

The War of Time: Occupation, Resistance, Communization

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Abstract:

Contemporary theorizations of strategies of resistance and revolution often turn on affirming the concepts of speed and saturation. I want to critically consider these claims by returning to the work of Paul Virilio from the 1970s and contemporary “communization theory.” These theorizations stress the emptying-out of traditional worker’s identity and the need to re-invent forms of resistance and revolution that can address this challenge. My aim is to assess how both engage with the problem of acceleration, and particularly the relation of resistance to forms of contemporary military power. I will argue that strategies of acceleration find themselves in fraught convergence with both military and capitalist practice.

Keywords: Resistance; Communization; Paul Virilio; War; Revolution

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You can have a proletarian insurrection on the condition that the others hold their fire. If they dump two tank battalions on you, the proletarian revolution is as good as nothing.
André Malraux¹

In regards to the events of 2011, the use of the language of acceleration, resonance, excess, and saturation to describe the various forms of protest has been ubiquitous. Implicit in these characterizations has been the suggestion of a politics of time. The “Arab Spring,” the *indignados*, and the Occupy movements were often taken as incarnating a new politics of time that evaded and accelerated beyond any “capture” by the state and capital. In an appropriately resonant characterization, Gastón Gordillo used the work of Spinoza and Deleuze to suggest that these forms of protest produced “nodes of acceleration, which shoot out high-speed resonances in all directions and make millions of bodies fight oppression in myriad places at the same time.”² He went on to suggest that the movements of the “Arab Spring” in particular were the sign of “an epochal clash between new revolutionary velocities and the old supremacy of the state in controlling means of speed-creation.”³ Here velocity is revolutionary in so far as it outpaces any attempt at control.

My approach to this politics of acceleration, saturation, and expansion is more cautious and critical. Instead of analysing the actual events, I want to consider different theorizations of practices of resistance and revolution.⁴ My focus will not be on the obvious, which is to say the Deleuzian (or “Deleuzoguattarian”) and Negrian approaches that have become the *lingua franca* of contemporary theorization and activism: “multitudes,” “lines of flight,” “resonance,” “minor politics,” etc. Rather, in the interests of critical displacement, I want to consider two lesser-discussed critical perspectives: the 1970s work of Paul Virilio, notably his *Speed and Politics* (1977) and *Popular Defense and Ecological*

¹ Qtd. in Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* [1977], trans. Marc Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006), 115.

² Gastón Gordillo, (2011), “The Speed of Revolutionary Resonance,” *Space and Politics Blog*, March 5, 2011, accessed February 10, 2013, <http://spaceandpolitics.blogspot.co.uk/2011/03/speed-of-revolutionary-resonance.html>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ For a nuanced discussion, which reflects on the organizational question of struggle, see Rodrigo Nunes, “The Lessons of 2011: Three Theses on Organisation,” *Mute*, June 7, 2012, February 7, 2013, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/lessons-2011-three-theses-organisation>.

Struggles (1978);⁵ and the work of “communization theory.”⁶ My reason for doing so is not only that both resonate in terms of contemporary struggles, but that they also pose crucial questions around the possibilities and limits of what Virilio calls “popular defence.” They remain attentive to the exhaustion of past forms of struggle, while also suggesting the *limits* of contemporary struggles. What I also want to trace in this convergence is an attention to the emergence of the “military question” as a problem of reflection, analysis, and practice.

