

**POPULAR DEFENSE IN THE EMPIRE OF SPEED:  
PAUL VIRILIO AND THE PHENOMENOLOGY  
OF THE POLITICAL BODY**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The argument that technological progress has been complementary to the fight against totalitarian forms of government is repeated often within the social sciences, based largely upon the notion that it has brought people from the most distant corners of the earth 'together' in such a way as to inscribe the liberal democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity at a global level for the first time. What these arguments ignore however, are the ties that bind the Nazi and Soviet forms of totalitarianism to the mass liberal democracies under which we live today through their common embrace of the ideology of progress, under which all that is external to technology is redefined as raw material for its 'inevitable' expansion. This thesis considers the shape that this complicity has taken over the course of the twentieth century through an engagement with the thought of Paul Virilio, whose life's work has demonstrated that technologization has depended upon the uprooting, fragmentation and totalization of the 'animal bodies' of men, women and children, the 'social bodies' of families, cities and nations and the 'territorial bodies' of forests, oceans and mountains. By drawing attention to this aspect of his thought, the study demonstrates the bases on which Virilio stakes his claim that the lived bodily experience of the territorial and social ecologies has been subordinated to the artificial prosthetic experience of the technical ecology, thus laying the groundwork for a totalitarian individualism to take over where the conviviality of the 'political body' left off. The study not only analyzes the deconstructive effects of technology on political community, but also investigates the many attempts of civilian populations to mount a popular defense against such incursions, while also considering the question of how the disassembled political body might be reconstructed through the reinvention of art, architecture and the city. Ultimately, the thesis concludes that while Virilio is pessimistic about the liberating potentiality of technology under fascism, Communism and liberalism, he nevertheless allows for the possibility of a 'new politics' and a 'new technology' through his uniquely phenomenological and anarchist approach.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION: PAUL VIRILIO AND THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE POLITICAL BODY

Over the course of the past several centuries it has become commonplace in the Western liberal democracies for political theorists to accept and even encourage technological and scientific 'advance' at the most accelerated pace possible, due to the widespread perception that their primary effects are positive rather than negative in that they have supposedly brought people from the most distant corners of the earth together into a more just and peaceful form of political community, namely that of liberal democracy. Paul Virilio challenges such notions by demonstrating how technological 'progress' is instead developing into a new form of totalitarianism, an 'empire of speed' that is uprooting, fragmenting and totalizing the 'animal bodies' of men, women and children, the 'social bodies' of couples, families, cities and nations and the 'territorial bodies' of forests, oceans and mountains, to such an extent that the lived experience of reality on which the political body is based will soon be eclipsed by the virtual reality of technique.

This thesis articulates Virilio's criticism of the relationship between politics and technology primarily through the interplay of the second and third chapters, which together consider both the ways in which imperial power is taking shape in our time as well as the ways in which this has been resisted in the past and how it might be replaced in the future. It is here that the central assertion of the present work is fleshed out, the first half of which is that the totalitarian dimensions of technology derive not only from the 'rational' separation of means and ends but even more so from the 'will to speed' irregardless of the effects that this may have on the body. This is investigated primarily in the second chapter, which articulates Virilio's conception of empire as a worldwide technological apparatus whose primary function is to undermine the conviviality of animal, social and territorial bodies, such that dromocracy replaces democracy and ecological warfare replaces the 'tumult of the tribes' at an ever-increasing pace and to an ever-increasing extent.

The second half of the 'thesis of the thesis' is that although many have interpreted this argument as meaning that Virilio can be dismissed as a prophet of doom and no more, what it really means is that popular resistance to empire cannot rely upon a symmetrical logistical

strategy and that it instead requires an asymmetrical tactic of 'slowing down'. This is seen primarily in the third chapter which considers how civilian populations might mount a 'popular defense' of the political body by reclaiming the ancient method of the tumult, as has happened repeatedly over the past century, especially since the Sixties. The chapter concludes with an outline of Virilio's conceptualization of how the political body might be reconstructed through the reinscription of art, architecture and the city in real space rather than real time, as a larger project for the future of humankind.

Before we get to the larger questions of empire and resistance however, the first chapter sets the pace for what follows by situating the uniqueness of Virilio's thought, explaining how he escapes the limitations of the dominant approaches of liberalism, postmodernism and Marxism by embracing a phenomenological approach to technology which brackets the 'natural attitude' of scientific positivism and embraces instead an intersubjective conception of reality, along with an anarchist approach to politics which challenges the authoritarianism of fascism, Communism and liberalism while embracing participatory politics at the local level instead. This is complemented by an assessment of Virilio's philosophy of the body, which begins by looking at the insights introduced by the primary thinkers who have influenced him, such as Merleau-Ponty, Arendt, Foucault and Agamben, concluding with an overview of his own ontology of the body and its animal, social, territorial and political components.

## **1.1 Critique of Technocracy**

Although it is true that compared to other French theorists such as Foucault, who has become more well established, Virilio has remained a primarily marginal figure within the discipline of political science over the past several decades, in this section I will demonstrate that his uniquely phenomenological approach to the politics of science, technology and the body position him well to become one the most significant thinkers of the political to emerge from that country in the past several decades. This becomes particularly clear when one considers the recent history of political science in which a plurality of new forms of criticism have suddenly emerged which challenge the assumptions of scientific positivism that have for so long patrolled the borders of acceptable forms of inquiry within the discipline, leaving very little room for conceptual innovation and a great deal of discontent as a result. Although political science as a discipline can be said to have begun as early as the nineteenth century, it really wasn't until the 1960s that this began to shift, with the rise of the post-Behavioral argument that the concept of 'impartiality' was itself ideological in nature since it served the interests of power rather than the public, obscured

the agency of non-state actors in the practice of politics and undermined more radical attempts at multidisciplinary inquiry.<sup>1</sup> While this primarily Marxian argument was quite popular for a short period, within a few years the legacy of positivism would once again attain hegemony with the emergence of rational choice theory in the 1980s, once again silencing those whose interest in political science stemmed from a desire to critically engage with the issues affecting the public at large through means that went beyond its confines. Recently however, a second revolution has emerged within the discipline under the name of 'Perestroika', converging around many of the same issues, but this time consisting of a much broader cross-section of opposition, including not just Marxists, but also feminists, postmodernists, constructivists and others who have made diversity itself their rallying cry, including such dimensions as methodological procedure as well as proportionate ethnic, racial, class, and gender representation.<sup>2</sup> Yet this broad basis of unity has not stopped the Perestroikans from fighting amongst themselves to such an extent that the common goal of overcoming the hegemony of positivism within the discipline has become increasingly difficult; the best example of this is to be found in the debate between the postmodernists, who argue that reality is socially constructed and that strictly empirical work more often than not reinforces power rather than challenging it and the constructivists who argue that while it is true that reality is socially constructed, it 'exists' nonetheless and therefore can and should be studied empirically, and that such an approach can either challenge or reinforce the system-as-it-is in the process.<sup>3</sup>

What has not received sufficient attention in this debate however is the tradition of phenomenology, which can help to bridge the gap between the two by asserting like constructivists that reality 'really does' exist, but that it is always interpretive and multiple, and like postmodernists that analysis should not be based not on 'objectivity' but rather on the lived experience of the subjectively perceiving animal body and intersubjectively perceiving social body within a particular context.<sup>4</sup> Though prominent postmodern political scientists such as

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<sup>1</sup> D. Easton, "The Future of the Postbehavioral Phase in Political Science" in Contemporary Empirical Political Theory ed. Kirsten Moore. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) , 15.

<sup>2</sup> Caucus for a New Political Science, "The Perestroika Glasnost Revolt". Retrieved October 10, 2003 from <http://www.apsanet.org/~new/NewsFeb01.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> R. Price and C. Reus-Smit, "Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism" European Journal of International Relations, 4, no. 3 (1998) : 1785. In this article, Price and Reus-Smit argue that aside from the 'systemic constructivism' of Wendt, the more prominent tradition of 'holist constructivism' which draws on Giddens, Habermas, Foucault and others is most properly seen as of a piece with the larger 'family' of critical political theory including postmodernism, feminism and Marxism; as in phenomenology, the penchant for empirical research need not imply 'rationalism' per se.

<sup>4</sup> M. Neufeld, "Interpretation and the 'Science' of International Relations" Review of International Studies 19 (1993) : 39. This essay concurs with Price and Reus-Smit (by way of Charles Taylor) that interpretive approaches can either

James Der Derian and others regularly refer to him in their writings, more often than not they ignore that while Virilio is not hostile to most of its key thinkers, he has consistently distanced his own approach from that of postmodernism, preferring to identify with the tradition of phenomenology which many of his contemporaries had rejected; indeed, as he himself has stated, "I am a phenomenologist, and I never stopped being one. I always said as much to Deleuze and the others. In my opinion, Husserl is worth ten times Heidegger. It is about time to wake up, moreover, since we are in the process of forgetting Husserl and phenomenology, when in fact we have never gone beyond it. That is what is so terrible. If we had gone beyond it, I would be the first to forget it. But we have not gone beyond it, we have left it to the machine".<sup>5</sup> Just as the 'new science' of phenomenology was originally conceived by Husserl, the version of it articulated by Virilio is also one which brackets the 'natural attitude' of positivism by focusing on the description of phenomena as it is lived subjectively, since even supposedly 'objective' forms of measurement are inherently biased toward their anthropocentric origins. While some might reply that this is not a truly scientific form of investigation, Virilio retorts that he is merely aligning himself with Einstein's Theory of Relativity, in which he demonstrated that the observer cannot be separated from the thing observed; as he explains, the importance of this revelation was that it revealed for the first time the limitations of classical physics "which were those of any science linked to man's sensory experience, to the general sense of spatial relationships which the logistics of perception has been secretly undercutting since the Renaissance and especially since the nineteenth century".<sup>6</sup> This insight is of even greater importance after the eclipse of the era in which space and time were still absolute and it was the speed of technology that was relative, as opposed to today, when it is space and time that are relative and technological speed that has become absolute; the weight of this argument is seen in Virilio's example of a passenger on a modern bullet train, observing the forest going by, asking "which tree is the true one? The tree that is only a frozen image whose branches and every single piece of bark I can describe in detail,

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support the positivist status quo - and by extension the system-as-it-is - as does Wendtian forms of constructivism, or undermine it, as does the critical constructivism of thinkers such as Alker, Ashley, Kratochwil, Ruggie and Cox. It is also one of the few texts within political science to mention Husserl and phenomenology as important sources of interpretivist social science, thus lending more support to the idea that Virilio, as a self-affirmed phenomenologist, might be one of the few figures amenable to both its postmodern and 'holist constructivist' forms.

<sup>5</sup> P. Virilio, Crepuscular Dawn (New York: Semiotext(e), 2002) , 153. Der Derian often compares Virilio to Baudrillard, whose nihilistic conception of simulacra contrasts dramatically with Virilio's Einsteinian conception of 'substitution' as we see below. Further, Der Derian seems to have considerably more faith in the liberatory potential of communication technologies than does Virilio, which sometimes results in odd associations; however, it should be noted that Der Derian has recognized the potentially violent consequences of war gaming and virtual reality within the realm of international conflict. See J. Der Derian, Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Media-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network (Oxford: Westview Press, 2001) , 216. Other postmodern theorists who refer to Virilio within political science include Arthur Kroker, RBJ Walker, Michael Shapiro, Timothy W. Luke and Shannon Bell.

<sup>6</sup> P. Virilio, Vision Machine (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) , 22.

or the blurred tree that passes by? We know very well that both trees are true. Yet in Newtonian rationalism (space and time are absolute and speed is relative), the true tree is the frozen, immobilized tree...but I believe we are heading in the opposite direction, where the genuine tree is the tree that passes by, because we are always moving".<sup>7</sup>

Therefore while he agrees with postmodernists that there is no such thing as 'objective' reality as such, Virilio does not agree with theorists like Baudrillard who dispense with the concept altogether, arguing that there is no reality beyond its simulation; for Virilio this misses the point entirely, since what really occurs is 'substitution' whereby the reality of a past era is substituted by the reality of an emerging era. In other words the question of our time is not whether reality exists as such, but whether only *one* reality exists or if instead there are *multiple* realities, in which for instance, due to the plurality of electronic prostheses which are engaged with daily, one lives both a 'virtual' reality and a 'real' reality together as stereoscopic reality. Thus by bringing the relativist arguments of Einstein into dialogue with the phenomenological arguments of Husserl, Virilio satisfies the imperative of constructivism to preserve the importance of empirical investigation without violating the postmodern penchant for subjective interpretation, a perspective which reflects the underlying spirit of both the post-Behavioral and Perestroikan revolutions, thus helping the broad 'family' of critical political theories to come together more solidly around the issue of methodological pluralism.<sup>8</sup> This is possible because while the current hegemony of rationalism within political science rests largely on its claim to be based upon 'objectively' verifiable phenomena accessible through positivist methodology, Virilio's political phenomenology points out the inherent biases underlying these ultimately relative truth claims without denying the importance of empirical investigation in the process.

Just as we have seen with his critique of the epistemology of science, so too does Virilio reject the ideology of objectivity in regard to technology, pointing out that far from being the product of equal input from all sectors of society, much less without value altogether, it too is always developed for someone and for some purpose, namely that of the military, the media, the state and other centers of power. It is through the convergence of these critiques that he develops his theory of technocracy as the totalitarian replacement of participatory politics in our time, which he says has come about because the instrumentalism that was born with what we call

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<sup>7</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, Edited by John Armitage (London: Sage, 2001) , 88.

<sup>8</sup> As noted earlier in regard to Price and Reus-Smit, this 'family' includes constructivism, postmodernism, Marxism and feminism, since these often share common roots in thinkers such as Giddens, Habermas, Foucault, Nietzsche, Weber and Marx.

'technology' has exceeded the machinic bounds of the term to encompass ever greater sectors of society, with the result that today it necessarily includes any standardized complex of procedures that transform nature, animals or humans into a means to an end, such that reflective and deliberatory decision-making are replaced, as seen for example in the way in which both the machinic technology of the nuclear bomb and the economic technology of neoliberalism involve the transformation of billions of living beings into either hostages or consumers rather than political actors in their own right.<sup>9</sup> Thus, politics and technology can no longer be separated in a time when the latter forms the very framework within which the former takes place, to such an extent in fact, that deliberation is often subsumed by technique altogether; as John Street has argued, this occurs because "technology encompasses not just nuclear power stations and computers. It extends, for example, to hedgerows, trees and walls. The row of trees outside the American Embassy in London was not planted out of commitment to natural beauty, but to break up student demonstrations, just as the Paris streets were designed to frustrate revolutionary mobs".<sup>10</sup> In this example we get a glimpse of why Virilio describes what are generally thought of as liberal 'democracies' as technocracies instead, since almost all of the most important decisions in regard to overall design are made not by the people directly affected by them, much less by their elected representatives in government, but rather by technicians who not only exclude the public from the decision of whether or not a particular form of technology should be introduced, but even design them from the start so as to preclude the very possibility from ever occurring at all.<sup>11</sup>

This argument has only become more relevant with the passing of time, as seen in phenomena recently whereby elected officials have taken to passionately defending the autonomy of the very technicians whom they have lost the ability to control, such as Clinton's dismissive remark during the 1999 WTO Ministerial in Seattle that those concerned about the dangers of genetically modified foods had merely lost faith in the representative nature of liberal democracy; as he proclaimed at the time, "I say to the people of the world: we eat this food too and we eat

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<sup>9</sup> Of course there is still an ostensible simulacrum of 'democracy' in which people continue to 'vote' and to express their will in the 'public forum', as was the case in the recent worldwide antiwar protests for instance (the largest protest in history) but by and large democracy has been subsumed by the predominance of predetermined procedure and technique, as seen so clearly in Bush's dismissive comments that the tens of millions who demonstrated served as little more than a 'focus group' to the overall national security strategy and no more. NPR, "President Bush Discounts Impact of Antiwar Protests Around the World". Retrieved October 30, 2003 from <http://www.npr.org/programs/atc/transcripts/2003/feb/030218.gonyea.html>.

<sup>10</sup> J. Street, *Politics and Technology* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1992) 2.

