

53. [Introduction] Nomadic Power and Cultural Resistance

The Critical Art Ensemble turned the rhizome on its root. The figures of the rhizome and nomadology, fashioned by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987), have been a worldwide inspiration for culture workers—from the net.art mailing list at rhizome.org to Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial critique. Rhizome language has been adopted as a language of liberation, as an alternative to the New Left that in retrospect seems to have died in the streets in 1968. Yet in this essay the CAE posits the rhizome and nomad—as used by many new media writers to discuss network and hypertextual technologies—as figures of corporate power, rather than of liberation.

That the applications of rhizome language to new media technologies may have sprouted from a misreading of Deleuze and Guattari is of little importance in this context; language achieves meaning through use. By co-opting the language of the rhizome and nomad from the technoliberationists, CAE cut to the heart of the argument that new media networks are inherently incompatible with the power relations of the industrial revolution. They demolished the idea that it is impossible for power to co-opt network and hypertext technologies, that such technologies have a manifest destiny of freedom.

The CAE argued: that the power elite are now the primary beneficiaries of network technologies; that these technologies allow them, as well as the sites of industrial production, to be so mobile as to make resistance in physical space ineffectual; that the communication and control functions of the elite are now fully cyberspatial, so cyberspace becomes the only effective site of resistance; and that the only potentially effective cyberspace resistance is “disturbance” via the sabotage of information technologies and the potential panic created by the cutoff of information flow (and resulting destabilization of the privatized safe harbors created by the powerful for those they employ).

Since the mid-1990s, significant flaws have been found in these arguments. The most telling of these is that corporate power continues to feel a need to press for greater mobility (e.g., via the World Trade Organization), and continues to have its meetings about this matter in physical space. Meanwhile, protest movements have found effective means to use cyberspatial technologies for their own communication, and have developed the nomadic ability to meet corporate power on the street wherever it chooses to gather. The power elite have found themselves unexpectedly trapped in meeting-room bunkers, rather than free to move as they please.

Yet the question of how, or whether, to use new media technologies for taking (virtual) action, rather than organizing and reporting (physical) action, remains open. The most attention-getting work that positions the network as a space for action has been the “virtual sit-ins” of “hacktivists” and “cyberhippies.” But is unclear whether this work is actually more like a physical sit-in or like gathering signatures on a petition. It does not close down spaces of power or have an undeniable public presence the way physical sit-ins have. It does provide a way for relatively large numbers of people to express personal dissatisfaction with power, as petitions do, and it involves a similar level of personal (physical) risk. Yet this work goes beyond the petition in its theatrical dimensions, which exist both for the participants and for their audience—the press, and the sit-in targets.

CAE, for their part, have weighed in to the debate by declaring that, at this historical moment, even the physical sit-in has almost no tactical value, and that hacktivist virtual actions are in the main tactically negative (even if they may possess small pedagogical value, which might eventually partially motivate tactically positive action). This objection to the virtual sit-in comes because, for CAE,

From “Electronic Civil Disobedience, Simulation, and the Public Sphere”:

In an addendum written in 1995 for *ECD and Other Unpopular Ideas*, CAE noted that there was growing paranoia among U.S. security agencies about controlling the electronic resistance. Oddly enough, these agencies scared themselves with their own constructions of electronic criminality. It was much like [Orson] Welles being scared of his own broadcast. In that comic moment, CAE ironically suggested that ECD was successful without ever having been tried . . . This is a comment that CAE wishes it had never made, as some activists have come to take it seriously and are trying to act on it, primarily by using the Web to produce hyperreal activist threats to fan the flames of corporate-state paranoia. Again, this is a media battle that will be lost. State panic and paranoia will be transformed through mass media into public paranoia, which in turn will only reinforce state power. In the U.S., the voting public consistently supports harsher sentencing for “criminals,” more jails, and more police, and it is this hyperreal paranoia that gets law-and-order politicians the votes needed to turn these directives into legislation or government order. How many times must we see this happen? From McCarthyism to Reagan's fear of the Evil Empire to the War on Drugs, the result in each case has been more funds for military, security, and disciplinary agencies . . .