“Occupy” obviously has a military connotation. It is a counter-discourse and counter-practice to not only the various military occupations (Iraq and Afghanistan), but also to the everyday occupation of space and time by capital and the state. Despite this reference, the military question—the question of the role, power, and the lethal nature of military intervention—has not been particularly central to the debates over the strategy of occupation. Of course, the question has been critical for those protests in the “Arab Spring”: from the equivocal role of the army in Egypt to the militarized repression found in Bahrain and Syria, and on to the ambiguous military struggle in Libya by the “resistance,” with UN support. Gordillo notes that a politics of acceleration would also have to confront the fact that: “The state still counts on powerful weapon systems that allow it to destroy resonant bodies at high speed.”⁷ Within the protest movements, and notably the occupy movements, in countries like the US, the UK and Spain (Greece would be a different case⁸), the military question has tended to be raised via the militarization of policing. In the case of the UK the deployment of tear gas and baton rounds as responses to the student protests and rioting “for the first time on the mainland,” refers to the colonial experience of Ireland and the military-police-secret-services fusion that was already tried in this “laboratory” for counter-insurgency. Questions of violence have, certainly on the side of the protestors, remained at a relatively low level.

I want to suggest that a critical consideration of the politics of acceleration as mode of resistance requires a parallel consideration of the military capacity to destroy at “high speed.” Therefore this will be the optic through which I consider the question of the politics of temporality. One brief remark before beginning this task; it is notable that often reflections on the military question can slip into a “techno-fetishism,” machismo, or replication of the nihilism of “pure war.”⁹ In a recent review of Karl Marlantes’s fictionalized account of his Vietnam experience *Matterhorn* (2010), Jackson Lears’s noted the implication of “[w]ar as authentic experience: this is the nihilist edge of modern militarism, unalloyed by moral pretension.”¹⁰ This “nihilist edge” often takes the form of aesthetic awe at the destructive power of military force and its technical means. I doubt whether I can entirely avoid this problem in what follows. I do, however, want to suggest that the military question be confronted without, as far as possible, conceding to this fetishization.

Endo-Colonization

In his work of the 1970s Paul Virilio offers a startling account of the emergence of state and capitalist power in terms of military power. While indebted to Marx or, more precisely Engels, who researched military questions in detail,¹¹ Virilio’s narrative offers significant departures from the more familiar Marxist account. Originating in his work as an urbanist, Virilio became fascinated by the spatial dimension of war and its role in crystallizing the forms of contemporary power.¹² He rethinks the proletarian condition in military terms. His analysis proposes that the proletariat is “produced” through semi-colonization by the military class, which seizes goods and value to support their own indolent and parasitic

⁵ Jason Adams (2012) has used Virilio to reflect on strategic difficulties and tensions in the “Occupy” movement, but not directly raised the military question. I owe Jason Adams for the encouragement to pursue these speculations. See Jason Adams, “Occupy Time,” *Radical Philosophy* 171 (2012): 15-18.

⁶ See Benjamin Noys, ed., *Communization and its Discontents* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia / Minor Compositions, 2011), for a critical overview of this problematic.

⁷ Gastón Gordillo, “The Speed of Revolutionary Resonance.”

⁸ Leigh Phillips, “Greece: ‘A promise from the army has been obtained to not intervene against a civil uprising,’” *New Statesman*, February 24, 2013, accessed February 26, 2013, <http://www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/2013/02/greece-promise-army-has-been-obtained-not-intervene-against-civil-uprising>

⁹ Paul Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles* [1978], trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1990), 68.

¹⁰ Jackson Lears, “Mad Monkey. Review of *Matterhorn* by Karl Marlantes,” *London Review of Books* [Online] 32.18 (2010): 15-17, accessed February 9, 2013, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v32/n18/jackson-lears/mad-monkey>.

¹¹ “To my mind, there was some hocus-pocus between Marx and Engels. Engels was aware of the reality of war, even if he didn’t see it the way we do. There was also the idea of war as reappropriated by the working class. The working class, especially at the beginning of trade unionism, was a combat unit. This relation of Marxism to war wasn’t really clear at the outset.” Paul Virilio, in Paul Virilio and Sylvère Lotringer, *Pure War*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 105.

¹² Virilio in *Pure War*, 1-3.

existence.¹³ In response, the proletariat forms itself into a counter-“war-machine,” militarizing itself in the compact formations of the march and the violence of sabotage to seize the streets and engage in retention of the instruments of violence. In this model the forms of the traditional workers’ movement—notably parties and unions—become alternative “armies” to counter this military domination.