<sup>11</sup> In other words, if the streets and hedgerows are designed to prevent public input into decision-making, then clearly there is a double-exclusion taking place.

more of it than you do".<sup>12</sup> A similarly Antoinettian approach has emerged in the aftermath of September 11, with the unveiling of a whole arsenal of totalitarian technologies such as the Pentagon's 'Combat Zones That See' in which the millions of surveillance cameras already in place throughout the major cities of the world would be linked into a single feed that would then be piped into US Military intelligence computers, automatically comparing thousands of passing faces and vehicles with database files of suspected terrorists and other 'undesirables';<sup>13</sup> as surprising as this development may be for some, Virilio demonstrates that the technical foundations for such phenomena were already being put into place several centuries back in the very layout of the cities that are now being placed under the constant watch of military analysts; as he quotes of a French police official in 1749, "public order will reign if we are careful to distribute our human time and space between the city and the country by a severe regulation of transit; if we are attentive to schedules as well as to alignments and signal systems; if by environmental standardization the entire city is made transparent, that is, familiar to the policeman's eye".<sup>14</sup>

Thus we can see that for Virilio for as long as technology has been allowed to become ever more autonomous, the deliberative basis on which politics rests has been undermined since it has exempted what is arguably the most important element of public administration from consideration. In order for the political to prevail over the technical then, the metadesign of society that results from the introduction of technique must be subjected to open and sustained debate and decision-making processes which directly involve the populations affected by them.<sup>15</sup> If this were to take place, he argues, the likely result would be the scaling back of large-scale authoritarian technologies such as nuclear power and the emergence of small-scale democratic technologies such as wind power, which is why it should not be taken from his pessimism about the present that he wants to turn back the clock to 'Year Zero', but rather that he would prefer to wait and see what might appear within the context of a society in which science and technology are transformed so as to serve the interest of the public rather than that of the elites who go to

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<sup>12</sup> Natural Foods Merchandiser "WTO Sees GMO Protests" Retrieved September 22, 2003 from [http://www.naturalfoodsmerchandiser.com/nfm\\_backs/Jan\\_00/wto\\_gmos.cfm](http://www.naturalfoodsmerchandiser.com/nfm_backs/Jan_00/wto_gmos.cfm).

<sup>13</sup> Sniffen, Michael, "US Develops Urban Surveillance System". Retrieved July 3, 2003 from <http://www.infoshop.org/inews/stories.php?story=03/07/02/7768433>.

<sup>14</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (New York: Semiotet(e), 1986), 18.

<sup>15</sup> Of course such a transformation would require a transition away from technologized representative republicanism and toward what has often been called 'radical democracy', in which politics, economics and culture would center around the autonomy and self-determination of the local over and against the dominance of the global; this concept will be elaborated on more thoroughly below.

such great lengths to protect their autonomy.<sup>16</sup> It is for this reason that it is rather difficult to place him within a particular tradition of technological thought since he is both negative about the short term future of technology and positive about its long term potentiality at one and the same time. While on the one hand he agrees with Ellul that the instrumental logic of technology as we know it today has become so pervasive that ours is more appropriately described as a 'technological society' than as a capitalist society, since even non-capitalist societies such as the Soviet Union held that 'communism is socialism plus electricity' and were thus in many way of a piece with our own, on the other hand he also takes from Heidegger that "we must take hold of the riddle of technology and lay it on the table as the ancient philosophers and scientists put the riddle of Nature out in the open...we must politicize speed, whether it be the metabolic speed (the speed of the living being, of reflexes) or technological speed. We must politicize speed, because we are both: we are moved, and we move. To drive is also to be driven".<sup>17</sup> In order to accomplish this, his suggestion is that citizens should immediately demand meetings with the engineers and technicians in order to really discuss both the positive and the negative implications of what is being brought into existence today, just as the developers of the railway system throughout Europe got together in Brussels in 1888 and came up with the 'block system' to prevent accidents as a result. What was unique in that instance, and what is unheard of today, as Virilio notes, is that "the starting point of the discussion in Brussels was on the negative, on what did not function. Contact switches and signals were devised, and these became the basis of a very sophisticated form of data management. But why are there no conferences nowadays on the damaging consequences of unemployment? On the wrong turns taken by urbanism? On the obverse side of technical progress?"<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Virilio's critique of technology is not so much that of one who would abolish all technologies, but instead is a criticism in the same way one critiques art; as he explains, "progress is one thing nobody sees as an object for criticism. Yet technology is the vector of progress and I would say that there can be no art without criticism. An art lover is at the same time an art critic, since a taste for art implies a certain quality of judgement. As a lover of new technology art, I totally contest the objective status accorded to the technosciences" P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 149. Without this freedom to criticize technology, one is also not free to really love technology because for Virilio, to love means to be cognizant of both the positive and the negative dimensions of the thing that is loved. This is why Virilio always recalls the image of Jacob wrestling with the angels before coming to the understanding that there is only one God; rather than 'sleeping before technology' he advocates beginning with its negativity, fighting against its instrumental dimensions so that we might come to really understand it at a much deeper level than we usually do;, which would show a true love for technology, as paradoxical as it may sound. As he continues, "today we have admen, even experts, who spend all their time saying how wonderful technology is. They are giving it the kiss of death. By being critical I do more for the development of new technologies than by giving in to my illusions and refusing to question technology's negative aspects". Sans, Jerome, "The Game of Love and Chance: A Discussion With Paul Virilio". Retrieved June 20, 2003 from <http://www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/vy2k/sans.cfm>.

<sup>17</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), 35.

<sup>18</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live*, 106. Clearly then, Virilio's perspective, while pessimistic in many respects is not depoliticizing. In addition to these assertions he has also stated that "the next political struggle - taking the concept of

In this sense then, Virilio's philosophy of technology could be said to be 'essentialist' in that he sees technology as deeply imbued with the instrumental values of the society from which it emerged, but it could not be said to be determinist since he does not follow this with the assertion that we must simply wait passively for the 'historical stages' to play themselves out. One framework for categorizing the various philosophies of technology which deals with many of these questions is that articulated by Andrew Feenberg, who divides them according to the degree to which technology is seen as either neutral or value-laden on the one hand and humanly controlled or autonomous on the other, all of which are key attributes that Virilio discusses in his own conception. With what he terms the 'instrumentalism' of mainstream liberalism, for instance, he says that technology is seen as both neutral and humanly controlled, with the implication that there is no pressing need for greater control over its development, while with the 'determinism' of Marx and Engels, technology is seen as autonomous and beyond human control, even though it is accepted that it is ultimately neutral, meaning that public intervention would not be possible. Likewise, with the 'substantivism' of Ellul and Heidegger, it is also argued that technology is autonomous from human control, with the difference that it is not seen as neutral but rather as bound up with the instrumental logic of the society which produced it, whereas with the 'critical theory' of Marcuse and Foucault, while it is accepted that technology is imbued with value, the idea that technology is autonomous is rejected since this is seen as overly simplistic and limiting to human agency.<sup>19</sup> While it is asking the right questions and contributes much to the understanding of the various traditions, the one limitation of this formulation is that it only allows for the combination of two attributes with regard to each category, rather than three as would be needed in the case of Virilio, who while he agrees with Ellul and Heidegger that technology is value-laden and autonomous within the context of a technocratic society, also concurs with Marcuse and Foucault that given the emergence of a more democratic system, it could be subjected to human control. While it is true that Feenberg argues that this is precisely what distinguishes substantivism from critical theory, with the implication that perhaps Virilio should be considered 'critical-theoretical' instead, the difference in his conception is that while both agree that there is a pressing need to subject technology to the democratic will of the communities that it affects, Feenberg contends that most technologies could continue on as they are today without interfering in this process. Thus while critical theory would potentially allow for the

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political struggle in its broadest terms - will be the struggle against techno-science, against the reign of techno-science, against cloning, robotics and so on. But this kind of struggle doesn't imply a return to a previous situation. It means the attempt to fight against technology itself - not in order to destroy it, but in order to transfigure it" P. Virilio, Virilio Live , 157.

<sup>19</sup> A. Feenberg, Questioning Technology (London: Routledge, 1999) , 9.

continuation of large-scale industrial, weapons and computer technologies so long as they are placed under democratic control, Virilio would be unlikely to accept this for the 'essentialist' reason that they all demonstrate tendencies toward autonomy and thus cannot really be placed under 'control' as such, which is why he argues that new forms of what Mumford called 'democratic technics' would have to be developed within the context of a radically decentralized and democratic society.<sup>20</sup>

This difference results from the fact that Feenberg's critical theory seeks to escape the limitations of what he sees as the essentialism of focusing only on the instrumental goals that shape technologies from the beginning rather than also considering the contextual lifeworlds of the people who make use of them after the fact, whereas with Virilio each new technology that is introduced reorganizes these lifeworlds so extensively that deliberation is cancelled out even before it has the chance to present itself, which is precisely why he argues that there is a need to politicize speed.<sup>21</sup> In this sense then, Virilio's critique is quite similar to that articulated by Ian Angus, who has used the concept of 'comparative media theory' in order to point out that while technologies always emerge within the context of a communicative environment structured by both relations of force and relations of use, it does not therefore follow that intrinsic

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<sup>20</sup> L. Mumford, "Authoritarian and Democratic Technics", in Questioning Technology: Tool, Toy or Tyrant? A Critical Anthology, ed. John Zerzan and Alice Carnes (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1991), 14. Much like Virilio, Mumford argues that only in small-scale communities in which face-to-face relationships predominate can participatory democracy flourish. He goes on to argue that these are only possible under particular forms of technology that rely primarily on human skill and muscle power, such that individuals and communities do not become uprooted and subjected to them in the process of 'use'. As he explains, "my thesis, to put it bluntly, is that from late Neolithic times in the Near East, right down to our own day, two technologies have recurrently existed side by side, one authoritarian, the other democratic, the first system-centered, immensely powerful, but inherently unstable, the other man-centered, relatively weak, but resourceful and durable". Feenberg argues that this 'alternative technology' approach, which he also identifies in the work of William Morris and Amory Lovins, unnecessarily concedes to capitalism the claim to be more efficient than socialism, with the result that it therefore becomes complicit with it in the process; as he puts it, "to claim that society must choose between industry and craft is to concede that the existing industrial system is the only possible one". He also points out that such arguments typically leave the question of industrial technology vs. craft technology unanswered, which is probably a fair assessment of Virilio's sometimes contradictory positions on the matter, such as when he on the one hand argues against a computer mediated direct democracy while on the other hand advocating measures similar to the 1888 Brussels conference. A. Feenberg, Transforming Technology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 141.

<sup>21</sup> In addition to this, Feenberg's belief in the possibility of 'democratic rationalization' leads him to describe the philosophical bases of substantivism (which is the category within which he places Virilio) as complicit with the totalitarian dimensions of technocracy in that "whether technology is welcomed or abhorred these deterministic premises leave no room for democracy" A. Feenberg, Questioning Technology, 75. Yet this argument directly contradicts Virilio's assertions (noted below) that the most pressing need of our time is to develop a system of popular and democratic control over technology so that local communities can decide which technologies they see or do not see as beneficial to them. Thus Virilio's perspective is not that of the 'prophet of doom' some interpret him as, but rather is that of one who sees the need to resist rationalization through small-scale, local and decentralized forms of democracy. Indeed, this, rather than the question of democratic control, may be his primary source of conflict with Feenberg and others who also see the need for the expansion of democracy, but not necessarily through a small-scale and local framework, since to them this implies an essentialist and determinist basis of thought, in which large-scale and national or global frameworks necessarily lead to centralized power and instrumental domination.

characteristics which limit potentialities are either of only limited importance or irrelevant altogether, since different mediums necessarily privilege different regimes of perception and therefore different regimes of control. One of the main disagreements between Feenberg and Angus on this point results at least partially from their differing interpretations of Don Ihde's thoughts about contextual effect, in which Feenberg interprets him as saying that there is nothing intrinsic to technology as such and that the only qualities which they possess are those that are acquired within a social context,<sup>22</sup> whereas Angus sees him as arguing that it is precisely the intrinsic qualities of each technology that lead them to engender differing modes of communication; indeed, as he puts it, "this view might be viewed as 'essentialist' insofar as each medium is investigated in isolation from its context, but it is not determinist insofar as the inclination can be resisted even though a certain degree of consciousness is required to do so"<sup>23</sup>. Similarly, while it is true that Virilio's conception may be essentialist in the sense that he would find intrinsically instrumentalist qualities within the technologies of *our time*, this does not mean that he therefore forfeits the potentiality of democratic control over technology *as such*, especially since he even goes so far as to argue that the questioning of technology should become the next major political struggle; as he puts it, "we must engage in resistance first of all by developing the idea of a technological culture. However at the present time, this idea is grossly underdeveloped. For example, we have an artistic and a literary culture. Nevertheless, the ideals of technological culture remain underdeveloped and therefore outside of popular culture and the practical ideals of democracy. This is also why society as a whole has no control over technological developments. And this is one of the gravest threats to democracy in the near future. It is, then, imperative to develop a democratic technological culture".<sup>24</sup>

As articulated by Virilio, such a transformation would begin with the popular defense of 'the body', understood in the broadest sense to include the 'animal bodies' of men and women, the 'social bodies' of families and cities and the 'territorial bodies' of earth and ocean, from the fragmenting effects of machinic, economic and political technologies. It would also challenge the massification brought about by all forms of technical mediation ranging from global computer networks to hemispheric trade regimes to sprawling nation-states, replacing all of these with a

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<sup>22</sup> A. Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, 213.

<sup>23</sup> I. Angus, *A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Identity and Wilderness* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 60.

<sup>24</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 194. This quote should be understood in the context of his declaration that he is an 'art critic of technology', as noted above.

plurality of locally-based decision-making assemblies, much as Proudhon once called for.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, while Virilio has been critical of the majority of the classical anarchists due to their often-uncritical embrace of science and technology, Proudhon, the early critic of urbanization, progress and revolution, is perhaps the only one whom he has consistently defended. This is why Virilio contrasts his primarily locally-based thought with that of the Marxist contention that 'we must cut the umbilical cord that holds the worker to the earth', which he describes as essentially complicit with technocratic imperialism. In his own words, "Marx and Engel's new theoretical opposition to the followers of Proudhon is much like Colbert's reflection deploring French inability to create an all-powerful naval empire, their backwardness in the domain of colonization...[thus] the social utopia will come less from class antagonism than from the hatred of the Earth, and we could make comparisons *ad infinitum* between the utopian project and the plans of the naval empire where Marx is buried".<sup>26</sup> Not surprisingly he has been taken to task for views of this order by Marxist academics such as Sean Cubitt, who argue that while Virilio may identify as an anarchist, he is not of the mainstream rationalist tradition but rather of his own marginal variety; as he put it, "Virilio's liberalism is in the lineage neither of Stirner's right-wing libertarianism, the deep subtext of much North American neo-liberal techno-utopianism, nor of Kropotkin and the agrarian utopianism that occasionally surfaces in contemporary writings critical of technological rationalism. Instead, it forms an anarchist mirror to the pessimistic Marxism of Adorno. But where Adorno is concerned to discover in the European past the roots of Nazism and authoritarianism, for Virilio the burning issue is a contemporary apocalypse".<sup>27</sup> While this argument has much to recommend it in regard to the implication that like the thinkers of the Frankfurt School did under German forms of totalitarianism, today Virilio is using his anarchist critique in order to reveal the shape it will take in our own time, Cubitt's unfounded conclusion that "the old liberal anarchist-tirades against state and technology cannot bring us a politics

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<sup>25</sup> A. Carter, The Political Theory of Anarchism (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971) , 70. Carter demonstrates that Proudhon preferred the decentralized simplicity of rural peasant life to that of centralized technological urban life; his advocacy of regional federations and subsistence economies are also congenial with Virilio's decentralized approach. While some might see this perspective as a romanticizing of the local, this need not be the case since privileging the self-determination and autonomy of the local does not preclude global interaction per se, it just refuses the predominant logic of our time in which globalization has made local self-determination an increasingly difficult task. For a more thorough discussion of the question of whether or not Virilio romanticizes the local, see section 3.4 'The Political City Against the Global City'.

<sup>26</sup> P. Virilio, Speed and Politics , 43. One might also consider one-time anarchist Simon Weil's argument that "under the same name of revolution, and often using identical slogans and subjects for propaganda, lie concealed two conceptions completely opposed to one another. One consists in transforming society in such a way that the working-class may be given roots in it; while the other consists in spreading to the whole of society the disease of uprootedness which has been inflicted on the working class". S. Weil, The Need For Roots (London: Routledge, 1952) , 48.

