04 2008

Nomadic Lines of Invention

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> "The war machine is that nomad invention that in fact has war not as its primary object but as its second-order, supplementary or synthetic objective, in the sense that it is determined in such a way as to destroy the State-form and city-form with which it collides." (Gilles Deleuze / Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*)

The object of the war machine, as Deleuze and Guattari never tire of explaining in their "Treatise on Nomadology" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is not simply war, but "the drawing of a creative line of flight, the composition of a smooth space and of the movement of people in that space." The weapons of this machine are nomadic lines of flight and invention. The combination of flight and invention, of the desertion from the state apparatus and the movement of instituting, the invention of an *instituent flight* is the specific quality of the war machine, in Deleuze' favorite formulation: "Fleeing, yes, but while fleeing looking for a weapon." The martial dimension of the war machine consists in the power of invention, in the capacity for change, in the creation of other worlds. It is only the appropriation by a state apparatus that can transform the war machine into a military apparatus, a war.

Some time ago I called the theater machine of the PublixTheatreCaravan a war machine, following from discourses in the genealogy of Walter Benjamin's essay on "The Critique of Violence" seeking to problematize the dichotomy of violence and non-violence. Referring to the Caravan not only as a theater machine, but also as a war machine was intended to actualize the overlapping of nomadism and the war machine developed by Deleuze and Guattari in the description of a micro-political, artistic-activist practice. To maintain that the Caravan – as I wrote at the time – operates on a line of flight, offensively as a war machine, does not at all mean attributing a special form of violence to it. On the contrary, the war machine points beyond the discourse of violence and terror, it is the machine that seeks to escape the violence of the state apparatus, the order of representation. Conversely, the state apparatus attempts to force the non-representable under the power of representation, for instance by making a Black Block out of the Caravan. I wrote that after the No-Border-Tour in the summer of 2001, which led from Vienna to the WEF summit in Salzburg and a border camp in Lendava to the G8 summit in Genoa, ending there with the arrest of most of the Caravan activists by the Italian police.

Several years later, in fall 2005, before a provincial court in the Upper Austrian town of Lambach, the screening and retreat of the war machine was repeated, but this time without the international flair of anti-G8 protests. The Caravan activists were charged with unauthorized assumption of authority and deception, because of an unannounced action in a school in Lambach (invisible agit-theater on the theme of biometrics) during the *Festival of the Regions* 2003, the theme of which was "The Art of Enmity". In this town court farce, there was no trace left of attacks, offensives, of "searching for a weapon in fleeing", and I had to politely testify, limited to the

role of an “art expert”, that the action was a matter of art, that this form of art is established and recognized and that the artists certainly meant no harm to the children. As the Caravan activist Gini Müller once formulated in reference to the arrest of the PublixTheatreCaravan and the trials after Genoa: “The question of whether the line of flight is transversal or terrorist was to be judged by the molar tribunal.”[1]

The arrest and conviction of the Caravan thus reveals a different relationship between war machine and state apparatus than the one familiar from *A Thousand Plateaus*: in the “Treatise on Nomadology” Deleuze and Guattari describe how the state apparatus takes over the war machine, subordinates it to its own objectives and makes war its immediate purpose. In the appropriation of the war machine by the state apparatus, flight and invention ultimately do become war, the war machine becomes a (quasi) military apparatus. Perhaps the development of the phenomenon of the Black Block from Seattle 1999 to Rostock 2007 could be interpreted as this kind of process of appropriation. The development, in which the first mentions of the “black block” in the early 1980s started from the mediatization and criminalization of the autonomous activists in Germany, in which the images generated in the process were only secondarily – sometimes ironically, sometimes with deadly seriousness – taken over and affirmed by various fractions of the left, seems to have repeated itself in the last ten years with greater intensity: over the course of a brief decade, the construction of a block, which was initially mainly a media construction, both dichotomously and symmetrically opposed to the block of the Robocops increasingly lead to an actualization of this image and to the transformation of sections of the no-global war machine into a “war”. State apparatuses (here mainstream media and politics) generate “war” in

the sense of a coerced integration of the war machine into a dually gridded order, in which the war machine itself (or its machist components) ultimately become a (quasi) military apparatus, a state apparatus.