For Virilio this path will eventually lead to failure, as the absolute violence of nuclear war signals the “end of the proletariat”: “In this sense, the proletariat’s determining role in history stopped with the bombing of Hiroshima.”¹⁴ Military hyper-power renders any proletarian “counter-power” ineffective, as there is not available territory on which to ground resistance. The result is “a kind of absolute colonization,”¹⁵ in which the military class finally eliminates any localization or ecology of resistance. This is what Virilio calls “endo-colonization.” If this endo-colonization is successful, then the people are reduced to domesticated animals, to the status of the “human commodity.”¹⁶ The aim of military occupation is to “reduce [...] a population to the status of a *movable slave*, a *commodity*.”¹⁷ In fact, “One now colonizes only one’s own population. One underdevelops one’s own economy.”¹⁸ This collapse of the possibilities of ecological resistance is visible in the passage from the desperate holding-on of the Vietnamese against the ecological destruction of their territory, to the disappearance (in the 1970s) of the Palestinians from any territory into the final deterritorialized space of the media. Confronting the reduction of status to mere commodity the Palestinians launch a suicidal popular assault, as popular defence is no longer possible.

Virilio implicitly tracks the rise of neoliberalism by exploring the *withdrawal* of the State, which then inhabits a “doctrine of security” permitting intervention anywhere.¹⁹ In the face of the “terrorism” of the 1970s, the State evolves a new modelling of power as “a world-wide police chase, a fearsome blend of military and judicial violence.”²⁰ This characterization obviously resonates with the dominance of neoliberalism and the instantiation, in the ’00s, of the “war on terror.” Virilio presciently captured the sense of new forms of asymmetric warfare and the “hostage-holding” function of military control in contemporary mediatized societies. In this situation, traditional forms of popular resistance and what Virilio calls “ecological struggles,” “the simple freedom to come and go, as well as the freedom to remain, to stay put,”²¹ become put into question.

This “ecological struggle,” the right to stay put, obviously speaks to the situation of “occupy,” which attempts to place a limit on the intrusion into what remains of “public” space. It tries to reconstitute a new figure of subjectivity—the 99%—to find a “grounding” of resistance. In this way, implicitly if not explicitly, it tries to refigure the situation of the people from this status as “movable commodity” into immovable protestor. Similarly, the protests of the “squares” also pioneered this resistance to military domination, in direct confrontations with their own militarized ruling classes. And yet, these movements and protests also have to confront the accelerative problem of what Virilio calls the “delocalization” of the military class. The emphasis on speed and saturation of process is intended to outpace the forms of military and capitalist power without succumbing to a suicidal popular assault. In this way the protests restate the right of resistance.²² Yet the tensions of this ecological resistance remain in the disappearance of protests and occupations, not least under the pressure of police and military surveillance and re-occupation of contested spaces.

Virilio’s pessimistic conclusions concerning the erosion of ecological resistance have not simply been disproved by the events of 2011. Rather, while the right of resistance is restated in these struggles, the accelerative forms of this new resistance also have to confront effects of dissipation and exhaustion. This is the key problem that confronts the new forms of accelerative mobilization. It is in this way that Virilio’s analysis gains its power as both predictive and critical in advance of these “new” forms of struggle.

¹³ Virilio, *Popular Defense*, 45-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁸ Virilio in *Pure War*, 95.

¹⁹ Virilio, *Popular Defense*, 57.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

²² Howard Caygill, “Also Sprach Zapata: philosophy and resistance,” *Radical philosophy* 171 (2012): 19-26, 19.