<sup>27</sup> S. Cubitt, "Virilio and New Media" in Paul Virilio From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond, edited by John Armitage (London: Sage Publications, 2000) , 35.

adequate to the new media formations"<sup>28</sup> ignores that the question of developing a 'new politics' appropriate to the advent of technological culture has been one of Virilio's primary concerns throughout his work, not to mention that it is for this very reason that he is so critical of technology and the state, since these impede such a 'resistance of the brake' from emerging.<sup>29</sup>

In fact it is for the same reason that he rejects so many of the classical anarchists such as Stirner, Kropotkin, Bakunin, Bonnot and others who, while they have rejected the authority of capitalism and the state, did not always also reject that of science and technology, often even embracing an almost Nietzschean philosophy of the 'perfect man' in the process; as Virilio explains, the distinction is that "I am an anarcho-Christian. It sounds quite paradoxical, but to me the definition of man is subsumed, and I quote it often, in a saying by someone who I have come to like very much, Hildegard of Bingen...the saying is '*Homo Est Clausura Mirabilium Dei*': 'Man is the closing point of the marvels of the universe'. Thus for me Man is not the center of the universe...there is nothing beyond man. Forget about technology, eugenism, robotics, prostheses. Forget also about '*Uebersch*'. I do not believe that these ideas are at all humanist. I think they're far worse. This is a very important point for me, because I am absolutely against this newfangled form of totalitarianism which I call technoscience and its cult".<sup>30</sup> Indeed, much like his fellow anarcho-Christians such as Tolstoy, Day and Ellul, Virilio sees contemporary technocracy as essentially blasphemous in that through the transportation and transmission technologies which are now operating at absolute rather than relative speed, it artificially reproduces the 'ubiquitous, instantaneous and immediate' qualities of the Divine, so as to replace the ancient God of humankind with the modern 'machine-god' of technique, a sort of 'substitute-god' whose religion is that of atheism, positivism and progressivism. In this sense, Virilio's anarchism is more appropriately Heideggerian than it is Nietzschean, since rather than embracing what he describes as the 'nihilist ideology' of the will to power, he aligns himself instead with the radical humility of letting Being be, of respecting the inherent sanctity of other animal, social and territorial bodies in and of themselves.<sup>31</sup> Rather than levelling all of human history and replacing

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<sup>28</sup> S. Cubitt, "Virilio and New Media", 35.

<sup>29</sup> Virilio's conception of resistance is thus in many ways similar to that of Adorno's teacher Walter Benjamin, who, in an early draft of his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" stated, "Marx says, revolutions are the locomotives of world history. But perhaps it is really totally different. Perhaps revolutions are the grasp by the human race travelling in this train for the emergency brake" W. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* Vol. 1 of *Abhandlungen*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Herman Schweppenhaeuser, (Frankfurt am, Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), 1232.

<sup>30</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Virilio argues that what is needed today is not more selfishness but rather more humility, since as he puts it, "totality will always remain inaccessible to us. A scientist, a philosopher, who confesses this humility, contributes to the salvation of humanity. But this humility has always existed more with poets - I'm thinking of Holderlin, of Nerval - and

it with the 'new' as advocated by many of the classical anarchists, Virilio argues that a more truly anti-authoritarian approach would be to consider the attributes of various forms of culture on a case-by-case basis. Thus we see that in regards to his politics, Virilio is primarily sympathetic to the 'federative' anarchism of Proudhon, with his embrace of the simplicity of rural life and the conviviality of animal, social and territorial bodies, as well as the anarcho-Christian tradition of Tolstoy, Day and Ellul, with their embrace of religious culture as a fortification against the negative impact of technological culture. Just as his phenomenological critique of science and technology allow him to escape the problematics inherent to both extreme materialism and extreme idealism, his anarchist critique of politics allow him to escape the technocratic features common to fascism, Communism and liberalism.<sup>32</sup> In order to really grasp the inimitability of this position in regard to political science in general and political theory in particular, it will now be necessary to engage in a more detailed investigation into Virilio's philosophy of the body, beginning first of all with the primary thinkers who have influenced his perspective.

## 1.2 Philosophy of the Body

The philosophy of the body on which Virilio bases his critique of technocracy is woven together from a number of distinctive threads within the history of political thought, including key features of Merleau-Ponty, Arendt, Foucault and Agamben which repudiate the enduring Platonic tradition of dividing the body from the soul, arguing that such dualisms provide the framework from which instrumental reason has come to dominate all of reality. This begins with the *Phaedo*, where Plato argued that body and soul are in their essence separate entities, with the result that the two could be separated not only from each other but also from the world, which was also described as consisting of body and soul. From this perspective Plato argued that the body was little more than a prison, whose sensory perceptions ultimately confused and degraded the soul, thus preventing acquisition of true knowledge and understanding in the same way that a prisoner is prevented as a result of the iron bars separating him from the world. As he saw it, since the soul

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only very rarely with scientists and philosophers. I think the future of humanity lies in humility" P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews, 104.

<sup>32</sup> This convergence, which might be called 'phenomenological anarchism' is also seen in the writings of Peyman Vahabzadeh who has argued that "the postmodern critique of fundamentals provides an unprecedented opportunity for the revitalization of anarchist thought by the radical phenomenological deconstruction of epochs and their dominant principles, in the work of Reiner Schürmann". Vahabzadeh argues that this can be accomplished by employing Schürmann's concept of 'anarché', as opposed to 'anarchy', which, he argues, typically decenters the self-regulating rational human subject outside of time and space. Anarché, by contrast centers the subject within the unique phenomena that characterize the particular epoch within which it moves (such as fascism, Communism or liberalism) and thus provides the possibility that things might be different within the context of another time and space. P. Vahabzadeh "Technological Liberalism and the Anarchic Actor" In Anarcho-Modernism: Toward a New Critical Theory, edited by Ian Angus. (Vancouver: Talon Books, 2001), 341.

reasons best when it is not confused, "he will do this most perfectly who approaches the object with thought alone, without associating any sight with his thought, or dragging any sense perception with his reasoning, but who, using pure thought alone, tries to track down each reality pure and by itself, freeing himself as far as possible from eyes and ears, and in a word from the whole body, because the body confuses the soul and does not allow it to acquire truth and wisdom whenever it is associated with it".<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Plato even went so far as to suggest that it is the feral body unrestrained by the law of reason that is the root cause of war and other forms of social conflict, since the body requires sustenance, which requires money and wealth; thus, freed from these requirements, such maladies would cease. So, for Plato, only upon being freed from this bodily prison could the soul make its way to the 'realm of the pure forms' where pure knowledge would finally become possible in the absence of the confusion caused by the perceptual organs. Upon reflecting on the commonly held assumptions about the body in contemporary society, it is apparent that the extremism at the heart of the Platonic separation of body and soul has proved a remarkable perseverance, with often-tragic consequences.

While this philosophy of the body continued to be influential for several millennia following Plato's death, in the mid-twentieth century Merleau-Ponty would mount what for Virilio would be the most important challenge to the split between body and soul, advancing a position based on existence itself. As he saw it, in the realm of preobjective physiological existence, body and soul form a single, united, evenly distributed system, not only within the skin of the human body but also with all other bodies in the world through the 'common ground' of the terrestrial body in which they are always embedded as a whole; as he saw it, this living weave was so mutually interdependent that "our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system"<sup>34</sup> - an ecology in which the body becomes aware of itself and its place in the world. This is seen more clearly, perhaps, in the example that is given of the cube, which, as he explains, is never seen in its totality from the point of view of the perceiving subject - since only one side can be seen at a time - but which the subject is able to understand as a cube nevertheless, through her bodily relationship to the larger system which unites her body with the object and the world. Thus it is the subject's deep integration into this ecology which gives form to the process by which the 'gaze' of the body inhabits an object in order to form a mental image of its dimensionality, which in turn redefines the perceptual experience of being-in-the-world that the

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<sup>33</sup> Plato, Plato's Phaedo, trans. GMA Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1977), 15.

<sup>34</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception (London: Routledge, 1958), 235.

body acquires from that point on. For Merleau-Ponty, the 'objective' split between body and soul, which was also based upon a profound distrust of the bodily organs and the privileging of the soul itself, often had the unsavory result that under the gaze of the master or the technician, the body of the slave or the patient was reduced to the status of an object like any other, a 'mechanical thing with no inner life'<sup>35</sup> and thus subject to the cruelest of instrumental uses without a second thought. So by rejecting the Platonic split between body and soul, by affirming that one does not have a body, but that one *is* a body, Merleau-Ponty also helped to overcome the objectification of the body in Western thought, while simultaneously demonstrating that the body is produced by the context of the world in which it moves, all of which helps open a path for Virilio to develop his conception of the political body through the thought of Arendt, Foucault and Agamben.

As many have noted, Merleau-Ponty's recovery of the body can be characterized as a sort of 'phenomenological humanism' - a humanism that has little in common with the Renaissance, which is usually cited as its origin. One of the most incisive phenomenological humanists in this regard is found in the figure of Arendt, a thinker of Jewish extraction who was forced into exile during WWII. In her reflections on the origins of totalitarianism, Arendt concluded that the uprooting and fragmentation of the political body was the primary factor that allowed it to occur, arguing that it would never have been possible had it not been for the replacement of the conviviality of 'common sense' with the instrumental science of Darwin and the terrorist method of Hitler. Thus, it is of little surprise that in later work she referred to the launch of the first satellite into space as the contemporary manifestation of the Platonic escape of the soul from its bodily prison<sup>36</sup> except that in this case it was in reference to the body's escape from what had come to be seen as its terrestrial prison - an enduring tendency in Western civilization that resonates to a disturbing extent with the totalitarian strategy of alienating the animal, social and territorial bodies from their political ecology in order to control them directly. As she elaborates, this strategy "substitutes for the boundaries and channels of communication between individual men a band of iron which holds them so tightly together that it is as though their plurality had

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<sup>35</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, 109.

<sup>36</sup> H. Arendt, "The Human Condition". Retrieved October 15, 2003 from [http://www.alamut.com/proj/98/nuclearGarden/bookTexts/Arendt\\_humanCondition.html](http://www.alamut.com/proj/98/nuclearGarden/bookTexts/Arendt_humanCondition.html). "The immediate reaction, expressed on the spur of the moment, was relief about the 'first step toward escape from men's imprisonment to the earth.' And this strange statement, far from being the accidental slip of some American reporter, unwittingly echoed the extraordinary line which, more than twenty years ago, had been carved on the funeral obelisk for one of Russia's great scientists: 'Mankind will not remain bound to the earth forever.' The banality of the statement should not make us overlook how extraordinary in fact it was; for although Christians have spoken of the earth as a vale of tears and philosophers have looked upon their body as prison of mind or soul, nobody in the history of mankind has ever conceived of the earth as a prison for men's bodies or shown such eagerness to go literally from here to the moon."

disappeared into One Man of gigantic dimension. To abolish the fences of laws between me - as tyranny does - means to take away man's liberties and destroy freedom as a living political reality".<sup>37</sup> But it does not stop there, for, as she points out, it also installs a motor into the ideology of natural or historical 'evolution' such that the acceleration of 'progress' becomes the essence of politics, and the iron band of terror, through disrupting the ecology in which bodies come to know themselves, prepares each body equally for the role of victims and executioners at one and the same time. As she explains, "the compulsion of total terror on one side, which, with its iron band, presses masses of isolated men together and supports them in a world which has become a wilderness for them, and the self-coercive force of logical deduction on the other, which prepares each individual in his lonely isolation against all others, correspond to each other and need each other in order to set the terror-ruled movement into motion and keep it moving".<sup>38</sup> Thus totalitarianism conquers by dividing *and* uniting at the same time, by reconstructing the disassembled political body as an 'organized loneliness' which, although it thrives on creating an individual experience as such, is not truly solitary in its effects, but paradoxically becomes a totality of all previously subjective bodies into a single totalitarian body, a 'shrunk head' suddenly miniaturized to a dimension at once more discernible and pliable from the perspective of power. Indeed, it is a similar 'shrinking down to size' of the plurality of cultures that has come as a result of the pollution of distances concomitant with the mass deployment of communications technologies<sup>39</sup> that Arendt cites as the basis for the American ascendancy to global hegemony, a transformation that makes the great plurality of the world manageable by a select few, in that every relationship between beings that had once formed the convivial basis for the political body has now been suddenly uprooted and liquidated, thus destroying the capacity of individuals and groups to discern between the true and the false, the real and the virtually real, the just and the unjust.

If we accept Merleau-Ponty's argument that the body only comes to know itself through its experience of other bodies and the world with which it forms a system, and we also accept Arendt's argument that totalitarianism is a technique which takes advantage of this, ruling through the totalizing process of uprooting and bonding the plurality of the political body, we can understand how Virilio might take Foucault's analyses as an extension of this. This is perhaps most clear when one considers that he argued in *Discipline and Punish* that with the decline of

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<sup>37</sup> H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1968) , 466.

<sup>38</sup> H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* , 474.

<sup>39</sup> H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism.*, xxi.

the physical reprimanding of the body at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the body is instead disciplined by the instrumental arrangement of perception, in other words by the gaze of his warden, a visual method of control which through the design of the Panopticon, inhabits the soul, sets it into motion, redefines its milieu and thus its very knowledge of itself. Indeed, the disciplinary architecture of the Panopticon mirrors not only the insights of Merleau-Ponty in regard to perception but also quite closely the technologies of totalitarianism articulated by Arendt, for they too are based on the instrumental imposition of an 'organized loneliness' that unites only through the creation of division, a totalizing surveillance strategy of multiple separations. Foucault elaborates on this political body by arguing that although it has primarily been a subject of study in the essentially Platonic realm of demography and pathology, appetites and disease, "the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labor power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which it is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body".<sup>40</sup> This description leads Foucault to elaborate further in his consideration of the outlines of a political anatomy of the 'body politic' which he defines not so much as a 'legal' study of the forms of State but rather as a "set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge".<sup>41</sup> Foucault uses this approach, which relies on the embedding of the body within an ecology that defines it, to consider the 'double body' of the Medieval era that, as Kantorowicz argued, links the corporeality of both the King and the condemned man through a strangely symmetrical legal code of ceremony, punishment and ritual, such that the condemned man becomes the inverted figure of the king himself. What changes in the 18<sup>th</sup> century is that the means of discipline relies upon the primacy of perception, such that the soul of the condemned man is not so much subjected to punishment as a result of his having sinned but is more accurately produced by punishment itself, which is administered now by a veritable army of specialists and technicians whose gaze becomes even

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<sup>40</sup> M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) , 25.

<sup>41</sup> M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 28.

more important than that of the judge himself, so that "the soul is the effect and instrument of political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body".<sup>42</sup> When one considers, in contrast with the works of Merleau-Ponty, Arendt and Foucault that the Platonic separation of body and soul is still widely accepted even today, it becomes clear how the dualistic claims of the State to be more humanely disciplining the 'soul' within the body rather than the 'body' itself, was really little more than an abstraction to divert attention from the instrumentalization of the body, which had merely reversed positions rather than disappeared.

Agamben is one of the most insightful theorists to think the politics of the body in the wake of the problematics unleashed by Plato, Merleau-Ponty, Arendt and Foucault; indeed, his most celebrated work on the *Homo Sacer* is essentially a meditation on the instrumentalization of the body as such in the tradition of Greek and Roman political thought, each of which reflected the 'double body' Foucault identified between the king and the condemned man. He explains that for the Romans, there is also a double exclusion whereby the *Homo Sacer* becomes a body in a position whereby all other bodies are potentially sovereign to it, and thus liable to kill it without punishment, whereas the body of the sovereign is in the opposite position whereby all other bodies are potentially *Homo Sacer* and are thus liable to be killed by it without punishment as well; as he elaborates, "the sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life - that is, life that may be killed but not sacrificed - is the life that has been captured in this sphere".<sup>43</sup> This double body was reflected in the thought of the Greeks as well, for whom there were two meanings of the word 'life' - on the one hand there is *zoe* which referred to life that animates all bodies and the other there is *bios* which referred to a particular way of life of said bodies; in regards to Plato and Aristotle, Agamben reminds us that "neither philosopher would ever have used the term *zoe* (which in Greek, significantly enough, lacks a plural). This follows from the simple fact that what was at issue for both thinkers was not at all simple natural life but rather a qualified life, a particular way of life".<sup>44</sup> This, of course, is because life as such is excluded from the *polis*, which, according to Aristotle, was to be the particular space of the *bios* of political bodies, that of propertied male citizens rather than *zoe* of bodies in general, which included those of slaves, women, animals and vegetation. Thus Agamben draws our attention instead to the analyses of Arendt and Foucault, who each in their way, pointed out that the eventual incorporation of *zoe*

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<sup>42</sup> M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 30.