The conceptual opposition (war) machine – state apparatus must nevertheless be understood as a relationship of exchange, as an infinite multitude of possibilities of struggle, of mutual overlapping that develops various layers of coding and overcoding with their respective effects. In the extreme case of *Themroc*, for instance, two policemen as figures of the state apparatus are simply eaten in a process of anthropophagy. Yet even cannibalism is not to be understood as pure negation, but rather as a special relationship of the war machine Themroc to the ultimately ingested policemen. Themroc's gentle wildness and his comrades spreading out do not correspond to a mob that hurls itself at the state apparatus as a dense mass, as an agitated crowd (*Hetzmasse*, to use Elias Canetti's terminology), but rather as a formless, non-conforming assemblage, unreal and yet turning in a very corporeal way to the bodies of the others. Yet this assemblage is not unlike the diffuse one of the bicycle thieves, in which the Roman policemen seem to be incorporated in a completely different way. And even the eternity machine of *The Third Policeman* appropriates both his colleagues, who scurry around in the immeasurable space of the underground machine and operate it without a deeper understanding. The anarchical quality of the war machine, as is evident here again, seems to be equally on the side of resistance and of power, supporting capital as well as the flight from capitalism; it can be overcoded in a fascistoid way, but it can also generate emancipatory or even revolutionary flows. It is only the analysis of the specific relationship of war machines and state

apparatuses that sheds light on the actualization of these ambivalences and the status of the respective appropriation.

The collision of the micropolitical praxis of the PublixTheatreCaravan with the state apparatus in Genoa and in Lambach is a different case. Here it is not a matter of appropriation, of machinic enslavement, of coding and overcoding, but rather an attempted annulment: forced into the grid of media representation and jurisprudence, the war machine is annulled. Yet this annulment will probably never be total, there is always something left over: a remainder of the production of desire, of invention, of an actualization of the possibilities that have been opened up. Following the trauma of Genoa, in the summer of 2002 the PublixTheatreCaravan hence developed increased activity again, especially in the context of the international border camp in Strasbourg. The current version of their war machine consisted of an old English double-decker bus, which again conjoined the two components of technical skill and artistic cunning. The bus was a technical machine, a composite of the old mechanics of the automobile and high-tech equipment inside it, and it was also a concrete localization of the micropolitical social machine of the PublixTheatreCaravan. After their experience in the autonomous squatter milieu, in the transnational anti-racist Noborder network, and in the anti-G8 protests in Genoa, in July 2002 the caravan machine was ready to be coupled with the social machine of the border camp in Strasbourg. On the open upper deck and around the locations of the bus in the city of Strasbourg (especially the expansive area in front of the train station) new arrivals to the city were greeted, information about the border camp was distributed and parties were enjoyed; yet beneath the splendid surface, in the belly of the bus, state-of-the-art electronic equipment enabled a counter-public media and communication guerrilla praxis ...

2000 years earlier, machinic materiality and machination, these two components of the theater machine are found in the predecessors of the Caravan theater and war machine. In ancient warfare, *machina* appears as a technical expression in conjunction with carrying out sieges. From the classical Greek and Hellenist poliorcetica to the warfare authors of late antiquity, all kinds of siege machines are listed as *machinae*, especially those for overcoming city walls or for battles at the walls in general. One of the earliest examples for the Latin use of the term *machina* is found in Ennius (early 2nd century BC), and is also evidence for this point of reference: *machina multa minax minitatur maxima muris*, a giant machine that terribly threatens walls. City walls were the focus of attention for these special machines, because for a long time there were no weapons that could breach them; hence combined, complex machines were needed that enabled an approach as secure as possible across moat systems and close to fortification rings with towers, as well as making it possible to conquer or destroy the walls, even if it meant taking them down stone by stone. Yet even here, similarly to the theater machines, it is not only a matter of concrete technical machines penetrating the walls, bringing them down or allowing them to be overcome. Here too, *machina* alternates between the material wall-breaker and the cunning that circumvents the wall or makes it open by itself.

Shortly before the period that is generally represented as the collapse of the Roman Empire, although that probably happened much less as a break than is usually presumed, an author who remains anonymous wrote *De rebus bellicis* (DRB), a treatise for the counsel of the emperor in matters of war. The date of this treatise was long unclear, with conjectures ranging from the 4th to the

16th century, although it is today largely presumed to have originated in the 4th or early 5th century AD. In the late 19th century still called "Denckschrift eines verrückten Projektemachers" ("Memorandum of a Mad Project-Maker", cf. the article on the anonymous author by Seeck in *Paulys Realenzyklopädie*), meanwhile voices have been raised calling the text a "serious work of military engineering" (Mazzarino) and the anonymous author at least a "brilliant dilettante" (Giardina). The text "about matters of war" is a social reform petition to the emperor in office, proposing reforms of the military in particular against the background of general, one could even say moralizing statements about corruption, extravagance and overtaxation (economic elements of rationalization predominate in this military policy discourse of late antiquity, such as reduction of personnel, reduction of service periods, limited tax exemptions for veterans, operation of war machines by reduced personnel or avoiding the deployment of troops and war machines altogether with more economical forms of occupation).[2]