The End of Programmatism

In a rather uncanny way Virilio's analysis also dovetails with that of the Marseille-based group *Theorié Communiste* (TC), and their announcement of the "end of programmatism." In this thesis capitalism and the workers' movement remained locked in a duel in which the capitalist negation of the proletariat generated the affirmation of the workers' identity. "Programmatism" refers to this affirmation as a programme to be realized, and one structured by the capital-labour relationship.²³ TC offer a periodizing hypothesis based on Marx's distinction between formal and real subsumption.²⁴ In formal subsumption we witness the subsumption of workers by capital, but they still produce externally to capital. For example, peasants would still till their fields, but they would have to bring their produce to a capitalist market to realize its value. Real subsumption is the process by which the act of producing is brought under capitalism, such as in production-line work or, in the case of agriculture, through the rise of mechanized agri-business. While Marx regards these as parallel processes, TC periodize a transition from formal subsumption into real subsumption. The period of formal subsumption draws to an end around 1917, with the emergence of a new cycle of struggles around real subsumption that involve affirming the worker's identity. This "programmatism" comes into crisis with the second phase of real subsumption, beginning in the early 1970s, and a new cycle of struggles that suggest the *limit* of this identity. Capital's "abandonment" of the worker, and worker's struggles of absenteeism, sabotage, and wildcat strikes, open new "lines of flight" that hollow out the traditional formations of programmatism (unions, parties, etc.) Under these twin shearing pressures the affirmative forms of worker's identity would be hollowed out. Rather than this simply being the sign of defeat, TC argue that it signals a recomposition of struggle with the proletariat as the pole of negation, structured within and against a capitalist system that no longer required the "working class" as mediator.

In the analysis of TC this cycle of struggle does not simply end the proletarian condition ("we are all middle-class now"), but reconfigures it to suggest the necessity (rather than the choice) of the proletariat as the self-abolishing class. They argue that: "Communization is prefigured every time the existence of the proletariat is produced as something alien to it, as an objective constraint which is externalised in the very existence of capital."²⁵ The "appearance" of communization is one at the edge or limit of struggle in which class itself "appears as an external constraint, a limit to overcome."²⁶ In this historical model these shifts in struggle put communism as communization on the agenda, shorn of previous "workerist" illusions.²⁷

The comparison between Virilio and TC becomes clearer if we consider the 1973 occupation and self-management by workers of the Lip watch factory in Beçanson. At the time several on the French far-left, primarily Maoists, regarded this act of occupation as the signal that workers no longer required the guidance of parties or militants to direct their struggles. This, at least, was the conclusion of Jacques Rancière.²⁸ A similar conclusion was drawn by the former Maoist militants Guy Lardreau and Christian Jambet:

We came to realize at a certain point that the masses had gotten all they could out of us, that intellectuals had nothing left to give them. Everything we had done had passed over into the masses themselves. Witness the events at Lip. It was becoming clear that there was no longer any sense in militancy.²⁹

There were, however, dissident voices. The French ultra-left journal *Négation* argued that the workers of Lip had reached a *limit* – the limit of self-management.³⁰ The Lip workers had been unable to go beyond their own factory and were limited to restarting a capitalist enterprise. So, while recognizing this was a struggle, for *Négation* it is limited by its failure to go beyond the limits of the workers' identity as workers. It is this point, as we have seen, which is taken up in more detail by TC.

²³ Nathan Brown, "Red years: Althusser's lesson, Rancière's error and the real movement of history," *Radical Philosophy* 170 (2011), 22.

²⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital vol. 1*, intro. Ernest Mandel, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 1019-1038.

²⁵ R.S. (2011), "The Present Moment," *SIC: International Journal for Communization* 1 (2011): 95-144, accessed December 23, 2012, <http://riff.raff.se/en/sic1/sic-1-07-the-present-moment.pdf>, 95.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁷ This is also contrary to the "communizing theory" of Gilles Dauvé and Karl Nestic, who treat "communizing" as a persistent possibility yet to be realized, rather than a new historical possibility. See the journal *Endnotes* (2008), for the debate between Dauvé and Nestic and TC on this point.

²⁸ Jacques Rancière, *Althusser's Lesson* [1974], trans. Emiliano Battista (London: Continuum, 2011), 90; Brown, "Red years," 20.

²⁹ Qtd. in Peter Starr, *Logics of Failed Revolt: French Theory After May '68* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 91.