<sup>43</sup> G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) , 83.

<sup>44</sup> G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 1.

into the domain of the State was the point at which politics became biopolitics, with the result that living bodies as such, rather than 'citizens' in particular, were suddenly understood as legitimate objects of governance, whether that 'governance' meant cooptation, incorporation or decimation. Unlike Foucault, however, Agamben rejects the implicit division between the technologies of the self and the technologies of population since "the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power"<sup>45</sup> which necessarily includes not only the subjective and the political, but also those forms of power referred to variably as fascism, communism and liberalism. This is because for Agamben, there is a common ground from which all of these traditions emerge, not only from the exclusionary polis of Plato and Aristotle, but also from the Roman tradition of the *Homo Sacer*, that life which could not be sacrificed but which could be killed nonetheless. Thus he argues that the perspective of biopolitics that it is the inclusion of bare life in the good life that characterizes modernity is only partially true since "the decisive fact is that, together with the process by which the exception everywhere becomes the rule, the real of bare life - which is originally situated at the margins of the political order - gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoe*, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction. At once excluding bare life from and capturing it within the political order, the state of exception actually constituted, in its very separateness, the hidden foundation on which the entire political system rested. When its borders begin to be blurred, the bare life that dwelt there frees itself inside the city and becomes both subject and object of the conflicts of the political order, the one place for both the organization of State power and emancipation from it".<sup>46</sup> In this sense one might infer that while the city has historically been based on the relative exclusion of the Other - whether in an 'inclusive' form or not - it is also the space whereby this history might be overcome by making the subject of that exclusion the very center of resistance. Indeed, Agamben argues that it is this inner solidarity between the competing political systems of the West that ultimately forms the negative ground for the 'new politics' which will seek to escape the permanent state of exception and truly unite *zoe* and *bios* for the first time in history, not only through a reclamation of the body or the city but also through the excluded biopolitical body itself, making the figure of the *Homo Sacer* its very basis.

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<sup>45</sup> G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 6.

<sup>46</sup> G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 9.

### 1.3 Three Bodies of the Political

For those familiar with both, it is immediately clear that Agamben's analysis of the fate of the body in Western political thought as well as his hopes for its emancipation are quite close to what Virilio has discussed from the very beginning of his career, which has consistently sought to unveil, on the one hand, the common ground uniting fascism, communism and liberalism in their conspiracy against the body as such, and on the other, a 'new politics' of proximity, based on the conviviality of the political body, redefined to include not just the *bios* of the polis or the nation, but the *zoe* of the man, the woman, the bear, the eagle, the family, the village, the ocean and the earth as well; in other words, these animal, social and territorial bodies are understood to be inseparable from the political body in the same way that the soul is held to be inseparable from the body, and the body is held to be inseparable from the world. With such a degree of overlap between the perspectives put forth between them, it is of little surprise that Virilio has affirmed his affinity with the perspective outlined in *Homo Sacer*, even going so far in one interview as to state, "I must say I have a boundless admiration for Agamben...it is a remarkable book and one with which I could not agree more".<sup>47</sup>

Yet the difference for Virilio is that in his conception, 'bare life' is produced not so much by sovereignty per se, but rather by the technologies of transportation, transmission and transplantation, which in a time when we have suddenly attained the speed of light, universally 'mediatizes' each and every body, turning them all into an amorphous mass of bare life, fodder for the global transition from real space to real time. Elaborating on this key concept, Virilio notes that prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mediatization had been defined as the stripping of rights from one's person by a conquering imperial sovereign such as Caesar or Napoleon; as the era of the tyrant is now receding, the conquering force in our own time has become that of the media, which is far more thorough in its approach in that it strips entire political bodies of their rights by uprooting, fragmenting and destroying them, only to reconstruct the remains into a single 'globalitarian' body whose billions of perceptual organs are then controlled directly through a global apparatus of networked prosthetic devices. As he argues, human beings are able, through the directly perceiving body, "to distinguish between what we think is real and therefore true, and what another individual might consider real and true...'natural' communication therefore demands audiovisual proximity and fairly restricted intervals or territory; it also demands a limited number

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<sup>47</sup> P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews, 45.

of communicants, each sharing the same vocalizations or other semantic signals".<sup>48</sup> But when the prostheses of perception finally conquer the body and make it its subject, the overall effect is a 'mass mediatization', in which the multiperspectivity of the ancient agora, with its thousands of uniquely situated spectator-participants, and thus thousands of unique interpretations, gives way to the uniperspectivity of 'e-democracy' with its uniformly situated spectator-participant and its singular 'optically correct' interpretation. Therefore it might be said that Virilio's major contribution to the philosophy of the body has been to articulate the ontologies of being that together form the ecology of the political body, the history of the empire of speed and its accelerating de-struction<sup>49</sup> of this ecology through the process of mediatization, and the implications that the intersection between the two might have for contemporary politics; throughout his work then, there are three elementary bodies that, through their integration with one another, make up the ecology of the political body;

1. *The Animal Body*: the man, the woman, the child, the dog, the horse, the cow
2. *The Social Body*: the couple, the family, the group, the village, the city, the nation
3. *The Territorial Body*: the island, the region, the continent, the ocean, the earth

The mutually dependent relationship between these bodies makes abundantly clear the 'need for roots' spoken of by Simone Weil, since if the animal body of the individual human being is removed from the social body of the couple and the family, not only will the number of births plummet, but true political life will disintegrate into *anomie*, since it relies on each of these as its very basis.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, if the social body of the couple, the family or the group is removed from the territorial body of the city, the region or the continent, the difference between here and there disappears along with it, resulting in a generalized sense of uniformity and confinement; it is for reasons of this sort that Virilio is interested in the fate of the political body; as he elaborates, "to a materialist, matter is essential: a stone is a stone: a mountain is a mountain: water is water: and earth is earth. As far as I am concerned, I am a materialist of the body, which means that the body

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<sup>48</sup> P. Virilio, *Art of the Motor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>49</sup> Throughout this thesis, the Heideggerian term 'de-struction' will be used in place of the more familiar 'destruction' since while the former implies a process of progressive yet unfinished disassembly, which is precisely the sense in which Virilio is arguing, the latter denotes a completed process that would be more extreme than what the word is referring to here.

<sup>50</sup> S. Weil *The Need for Roots*, 48. Weil argues that "whoever is uprooted himself uproots others. Whoever is rooted himself doesn't uproot others." She bases this statement upon such examples as the Romans, Hebrews, Germans and Americans, all of who were uprooted peoples who soon went on to occupy lands that were not their own. Indeed, as she puts it, "for several centuries now, men of the white race have everywhere destroyed the past, stupidly, blindly, both at home and abroad. If in certain respects there has been, nevertheless, real progress during this period, it is not because of this frenzy, but in spite of it, under the impulse of what little of the past remained alive".

is the basis of all my work. To me, dance is an extraordinary thing, more extraordinary than most people usually think. Dance preceded writing, speaking and music. When mute people speak their body language, it is true speaking rather than handicap, this is the first word and the first writing. Thus to me, the body is fundamental. The body, and the territory of course, for there cannot be an animal body without a territorial body. Three bodies are grafted over each other: the territorial body - the planet, the social body - the couple; and the animal body - you and me. And technology splits this unity, leaving us without a sense of where we are".<sup>51</sup> In this formulation, Virilio has articulated a materiality rather different from that of the Marxist tradition, one that escapes the split between materialism and idealism by focusing on what Ian Angus has called the 'living materiality' of the body itself<sup>52</sup> and its relationship with the technological extensions which it has fashioned, yet which also tend to uproot it from the *hic et nunc* that is the very basis of its being, the unheard-of-center that draws the three bodies together into a mutually beneficial system.

Despite the seeming obviousness of the argument, the positing of the three bodies as a political ecology that ought to be preserved runs surprisingly against the grain of much of Western thought, which tends to argue from the dualistic perspective that humanity will only be free once it has escaped its animal, social and territorial chains, and that we must therefore use 'whatever means necessary' to accomplish this unleashing. This is where Virilio parts ways with the position taken by Plato, that the body is nothing more than a prison of the soul, that confuses its attempts to understand the world, or that it is the body that is the root of social strife and warfare as a result of its uncontrollable 'appetites' - instead he argues that the body is the ecology in which the soul is necessarily embedded, just as the body has a social and territorial ecology in which it is embedded, a conviviality that is the very basis for the new political life he looks forward to. Ironically, his argument is that the true 'prison', the true basis for the 'confusion', 'social strife' and 'warfare' is nothing less than that which has been constructed in the naïve attempt to escape these ecologies through the artificial prostheses of speed, those instrumental techniques whose purpose is the mediatization of animal, social and territorial bodies so that they will only come to know themselves within a technical ecology, a non-space controlled by the

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<sup>51</sup> L. Wilson, "Cyberwar, God and Television: Interview With Paul Virilio" Retrieved September 1, 2003 from [http://www.ctheory.net/text\\_file.asp?pick=62](http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=62).

<sup>52</sup> I. Angus, Primal Scenes of Communication (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000) , 190. "This turn toward materiality can be misunderstood if it is taken to refer to a merely physical externality, or 'dead materiality'. Communication media must be understood as extensions of the living human body such that the entire complex of media forms is a culture constituted by living expressions of a way of life". As noted above, Angus' conception of 'media' refers to the communicative dimensions of technologies.

military, the mass media or both. In his rejection of Plato's philosophy of the body, Virilio embraced instead his teacher Merleau-Ponty's argument that since the soul and body are one with each other and the world with which they form a system, there really is no such thing as 'normal' space, since with the passing of events and the coming into being of inventions, the perceptual regime of the animal body is reorganized along with the values and perspectives of the social body. It is because of this interdependent ecology of bodies that any attempt to divorce them would likely end in a situation in which they would become instrumentalized as objects among objects, as mechanical bodies-without-souls, as has certainly been the case in the context of scientific and totalitarian ideologies in general, and the empire of speed in particular.

It is because of this focus on the political culmination of the animal, social and territorial bodies that Virilio's phenomenology intersects so notably with that of Arendt, although he is considerably more willing to articulate the unique forms of totalitarianism found in the 'liberal democracies' than she, with her focus primarily being on the forms that emerged under Hitler and Stalin.<sup>53</sup> In fact his very critique of the technological splitting of the political body seems to essentially replace her 'iron band of terror', which she argues brings about a state of 'organized loneliness' through instrumental alienation of animal bodies from the body politic, with his own concept of the 'empire of speed', whereby 'iron' becomes the 'technology' that facilitates the implementation of what he calls 'multiple solitude'. He also elaborates on both her discussion of the shrinking of the expanse of the territorial body by communications technologies as an instrument of imperial control, as well as her critique of the will to 'escape velocity' marked by the launch of the first satellite into space, each of which he sees as working toward the destruction of the political body and its replacement by the speed body, an 'iron band' of organized loneliness on the global level that will form the basis for a Global City of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to replace the One Man of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although he is certainly no antihumanist, poststructuralist or even late structuralist; since the late 1970s Virilio has elaborated on the Foucauldian concepts of surveillance and panopticism, modifying the discussion through an engagement with Merleau-Ponty, reframing the Panopticon as a 'Perceptron'; in other words, as a technical disciplining of the body made functional by way of a vast apparatus of urban planning, surveillance cameras, web cameras, internet tracking and spy satellites. Virilio sees this 'society of control' as functioning through a new political anatomy whereby the military-information

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<sup>53</sup> However, it should be noted that Arendt did point out that totalitarianism was not so much a political tendency alien to Western civilization as it was a product of it; she also made the point that it relied on mass support rather than autocratic rule.

complex becomes the symmetrical inversion of the 'information proletariat' subjected to it, through a complex of cybernetic communications and instrumental techniques that make the virtual soul the prison of the cyborg body, which has by that point taken over from its organic counterpart.

In the final analysis then, Virilio's philosophy of the body is the primary basis from which he develops his critical theory of science and technology, and thus his relevance to the discipline of political science, in that it too takes a phenomenological rather than postmodern approach, true to the tradition as laid out by Husserl. As we have seen, this is demonstrated in his attempt to get behind the supposedly 'objective' veneer of technoscience that has progressively alienated the soul from the animal body, the animal body from the social body, and the social body from the territorial body, in order to return to the things themselves, in this case, the living materiality of the political body. It is also for this reason that his critical theory of politics can be characterized as anarchist, since not only does he self-identify as such throughout his writings, but like most anarchists he is also deeply suspicious of attempts to impose massifying and globalizing forms of political, economic or technical infrastructure onto diverse locally-based populations. This 'phenomenological anarchist' perspective which we have outlined in this chapter carries him through his larger analyses of both the empire of speed and the popular defense to its assault, in which Virilio brackets the 'natural attitude' propagated by the cybernetic society, in order to get at those things that have been uprooted and obscured by instrumental reason.

## **CHAPTER TWO THE EMPIRE OF SPEED AND THE DEATH OF THE POLITICAL BODY**

As we saw in the last chapter, Virilio's critique of the mass mediatization that he sees as the effect of the transportation, transmission and transplantation technologies of contemporary imperial power, begins with his demand that the sanctity of the political body be preserved, a body which he defines as an amalgamation of animal, social and territorial bodies that together form a reciprocal system, whether this refers to the ecology of the nomadic hunter-gatherer or that of the sedentary polis. Of course, this is only possible if the totalizing effects of technical mediation between bodies are kept to a bare minimum and the infinitizing ethic of the face-to-face encounter with the Other is preserved, thus reinforcing the ancient plurality that has always constituted the world.<sup>54</sup> The first section of this chapter demonstrates that for Virilio, the central problematic of our time is precisely this, the ever-increasing acceleration of technology, which has solidified into an 'empire of speed' whose primary purpose is to subsume whatever limited political space there once was with a new form of totalitarianism in which decision-making becomes automatic and instantaneous. The following three sections investigate individually how this imperial project results in each of the three bodies becoming separated from their common political ecology and thus from one another and from themselves, such that a single apparatus of prosthetic perception replaces billions of organs of direct perception. The final section considers the method by which the empire of speed is installed and then enforced over and against all other possible systems, through the illegal but nonetheless pervasive strategy of ecological warfare, which consists of the de-struction of any possibility of conviviality or sustenance.

### **2.1 Empire of Speed**

If the political body is the basis of all of Virilio's work, then 'speed' is the categorical imperative of its de-struction and is thus the basis of empire in our time. As he uses the term, speed consists of a synthesis of instrumental and technical control that makes an object of every living body through an ideology of perpetual acceleration, a project which has only come to the verge of 'perfection' in the age of cybernetics. Speed has never been distributed evenly, but has always functioned in the form of a hierarchy, such that the more powerful sectors of society are those that

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<sup>54</sup> In other words, Virilio is arguing that deliberative, participatory forms of democracy require that those who are to participate in the making of a decision have the opportunity to engage with one another on a face-to-face basis and that the more that technology separates us from one another the less plausible this becomes.

move at faster speeds, while the less powerful sectors are those that move at slower speeds, an observable phenomena from the Concorde Jet of the elite to the Greyhound Bus of the poor. A considerably more vivid example of this hierarchy is found in the American automatic responder system which has been set up to launch retaliatory nuclear strikes within one second of an offensive launch by any other country<sup>55</sup>; here, the tyranny of acceleration has taken over so completely that the human despot that once ruled at the top of the social pyramid has been replaced by a totalitarian robot. It is because of this increasingly authoritarian stratification of acceleration that Virilio contends that, as is also the case with wealth, the essence of speed is power; as he elaborates, "power and speed are inseparable just as wealth and speed are inseparable...power is always the power to control a territory with messengers, modes of transportation and communication. Independent of the economy of wealth, an approach to politics is impossible without an approach to the economy of speed".<sup>56</sup> Just as Virilio rejects the Marxist privileging of economic power as prior to speed power, he also rejects the Foucauldian privileging of knowledge-power, arguing that "before knowing-power there is always moving-power",<sup>57</sup> thereby demonstrating the uniqueness of his conception, which places speed at the center without denying the importance of either economic or knowing power.

