoidable noise of digital culture provides the camouflage for operation. Noise is quite ambivalent even if it sometimes disrupts communication. The rising decibels of a loud dinner party, for example, create a feedback loop that drowns out certain intimacies but initiates others that would be impossible without it. Noise should not then be understood as always detrimental to a system, for even if it “destroys and horrifies,” it is also true that “order and flat repetition are in the vicinity of death;” rather, noise holds any system open to its outside and “nourishes a new order” (Serres, *The Parasite*, 27). This is because background noise forms “the ground of our perception,” whose constant concealments are an unstoppable force of “perennial sustenance” and “the element of the software of all our logic” (Serres, *Genesis*, 7). In fact, a certain degree of noise may even aid transmission, for it may allow signal compression that increases the efficiency of the channel and its system (Hainge, “Of Glitch and Men,” 27). Even if the introduction of noise improves signal compression, it does so by sacrificing fidelity for mobility and flexibility. And it is here that the strategic role of noise emerges, as it engenders an indiscernibility like that of the urban guerrilla and the people, but a more fundamental one – for noise is the very material through which information travels. On the one hand, this is why cultural forms of resistance like ‘culture jamming’ focus on signal distortion, and other methods for introducing noise to disrupt the easy flow of communication. On deeper level, however, strategic manipulation of noise allows for the creation of “vacuoles of non-communication,” opening up tiny breaches that allow one to evade control, at least temporarily (Deleuze, “Control and Becoming,” 195). Noise also marks a destabilising moment in a system that has a chance to widen the space of non-communication by invading a channel with the desubjectified force of the outside.

It is finally time to answer Foucault's demand for a force of truth that is not just the truth of force by way of a reintroduction of insinuation. The 'propaganda by the deed' of turn-of-the-century anarchists and the 'armed propaganda' of mid-century guerrillas each typify the truth of force but they also epitomise the rhetorical power of action. Yet these radicals were unable to find a force of truth independent of power itself. Instead, they found that rhetoric and force were both amplified when treated as imbricated and thus mutually constitutive – propaganda by the deed declared that the actions of anarchists to be more than idle talk or utopian dreams, and guerrillas waged ideologically-fuelled wars against occupying powers. Resistance to Empire should take heed.

The oversaturated streets of the Metropolis seem to announce that "we do not lack communication," but "on the contrary, we have too much of it," and in fact what we lack is creation, or really, "*resistance to the present*" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 108). If that is the case, then neither the politics of persuasion or the presentation of facts will do, for the Metropolis will remain unfazed as long as tactical media leans on the force of truth. Rather, in the struggle against Empire, the only mode of communication appropriate to the task is one that disrupts proper communication and whose signal is one of ungovernability: insinuation. Though its effects are not clear, it is obvious that insinuation unlocks an underground force in its flight of invisibility and anonymity that subverts identification and legibility while distorting signals and overloading the system. Insinuation has barely converged with the dangerous politics of those who desire nonexistence and disappearance – those who have no demands, refusal political representation, and rebuke negotiation with the present (Galloway, "Black Box, Black Bloc," 244). In the battles of appearances that consumes the Metropolis, the two promise to make a potent combination. And perhaps they will be the fusion of force and truth that will defeat Empire – injecting insinuations while fighting cultural politics in digital code – releasing a cascade of affect charges while turning glitches into exploits, over-accumulation into overload, and flooding the Metropolis with the noisy force of the outside.

Notes

[1] Louis Hjelmslev uses the net as a diagram to explain how semiotics 'capture' the referent, which is an unformed matter he calls 'purport.' For more, see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 43-44; 108. Another, more widely used, semiotic model is Jacques Lacan's "Che vuoi?" graph, which curls with the Other's question of 'What do you want?,' or more colloquially, 'What's bugging you?.' See Lacan, *Écrits*, 690.

[2] Insinuation thus blurs the distinction between two dominant models of communication, the transmission model and the cultural, because it asks the materialist question of transmission of a signal through a medium but without focusing on the genesis or reception of that signal but also asks questions about the cultural effects of common forms and a communication event. For more on the distinction between the two approaches, see Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication,” *Communication as Culture*, 13-36, and Grossberg et al, “Media in Context,” *MediaMaking*, 3-33.

[3] “Certainly music traverses our bodies in profound ways, putting an ear in the stomach, in the lungs, and so on. It knows all about waves and nervousness. But it involves our body, and bodies in general, in another element. It strips bodies of their inertia, of the materiality of their presence: it *disembodies* bodies. We can thus speak with exactitude of a sonorous body, and even of a bodily combat in music – for example, in a motif – but as Proust said, it is an immaterial and disembodied combat “in which there subsists not one scrap of inert matter refractory to the mind.” In a sense, music begins where painting ends, and this is what is meant when one speaks of the superiority of music. It is lodged on lines of flight that pass through bodies, but which find their consistency elsewhere, whereas painting is lodged farther up, where the body escapes from itself. But in escaping, the body discovers the materiality of which it is composed, the pure presence of which it is made, and which it would not discover otherwise. Painting, in short, discovers the material reality of bodies with its line-colour systems and its polyvalent organ, the eye.” Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 46-47.

[4] As an emergent response to its milieu, life’s rhythmic expansion and contraction of difference leads to the internalisation of its surroundings, which encourages it to leave and explore new environments. Shaping this Darwinian analogy into the movement of life, Deleuze uses this among many other analogies to describe the character of a line of becoming. For more, consult the work of Henri Bergson, Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* and *Bergsonism*, Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*, Elizabeth Grosz’s recent work on Darwin, and Claire Colebrook’s work on vitalism.

[5] Tiqqun suggests that such spaces worked best when they were abandoned, when they either stopped emitting lines of becoming or became too costly to maintain.

To be clear: this is not a suggestion to practice guerrilla warfare. Everywhere that the Metropolis spreads, it makes all previous forms of guerrilla warfare obsolete. The subversion of the Metropolis may be clandestine; it will not be through military means but through a battle of intensities. The weaknesses of the Metropolis cannot be exploited through armed propaganda without ending in death. As the history of guerrilla warfare demonstrates, escape, when it raises anonymity to a strategic principle, can bring success to a forces inferior in numbers, arms, and training. To share in the history of success, the struggle against Empire must adapt its tactics to fit the new terrain of the Metropolis, namely its contingency, density, and clutter. This struggle can derive advantages from the same elements as the guerrilla by transforming the products of Empire into the means for its destruction: a way of life, knowledge of terrain, and camouflaged operations. And with these strategic advantages, the struggle against Empire throws off the nightmare of cynical politics and begins revolutionary dreaming once again.

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