³⁰ *Négation*, "Lip and the Self-Managed Counter-Revolution" [1973], trans. Peter Rachleff and Alan Wallach, *lib.com* (2007), accessed December 22, 2012, <http://libcom.org/library/lip-and-the-self-managed-counter-revolution-negation>; Brown, "Red years," 20.

In the case of Virilio, his point is similar. With more sympathy, Virilio regards this struggle as the attempt to hold on to an ecological “niche” of struggle. He remarks:

The trade unions knew what they were doing when they ordered the workers to carefully maintain their tools of production. It’s as if, in their minds, these tools were the last representation of the original environment, the guarantee and mainstay of their entire legal existence.³¹

While certainly, in a fashion somewhat similar to *Négation*, Virilio sees this struggle as outpaced by the “delocalizing” forces of the State and capital, he also refuses to simply condemn this attempt at “attachment.” In both cases the “traditional” ground of resistance has been abolished.

Certainly the events of 2011 might provide confirmation for this diagnosis. They have been widely taken as signalling the end of previous forms of struggle, notably those centred on class, party, and union, and the birth of new forms of struggle organized around the fluid gathering of the multitude or the people. In fact, as Rodrigo Nunes has pointed out, the evidence is more equivocal than that.³² Certain forms of so-called “traditional” organizations retained and developed key roles in the seemingly “acephalic” spreading of protests. We can, of course, say, however, that the very changes in these forms of organization might well indicate their obsolescence. The question remains, how do we respond? We have seen that Virilio stresses the continuing, although vanishing, possibility of resistance. In contrast, TC insists that the current situation suggests, in its limits, the necessity of new configurations of revolution.

Resistance or Revolution

The tension of resistance and revolution encompasses many contemporary movements of struggle.³³ In fact we could read acceleration as the solution to this tension in that it supposes the reaching of a critical “tipping point” in which speed would lead to a qualitative transformation of resistance *into* revolution. We have seen that Virilio remains sceptical about this possibility, preferring to insist on the reinvention of resistance. He concludes that the dispersion of military power across space and time puts an end to the traditional right of resistance, which was grounded in a particular territory and the preservation of means of violence. In fact, “deprived of their productive arsenal, they [the proletariat] stop being privileged economic partners in the pact of military semi-colonization.”³⁴ The collapse of the place of the pact between the military and civilians means that: “From now on, military assault is shapeless in time and orgiastic participation is no more than the irrational support of a *techno-logistical supra-nationality*, the final stage of delocalization, and thus of servitude.”³⁵ This “disappearance” means that we cannot locate a moment of resistance, and so it enters into dissolution.³⁶

The pessimistic conclusion of Virilio is that revolution is over and only revolutionary resistance remains,³⁷ but as we have seen this seems largely ineffective or threatens to disappear. In typically hyperbolic fashion he concludes:

We can all drop dead. In any case, they no longer need us: robots and computers will take care of production. War is automatized, and along with it the power of decision. They no longer need men, soldiers or workers, only means of absolute extermination, on the commercial level as elsewhere.³⁸

While this registers capital’s abandonment of “labour,” as also registered by TC, it extends it to a vision of annihilation that falls outside the still-remaining “moving contradiction” of capital’s need for labour. In this vision there is only a desperate clinging on to the last remaining ecological niches of resistance.

³¹ Virilio, *Popular Defense*, 54.

³² Nunes, “The Lessons of 2011.”

³³ Caygill, “Also Sprach Zapata.”

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 53..

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁶ Virilio’s diagnosis bears some similarity to that of Carl Schmitt in his *Theory of the Partisan* [1963], trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Publishing, 2007).

³⁷ Virilio may be deploying a distinction between revolution and resistance that Howard Caygill has traced through post-Kantian philosophy, and especially the work of Clausewitz. See Howard Caygill, “Also Sprach Zapata.”

³⁸ Virilio in *Pure War*, 102.