The imperial form which speed takes is clear not only in the disparity between the various 'speed-classes' but also in the differences in the degree of democratic control that were possible in past times of technologies of relative speed, which, because they required the power of the animal body, thereby guaranteed the population a greater degree of bargaining power, versus the current era of the technologies of absolute speed in which the animal body has been replaced by the technical power of automation.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, just as the epoch of relative speed had been based on the unity of the political body in such a way that it could easily mount a popular resistance if need be, whether in nomadic hunter-gather society or the sedentary society of the polis; as Virilio points out, "the prodigious technical acceleration of means of transportation and

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<sup>55</sup> For a more in depth consideration of this strangely undiscussed but nevertheless incredibly important phenomenon and for considerable documentation, see Section 3.2 'Popular Defense and Relative Speed'.

<sup>56</sup> P. Virilio, *Politics of the Very Worst* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1999), 15. An interesting attempt to lay the groundwork for an economy of speed through combining the Marxist critique of capitalism with the Virilian critique of technology is found in an essay on 'dromoeconomics' by John Armitage and Phil Graham. The main point of convergence they identify is Marx's argument in the *Grundrisse* that concomitant with the increasing importance of exchange value as a factor of production, there also emerges a symmetrical increase in the importance of the means of transportation and transmission to facilitate the general increase in exchange volume. See Armitage, J. & Graham, P. (2001). "Dromoeconomics: Towards a Political Economy of Speed. *Parallax*, 7 (1): 111-123.

<sup>57</sup> P. Virilio *Pure War*, 59.

<sup>58</sup> Virilio's use of the term 'absolute speed' is not to be taken literally but rather as an indication of the incredibly accelerated speeds at which technologies have begun to operate in the past several decades as opposed to those that predominated at the beginning of the twentieth century.

transmission disintegrated this social order and founded a new hierarchy between rulers and masses. This was the hierarchy of high speeds of penetration"<sup>59</sup> in which bare life became dependent upon 'qualified life' for its defense. Thus we see that the shift from a society of relative speed to one of absolute speed is also one in which there is a shift from the relative sharing of power, however marginal this may have been, towards a truly instrumental totalitarianism in which animal, social and territorial bodies are rendered superfluous to the functioning of power and are thus disintegrated into the mediatization of digital being.<sup>60</sup>

It is in this process of mediatization of the political body that Virilio argues that the power structure being imposed in the current epoch of absolute speed amounts to nothing less than a high-tech totalitarianism, one that he labels the 'empire of speed' since it extends so far beyond the continental realm of that criticized previously by Arendt; as he explains, "now, through the single market, through globalization, through the convergence of time towards a single time, a world time, a time which comes to dominate local time...through cyberspace, through the big telecommunications conglomerates, [there] is a new totalitarianism, a totalitarianism of totalitarianisms, and that is what I call globalitarianism...and that's something infinitely more dangerous, even, perhaps, than the Nazi or communist brands of totalitarianism"<sup>61</sup> in that it has now become so universal that every animal, social and territorial body is immediately rendered its subject. Thus the concept of globalitarianism is one that extends his critique of the limits of Marxian and Foucauldian conceptions of power, arguing against the idea that globalization can be so easily summed up as either a new capitalist internationalism on the one hand, or that the 'Great Confinement' has already taken place prior to globalization on the other. To the contrary, he holds that "what is being revealed here are the beginnings of the 'end of the space' of a small planet held in suspension in the electronic ether of our modern means of telecommunication",<sup>62</sup> a confinement more universal and a capitalism more total, than any seen thus far. The importance of understanding 'globalization' as being primarily about mass mediatization, according to Virilio, is that it assists in illuminating the fundamental importance of the spatial and temporal dimensions of the terrestrial body to the orientation of the animal and

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<sup>59</sup> P. Virilio, Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles (New York; Semiotext(e), 1990) , 86.

<sup>60</sup> In other words when the production process was still primarily dependent upon the muscle power of the laborer, the implicit threat of the general strike held a certain amount of political weight which has since disappeared as a result of the generalization of automation brought about by the 'empire of speed' which has transformed the identity of 'laborers' appropriate to the framework of the welfare state into that of 'consumers' appropriate to the framework of the postindustrial minimal state. This is elaborated upon below.

<sup>61</sup> J. Armitage , ed. Paul Virilio: From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond , 38.

<sup>62</sup> P. Virilio, The Information Bomb (London: Verso, 2000) , 7.

social bodies embedded within it; as he argues, "we need to do this to come back to the Earth...to its dimensions and to the coming loss of those dimensions...which only yesterday still organized the politics of nations and their alliances".<sup>63</sup> Indeed, it is not hard to see that the 'lost dimension' of the local political body, which often had more to do with the time-lag inherent in the relative speeds of transportation and transmission technologies than it did with political or physical borders themselves, is now being replaced with the virtual reality of the 'telecontinent' and the 'global city' of absolute speed.<sup>64</sup> This is a result of the fact that that in the current epoch, it is technical bodies rather than living bodies that matter most to the functioning of empire; thus we grasp the weight of Virilio's argument that "all media basically form one single medium, from the telega in the Ukrainian steppes to the transcontinental rail and the cinema motor city".<sup>65</sup> It is this single speed body that forms the infrastructure for the imperial apparatus of control, which as Gandhi, Benedict Anderson and others have observed, has always required the instrumental application of transportation and transmission technologies, even when earlier forms of empire were still based on technologies of relative rather than absolute speed.<sup>66</sup> As Virilio notes, the empire of speed has now reached such an advanced stage that presidents are even declaring the end of the foreign policy/domestic policy opposition at the same time that mayors are declaring that the borders of nations now run through the center of the city rather than outside of it. For Virilio all of this grows out of the mass mediatization of the political body of the polis, in which "the real city, which is situated in a precise place and which gave its name to the politics of nations, is giving way to the virtual city, that deterritorialized meta-city which is hence to become the site of metropolitics, the totalitarian or rather globalitarian character of which will be plain for all to see".<sup>67</sup>

Despite the seeming 'timeliness' of this critique, Virilio is not arguing that the destruction of the political body appeared suddenly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as for him it began much

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<sup>63</sup> P. Virilio, The Information Bomb, 8.

<sup>64</sup> Virilio's conception of the empire of speed is thus quite similar to that of George Grant, who argued that what allowed North America to become the global center of technological empire was the fact that unlike Europeans, there was no sense in which it could be said to autochthonous, which meant that our 'roots' were not implanted in the land itself but in the artificial territory of technique. G. Grant, Technology and Empire (Toronto: Anansi, 1969), 40.

<sup>65</sup> P. Virilio, Art of the Motor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 79. Arthur Kroker has also noted this relationship, pointing out that both of these thinkers ultimately use their Christianity as a basis from which to critique, challenge and ultimately reject the instrumentalism of technological liberalism; see A. Kroker, "The Possessed Individual". Retrieved October 10 from <http://www.ctheory.net/book2.asp?bookid=5>.

<sup>66</sup> B. Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1996). Gandhi's thoughts on technology and empire were gathered from Sankaran Krishna's presentation to the 2003 International Studies Association Conference, "Intimations of Modernity: The Railway as Metaphor in Holocaust and Partition Literatures" on February 28, 2003.

<sup>67</sup> P. Virilio, The Information Bomb, 11.

earlier, as an internal feature of the polis itself; indeed, as he saw it, the city emerged shortly after the appearance of agriculture as a part of the general settling down of the nomads into the life-world of the sedentary. Once this settling process had progressed to the point that the animal, social and territorial bodies had been tamed to the technical demands of humanity, there would appear a milieu that had to be protected; this in turn gave rise to ramparts and watch towers along the outer edge of the city, in an attempt at redefining the space the enemy must encounter in order to conquer the community. This instrumentalization of space was soon expanded on with the rise of 'scientific' measurement by Europeans eager to shrink down the expanse of the world for similar purposes; in contrast to the direct experience of space that predominated in the pre-agricultural world, the tendency now was one toward "increasingly precise evaluations of distances, lengths, as well as durations of time"<sup>68</sup> all of which was now to be based upon such incredibly abstract foundations as the 'length of radiation waves' or other such oddities. Once the *spatial* expanse of the earth had been redefined through this massive project of technical planning and scientific measurement of the entire world, which was also the beginning of the long term mediatization and homogenization of its plurality, it was only a matter of time before the 'dromocratic revolution' would proceed to redefine the *temporal* expanse of the earth as well through the increasing speed of transportation and transmission technologies. For Virilio, 'dromocracy' is a term to be used in place of the more commonly accepted 'industrial revolution' in order to draw the reader apart from the natural attitude it relies on; what is unique about this conceptualization is that it not only illuminates the sudden appearance of the technologies themselves but also the instrumental reason which underlies them, as well as the profoundly undemocratic hierarchy of speeds that result. His argument is that, "there was no 'industrial revolution', but only a 'dromocratic revolution'; there is no democracy, only dromocracy; there is no strategy, only dromology".<sup>69</sup> Indeed, as early as his first writings, Virilio was already demonstrating his conviction that speed is the 'categorical imperative' that ties together Western modernity from fascism to communism to liberalism; this, he argued, is because imperial control has always been based upon not only redefining the experience of space for the enemy who seeks to invade or overthrow it, but even more so by the quickness with which the imperial forces can travel and communicate between one location and another, coming up against as few obstacles as possible in the process. This, in fact, is the best definition of the concept of the 'empire of speed'; a worldwide apparatus of technical control that functions through the instrumental de-struction of

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<sup>68</sup> P. Virilio, Lost Dimension (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 36.

<sup>69</sup> P. Virilio, Speed and Politics, 46.

animal, social and territorial bodies, disembedding them from any ecology whatever, in order to render them mere instruments of power. This de-struction of the political body is perhaps more clearly expressed in the following chronology, in which he outlines the process whereby the unity of bodies that was the basis of nomadic hunter-gatherer society gives way to the instrumentalization of the body with the rise of the 'metabolic vehicle' of the slave, the woman, or the child as an outgrowth of sedentary society, which in turn gives way to the 'technological vehicle' of the plane, the train, or the automobile in dromocratic society, forming an empire over the bare life of animal, social and territorial bodies:

1. A society without technological vehicles, in which the woman plays the role of the logistical spouse, mother of war and the truck.
2. The indiscriminate boarding of soulless bodies as metabolic vehicles.
3. The empire of speed and technological vehicles
4. The metabolic vehicle competing with, then defeated by, the earthly technological vehicle
5. The end of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of History in the war of Time<sup>70</sup>

The final stage listed in this progression is the postindustrial empire of speed at which we have arrived today, in which the victory of the speed body over the political body is complete and the power of the proletariat to affect change eclipsed, thus forcing each and every body to join the ranks of bare life, those billions of bodies-without-souls that have suddenly become superfluous to the functioning of power. The primary method by which speed reduced the body to this degree of degradation, as Virilio elaborates, was "by striking populations with slow death through the destruction of their environment, the ultimate forms of modern ecological war curiously restore the 'soul' in its primitive 'ethnological' definitions: 'mana', potential substance indistinguishable from its environment, not individual but plural, multiform, fluidform, coagulated here and there in social, animal and territorial bodies".<sup>71</sup> Throughout the dromocratic West, whether they are Japanese or Jews, Indians or gypsies, Africans or Slavs, the common denominator between them is that political bodies are uprooted, separated and redefined as bare life, reinscribed in the 'territory' of technocracy as people without states and without rights; they are deported to camps, subjected to industrial experimentation and made to labor without remuneration at a pace that has accelerated progressively throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century until all life has become subject to

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<sup>70</sup> P. Virilio, Speed and Politics, 96.

<sup>71</sup> P. Virilio, Speed and Politics, 75. Section 2.5 'Ecological Warfare and the De-struction of the Political Body' elaborates on this conception and provides extensive documentation.

its apparatus of control. This is why Virilio argues for the expansion of the concept of the industrial proletariat, to include the other 'bodies-without-souls' of the military proletariat, the migrant proletariat, the female proletariat, the proletariat of children and the animal proletariat, as he explains, "the vehicle-bodies of horses are likened in the Middle Ages to projectiles; the bodies of elephants to assault tanks, bulldozers, tractors; those of oxen, camels and mules are like jeeps...still today, the most widespread conviction with respect to the bodies of those wanderers deprived of their identity, those living dead, is that they must be occupied, inhabited, possessed by wills other than their own, which is the very meaning of Fredrick the Second's 'yours is not to reason why!'"<sup>72</sup>

Yet the empire of speed that we live in today goes even beyond this; having transformed the political body into a superfluous, amorphous mass of bare life in the dromocratic revolution, the latest incarnation of empire at absolute speed now seeks to destroy the elementary animal, social and territorial bodies so that it can never be formed again. Now that we have considered the overall structure of this emerging form of control, we will now consider in greater detail the techniques that are bringing about this de-struction of each of the three bodies of the political, followed by an examination of the methods of ecological warfare by which this transformation is being enforced on a global scale.

## 2.2 De-struction of the Animal Body

After the instrumentalized body of the metabolic vehicle was supplanted with the more 'efficient' speed body of the technological vehicle, the animal body of the human person fell into a state of inertia to such a dramatic extent that its very physicality began to be seen as 'behind the times', a 'new era' which, it was imagined, would produce the need for a cyborg body, one able to survive for extended periods in the realms of cyberspace and outerspace.<sup>73</sup> But for Virilio, the Platonic will to break out of the corporeal 'prison' is deeply flawed, since by leaving the earth's atmosphere and developing ever-faster vectors of transportation and transmission, we have also left behind our sense of centeredness in the spatial and temporal world; in this artificial environment, "the relativity of the living is mixed in with the relativity of those technological

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<sup>72</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 86. This is what he exclaimed in response to insolent soldiers who dared to question the validity of military policy.

<sup>73</sup> In a personal communication sent by Arthur Kroker to Virilio, the former described this cyborg body as an "imposture attempting to evade the certainty of death...[thus] it is no accident that *cybernetic eternity* is one of the recurrent themes in a discourse in which the physical world dissolves and the cosmos finds itself planted squarely in the computer", P. Virilio, *The Information Bomb*, 40.

vectors which complete the defeat of the constituted world, the decentering of animal being...[thus] speed really is the old age of the world, of this world of bodily and spatial experience".<sup>74</sup> Indeed, for Virilio, this uprooting was the culmination of the clash of the ideology of progress with Husserl's conception of the 'zero position' in which he observed that the "primary world...is a world which is firmly oriented about my physical animate organism...if walking begins, all worldly things therefore continue to appear to me to be oriented about my phenomenally stationary, resting organism. That is, they are oriented with respect to here and there, left and right...whereby a firm zero of orientation persists, so to speak, as absolute here...the prone position, being the most comfortable, ought to be the zero position".<sup>75</sup> Virilio's great insight is that with the completion of the uprooting of the animal body, the zero position is uprooted as well and is concomitantly relocated into the speed body that is progressively replacing it. This is seen, for instance, in the decline of the automobile as such as a means of moving through real space and its increasing replacement with the 'trans-dimensional' vehicle in which the image itself becomes the ultimate vehicle with which to navigate the virtual reality that is replacing real reality.<sup>76</sup> Thus the instrumental desire of power to transport bodies and transmit messages at the highest speeds possible and in the most dynamic ways possible, has finally led to a situation in which, along with the decrease in physical movement of the technological vehicle, the animal body finally ceases to be an actor in its own right and becomes instead a motionless source of sustenance. In this sense, Virilio's critique of the fate of the animal body is not unlike that unveiled by Neo in *the Matrix*, in that he too is working to awaken the world to the ways in which each of us, after having become superfluous to the functioning of empire, have now been redeployed as 'coppertops' for technologies that have become increasingly autonomous.

This then, is the advent of 'polar inertia' and the 'last vehicle', in which one not only does not personally move the animal body, as was already the case with the passenger in an automobile, but which goes even further to the point where the vehicle itself seizes up such that the only 'movement' that still takes place is now only virtually real. Virilio's prime example of this is that of the stationary swimming pools that have become popular in Japan, produced by an artificial current which prevents one from advancing; as he elaborates, it is "travelling on the spot, with an inertia that is to the passing landscape what the 'freeze-frame' is to the film. And it is the

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<sup>74</sup> P. Virilio *Polar Inertia* (London: Sage Publications, 2000) , 75.

<sup>75</sup> P. Virilio, *Polar Inertia* , 71.