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Electronic Civil Disobedience is not a form of traditional Civil Disobedience, but an inversion of it. Rather than “the people united” of CD, ECD imagines many independently-acting cells. Rather than CD’s aiming for media manipulation through which public pressure will be brought to bear on an institution to change its policies, ECD aims to bring the pressure for change *directly* (arguing that there is now no corporate or governmental institution who is not amply prepared to do battle in the media, to reverse the spin of any publicly-applied pressure). For ECD to be effective, CAE argues in “Electronic Civil Disobedience, Simulation, and the Public Sphere,” action should not only be non-theatrical—it should be conducted in secret.

The Hacktivismo group of cDc (Cult of the Dead Cow) is an organization that partially shares CAE’s belief in the value of secrecy, but disagrees both with CAE and many hacktivists on the subject of disobedience. The cDc model is, instead, one of *disruptive compliance*. Their work focuses on the development of software that enables actions forbidden by repression, rather than enabling (private or public) attacks on repressors. An example is software for allowing political dissidents to, as safely as possible, share information while behind the Great Firewall of China (which was, of course, constructed with the help of U.S. corporations). For such software to be effective the details of its operation may be, in some cases, best kept secret. However, in general cDc hopes that open code can become the *lingua franca* of a hacktivism that seeks to wage peace, not war. While the term isn’t used, the software described in cDc’s “Waging Peace on the Internet” would create a set of connections between dissidents that sound, in technoliberationist terms, rhizomatic.

—NWF

From “Waging Peace on the Internet”:

For the past four years the cDc has been talking about hacktivism. It’s a chic word, beloved among journalists and appropriators alike. Yet the meaning is serious. Our definition of hacktivism is, “using technology to advance human rights through electronic media.” Many on-line activists claim to be hacktivists, but their tactics are often at odds with what we consider hacktivism to be.

From the cDc’s perspective, creation is good; destruction is bad. Hackers should promote the free flow of information, and causing anything to disrupt, prevent, or retard that flow is improper. For instance, cDc does not consider Web defacements or Denial of Service (DoS) attacks to be legitimate hacktivist actions. The former is nothing more than hi-tech vandalism, and the latter, an assault on free speech. . . .

There is no such thing as electronic civil disobedience. Body mass and large numbers don’t count as they do on the street. On the Internet, it’s the code that counts, specifically code and programmers with conscience.

We need to start thinking in terms of disruptive compliance rather than civil disobedience if we want to be effective on-line. Disruptive compliance has no meaning outside of cyberspace. Disruptive, of course, refers to disruptive technology, a radically new way of doing things; compliance refers back to the Internet and its original intent of constructive free-flow and openness. . . .

Here is where the Napster analogy breaks down. Trust was never a paramount factor in using the application. It was a fun loving network developed on the free side of the firewall, where users’ greatest worries were, a) Can I find what I want? b) How long will it take to download? c) Is it of good quality? and, d) Do I have time to download four more tunes before I go to the keg party?

No one ever had to ask, a) If I’m caught using this, will I be arrested? b) Is this application good for ten years in jail?

Having millions of students on the Napster network made sense because the more users there are on-line, the larger the lending library becomes. Users behind national firewalls cannot be so casual. Having millions of users on a network may be one thing, but only a fool would trust more than his or her closest friends when the consequences of entrapment are so high. Thus, carefree peer-to-peer networks are replaced by careful hacktivist-to-hacktivist (H2H) networks.

Further Readings

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Nomadic Power and Cultural Resistance

Critical Art Ensemble

The term that best describes the present social condition is liquescence. The once unquestioned markers of stability, such as God or Nature, have dropped into the black hole of scepticism, dissolving positioned identification of subject or object. Meaning simultaneously flows through a process of proliferation and condensation, at once drifting, slipping, speeding into the antinomies of apocalypse and utopia. The location of power—and the site of resistance—rest in an ambiguous zone without borders. How could it be otherwise, when the traces of power flow in transition between nomadic dynamics and sedentary structures—between hyperspeed and hyperinertia? It is perhaps utopian to begin with the claim that resistance begins (and ends?) with a Nietzschean casting-off of the yoke of catatonia inspired by the postmodern condition, and yet the disruptive nature of consciousness leaves little choice.