On the contrary, TC argue that new forms of “suicidal” struggle by workers register the limits of this delocalization, while continuing to contest it. In these struggles workers no longer try to hold on to a wage labour that has failed, but instead are “forced” into a “rift” with that identity. The result is the burning down of factories, attempts to claim as high a redundancy payment as possible, and other “exits” from work.³⁹ These struggles have an equivocal status,

indicating both the tragedy of workers deprived of the identity of the worker and the fleeting prefiguration of a “de-essentialization” of labour.⁴⁰ Contrary to Virilio’s sense of the exhaustion of the “proletariat” under the threat of extermination, TC suggest that the “rift” of proletarian self-abolishing can lead to the possible emergence of a new communizing process of revolution.

While Virilio tends to an apocalyptic pessimism, TC’s evasion of the military question produces some moments of seemingly remarkable optimism concerning the “communizing” process of revolution:

The confrontation with the state immediately poses the problem of arms, which can only be solved by setting up a distribution network to support combat in an almost infinite multiplicity of places. Military and social activities are inseparable, simultaneous, and mutually interpenetrating: the constitution of a front or of determinate zones of combat is the death of the revolution.⁴¹

This statement relies on proliferation and dispersion to make a challenge to the compact “military body” of the transnational ruling class. While this may be possible, or even desirable, the means and capacities to engage in this “infinite” combat seem problematic, to say the least. Elsewhere, TC concedes that there may be “the possibility of a multitude of small, barbaric wars.”⁴² While this is less sanguine, it still seems that mobility and multiplicity are supposed to win the day.

The hope of TC is that the very speed of the communizing process will outpace the military and logistical capacities of the capitalist class:

It [the revolution] permits the abolition to an ever greater extent of all competition and division between proletarians, making this the content and the unfolding of its armed confrontation with those whom the capitalist class can still mobilize, integrate and reproduce within its social relations.⁴³

It is the rapid expansion of the “proletarian condition,” no longer tied to the usual organizational and wage forms, which will permit an overcoming, it is claimed, of the fraction of the military (and its capacity for destruction) still integrated in capital. Therefore, they stake communization on an effect of acceleration:

This is why all the measures of communization will have to be a vigorous action for the dismantling of the connections which link our enemies and their material support: these will have to be *rapidly destroyed*, without the possibility of return.⁴⁴

Of course, it is again not easy to see how these connections, the logistical chains of capital and state, will be “dismantled” at a sufficient pace.

A similar trope occurs in the communizing text by the two groups Rocamadur and Blaumachen on the London riots of 2012. They conclude:

The dynamic of class struggle today can never be victorious, because it will keep finding class struggle itself as its limit, up to the point when the multiplication of rifts will become the overcoming of class belonging (and therefore of class self-organization), as a revolution within the revolution, as communizing measures, that will either de-capitalize (communize) life further and further or be crushed.⁴⁵

³⁹ R.S., “The Present Moment,” 119.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 120.

⁴¹ Théorie Communiste, “Communization in the Present Tense,” trans. Endnotes, in *Communization and its Discontents*, ed. Benjamin Noys (Brooklyn: Autonomedia / Minor Compositions, 2011), 56

⁴² R.S., “The Present Moment,” 138.

⁴³ Théorie Communiste, “Communization,” 56.

⁴⁴ Ibid., my italics.

⁴⁵ Rocamadur / Blaumachen, “The feral underclass hits the streets: On the English riots and other ordeals,” *SIC: International Journal for Communization* (2012), accessed December 23, 2012, <http://sic.communisation.net/en/the-feral-underclass-hits-the-streets?DokuWiki=e19764affecb034401ae1fc9df032fbb>

Of course, the question is whether the speed invoked by TC, the spread of communization in the process of revolution, will “de-capitalize life further” “or be crushed.” It is, to me, the rather sanguinary tendency to not take seriously the second possibility that seems problematic.