<sup>76</sup> I am assuming that Virilio uses this term to refer to the increasing tendency of people to telecommute and teleshop through the mediums of the phone, the internet or the television rather than actually getting inside their automobiles and going somewhere physically.

coming of a last generation of remote communication vehicles...the end of this century heralds a final shift with the advent of the static audiovisual vehicle, a substitute for bodily movement and an extension of domestic inertia which will mark the definitive triumph of sedentariness".<sup>77</sup> This can be seen in technical phenomena ranging from the broadcast coverage of emergencies on television, which transform the viewer at home into a passenger in a static vehicle of information, to the automobile that is now typically decked out in a veritable suit of electronic gadgets, from televisions to cell-phones, from GPS to MP3 players. As Virilio sees it, the more this colonization continues the less important the originally limited function of the metabolic or technological vehicle becomes and the closer we move to the static vehicle that will eventually enshroud the animal body like an electronic cocoon. Where this enclosure becomes really dangerous however, is in the arena of military conflict. Virilio points out for instance, the appearance of fighter jets designed to completely envelop the animal body of the pilot, resulting in the total separation of the actor from his actions and thus enabling him to carry out acts he would be reticent to engage in otherwise. Further, there is the disturbing fact that the mediatized pilot, with all of his high-tech prostheses, "has become the perfect example of the disabled person, his very survival depending upon the motor and audiovisual feats of his equipment. The equipped invalid is thus paradoxically on a par with the overequipped able person".<sup>78</sup> The truth in Virilio's comparisons between the overequipped air force pilot and the equipped invalid can be seen in the example of the Segway, a sort of electronic scooter that is 'worn' and that ultimately replaces walking, was invented by a person whose initial claim to fame was a gyroscopic wheelchair; thus one can understand more clearly what is meant when he claims that "the blind or disabled person is now the model for the 'sight-disabled' or 'motor-disabled' occupant of the intelligent home".<sup>79</sup>

This disturbing tendency of disabling the able body is seen also in Virilio's argument that the automobile is in some respects just a moving piece of furniture, whose main accomplishment was not so much movement from one place to another as it was a sofa that puts the limbs at ease. It is also found in the contemporary intelligent home, in which heating, lighting, sprinkler systems, garage doors and other accessories can be remotely acted on from a distance. As Virilio explains, "whereas it used to be just a question of arranging our environment to house our bodily activities, the point now is to control that environment through interactive online

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<sup>77</sup> P. Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, 18. In this quote Virilio affirms his affinity for the nomadism of the hunter-gatherer, since that form-of-life allowed for 'energetic being' rather than 'ergonomic being'.

<sup>78</sup> P. Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, 26.

<sup>79</sup> P. Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, 65. Not to mention the fact that the biggest wave it has made since its appearance was when George W. Bush fell off of one after the batteries ran low, making headlines nationwide. More recently, all 6,000 Segways that had been sold were recalled for just this reason.

techniques...instead of domestic functions being successively distributed around the space that is used for living, all the occupant's activities are concentrated at a single-point remote control so that he or she does not have to move about".<sup>80</sup> In this sense, the house becomes an electronic cocoon like the static vehicle or the jet cockpit, an enclosure of the animal body within a speed body that removes any reason to move within it, just as one does not 'move' within one's own body, but rather moves one's body within a world. In other words, this is the dawning of what Virilio calls the era of 'generalized arrival', in which before and after, here and there, cease to have meaning and everything becomes co-present at once. Whether the animal body is physically present or not, the virtual body haunts all spaces simultaneously, just as those spaces virtually haunt the animal body as well; the extremes to which this logic will be taken in the future are now being explored by NASA in their development of the 'data-suit', in which a 'telenaut' on earth will wear one of these costumes coupled with "a helmet relaying live vision of the Martian surface; he will then be able to remote-guide a vehicle several light-years away on the red planet...humans will no more tread the soil of the distant planet than people on earth will actually have to walk around their intelligent home".<sup>81</sup> With developments of this order, there should be no question of the direction in which we are heading, one in which a technological 'double' will become our virtual representative in place of the animal body itself; as Virilio laments, "it is hard to imagine a society that denies the body in the way that the soul has been more and more denied - and yet, that is what we are heading towards...closer to what is far away than to what is just beside us, we are becoming progressively detached from ourselves. Not only is the 'full body' of the earth vanishing before our eyes but our own body is also becoming blurred and afflicting us with an unprecedented disorder",<sup>82</sup> what might be called a 'generalized separation anxiety' that never comes to an end since the animal body is not only uprooted from its social and terrestrial context but is now exiled from itself as well.

While it might appear liberating at first glance to lose the 'dead weight' of the animal body, in fact this mediatization belies a form of control so ubiquitous that it necessarily trumps any technique seen in the past. Virilio argues that polar inertia is not merely the loss of locomotivity but is also a universal confinement of the real space of the local in the real time of the global prison. In the past, one could still open the door or go to the seaport or the airport to 'go outside', whereas today there really is no outside, since the instantaneity of the teleport has

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<sup>80</sup> P. Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, 62.

<sup>81</sup> P. Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, 67.

<sup>82</sup> P. Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, 83.

trumped the function of both the door and the port. The extent of this 'Great Confinement' is seen also in the new ways that prisoners are treated, for instance, in the latest mutations of penal technique, where the animal body is 'liberated' from the walls of the physical prison through the telesurveillance of the apartment, combined with an electronic tether which allow them to travel to designated areas for shopping and other necessary activities. As Virilio argues, "here Bentham's Panopticon is no longer in the detention center but in the apartment or city, or even the country at large...what punishment is involved in this imaginative expansion of imprisonment, this 'media ghettoization' or 'electronic apartheid'?"<sup>83</sup> Here he seems to question the continuing validity of Foucault's limited conception of penalty in the contemporary moment, which has changed so much from the time when he was writing. Perhaps this is why, when Deleuze articulated his concept of the 'society of control' as the successor to the disciplinary society, he cited Virilio as being one of the most cogent articulators of this shift.<sup>84</sup> There is no doubt that this concept can be seen in his work, but Virilio insist that his own goes further still. He argues in regard to the totalitarian features of the Internet that "when people vaunt the world brain by declaring that humans are no longer human but neurons inside a world brain, and that interactivity favors this phenomenon, its more than just a question of the society of control - it's the cybernetic society".<sup>85</sup> Indeed, from Virilio's perspective, it is precisely the society warned of by the inventors of cybernetics, in which from the time when the motor of the machine could be easily disassembled and reassembled to the alienation from that motor wrought by its enclosure in a welded case and on into the various forms of microelectronics of today, we have increasingly lost control, becoming raw material for the very machines we are supposed to be using for our own benefit. As he explains:

as early as 1952, Norbert Wiener feared that cybernetics, which he invented with Alan Turing and Claude Shannon, would become a threat to democracy. Atomic power is a great revolution, so is computer science, and the men who I named are, however, aware that totalitarian control of populations is possible with computer science and robotics, without the necessary political guarantee Remember that cybernetics - from the Greek kubernan: "to direct" - deals with processes of control and communication between men and machines. These two populations, living beings and technical objects may then come into conflict; and it is the very people who developed the automotans of early cybernetics who alerted the public about the political risks involved.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> P. Virilio, Polar Inertia , 33.

<sup>84</sup> G. Deleuze, "Postscript to the Societies of Control". Retrieved June 20, 2003 from <http://www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/vy2k/deleuze-socieites.cfm>.

<sup>85</sup> P. Virilio, Politics of the Very Worst , 80.

<sup>86</sup> P. Virilio, Politics of the Very Worst , 32.

For Virilio, the cybernetic society consists of the enveloping of the animal body within an infrastructure of individualizing and totalizing technologies to such a great extent that anxiety, once an emotion that occurred only at certain moments, becomes a generalized condition of everyday life, an unprecedented form of life that is lived constantly 'on stage', under the watch of satellites, surveillance cameras, electronic tethers, cell phones, email listservs and other such prostheses; as he sees it then, "the more the speed of movement increases, the more control becomes absolute, omnipresent. The more speed grows, the more control tends to supplant the environment itself, so that the real time of interactivity finally replaces the real space of bodily movement".<sup>87</sup> This netting of the territorial body under the circuitry of cybernetics is of necessity also a netting of the animal body as well, with the result that in the near future, the human person "will no longer throw himself into any means of physical travel, but only into another body, an optical body; and he will go forward without moving, see with other eyes, touch with hands other than his own, to be over there without really being over there, a stranger to himself, a deserter from his own body, an exile for evermore".<sup>88</sup>

As dark an image as this most certainly is, thus far we have only considered the effects of the acceleration of transportation and transmission technologies as extensions of the animal body; in the past few years, however, Virilio has increasingly concerned himself with the threat posed by transplantation technologies, with which the animal body will be intruded, altered and colonized from within by nanotechnology, biogenetics and cloning. He sees this latest development as the contemporary equivalent to the colonialism of an earlier era; as he argues, "biotechnologies are, on the scale of the world empire, the same as the drill to the army, or the training of bodies meant to civilize 'savages' in colonies. Except that in the present situation the problem is not to civilize savage bodies but to modify living bodies through cloning".<sup>89</sup> Thus the direction we are heading is toward the completion of the unfinished colonialist project, not only through the retrofitting of the earth with a 'second skin', but also through genetic engineering practices such as cloning, which, Virilio notes, is not Darwin's 'natural selection' but instead his cousin Galton's 'artificial selection' which also formed the basis for eugenics. Though the history has been largely forgotten, eugenics began with the mass sterilization of indigenous, black, mixed-race, low-income and 'feeble-minded' people in twenty four American states, quickly spreading throughout the West in the years immediately afterward up until what was thought to

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<sup>87</sup> P. Virilio, Polar Inertia , 76.

<sup>88</sup> P. Virilio, Polar Inertia , 85.

<sup>89</sup> P. Virilio, Crepuscular Dawn , 101.

be the peak of its influence, in the extermination camps of National Socialism. It is in order to maintain the incredible fallacy of this grand illusion that we do not hear about the ties that bind the long and interwoven history of both eugenics and biogenetics, which would necessarily bring together Galton, Plecker, Hitler and Bush in a rather unseemly common lineage. Thus, with the completion of the European project of exocolonialism (colonization of the Other) through transportation and transmissions, we are now also seeing the completion of the Nazi project of endocolonialism (colonization of the Self) through transplantation. As Virilio elaborates, "in all rigor, one can imagine the creation of human races - no longer the human species in the singular but human species in the plural...what people fail to understand is that the prefix 'super' includes the under-valuation of every other human"<sup>90</sup> which is thus the introduction of at least three levels of 'man' including supermen, humans and subhumans. Indeed, with developments of this sort, Virilio sees the figure of the colonial subject to have become the fate of the general population of the world; as he explains, "one could say that mankind today would be the equivalent of the Savage, as compared to the civilized Conquistador. Far away lands would no longer be where one would discover savages, good or bad. Rather one would find them in a laboratory".<sup>91</sup> This biogenetic endocolonialism would then lead to a kind of 'superracism' on a level unheard of in the past, one that would privilege the modified body of the supermen and the subhuman over the organic body of the human; the unfolding of an era in which, Virilio contends, we will undoubtedly see the advent of 'human farms' in which clones will be produced en masse with the specific intention of harvesting their organs, a process that would be quite close indeed to the programs of National Socialism, in which Jews, Gypsies and others were turned into fodder for technoscientific experimentation of all sorts. Thus, as Virilio sees it, "Auschwitz-Birkenau - the S.S. laboratories were in Birkenau, was the anticipation of what is happening today with transgenics. The extermination camps...were the biggest genetic laboratories of the period".<sup>92</sup> In this sense, the de-struction of the animal body is the logical culmination of the empire of speed; first there was the American eugenic science, which sterilized thousands of people, then there was the Nazi eugenic science, which sterilized and killed millions of people, and now there is the globalitarian eugenic science, which threatens to literally end the human race as such, a development which necessarily brings us from the individual animal body to the communal social body.

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<sup>90</sup> P. Virilio, Crepuscular Dawn, 105.

<sup>91</sup> P. Virilio, Crepuscular Dawn, 106.

<sup>92</sup> P. Virilio, Crepuscular Dawn, 111.

### 2.3 De-struction of the Social Body

Having considered the fragmenting and totalizing effects of the empire of speed on the individual animal body, we can now consider the concomitant effects that this has on the community in which it is embedded, the social bodies of the couple, the family, the city and the nation. Virilio argues that the couple is currently in the process of being destroyed not only by economic factors, but also by a form of sexual relations, which no longer requires the physical union of animal bodies in real space. The long-range trajectory of 'cybersex' is bound to have "demographic consequences for humanity that go without saying thanks to the invention of such a universal condom!"<sup>93</sup> In other words, what we are witness to today is the birth of a cybernetic sexuality in which desire itself is mediatized and alienated from the bodily dimensions of life. Virilio remarks that, ironically, "if the virtual pleasure of sexual telepresence were eventually to outstrip the real pleasure of embodied love, as is probable, soon the only societies left to endure the continuation of the human race will be those that are underdeveloped and worse, 'media' deprived".<sup>94</sup> Thus in this mediatization of the couple, we witness the convergence of the two laws of speed:

1. The law of least action, which is that with every new technology that emerges the less and less the metabolic body itself moves within the world.
2. The law of most acceleration, which is that with every new technology that emerges the faster and faster the vehicular body moves within the world.

He elaborates on this by considering the evolution of the driver's cabin. "In the recent past for instance, one drove in the open air, in contact with the atmosphere, listening to the sound of the engine and the wind, and feeling the cell of the machine vibrate; but today excessive speed has contributed to the driver's being gradually shut away, initially behind the screen of his goggles, then behind the windscreen and finally, right inside the sedan...how can we fail to see that the love relationship will suffer exactly the same fate, with the cybernetic steering of disunited lovers?"<sup>95</sup> For Virilio then, the conquest of the social body of the couple means that sexual intercourse is now in the process of being replaced by the spectacle of fear, the generalized promotion of anxieties over STDs or pregnancy, amplified by precisely the same technologies that promptly offer the machinic 'solution', whether that means cybersex, porn movies, artificial fertilization, biogenetics or cloning, all of which threaten to extend the destructive process even further. The horrors of such a scenario are summed up in a concept that Virilio calls 'totalitarian

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<sup>93</sup> P. Virilio, *Open Sky* (London: Verso, 1997), 67.

<sup>94</sup> P. Virilio, *Open Sky*, 109.

<sup>95</sup> P. Virilio, *Open Sky*, 110.

individualism', a method of control that destroys the very being of the social body through the prostheses of telepresence; as he explains, "if the existence of the social body patently comes before the existence of the animal body that it generates, and if 'being per se resides in the species more than the individual', contemporary individuation menaces the persistence of being at every turn".<sup>96</sup> It is from this critique that Virilio responds negatively to those who argue that speed is potentially liberatory for excluded populations, including such influential cyberfeminist texts as 'The Cyborg Manifesto' by Donna Haraway, which argues that "it is not just that science and technology are possible means of great human satisfaction, as well as a matrix of complex dominations. Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves".<sup>97</sup> In response Virilio notes, "this text already has the ring of a cry of alarm in the face of a mechanical surrogacy that would supplant the carnal attractions of femininity...a deadly addiction to narcotics heralding what will, in the near future, become the implacable imaginary of cybersex".<sup>98</sup> Thus, if totalitarian individualism means that the body is destroyed by technologies which have been designed from the very outset as instrumental means to an end, then it is naïve to assume that these can somehow form the basis of a liberatory movement without becoming implicated in the systems of power which they claim to oppose. "If cyberfeminists do not want to understand the replacement of emotions by electrical impulses - because that is what we are talking about - the replacement of emotional involvement by electrical impulses, it is clear that they will never be liberated."<sup>99</sup> Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that, contrary to the Marxist Haraway's celebrated statement that she would "rather be a cyborg than a goddess",<sup>100</sup> the anarchist Virilio replies in turn, "I want to be neither a God nor a cyborg!"<sup>101</sup>

Thus the cybernetic de-struction of the corporeal relations of the couple is not so much a surprisingly 'liberating' side effect of late modernity as it is the logical culmination of an increasingly postindustrial society, an anomic effect which extends to the social body of the

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<sup>96</sup> P. Virilio, *Open Sky*, 115.

<sup>97</sup> D. Haraway, "The Cyborg Manifesto". Retrieved August 23, 2003 from <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html>.

<sup>98</sup> P. Virilio, *Open Sky*, 116.

<sup>99</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 51. It is for this reason that he rejects what he calls the writings of 'liberated' women such as Donna Haraway in favor of those of 'liberating' women such as Simone Weil and Hannah Arendt; as he explains, "they had some idea of the accident of science, the accident of politics, the accident of knowledge - a much more precise idea than the others. [They knew that] if we separate science from philosophy and religion, it is because of specialization. And it is by specializing that we began to destroy science. This is the reason we were forced to invent automatons". P. Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 156.

<sup>100</sup> D. Haraway, "The Cyborg Manifesto".