Treading water in the pool of liquid power need not be an image of acquiescence and complicity. In spite of their awkward situation, the political activist and the cultural activist (anachronistically known as the artist) can still produce disturbances. Although such action may more closely resemble the gestures of a drowning person, and it is uncertain just what is being disturbed, in this situation the

postmodern roll of the dice favors the act of disturbance. After all, what other chance is there? It is for this reason that former strategies of "subversion" (a word which in critical discourse has about as much meaning as the word "community"), or camouflaged attack, have come under a cloud of suspicion. Knowing what to subvert assumes that forces of oppression are stable and can be identified and separated—an assumption that is just too fantastic in an age of dialectics in ruins. Knowing how to subvert presupposes an understanding of the opposition that rests in the realm of certitude, or (at least) high probability. The rate at which strategies of subversion are co-opted indicates that the adaptability of power is too often underestimated; however, credit should be given to the resisters, to the extent that the subversive act or product is not co-optively reinvented as quickly as the bourgeois aesthetic of efficiency might dictate. The peculiar entwinement of the cynical and the utopian in the concept of disturbance as a necessary gamble is a heresy to those who still adhere to 19th-century narratives in which the mechanisms and class(es) of oppression, as well as the tactics needed to overcome them, are clearly identified. After all, the wager is deeply connected to conservative apologies for Christianity, and the attempt to appropriate rationalist rhetoric and models to persuade the fallen to return to traditional eschatology. A renounced Cartesian like Pascal, or a renounced revolutionary like Dostoyevsky, typify its use. Yet it must be realized that the promise of a better future, whether secular or spiritual, has always presupposed the economy of the wager. The connection between history and necessity is cynically humorous when one looks back over the trail of political and cultural debris of revolution and near-revolution in ruins. The French revolutions from 1789 to 1968 never stemmed the obscene tide of the commodity (they seem to have helped pave the way), while the Russian and Cuban revolutions merely replaced the commodity with

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the totalizing anachronism of the bureaucracy. At best, all that is derived from these disruptions is a structure for a nostalgic review of reconstituted moments of temporary autonomy.

The cultural producer has not fared any better. Mallarmé brought forth the concept of the wager in *A Roll of the Dice*, and perhaps unwittingly liberated invention from the bunker of transcendentalism that he hoped to defend, as well as releasing the artist from the myth of the poetic subject. (It is reasonable to suggest that de Sade had already accomplished these tasks at a much earlier date). Duchamp (the attack on essentialism), Cabaret Voltaire (the methodology of random production), and Berlin dada (the disappearance of art into political action) all disturbed the cultural waters, and yet opened one of the cultural passages for the resurgence of transcendentalism in late Surrealism. By way of reaction to the above three, a channel was also opened for formalist domination (still to this day the demon of the culture-text) that locked the culture-object into the luxury market of late capital. However, the gamble of these forerunners of disturbance reinjected the dream of autonomy with the amphetamine of hope that gives contemporary cultural producers and activists the energy to step up to the electronic gaming table to roll the dice again.

In *The Persian Wars*, Herodotus describes a feared people known as the Scythians, who maintained a horticultural-nomadic society unlike the sedentary empires in the “cradle of civilization.” The homeland of the Scythians on the Northern Black Sea was inhospitable both climatically and geographically, but resisted colonization less for these natural reasons than because there was no economic or military means by which to colonize or subjugate it. With no fixed cities or territories, this “wandering horde” could never really be located. Consequently, they could never be put on the defensive and conquered. They maintained their autonomy through movement, making it seem to outsiders that they were always present and poised for attack even when absent. The fear inspired by the Scythians was quite justified, since they were often on the military offensive, although no one knew where until the time of their instant appearance, or until traces of their power were discovered. A floating border was maintained in their homeland, but Power was not a matter of spatial occupation for the Scythians. They wandered, taking territory and tribute as needed, in whatever area they found themselves. In so doing, they

constructed an invisible empire that dominated “Asia” for twenty-seven years, and extended as far south as Egypt. The empire itself was not sustainable, since their nomadic nature denied the need or value of holding territories. (Garrisons were not left in defeated territories). They were free to wander, since it was quickly realized by their adversaries that even when victory seemed probable, for practicality’s sake it was better not to engage them, and to instead concentrate military and economic effort on other sedentary societies—that is, on societies in which an infrastructure could be located and destroyed. This policy was generally reinforced, because an engagement with the Scythians required the attackers to allow themselves to be found by the Scythians. It was extraordinarily rare for the Scythians to be caught in a defensive posture. Should the Scythians not like the terms of engagement, they always had the option of remaining invisible, and thereby preventing the enemy from constructing a theater of operations.