The main section of the text (chapters 6-19 of 21 altogether) consists of a catalogue of the inventions of war machines with illustrations and brief commentaries. From the text and the use of the terms *inventio* and *inventa* in late antiquity, it is unclear whether the inventions are all or only partly new inventions, or even inventions by the author – in the Praefatio he points out himself that he has "gathered together everything useful from everywhere". A total of twelve war machines are presented here, which have such intimidating names as Tichodifrus, Clipeocentrus, Currodrepanus or Thoracomachus, but also – the more frequent variation in war machines – with animal names: an entire zoology is to be found in the writings of antiquity on warfare, including "rams", "tortoises", "ram tortoises", "raven's beaks" and "cranes".

In the preface the author boasts of being able to present an extremely fast type of ship, by today's standards quite utopian, driven by oxen trotting in a circle on the ship and paddle wheels (*liburna*, cf. DRB, XVII) and a new, easily transportable hose bridge for crossing larger rivers (*ascogefyrus*, cf. also DRB, XVI). He also invented a special device for making a horse urge itself on without any command, when breaking through a line or chasing a fugitive. The *currodrepanus clipeatus* (cf. DRB, XIV) is a horse-machine for causing the greatest damage to the enemy without human aid, in other words, even if the rider has been thrown off: *verberibus spontaneis*, "automatically" whipping itself through the masses, this imaginary machine of a battle horse without a rider corresponds to the inverse form of Kafka's rider without a horse. In Kafka's text fragment "The Wish to become an Indian", the rider sheds the spurs and then the reins, finally flying over the ground "already without horse's neck and horse's head". In the invention of the anonymous writer, the horse-machine whips itself on, instead of a becoming-Indian, instead of a machine of becoming-animal, the fantasy of a technical-animal combat apparatus.

However, such imagined predecessors of today's weapons and war technology, which have been relatively largely realized in the development, for instance, of remote-controlled drones, should not mislead us to separate the machines from their concatenations with the invention as cunning. Already by the end of the 1st century AD, in his work on the various forms of stratagems, the Roman commander and senator Frontinus had concentrated – contrary to our anonymous author – on the immaterial. Since in Frontinus' opinion inventions in the area of war devices had already reached their limits, in the third book of his *Strategemata* he turned to tricks and stratagems that could help to avoid or shorten an expensive siege. He listed a total of eleven different stratagems,

including enticement to betrayal (bribery seemed to be the most economical procedure for taking over cities), redirecting rivers and poisoning water, terrorizing the besieged, and many more. The most inventive variations of stratagems are in any case those that involve deceiving the besieged. Here Frontinus lists primarily strategies of travesty: Hannibal was said to have taken many cities in Italy by having his men adopt the Roman habitus and sending them ahead – disguised by language and clothing – as spies or the covert avant-garde of the conquering troops. The Arcadians overpowered the troops that were sent to aid the besieged, put on their uniforms and thus took the city in the resultant confusion. The Spartan Aristipp disguised his soldiers as merchants, Epaminondas of Thebes disguised his as women to open the city gates to their armies.[3]

Our anonymous author's war machines have a surplus of materiality that reaches into the immaterial, just as Frontinus' stratagems, on the other hand, rarely get by without materiality. The thesis of the extensive overlapping of material and immaterial components of the war machine crystallizes in an exemplary form, however, in the most prominent myth of the war machine epic. The most famous example of a machine that decides and ends a war through cunning is again a horse, but this time a wooden one. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, three lines before the famous verse, in which the Trojan priest Laocoon expresses his reservations about the gift from the Greeks pretending to depart, *quidquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*, Virgil refers to the Trojan horse as *machina*: *aut haec in nostros fabricata est machina muros* (2,46). Virgil has Laocoon warn that this machine is devised as a trick against the walls of Troy, and this opens up the entire palette of the war machine: from the stratagem of the *fatalis machina* (2,237), through which Odysseus undermines the insurmountable city walls, to the concrete war machine, the

machina belli (2,151), which does not even have to function as a wall-breaker in this case, but is brought into the city by the Trojans themselves. It is not a coincidence that Odysseus, as a typical machinator, is known not only as *polýtropos* and *polýmetis*, but also by the epithet *polyméchanos*. As the inventor of the technical machine and the psycho-social invention of the Trojan horse, he is literally both multiply cunning and mastering many machines.