<sup>101</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 51.

family as well. As Virilio elaborates, "if industrial technologies have progressively favored the decline of the extended family of the rural world and promoted the bourgeois, and then the nuclear family at the time of the last century's urban expansion, the end of the supremacy of physical proximity in the megalopolis of the postindustrial age will not content itself with promoting a boom in the single-parent family. It will go on to provoke an even more radical gap between men and women, thereby directly threatening the future of sexual reproduction".<sup>102</sup> This de-struction of the family is also heralded today as a form of liberation from the 'dead weight' of the past, yet for Virilio, the ever-heightening divorce rate signals something quite other; an individuation which conforms entirely to the imperatives of contemporary technocratic capitalism and the single global city it is putting into place. As he sees it, "there are two laws of urbanism: the first is the perseverance of the site. A city can never be rebuilt somewhere else. The second is that the more the populating site expands, the more the populating unit falls apart".<sup>103</sup> This latter point, he says, is a result of the fact that, with the accelerated pace of life, after just a few years of living together, the couple or even the family begins to feel as though they have lived together for several decades and little things begin to nag more quickly than they did when the rhythm of life was not so high-paced; this leads then to what Virilio calls the 'Cold Civil War' in which this storm and stress make the 'part-time couple' and the 'single-parent family' the norm rather than the exception. In this state of *anomie*, the empire of speed then becomes the large-scale replacement of the family, supplanting the plurality that was once the bedrock of cities and nations with a single organizing principle operating at a global level. This is the tragedy of the castaways that form the technical 'bedrock' of our increasingly artificial times, "no longer able to count on his family or communicate with them, he is forced to invent an essentially cosmopolitan Western culture, always evolving because always on the move".<sup>104</sup> Even amongst the few who attempt to resist this mediatization of the family by reconstructing it in another form, the typical pattern, due to a narrow understanding of the world, is to fall into some outlaw gang, lifestyle commune or political cult instead, often engaging in forms of spectacular 'action' that are easily recuperated and redeployed as one more element of empire.

With the de-struction of the couple and the family due to accelerated 'progress', the larger bodies of the city and the nation are also destroyed as they lose their specificity and become as one with the technologies that divide them, having lost the populating unit that forms their base.

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<sup>102</sup> P. Virilio, Open Sky, 106.

<sup>103</sup> P. Virilio, Politics of the Very Worst, 63.

<sup>104</sup> P. Virilio, Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles, 85.

This is seen clearly when one compares the Vietnamese resistance to American aggression and the Palestinian resistance to Israeli aggression, in which while the former still had the base populating units of the couple and the family, the sense of national community and the grounding of the territorial body, the latter had been completely uprooted and separated from all of these, forcing it into a position that necessarily tended toward terrorism. As Virilio notes, "those who claim that the Palestinian combat is not a popular defense are right, it is a popular assault become suicidal. Because they have not had any choice, after their geographic disappearance, the last objective of the Palestinian people is that they not disappear from memory as they have disappeared from the map. If, like migrants, they had ceased to be legal inhabitants of the earth, they would still possess a specific territory; that of the media".<sup>105</sup> It is in this way that the national body is being destroyed, such that after losing its terrestrial bearings it is immediately recuperated into the audiovisual empire which is its only true asylum; thus the Palestinian resistance was one of the earliest harbingers of the 'information warfare' that is now transforming military affairs the world over, a form of war waged primarily in the minds of millions of television viewers around the world due to the primacy of perception to its logistical strategy. This globalitarian uprooting of couples, families and nations waged by the 'military-information complex' is thus primarily about the de-struction of the ancient right of peoples to armed popular defense and regular judiciary defense, facilitated by the instrumental suppression of national borders, which, Virilio reminds us, is also the suppression of juridical asylum. Though it has been argued that globalization suppresses borders to impose unilateral American domination, for Virilio this formulation ignores the fact that the US itself is colonized by corporate and military interests, that it too is in a process of deconstruction and *anomie*, like every other nation-state on the planet; as he reflects, "the big threat, I realized it in 1968, is not anarchy, or Balkanization, but Sicilianization, that is *anomie*...what is decomposing is the geographical space, the psychophysical and psychophysiophysical space of being. It affects at once the big territorial body, the small animal body and the social body...[thus] globalization is a phenomenon that surpasses Americanization. Many of our old French Marxists are still preoccupied with anti-Americanism or anti-first worldism. I believe that we are past all that. Globalization, this is the end of America".<sup>106</sup> It is from this globalization of *anomie* that he argues that we are now moving away from territorial geopolitics and towards virtual geostrategy, away from local and world wars and towards 'global wars', away from national wars and toward civil wars; this is the basis of

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<sup>105</sup> S. Lotringer, ed. *Itay: Autonomia: Post-Political Politics* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1980), 270.

<sup>106</sup> P. Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 166.

what he calls, after Arendt's usage, 'global civil war', referring to war which is no longer between social or territorial bodies but which is based instead on a world that has become a single global city, in which the borders of nations run through its center. It is for this reason that he argues that the claim that borders are being 'opened up' as in the European Schengen agreement, is not some kind of sudden breakthrough, whereby power has voluntarily 'liberated' the exiles of the world, but is instead a strategic sleight of hand, whereby animal and social bodies are controlled all the more closely, but on a global level. As Virilio explains, "the border exists somewhere. When you compare Europe and Africa, the border is actually only aerial or maritime, which is a denial of geography, place and relation...the suppression of national boundaries and the hyper-communicability of the world do not enlarge the space of freedom. They are rather a sign of its disappearance, its collapse, before the expansion of an all-too-tangible totalitarian power, a technological control".<sup>107</sup>

The overall effect of this 'national deconstruction' is that the empire of speed is now solidifying into a single global city, in which not only the specificity of nations, but also the uniqueness of cities is dissolved and mediatized through the 'single medium' of transportation and transmission technologies; this is the 'overexposed city' within which populations are kept in line in through a vast network of surveillance cameras, character profiling, militarized police and anomic fragmentation. The origins of this development are found in Virilio's notation that, "at the beginning of the 60's, with black ghettos rioting, the mayor of Philadelphia announced: 'from here on in, the frontiers of the State pass to the interior of the cities'",<sup>108</sup> a harbinger that he then compares to the Berlin Wall, religious apartheid in Belfast, the partition of Beirut, the gutting of Detroit, the evacuation of Liverpool and the fragmentation of Los Angeles.<sup>109</sup> This globalization of *anomie* he says, is a result of the fact that "when the national State is pulled simultaneously at the top and the bottom, there is no remaining transnational State and there is a movement toward

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<sup>107</sup> P. Virilio, Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles , 64.

<sup>108</sup> P. Virilio, Lost Dimension , 9.

<sup>109</sup> Within the domain of political science RBJ Walker has probably done more than any other thinker to point out the impossibility of maintaining the inside/outside distinction when considering the relationship between international relations and civil society within the context of an age of ever increasing spatiotemporal acceleration. As he notes, "the most trenchant reminder that ours is an age of speed and temporal accelerations has been the simultaneous dissolution of Cold War geopolitics and rapid entrenchment of a globally organized capitalism across the territorial divisions of Europe. The year 1989 is now firmly enshrined as a symbol of historical ruptures that have been felt everywhere. Structural rigidities and ideological certainties have given way to social revolutions and territorial fluidities. Ritualized attitudes and postures have atrophied, scholarly literatures have been declared redundant and policy-making groups have been forced to regroup. Even the most up-to-date cartographies have acquired the antique aura of mid-century maps of a world carved into formal colonies and empires". See R. Walker, Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1993) , 2.

the State of civil war".<sup>110</sup> In the wake of the partitioned de-struction of the local city then, we witness the rise of 'metroplex' cities built around and modeled on the international airport, what with its surprise inspections, border patrol agents, intensive surveillance systems and magnetized doorways. This transition is primarily a result of the shift from the technologies of real space to those of real time, such that "from here, continuity is ruptured in time, in a time that advanced technologies and industrial redeployment incessantly arrange through a series of interruptions, such as plant closures, unemployment, casual labor, and successive or simultaneous disappearing acts".<sup>111</sup> This rupture is then exacerbated by the proliferation of internet, satellite, cable and cell phone networks as well as bullet trains and supersonic jets, all of which tend to destroy the interiority of the city and replace it with a technological space-time in which the 'natural day' of the sun and moon is replaced with the 'false day' of electric lighting, surveillance technology and television. Once one has 'entered' this city of speed, it becomes abundantly clear that spatial organization is not nearly as important as temporal organization and that this shift has dramatic effects on the practice of politics; as Virilio observes, "everyone is busily waiting in front of some communications or telecommunications apparatus, lining up at tollbooths...work occupies the center of time, while uncontrolled time of vacations and unemployment form a periphery, the suburbs of time...consider, for example, the irruption phenomenon, in which the City allows itself to be seen thoroughly and completely...where once the polis inaugurated a political theater, with its agora and its forum, now there is only a cathode-ray screen, where the shadows and spectres of a community dance amid their processes of disappearance".<sup>112</sup>

With this de-struction of cities and nations, McLuhan's global village appears in inverted form, where increasing exchange brings forth not technotopian community but rather the dystopian separation of polar inertia and thus an increasing tendency toward riots, rebellions and terrorist actions, which now occur very close together in time but not so close together in space; this is seen not only in the almost immediately consecutive terrorist bombings in New York, Calcutta and Bombay in 1993, but also in the 'citizenship riots' a decade earlier, in which, within 10 days of one another, immigrant boroughs of Paris, Marseilles and Birmingham all disintegrated into chaos. As Virilio argues, "one thing these events, distant in space but so very close in time, have in common is their characteristic suddenness, their unpredictability as

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<sup>110</sup> P. Virilio, Politics of the Very Worst, 76.

<sup>111</sup> P. Virilio, Lost Dimension, 11.

<sup>112</sup> P. Virilio, Lost Dimension, 19.

outbreaks of violence, as well as the flimsiness of their apparent causes"<sup>113</sup> as a result of the multiplier effect, whereby media saturation of the events helps them to spread, the way that Birmingham suddenly becomes a suburb of Soweto, or Berlin a suburb of Los Angeles, as happened in 1992 when the famous rebellion spread not just to San Francisco, Las Vegas, Seattle, NYC, Atlanta and other US cities but also across borders into Toronto and even Berlin. Thus Virilio makes his case that in these times, "the megalopolis is not Mexico City or Cairo or Calcutta, with their tens of millions of inhabitants, but this sudden temporal convergence that unites actors and viewers from the most remote regions, the most disparate nations, the moment a significant event occurs here or there".<sup>114</sup> With the status of the 'citizen' increasingly cancelled out not only by immigration status, racial divisions and class stratification but also by the many 'screens' that keep everyone individualized, from the windshield to the television screen to the computer screen, Virilio finds it unsurprising that James Baldwin's prediction is being confirmed in the very cities where the Industrial Revolution first emerged; that it would only be a matter of time before the whole world became one great ghetto, where in the end the experience of 'the so-called American Negro' would become the experience of us all. "With those words Baldwin points up the powerlessness not only of the North American city to integrate its blacks, but of any city to integrate anyone at all from now on. This is a radical inversion of the principle of the traditional town, once a place for integration, for assimilation of communities".<sup>115</sup> It is in this way that the seemingly righteous demand for world citizenship is redeployed by power as a 'dictatorship of movement'; a global exile of animal and social bodies into a technologized world where the only thing that one has in common with the other is the general condition of statelessness and lack of rights, as seen in Virilio's early observation that the NATO project on 'the universal planning of the circulation of persons and goods' was not about really opening the borders per se, but was more specifically concerned with "putting in question, in the shorter or longer term, all human movement on the planet through the global strategic web spun by the new military-industrial complex".<sup>116</sup> This observation, made in 1974, is one that is increasingly relevant today, when millions of Eastern Europeans, Latin Americans, Asians, Mediterraneans and Africans have been forced into exodus by brutal war, economic conditions and political upheaval; as he notes in regard to the Kosovo War, "on 24 March 1999, the very day when air

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<sup>113</sup> P. Virilio, Landscape of Events (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000) , 68. Obviously it is quite debatable whether the causes were 'actually' flimsy or not, but Virilio's point is that increasingly, media of communication have assumed center stage rather than the issues themselves.

<sup>114</sup> P. Virilio, Landscape of Events , 70.

<sup>115</sup> P. Virilio, Landscape of Events , 71.

<sup>116</sup> P. Virilio, Strategy of Deception (London: Verso, 2000) , 28.

strikes on Yugoslavia began and the moment when the 'ethnic cleansing' of the Kosovars was about to be speeded up, the OECD called on the European Union also to speed up the mobility of labor within our continent...they pointed out that mobility was greater in the USA, Canada or Australia, as though it was all a parlour game or an Olympic marathon!...Here, Milosevic's ethnic cleansing ran alongside the technical cleansing of the postindustrial proletariat".<sup>117</sup> It is precisely this incessant drive toward the 'cleansing' of peoples, promoted by the empire of speed at least as much as by Milosevic, that is destroying the social body of the nation, the city, the family and the couple, and which brings us to the primary means by which this becomes possible, through the replacement of its ancient grounding in the territorial body with the perpetuity of 'short-term housing' in the artificial territory of technique.

## 2.4 De-struction of the Territorial Body

As noted earlier, the territorial is probably the most important of the three bodies in that it is the very basis of orientation that allows animal and social bodies to converge into a political body and thus to have a world as such; this is why it is of such importance to understand the extent to which speed has destroyed this environment, not only industrially but also informatically, such that the spatial and temporal distances which have historically underwritten its plurality have now been destroyed as the uniformity of technique has set in. It is for this reason that Virilio argues for a 'grey ecology'<sup>118</sup> as a compliment to the green ecology with which we are already familiar, since "it is time that we realized that the most important ecological struggles in these last years have a common denominator; they have all taken place and been organized around the problem of speed and its vectors, of the expansion of its area. From the Larzac camp to the town of Malville, from Tokyo-Narita Airport to the black tide in Brittany, territory, in the final account, has always been defended, from the beginning of the popular struggle, against the same enemy: physical or mechanical acceleration".<sup>119</sup> Thus for Virilio it is the concern with the terrestrial body of the earth as the worldly basis of all animal and social bodies that drives his argument that its mediatization

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<sup>117</sup> P. Virilio, Strategy of Deception, 29.

<sup>118</sup> The term 'grey ecology' can be understood as a contrast to 'green ecology' in a number of ways; first of all, since it refers largely to the pollution of human perception, it can be thought of as a mental ecology, in which the color represents the 'grey matter' of the brain; another possibility is that it refers to the grey external color of many technologies, the color of steel and wire, or the color of the cement in the 'urban environment'; while each of these possibilities are hinted at in various locations throughout his work, Virilio specifically quotes Paul Morand as stating that "speed destroys color, when a gyroscope is spinning everything goes grey" which indicates that in a general sense it refers to an environmentalism which would primarily be about challenging unbridled acceleration. P. Virilio Open Sky, 59. In this sense grey ecology can be seen as somewhat similar to Walter Benjamin's positing of revolution as an 'emergency brake' rather than Marx's 'locomotive' of history.

<sup>119</sup> P. Virilio, Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles, 89.

will lead to nothing less than a dictatorship of technique, as he laments, "during the last two centuries of our history, the physical geography of France has completely disappeared under the inextricable tangle of the different media systems...not only does delocalization occupy more territory than does localization, but it occupies it in totalitarian fashion...if, as NATO wishes, we strip every communications system of that kind of neutrality conferred on it by the notion of public service and make the whole thing entirely techno-logistical; then you will have before your eyes the true physical body of the modern totalitarian State, its speed-body".<sup>120</sup> The de-struction of public service, then, is also the de-struction of territory, as seen in the history of US media policy, where cable television and radio broadcasting companies were originally required to give over a percentage of their bandwidth to 'public access' stations. Although this has been increasingly undermined by the deterritorializing deregulation as seen in the case of Clear Channel, which has gone from owning several dozen stations to now owning over 1,200 stations just over the past several years, such requirements conferred at least a semblance of grounding in local space upon these technologies and thus reinforced, however feebly it may have been, the ancient plurality and expanse of the terrestrial body. Indeed, as Virilio argues, it is the widespread ignorance of this 'grey' dimension of ecology that has give environmental movements the 'the quaint, folksy aspect' which makes them appear so ridiculous to those outside; as he argues, "following in the footsteps of the 'universal' science denounced by Edmund Husserl, ecology does not really question the man-machine dialogue, the close correlation between different regimes of perception and the collective practices of communication and telecommunication...today, when we are all so worried about the ecological balance of a human environment seriously threatened by industrial waste, would it not be appropriate to add to the concerns of a green ecology those of a grey ecology that would focus on the postindustrial degradation of the depth of field of the terrestrial landscape?"<sup>121</sup>

The extent to which the bodily perception of space and time is dependent upon the terrestrial body of the earth is illustrated in Virilio's point about the Pioneer 10, which he notes travels at 46,000 kilometers per hour; "but what hour and what kilometer are we talking about, since the probe has been moving away from all geographical landmarks for twenty-three years?"<sup>122</sup> Thus 'dromospheric' pollution can be thought of as the colonization, mediatization and the de-struction of life-size sensuality that has always provided for the expanse and plurality of

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<sup>120</sup> P. Virilio, Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles , 92.