This is Virilio’s question. He notes the disappearance of the military from their own war-machine. Remarking on an incident during the conflict between Britain and Argentina over the Falkland or Malvinas Islands, Virilio points out that the Captain of the British Guided Missile Destroyer HMS Sheffield had no time to react to the launching of an Exocet missile launched from an Argentine Super Etendard aircraft, whose pilot obeyed the injunction of “Fire and Forget.”⁴⁶ The ship was destroyed. Beverly Silver has also pointed out that against the great citizen-armies, which allowed workers to then make a claim on the States which had unleashed them in war, the response has been to professionalize, privatize, and minimize the role of workers in war – in line with the general tendency of capitalism to replace variable capital with constant capital.⁴⁷ In the jargon of the US military in regards to drones, the aim is the “compression of the kill chain” – the removal or minimisation of human involvement from destruction. It is perhaps not hard to imagine these hardwired “moral drones” regarding proletarian revolution as an immoral act.

The tension here is that the forms of capitalism which for TC condition the possibility of self-abolishing and the rapid and contagious emergence of revolution as “communizing” process also involve the elimination and restriction of labour from sites of production and military power. The contradictory forms of these tendencies—which involve complex “national” and “transnational” processes, both spatially and temporally—make rapidity and resonance a more complex and risky strategies than I think TC and other theorists of contemporary movements admit. Of course, they can argue that these comments are only referring to an actual process of revolution that has yet to emerge, but if that process is to be successful we might further consider the tensions of “acceleration.”

#Accelerate

Banking on speed and movement is precisely the ground of the “war of time” that Virilio identified as *the* problem of the military class. The war of acceleration turns on new technologies that push humans out of the domain of choice and control, in favour of an autonomous and automatic deterrence. It also, as we have seen, operates along the vectors of the accumulation of capital that operate by similar effects of technological displacement. Of course, for many this is the great virtue of these forms of the new forms of protest, resistance, and struggle. They engage with the actuality of capitalist and state technologies to re-tool and re-deploy them *against* power.

This was already event in the strategic theorizations of the possibilities of internet technologies. Galloway and Thacker, for example, had suggested that the power to overload the system lies in the speed and resonance of “the exploit,” a hacking strategy that can have wider application for subverting networked forms of power.⁴⁸ In a similar vein, Harry Halpin argues that the ontological capacity for invisibility developed by the hacker group “Anonymous” also suggests a new mode of struggle that saturates and exceeds the control networks of the internet.⁴⁹ In these cases is the explicitly military technology of the internet, originally developed as a mode of dispersed communication to counter nuclear war, that provides new possibilities as modes of struggles that can then be realized on the streets. They both also owe a debt to The Invisible Committee’s theorization of an “insurrectional” politics premised on anonymity and evasion, which could create new spaces for “forms of life” in the “rifts” created by contemporary state and capitalist power.⁵⁰

In this modelling, the “war of time” can only be successfully waged on the same terrain of networks, nodes, and their forms of acceleration. This is, of course, the fundamental point made by Marx: “if we did not find concealed in society as it is the material conditions of production and the corresponding relations of exchange prerequisite for a classless society, then all attempts to explode it would be quixotic.”⁵¹ The question is where exactly do we identify these material conditions, and how far do we accept them as they are? My suggestion is that the affirmation of acceleration implies of mimicry and replication of state and capitalist relations that is insufficiently critical. In particular, what the acceleration of bodies neglects are the processes of the incorporation and elimination of labour as *the* mechanism of capitalist power.

⁴⁶ Virilio in *Pure War*, 18.

⁴⁷ Beverly J. Silver, (2003), *Forces of Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴⁸ Alexander R. Galloway, and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*, Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

⁴⁹ Harry Halpin, “The philosophy of Anonymous: Ontological politics without identity,” *Radical Philosophy* 176 (2012): 19–28.

⁵⁰ The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009).

⁵¹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973), 159.