However, Odysseus' poly-mechanics also appear to inhere to the enemies of the Roman Empire, against which the anonymous author of *De rebus bellicis* wrote his treatise. Impelled by his commercial interest, the anonymous author proffered his colorful array of more or less useful war machines to an equally anonymous emperor, who was in need of these inventions to mobilize imaginations against the overflowing fantasies of collapse in the *Imperium Romanum* of late antiquity. The life styles of the "barbarian" enemies of the Roman Empire between nomadic wandering and retreat into remote areas, their geographies between snow-covered mountains and the desert proved to be so diverse that very different inventions were required to fight them (DRB, VI). Contrary to the general culturalistic notion of the correlation between Roman civilization and technical progress, of the direct proportionality of Roman culture and military technology on the one hand and the typical topoi of barbarian wildness, destructiveness and ferocity on the other (as may be found in Roman historiography, such as by Caesar, Tacitus and Ammian), the anonymous author of *De rebus bellicis* even attributes to the barbarians *ingenii magnitudo*, the mother of all virtues: inventiveness, *rerum inventio*, also in terms of war machines, is by no means alien to them, especially since it is, according to this author, supported by nature (DRB, Praefatio).

Anonymous' barbarians, which are not specifically identified and thus spark the imagination all the more, come closer to the concept of the war machine in *A Thousand Plateaus* not only in a vague allusion to nomadology, but also and especially in this emphasis on their inventiveness. Nomadic *inventio* starts with the invention of technical machines, but goes far beyond it. Nomads – and with this term Deleuze familiarly and paradoxically means especially those who do not move from where they are – not only invent war machines, they *become* war machines, when they develop inventiveness as a specific mode of action and subjectivation. Here invention means not only the invented device and invented stories, but beyond this the capability of inventing new worlds. Along with and within nomadic existence, fleeing, deserting the state apparatus, the inventiveness of the war machine evolves new forms of sociality, instituent practices and constituent power, the creation and actualization of other, different possible worlds. Rather than seeing the possible as a predetermined image of reality in one *single* possible world, *inventio* implies the differentiation of the possible into *many* different worlds. Counter to the identitary constitution of the one world of state apparatuses, it produces bifurcations into many worlds. Where a single possible world is divided up in the logic of the state apparatuses, the singularities of invention distribute themselves among different possible worlds.[4]

Theater machines, war machines, these are not only the two strongest lines of the differentiation of the *mechané/machina* concept, these two lines also correspond to two of the main components of current social movements and the small revolutionary machines affiliated with them. Contemporary strategies of inventive cunning, of confusion, of asymmetry, of travesty, whose genealogical lines include the polymechanic

machinator Odysseus as well as the medieval figure of the jester, the tradition of the Italian politics of *autoriduzione* (the self-organized reduction of rent or the cost of food) in the 1970s, as well as the practice of the communication guerillas of the 1990s, also raise questions about the overlapping between invention and imitation, of (intellectual) property, of the commons and of appropriation. The forms of action used here are usually situated on the boundary between legality and illegality, between play and militant action, purposely blurring this boundary. They are often actualized on the margins and within the framework of social movements, not only constituting, but also problematizing them and the forms of their concatenation.

A group from Barcelona and Madrid has appeared since 2002 under the name Yomango, carrying out these kinds of practices of appropriation with performative and media strategies. In colloquial Spanish “yo mango” means “I shoplift”, and what is shoplifted here is both material and immaterial at the same time: on the one hand, commodities are appropriated in a playful, very concrete manner, but on the other hand also and especially signs. In the name Yomango there is also a formal allusion to the group’s practice: the appropriation of the name and the logo of the Spanish transnational textile corporation “Mango” exemplifies their program. Yomango especially likes to liberate products imprisoned by multinational corporations as well as signs that end up in captivity due to rigid copyright policies, imprisoned less by authors than by globally operating corporations. And just as these corporations sell not only their commodities, but increasingly also their brands as lifestyle, Yomango celebrates shoplifting as a lifestyle.