This archaic model of power distribution and predatory strategy has been reinvented by the power elite of late capital for much the same ends. Its reinvention is predicated upon the technological opening of cyberspace, where speed/absence and inertia/presence collide in hyperreality. The archaic model of nomadic power, once a means to an unstable empire, has evolved into a sustainable means of domination. In a state of double signification, the contemporary society of nomads becomes both a diffuse power field without location, and a fixed sight machine appearing as spectacle. The former privilege allows for the appearance of global economy, while the latter acts as a garrison in various territories, maintaining the order of the commodity with an ideology specific to the given area.

Although both the diffuse power field and the sight machine are integrated through technology, and are necessary parts for global empire, it is the former that has fully realized the Scythian myth. The shift from archaic space to an electronic network offers the full complement of nomadic power advantages: The militarized nomads are always on the offensive. The obscenity of spectacle and the terror of speed are their constant companions. In most cases sedentary populations submit to the obscenity of spectacle, and contentedly pay the tribute demanded, in the form of labor, material, and profit. First world, third world, nation or tribe, all must give tribute. The differentiated and hierarchical nations, classes, races, and genders of sedentary

modern society all blend under nomadic domination into the role of its service workers—into caretakers of the cyberelite. This separation, mediated by spectacle, offers tactics that are beyond the archaic nomadic model. Rather than a hostile plundering of an adversary, there is a friendly pillage, seductively and ecstatically conducted against the passive. Hostility from the oppressed is rechanneled into the bureaucracy, which misdirects antagonism away from the nomadic power field. The retreat into the invisibility of nonlocation prevents those caught in the panoptic spatial lock-down from defining a site of resistance (a theater of operations), and they are instead caught in a historical tape loop of resisting the monuments of dead capital. (Abortion rights? Demonstrate on the steps of the Supreme Court. For the release of drugs which slow the development of HIV, storm the NIH). No longer needing to take a defensive posture is the nomads' greatest strength.

As the electronic information-cores overflow with files of electronic people (those transformed into credit histories, consumer types, patterns and tendencies, etc.), electronic research, electronic money, and other forms of information power, the nomad is free to wander the electronic net, able to cross national boundaries with minimal resistance from national bureaucracies. The privileged realm of electronic space controls the physical logistics of manufacture, since the release of raw materials and manufactured goods requires electronic consent and direction. Such power must be relinquished to the cyber realm, or the efficiency (and thereby the profitability) of complex manufacture, distribution, and consumption would collapse into a communication gap. Much the same is true of the military; there is cyberelite control of information resources and dispersal. Without command and control, the military becomes immobile, or at best limited to chaotic dispersal in localized space. In this manner all sedentary structures become servants of the nomads.

The nomadic elite itself is frustratingly difficult to grasp. Even in 1956, when C. Wright Mills wrote *The Power Elite*, it was clear that the sedentary elite already understood the importance of invisibility. (This was quite a shift from the looming spatial markers of power used by the feudal aristocracy). Mills found it impossible to get any direct information on the elite, and was left with speculations

drawn from questionable empirical categories (for example, the social register). As the contemporary elite moves from centralized urban areas to decentralized and deterritorialized cyberspace, Mills' dilemma becomes increasingly aggravated. How can a subject be critically assessed that cannot be located, examined, or even seen? Class analysis reaches a point of exhaustion. Subjectively there is a feeling of oppression, and yet it is difficult to locate, let alone assume, an oppressor. In all likelihood, this group is not a class at all—that is, an aggregate of people with common political and economic interests—but a downloaded elite military consciousness. The cyberelite is now a transcendent entity that can only be imagined. Whether they have integrated programmed motives is unknown. Perhaps so, or perhaps their predatory actions fragment their solidarity, leaving shared electronic pathways and stores of information as the only basis of unity. The paranoia of imagination is the foundation for a thousand conspiracy theories—all of which are true. Roll the dice.