In some enigmatic passages Paul Virilio turns to the metaphysics of metempsychosis—the transmigration of souls—to suggest the tension of the “loading” of the soul on to various “metabolic vehicles.” He argues that we find the soul as “plural, multiform, fluidiform, coagulated here and there in social, animal or territorial bodies.”⁵² In the philosophy of the military class “weak” souls are tied to their environments, imprisoned within the body. This Gnostic philosopher presumes that the “powerful” soul is deterritorialized – the fluid transferable soul of the “gyrovagues,” (wandering and itinerant monks) which can smoothly move from vehicle to vehicle. Acceleration is predicated on the power to escape or move from body to body, and in this way to exceed any territorial “capture.” This accelerative politics is in close proximity to the politics of resonance and saturation, which also stresses a contagion that exceeds territorial grounding.

For Virilio, of course, this deterritorialization is not to be lauded. It incarnates the nihilistic politics of “pure war.” We can find a resonant figuring of this thanatopolitical acceleration in Thomas Pynchon’s novel *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973). Set during the Second World War, Pynchon explores the ways in which “[t]he War has been reconfiguring time and space into its own image.”⁵³ This “reconfiguration” takes its terminal form in the human “passenger” that is integrated into a remaining Nazi V-2 rocket, in an experiment staged by the rocket crew following the Nazi defeat. With tongue somewhat in cheek, Pynchon suggests that “secretly, [the War] was being dictated instead by the needs of technology . . . by a conspiracy between human beings and techniques, by something that needed the energy-burst of war.”⁵⁴ In this way “War” and “Technology” become forces demanding acceleration and the integration of the human into the suicidal “war-machine.” In Pynchon’s pessimistic and conspiratorial view the emergence of great systems of control operate precisely through energy and acceleration.

Virilio’s insight into the boarding of metabolic vehicles, reinforced by Pynchon’s provocation, suggests the “metaphysical” desire for integration and dispersion of human and machine at work in the dynamic of technology, military power, and capitalism. The resulting tension is that the reading of contemporary protest and struggles in terms of endorsing this integration and dispersion becomes problematic. The “metabolic vehicles,” which is to say living bodies, risk being occluded by an assimilation of struggle to the same dynamic by which capitalism insists that we are endlessly transferable and mobile labour.

In terms of the logic of struggle, the “war of time” is coded as one between the elimination and minimization of labour from the processes of warfare and production, which will then be countered by a superior force of escape and flight. In response to this conflict, I would suggest two symmetrical risks. In the case of the minimization and elimination of labour and bodies from warfare and production we could adopt an *overestimation* of the powers of the “trans-national military class,” and thereby engender our own stasis, if not even the reification and fetishization of military power (a risk run by Virilio). The second risk is that by relying on the superior speed of revolution and resistance we could ignore the effects of military and capitalist power that operate along similar, or the same, vectors. This risk is run by certain formulations of TC and certain theorizations of the present forms of struggle.

Here, my main concern has been with this second risk. While those who theorize contemporary movements of struggle often, and rightly, insist on the embodied nature of this acceleration and resonance,⁵⁵ my concern is that this “embodiment” repeats the “fluidiform” ideology of “pure war.” Of course, “Occupy” and the related struggle are, or were, heterogeneous formations that often aimed to break outside of this kind of ossification. It could be argued that, if anything, they try to break exactly the framing I am suggesting, by positively *refusing* the discourse of “pure war,” especially as it was replicated in “traditional” forms of struggle. Obviously this seems to be an essential task. The difficulty that I am suggesting is that in supposing escape and evasion from these problems, in supposing a flight from both labour and the “territorializing” effects of power, they do not fully consider the new forms of deterritorialized power. While their aims are laudable, it might be that a politics of dispersion, resonance, and acceleration, will have to confront not only the inertial effects of the “practico-inert,” but also the militarized forms of the capitalist State that deploy and engage with exactly these new forms to produce their own de-localization and localization of power.

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⁵² Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 96.

⁵³ Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow* [1973] (London: Picador, 1975), 257.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 521.

⁵⁵ Gordillo, “The Speed of Revolutionary Resonance.”

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