In honour of the first anniversary of the revolution in Argentina, in December 2002 this theater machine incited a dance in the midst

of a supermarket. Seven couples not only skilfully danced the tango, however, at the same time they also pocketed bottles of champagne in their specially prepared clothing, which they later consumed with pleasure during a collective visit to a bank. In other performances the appropriated goods were distributed among those who are hungry and thirsty. In addition to these kinds of performative actions and an abundant web site[5], there are videos and workshops that disseminate Yomango's praxis. Yomango seminars (including at the European Social Forum in Florence in 2002 or during an extended tour of Germany in 2004) are lifestyle workshops on civil disobedience and offer specific instructions for evading technological and communicative security measures as elegantly as possible. Yet the performances and video works are not just anti-capitalist training and propaganda measures, but also playful examples of a micropolitics of embodied criticism *and* collective invention. Their intention is not just another blatant criticism of capitalistic consumption, but rather the testing of a *different* form of consumption, the reversal of the appropriation of common goods into private property, and also the reappropriation of cognitive work and the production of signs.

Micropolitical practices such as those of Yomango, the Italian Chainworkers, the *Umsonst* campaigns in Germany, the Hamburg *Superhelden*, all groups that have played a certain role in the spread of the Euromayday parades and the precarity movement, but also the Reclaim the Streets parties of the 1990s or the Clown Army of the anti-G8 summits in Gleneagles and Heiligendamm: they all conjoin the capability of invention as a war machine with performative practice as a theater machine.[6] Following Paolo Virno, the macropolitics of the "global movement" could even be described as a performative movement and integrated into the genealogy of theater machines. At the same time, many social

movements of the 1990s and 2000s are war machines, because they invent the dream and the reality of deserting the state apparatus. In other words, they also problematize their own closure, structuralization and state-apparatization in Guattari's sense. In this way they turn against the concrete states that are still powerful players in the constellation of neoliberal globalization, but also – and this is specific and new at least in this extent and this vehemence – against the development of state apparatuses within themselves: against representationist forms, against the logic of the stage (which is contrary to what is called here theater machine and performative movement), against the top and bottom of hierarchical striation, against the before and after of avant-garde and masses.

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[1] Gini Müller, "Transversal or Terror?", http://eipcp.net/transversal/0902/mueller/en. My essay was published as "A War-Machine against the Empire. On the precarious nomadism of the PublixTheatreCaravan", http://eipcp.net/transversal/0902/raunig/en. On the history of the PublixTheatreCaravan (including Genoa and Strasbourg), cf. Gerald Raunig, *Art and Revolution*, Los Angeles:
Semiotext(e), 2007, on the Lambach "biometrics trial", cf. http://lambach.volxtheater.at/.

[2] The text of the treatise can be found in the Oxford Text Archive http://ota.ahds.ac.uk/. Cf. also the article on the anonymous author by Seeck in *Paulys Realenzyklopädie* I (1894), 2325; Santo Mazzarino, *Aspetti sociali del quarto secolo: ricerche di storia tardo-romana*, Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider 1951; Edward A. Thompson, *A Roman Reformer and Inventor*, Oxford: Oxford

University Press 1952; Hartwin Brandt, *Zeitkritik in der Spätantike*, Munich: Beck 1988; Andrea Giardina (Ed.), *Introduzione a Anonimo, Le cose della guerra*, Milan: Mondadori 1989.

[3] The judgment of this *locus classicus* on the part of the authors of antiquity oscillates between admiration for cunning behavior and condemnation of insidious deceit, the latter often combined with rhetorically reinforced pejorative allusions to the introduction of groups such as "merchants" and "women" that were understood as excluded from masculine virtue.

[4] Cf. Maurizio Lazzarato's explanations in *Puissances de l'invention. La psychologie économique de Gabriel Tarde contre l'économie politique,* Paris: Les empêcheurs de penser en rond 2002, *La Politica dell'Evento*, Rubbettino 2004; "The Political Form of Coordination", http://eipcp.net/transversal/0707/lazzarato/en.

[5] Cf. http://www.yomango.net/. The video *Yomango Tango* is also included in the DVD *Precarity*: http://eipcp.net/transversal/0704/p2p/en.

[6] On the Chainworkers see: http://www.chainworkers.org/; on Umsonst see: Anja Kanngieser, "Gestures of Everyday Resistance", http://eipcp.net/transversal/0307/kanngieser/en; on the Superhelden see: Efthimia Panagiotidis, "The 'Good News' of Precarization", http://eipcp.net/transversal/0307/panagiotidis/en; on Reclaim the Streets and the Clown Army see John Jordan, "Notes Whilst Walking on 'How to Break the Heart of Empire'", http://eipcp.net/transversal/1007/jordan/en.