The development of an absent and potentially unassailable nomadic power, coupled with the rear vision of revolution in ruins, has nearly muted the contestational voice. Traditionally, during times of disillusionment, strategies of retreatism begin to dominate. For the cultural producer, numerous examples of cynical participation populate the landscape of resistance. The experience of Baudelaire comes to mind. In 1848 Paris he fought on the barricades, guided by the notion that "property is theft," only to turn to cynical nihilism after the revolution's failure. (Baudelaire was never able to completely surrender. His use of plagiarism as an inverted colonial strategy forcefully recalls the notion that property is theft). André Breton's early surrealist project—synthesizing the liberation of desire with the liberation of the worker—unraveled when faced with the rise of fascism. (Breton's personal arguments with Louis Aragon over the function of the artist as revolutionary agent should also be noted. Breton never could abandon the idea of poetic self as a privileged narrative). Breton increasingly embraced mysticism in the 30s, and ended by totally retreating into transcendentalism. The tendency of the disillusioned cultural worker to retreat toward introspection to sidestep the Enlightenment question of "What is to be done with the social situation in light of sadistic power?" is the representation of life through denial. It is not that interior

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liberation is undesirable and unnecessary, only that it cannot become singular or privileged. To turn away from the revolution of everyday life, and place cultural resistance under the authority of the poetic self, has always led to cultural production that is the easiest to commodify and bureaucratize.

From the American postmodern viewpoint, the 19th-century category of the poetic self (as delineated by the Decadents, the Symbolists, the Nabis School, etc.) has come to represent complicity and acquiescence when presented as pure. The culture of appropriation has eliminated this option in and of itself. (It still has some value as a point of intersection. For example, bell hooks uses it well as an entrance point to other discourses). Though in need of revision, Asger Jorn's modernist motto "The avant-garde never gives up!" still has some relevance. Revolution in ruins and the labyrinth of appropriation have emptied the comforting certitude of the dialectic. The Marxist watershed, during which the means of oppression had a clear identity, and the route of resistance was unilinear, has disappeared into the void of scepticism. However, this is no excuse for surrender. The ostracized surrealist, Georges Bataille, presents an option still not fully explored: In everyday life, rather than confronting the aesthetic of utility, attack from the rear through the nonrational economy of the perverse and sacrificial. Such a strategy offers the possibility for intersecting exterior and interior disturbance.

The significance of the movement of disillusionment from Baudelaire to Artaud is that its practitioners imagined sacrificial economy. However, their conception of it was too often limited to an elite theater of tragedy, thus reducing it to a resource for "artistic" exploitation. To complicate matters further, the artistic presentation of the perverse was always so serious that sites of application were often consequently overlooked. Artaud's stunning realization that the body without organs had appeared, although he seemed uncertain as to what it might be, was limited to tragedy and apocalypse. Signs and traces of the body without organs appear throughout mundane experience. The body without organs is Ronald McDonald, not an esoteric aesthetic; after all, there is a critical place for comedy and humor as a means of resistance. Perhaps this is the Situationist International's greatest contribution to the postmodern aesthetic. The dancing Nietzsche lives.

In addition to aestheticized retreatism, a more sociological variety appeals to romantic resisters—a primitive version of nomadic disappearance. This is the disillusioned retreat to fixed areas that elude surveillance. Typically, the retreat is to the most culturally negating rural areas, or to deterritorialized urban neighborhoods. The basic principle is to achieve autonomy by hiding from social authority. As in band societies whose culture cannot be touched because it cannot be found, freedom is enhanced for those participating in the project. However, unlike band societies, which emerged within a given territory, these transplanted communities are always susceptible to infections from spectacle, language, and even nostalgia for former environments, rituals, and habits. These communities are inherently unstable (which is not necessarily negative). Whether these communities can be transformed from campgrounds for the disillusioned and defeated (as in late 60s-early 70s America) to effective bases for resistance remains to be seen. One has to question, however, whether an effective sedentary base of resistance will not be quickly exposed and undermined, so that it will not last long enough to have an effect.

Another 19th-century narrative that persists beyond its natural life is the labor movement—i.e., the belief that the key to resistance is to have an organized body of workers stop production. Like revolution, the idea of the union has been shattered, and perhaps never existed in everyday life. The ubiquity of broken strikes, give-backs, and lay-offs attests that what is called a union is no more than a labor bureaucracy. The fragmentation of the world—intonations, regions, first and third worlds, etc., as a means of discipline by nomadic power—has anachronized national labor movements. Production sites are too mobile and management techniques too flexible for labor action to be effective. If labor in one area resists corporate demands, an alternative labor pool is quickly found. The movement of Dupont's and General Motors' production plants into Mexico, for example, demonstrates this nomadic ability. Mexico as labor colony also allows reduction of unit cost, by eliminating first world "wage standards" and employee benefits. The speed of the corporate world is paid for by the intensification of exploitation; sustained fragmentation of time and of space makes it possible. The size and desperation of the third world labor pool, in conjunction with complicit political systems, provide organized labor no base from which to bargain.

The Situationists attempted to contend with this problem by rejecting the value of both labor and capital. All should quit work—proles, bureaucrats, service workers, everyone. Although it is easy to sympathize with the concept, it presupposes an impractical unity. The notion of a general strike was much too limited; it got bogged down in national struggles, never moving beyond Paris, and in the end it did little damage to the global machine. The hope of a more elite strike manifesting itself in the occupation movement was a strategy that was also dead on arrival, for much the same reason.

The Situationist delight in occupation is interesting to the extent that it was an inversion of the aristocratic right to property, although this very fact makes it suspect from its inception, since even modern strategies should not merely seek to invert feudal institutions. The relationship between occupation and ownership, as presented in conservative social thought, was appropriated by revolutionaries in the first French revolution. The liberation and occupation of the Bastille was significant less for the few prisoners released, than to signal that obtaining property through occupation is a double-edged sword. This inversion made the notion of property into a conservatively viable justification for genocide. In the Irish genocide of the 1840s, English landowners realized that it would be more profitable to use their estates for raising grazing animals than to leave the tenant farmers there who traditionally occupied the land. When the potato blight struck, destroying the tenant farmers' crops and leaving them unable to pay rent, an opening was perceived for mass eviction. English landlords requested and received military assistance from London to remove the farmers and to ensure they did not reoccupy the land. Of course the farmers believed they had the right to be on the land due to their long-standing occupation of it, regardless of their failure to pay rent. Unfortunately, the farmers were transformed into a pure excess population since their right to property by occupation was not recognized. Laws were passed denying them the right to immigrate to England, leaving thousands to die without food or shelter in the Irish winter. Some were able to immigrate to the US, and remained alive, but only as abject refugees. Meanwhile, in the US itself, the genocide of Native Americans was well underway, justified in part by the belief that since the native tribes did not own land, all territories were open, and once occupied (invested with sedentary

value), they could be "defended." Occupation theory has been more bitter than heroic.

In the postmodern period of nomadic power, labor and occupation movements have not been relegated to the historical scrap heap, but neither have they continued to exercise the potency that they once did. Elite power, having rid itself of its national and urban bases to wander in absence on the electronic pathways, can no longer be disrupted by strategies predicated upon the contestation of sedentary forces. The architectural monuments of power are hollow and empty, and function now only as bunkers for the complicit and those who acquiesce. They are secure places revealing mere traces of power. As with all monumental architecture, they silence resistance and resentment by the signs of resolution, continuity, commodification, and nostalgia. These places can be occupied, but to do so will not disrupt the nomadic flow. At best such an occupation is a disturbance that can be made invisible through media manipulation; a particularly valued bunker (such as a bureaucracy) can be easily reoccupied by the postmodern war machine. The electronic valuables inside the bunker, of course, cannot be taken by physical measures.

The web connecting the bunkers—the street—is of such little value to nomadic power that it has been left to the underclass. (One exception is the greatest monument to the war machine ever constructed: The Interstate Highway System. Still valued and well defended, that location shows almost no sign of disturbance.) Giving the street to the most alienated of classes ensures that only profound alienation can occur there. Not just the police, but criminals, addicts, and even the homeless are being used as disrupters of public space. The underclass' actual appearance, in conjunction with media spectacle, has allowed the forces of order to construct the hysterical perception that the streets are unsafe, unwholesome, and useless. The promise of safety and familiarity lures hordes of the unsuspecting into privatized public spaces such as malls. The price of this protectionism is the relinquishment of individual sovereignty. No one but the commodity has rights in the mall. The streets in particular and public spaces in general are in ruins. Nomadic power speaks to its followers through the autoexperience of electronic media. The smaller the public, the greater the order.

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The avant-garde never gives up, and yet the limitations of antiquated models and the sites of resistance tend to push resistance into the void of disillusionment. It is important to keep the bunkers under siege; however, the vocabulary of resistance must be expanded to include means of electronic disturbance. Just as authority located in the street was once met by demonstrations and barricades, the authority that locates itself in the electronic field must be met with electronic resistance. Spatial strategies may not be key in this endeavor, but they are necessary for support, at least in the case of broad spectrum disturbance. These older strategies of physical challenge are also better developed, while the electronic strategies are not. It is time to turn attention to the electronic resistance, both in terms of the bunker and the nomadic field. The electronic field is an area where little is known; in such a gamble, one should be ready to face the ambiguous and unpredictable hazards of an untried resistance. Preparations for the double-edged sword should be made.

Nomadic power must be resisted in cyberspace rather than in physical space. The postmodern gambler is an electronic player. A small but coordinated group of hackers could introduce electronic viruses, worms, and bombs into the data banks, programs, and networks of authority, possibly bringing the destructive force of inertia into the nomadic realm. Prolonged inertia equals the collapse of nomadic authority on a global level. Such a strategy does not require a unified class action, nor does it require simultaneous action in numerous geographic areas. The less nihilistic could resurrect the strategy of occupation by holding data as hostage instead of property. By whatever means electronic authority is disturbed, the key is to totally disrupt command and control. Under such conditions, all dead capital in the military/corporate entwinement becomes an economic drain—material, equipment, and labor power all would be left without a means of deployment. Late capital would collapse under its own excessive weight.

Even though this suggestion is but a science-fiction scenario, this narrative does reveal problems which must be addressed. Most obvious is that those who have engaged cyberreality are generally a depoliticized group. Most infiltration into cyberspace has either been playful vandalism (as with Robert Morris' rogue program, or the string of PC viruses like Michaelangelo), politically misguided espionage (Markus Hess' hacking of military computers, which was

possibly done for the benefit of the KGB), or personal revenge against a particular source of authority. The hacker* code of ethics discourages any act of disturbance in cyberspace. Even the Legion of Doom (a group of young hackers that put the fear into the Secret Service) claims to have never damaged a system. Their activities were motivated by curiosity about computer systems, and belief in free access to information. Beyond these very focused concerns with decentralized information, political thought or action has never really entered the group's consciousness. Any trouble that they have had with the law (and only a few members break the law) stemmed either from credit fraud or electronic trespass. The problem is much the same as politicizing scientists whose research leads to weapons development. It must be asked, How can this class be asked to destabilize or crash its own world? To complicate matters further, only a few understand the specialized knowledge necessary for such action. Deep cyberreality is the least democratized of all frontiers. As mentioned above, cyberworkers as a professional class do not have to be fully unified, but how can enough members of this class be enlisted to stage a disruption, especially when cyberreality is under state-of-the-art self-surveillance?

These problems have drawn many "artists" to electronic media, and this has made some contemporary electronic art so politically charged. Since it is unlikely that scientific or techno-workers will generate a theory of electronic disturbance, artists-activists (as well as other concerned groups) have been left with the responsibility to help provide a critical discourse on just what is at stake in the development of this new frontier. By appropriating the legitimized authority of "artistic creation," and using it as a means to establish a public forum for speculation on a model of resistance within emerging techno-culture, the cultural producer can contribute to the perpetual fight against authoritarianism. Further, concrete strategies of image/text communication, developed through the use of technology that has fallen through the cracks in the war machine, will better enable those concerned to invent explosive material to toss into the political-economic bunkers. Postering, pamphleteering, street theater, public art—all were useful in the past. But as mentioned above, where is the "public"; who is on the street? Judging from the number of hours that the average person watches television, it seems that the public is electronically engaged. The electronic world, however, is by

no means fully established, and it is time to take advantage of this fluidity through invention, before we are left with only critique as a weapon.

Bunkers have already been described as privatized public spaces which serve various particularized functions, such as political continuity (government offices or national monuments), or areas for consumption frenzy (malls). In line with the feudal tradition of the fortress mentality, the bunker guarantees safety and familiarity in exchange for the relinquishment of individual sovereignty. It can act as a seductive agent offering the credible illusion of consumptive choice and ideological peace for the complicit, or it can act as an aggressive force demanding acquiescence for the resistant. The bunker brings nearly all to its interior with the exception of those left to guard the streets. After all, nomadic power does not offer the choice not to work or not to consume. The bunker is such an all-embracing feature of everyday life that even the most resistant cannot always approach it critically. Alienation, in part, stems from this uncontrollable entrapment in the bunker.

Bunkers vary in appearance as much as they do in function. The nomadic bunker—the product of “the global village”—has both an electronic and an architectural form. The electronic form is witnessed as media; as such it attempts to colonize the private residence. Informative distraction flows in an unceasing stream of fictions produced by Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and CNN. The economy of desire can be safely viewed through the familiar window of screenal space. Secure in the electronic bunker, a life of alienated autoexperience (a loss of the social) can continue in quiet acquiescence and deep privation. The viewer is brought to the world, the world to the viewer, all mediated through the ideology of the screen. This is virtual life in a virtual world.

Like the electronic bunker, the architectural bunker is another site where hyperspeed and hyperinertia intersect. Such bunkers are not restricted to national boundaries; in fact, they span the globe. Although they cannot actually move through physical space, they simulate the appearance of being everywhere at once. The architecture itself may vary considerably, even in terms of particular types; however, the logo or totem of a particular type is universal, as are its consumables. In a general sense, it is its redundant

* “Hacker” refers here to a generic class of computer sophisticates who often, but not always, operate counter to the needs of the military/corporate structure. As used here the term includes crackers, phreakers, hackers proper, and cypherpunks.

participation in these characteristics that make it so seductive.

This type of bunker was typical of capitalist power’s first attempt to go nomadic. During the Counterreformation, when the Catholic Church realized during the Council of Trent (1545-63) that universal presence was a key to power in the age of colonization, this type of bunker came of age. (It took the full development of the capitalist system to produce the technology necessary to return to power through absence). The appearance of the church in frontier areas both East and West, the universalization of ritual, the maintenance of relative grandeur in its architecture, and the ideological marker of the crucifix, all conspired to present a reliable place of familiarity and security. Wherever a person was, the homeland of the church was waiting.

In more contemporary times, the gothic arches have transformed themselves into golden arches. McDonald’s is global. Wherever an economic frontier is opening, so is a McDonald’s. Travel where you might, that same hamburger and coke are waiting. Like Bernini’s piazza at St. Peters, the golden arches reach out to embrace their clients—so long as they consume, and leave when they are finished. While in the bunker, national boundaries are a thing of the past, in fact you are at home. Why travel at all? After all, wherever you go, you are already there.

There are also sedentary bunkers. This type is clearly nationalized, and hence is the bunker of choice for governments. It is the oldest type, appearing at the dawn of complex society, and reaching a peak in modern society with conglomerates of bunkers spread throughout the urban sprawl. These bunkers are in some cases the last trace of centralized national power (the White House), or in others, they are locations to manufacture a complicit cultural elite (the university), or sites of manufactured continuity (historical monuments). These are sites most vulnerable to electronic disturbance, as their images and mythologies are the easiest to appropriate.

In any bunker (along with its associated geography, territory, and ecology) the resistant cultural producer can best achieve disturbance. There is enough consumer

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technology available to at least temporarily reinscribe the bunker with image and language that reveal its sacrificial intent, as well as the obscenity of its bourgeois utilitarian aesthetic. Nomadic power has created panic in the streets, with its mythologies of political subversion, economic deterioration, and biological infection, which in turn

produce a fortress ideology, and hence a demand for bunkers. It is now necessary to bring panic into the bunker, thus disturbing the illusion of security and leaving no place to hide. The incitement of panic in all sites is the postmodern gamble.