<sup>121</sup> P. Virilio, Open Sky , 41.

<sup>122</sup> P. Virilio, Open Sky , 42.

the earth; after the introduction of colonization, Virilio argues, it was only a matter of time until every 'square inch' of the earth would come under the imperial fold in one way or another, whether through transmission technologies which bring us into cyberspace or transportation technologies which bring us into outerspace; as he asks, "what can we say at the end of the twentieth century which saw the first moon landing except that we have exhausted the time of the finite world, standardized the earth's expanse?"<sup>123</sup> Indeed, for Virilio, ever since humanity lost its bodily bearings on the Earth with the passing of this event, the Age of Enlightenment has been coming to an end, such that the goal since has been to "break down all resistance, all dependence on the local, to wear down the opposition of duration and extension, not only with regard to the terrestrial horizon but also to the circumterrestrial altitude of our natural satellite".<sup>124</sup> This is clearly seen when one considers the experience of astronauts such as Buzz Aldrin, who, upon having reached the moon's surface, realized that lunar time is no longer the same as earth time since it is removed from the real spatiotemporality of the terrestrial body, a realization which will surely become more widely understood as animal and social bodies become ever more universally uprooted from the earth. Indeed, for Virilio, the astronauts were the harbingers of grey ecology, since they came to know quite intimately what happens when the three bodies become removed from one another; as he points out, after reentry, Neil Armstrong recounted the surreal feeling that he had not really gone to moon, Mike Collins of having been 'both present and absent at the same time' while Buzz Aldrin ended up in a psychiatric ward after several nervous breakdowns and detoxification treatments; thus it is "as though the two most famous crews in contemporary history - that of the Enola Gay, which dropped the atomic bomb, and that of the Apollo 11 space capsule - had been the prophets of doom of humanity's unhappy future".<sup>125</sup> In other words, one might say that the mental disorientation of the uprooted astronauts unconceals one element of what Virilio predicts to be the generalized accident appropriate to the grey ecology of absolute speed that will finally replace the local accident appropriate to the green ecology of relative speed.

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<sup>123</sup> P. Virilio, *Open Sky*, 61.

<sup>124</sup> P. Virilio, *Open Sky*, 119.

<sup>125</sup> P. Virilio, *Open Sky*, 139. Indeed, the pilot of the Enola Gay, Paul Tibbets, was quoted in an interview with Studs Terkel as stating "the whole sky is lit up in the prettiest blues and pinks I've ever seen in my life. It was just great...we've never fought a damn war anywhere in the world where they didn't kill innocent people. If the newspapers would just cut out the shit: 'You've killed so many civilians.' That's their tough luck for being there". The abrasiveness of this statement reveals the increasing desensitization that comes with increasing technical mediation from the effects of one's actions; Tibbets also revealed for the first time that plans had been made to drop an atomic bomb on Europe if the need had arisen. S. Terkel, "One Hell of a Big Bang". Retrieved October 16, 2003 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,3604,769634,00.html>.

It certainly is true that the content of the ecological accident has undergone a transformation in the past several decades of technical acceleration; whereas in the past the green ecology of the terrestrial body was threatened only by 'local' accidents such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill or the perennial forest fires in the Pacific Northwest, with the invention of extraterrestrial and circumterrestrial transportation and transmission technologies, the threat of a truly global accident of grey ecology supplants this, unleashing a danger as has never been seen before. As Virilio notes, "if according to Aristotle, 'the accident reveals the substance', the invention of the substance is also the invention of the 'accident'"<sup>126</sup> - as has certainly been the case in regard to technology over the course of the twentieth century, when the technical substance of mass production also became the technical accident of mass destruction, from Chernobyl to Bhopal to today, when global populations are increasingly plugging their vital infrastructures into singular networks such as the Internet or international electric grids, or when the Pentagon is sending nuclear materiel into orbit several miles over the surface of the earth. As Virilio notes, what this means is that "whereas in the past the local accident was still precisely situated...the global accident no longer is, and its fall-out extends to entire continents. Waiting in the wings is the integral accident, which may some day soon, become our only habitat".<sup>127</sup> The incessant drive toward increasingly dynamic technologies is precisely what is leading toward the future accident which will outstrip the excesses of everything we have known until now, because "if to invent the substance is, indirectly, to invent the accident, then the more powerful and efficient the invention, the more dramatic the accident. Eventually the fateful day will come when the progress of knowledge becomes intolerable, not just because of its misuse but also because of its effects - the very power of its negativity".<sup>128</sup> Thus the greatest threat to the territorial body today is that in the move beyond the accidents of land, sea and air, the accidents of cyberspace and outer space increasingly threaten to bring the accident to the global level for the first time; indeed, "this is what is meant by the 'integral accident', the accident which integrates us globally, and which sometimes even disintegrates us physically. So in a world which is now foreclosed, where all is explained by mathematics or psychoanalysis, the accident is what remains unexpected, truly surprising, the unknown quantity in a totally discovered planetary habitat".<sup>129</sup> This 'charted territory' of the world is one in which the great expanses of the oceans and continents are no longer so great, in which the furthest reaches of the planet become more familiar than the town

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<sup>126</sup> P. Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, 6.

<sup>127</sup> P. Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, 25.

<sup>128</sup> P. Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, 85.

<sup>129</sup> P. Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, 129.

three hours away by car; added to this pollution of distance, Virilio brings up the pollution of darkness by electronic light, which has reached such an extent that the vast majority of humanity no longer experiences night as such, so that even the Milky Way has suddenly become invisible, paradoxically enough, as a result of the desire to make everything on earth entirely visible! Thus, in the great transformation of our times, Virilio argues that "it is no longer God the Father who dies, but the Earth, the Mother of living creatures since the dawn of time. With light and the speed of light, it is the whole of matter that is exterminated".<sup>130</sup>

The threats posed to the grey ecology, as far reaching as they may be, do not cancel out those of the green ecology, but are instead superimposed on top of them, as Chernobyl is one of the best examples, extending as it did, across the great expanse of the territorial body both spatially - since the nuclear cloud spread all over Europe and even reached other continents - and temporally - since the regions that were contaminated will continue to be affected for several millennia to come. It is to features such as these that Virilio attributes the state of shock and disorientation that the survivors of the meltdown immediately found themselves in, such that many of them could not even bring themselves to speak to one another. Indeed, as survivor and filmmaker Svetlana Aleksievich affirms, "we were immediately confronted with the problem of our maladjustment to the event. Because the first sensation there, in the disaster zone, is that our biological machinery is not adapted to this. We, God's creatures, are not ready for it: our eyes can't see radiation, our noses can't smell it, our hands can't touch it. Our biology isn't prepared for it".<sup>131</sup> This is an effect of the loss of the territorial body in the shift from the spatiality of the local accident to the temporality of the global accident, which suddenly affects all living beings on earth. For Virilio, the public embrace of spirituality and religion demonstrated the extent of the awakening to the stifling nature of scientism that had been official dogma for so long, just as the "the fear experienced even in looking at the gigantic flowers, greatly beyond normal size, that grew there [led people] to realize that we were now living in a different, frightening world that defied explanation...people who had lived in the materialistic world, as though imprisoned in a cage (for materialism is a revolt against the infinite) understood they had been pitched into that infinite".<sup>132</sup> Aleksievich emphasizes that the futility of the will to blame anything other than the excesses of technoscience itself was recognized by people in general, as seen in her notation that the person who accidentally pushed the button that led to the meltdown, even after he was locked

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<sup>130</sup> P. Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, 131.

<sup>131</sup> P. Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, 200.

<sup>132</sup> P. Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, 201.

up amongst prisoners who regularly attack rapists and child molesters in their midst, was left alone with none of the expected attempts to harass, beat or kill him. It is precisely this sense of powerlessness before the technics of our time that has led to the decline of incidences of naturally occurring accidents in proportion to the 'man-made' accident, since the speed body has been slowly supplanting the territorial body over time; as Virilio explains, "the question raised by the accidental event is not so much that of the iceberg looming up in the North Atlantic on a particular night in 1912, or of the nuclear reactor triggering a chain reaction on a particular day in the year 1986, as of the production of the 'unsinkable' liner or of the siting of an atomic power station near inhabited areas".<sup>133</sup> Thus, while an earthquake is technically a naturally occurring accident originating within the body of the earth itself, the collapse of bridges, buildings and elevated highways as a result is a man-made accident, since the large scale organization of animal and social bodies could have been planned differently so that it would exist in harmony rather than opposition to its terrestrial grounding. Indeed, it is because of this blurring between natural and man-made catastrophes that they have both been redeployed as opportunities for the continuing de-struction of the political body; as Virilio argues, "we must therefore get it out of our heads that the military rushes to the aid of civilians...out of pure philanthropy. Ecological catastrophes are only terrifying for civilians. For the military, they are but a simulation of chaos and consequently a subject of study and an opportunity...in the state of undeclared war in which we live, this study is not only useful but indispensable [as state-of-the-art experimentation] ... more than ever before, the experimental sciences are trying to justify an art of warfare which is becoming all the more autonomous as the political State dies out".<sup>134</sup> Thus, rather than working to protect populations by preventing accidents as much as possible, Virilio argues that to the contrary, the empire of speed produces ever more serious accidents as a part of its regular functioning, a sort of fuel source for the perpetual reproduction of the speed-body of transportation and transmission technologies that has been laid like a grid of control over the organic body of the earth, through methods which we explore below.

## **2.5 Ecological Warfare and the De-struction of the Political Body**

Throughout this chapter the importance of 'warfare' as such to Virilio's conception of empire has been largely avoided so as to more accurately reflect his insistence that it is speed rather than war that is the categorical imperative of the world and that it is the living materiality of the body that

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<sup>133</sup> P. Virilio, Unknown Quantity, 232.

<sup>134</sup> P. Virilio, Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles, 66.

is its object of de-struction. This is contrary to such postmodern International Relations theorists as James Der Derian, who focus so heavily on the military aspects of his thought that one is left with the impression that he says very little about the civilian sphere or the political body as such, when in fact this is not the case.<sup>135</sup> Thus it has been demonstrated in a more general way how imperial power deploys its technologies of transportation, transmission and transplantation as the infrastructure of world order, how this process results in the uprooting, fragmentation and destruction of animal, social and territorial bodies and how the scattered remains of the local political body are then reconstructed into a global speed body that supplants all other forms of community. However, despite the fact that this narrative is true to Virilio's own assertions about his work, it would be incorrect to therefore assert that warfare plays only a 'minor' role throughout, since he also argues that this strategy of 'divide and conquer' is not merely some unintentional side effect of the empire of speed but is in fact an act of war by which imperial power is enforced, with roots going as far back into military history as *The Thirty-Six Stratagems*. Indeed, he points out that the division between military/civilian and war/peace is becoming increasingly difficult to discern, since the strategy of the empire of speed consists of "applying intensively to populations that age-old strategy which consists in sowing divisions everywhere - between peoples, regions, towns, countries, races, religions, sexes, generations and even within families".<sup>136</sup> Within the arena of global politics in particular however, the primary method by which these divisions have been and are being deployed today is that of 'ecological warfare', despite its having been banned by the Geneva Convention in the aftermath of the Second World War. Virilio defines this term as the sudden and violent installation of an 'artificial climate' that "aims at the constitution of an unhealthy, improper place for man just where he used to dwell"<sup>137</sup> through the systematic de-struction of the territorial, social and technical ecologies necessary to his survival; thus, the three major domains of ecological warfare would include, but are not limited to:

1. *Territorial Ecology*: The modification of the biosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere or outerspace through depleted uranium, defoliation agents, low frequency vibrations or other pollutants that disrupt the vitality and predictability of weather patterns, forestlands, wetlands, oceans, lakes and other ecosystems; also the disruption, contamination

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<sup>135</sup> J. Der Derian *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*, 207. In fairness it should be noted that this is probably not an intentional 'misrepresentation' of Virilio but rather has more to do with the subject matter on which Der Derian concentrates; the point I am making is that Virilio is not just the 'theorist of war' which would mean that his writing is relevant only to the sub-discipline of international relations, but that rather he is a theorist of the relationship between politics and technology in general, which means that he could also be of interest within other sections of political science including political theory, comparative politics, etc.

<sup>136</sup> P. Virilio, *Ground Zero* (London: Verso, 2002), 26.

<sup>137</sup> P. Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 37.

or destruction of crops, livestock, foodstuffs, drinking water installations or irrigation works, each of which place the overall health and survival of the civilian population in jeopardy both in the short and long term.

2. *Social Ecology*: The violation of the political space separating combatants and non-combatants by military units, subjecting unarmed civilians to potentially lethal combat situations; the 'carpet bombing' of cities and other populated areas with chemical, gas, conventional and nuclear bombs, destroying non-combatants en masse; the concentration of enemy populations into military camps and the reorganization of city and state borders and nomenclature, thus uprooting civilians from safe and familiar surroundings.

3. *Technical Ecology*: The control, disruption or redirecting of electricity, internet, satellite, television, film, radio or telephone transmissions, thus interrupting the continuity of vital technical infrastructure from populations who have come to rely on them for the maintenance of life-saving devices as well as the exchange of vital information with social and political bodies, compelling whole peoples to become hostages of their military conquerors.<sup>138</sup>

Overall then, ecological warfare is a method of attaining total military dominance through the ubiquity of an 'ecological spectacle' appearing simultaneously in as many spheres as possible, a technique that is "devised to surprise the crowd by its vastness and sheer originality...creating fire that lasts longer than shrubbery inflamed by the sun, impact more shattering than an avalanche of rock, an upheaval comparable to an earthquake".<sup>139</sup> This aesthetic of omnipresence at its core is also based on the technical potentiality of disappearance, as seen in military technologies ranging from the Stealth bomber to the global spy satellite system, each of which saturate the conflict zone invisibly, through the universal discipline of total surveillance or the perpetual threat of sudden death. In this sense it can also be understood as the mirror image of Virilio's conception of 'popular defense' which, as we will see below, rather than seeking to replace the conviviality of the political body with an artificial environment that can be placed under direct military control, consists of reconstructing and fortifying the mutuality of animal, social and territorial bodies to the greatest extent possible. Indeed, it is through the conception of popular defense that we can see that the inverted logic of ecological warfare cannot be limited to the military sphere but must by necessity be present throughout all of the examples examined thus far, since the mediatization of the political body has consistently relied upon the de-struction of its animal, social and territorial components, the reorganization of the perceptual regime and the

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<sup>138</sup> This description is a synthesis of Virilio's use of the term with language from articles 2, 35, 54, 55, 56 and 57 of the Geneva Convention as well as commentary from the International Committee of the Red Cross, which indicated that in interpreting the international condemnation of ecological war, "the concept of the natural environment should be understood in the widest sense to cover the biological environment in which a population is living". Society of Professional Journalists, "A Brief History of the Laws of War". Retrieved September 15, 2003 from <http://www.globalissuesgroup.com/geneva/history.html>. Virilio's definition of 'environment', which includes the 'artificial climate' of technology, clearly exceeds that of the ICRC but is all the more insightful in its conclusions for just this reason.

<sup>139</sup> P. Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology*, 43.

installation of an artificial environment. Yet while it is true that there is increasingly significant overlap between the 'civilian' and 'military' spheres as a result of the Revolution in Military Affairs, in order to place the de-struction of the political body within the specific context of global politics, it will be necessary to retrace the broad evolution of ecological warfare as an instrument of imperial control.

Virilio describes this history as having begun in its most rudimentary forms with the colonization of nature that was the invention of agriculture and the concomitant settling of the nomads into the cities. Once this process is set into motion "it is no longer enough to be quickly educated about one's surroundings; one must also educate the surroundings. In other words, one must try to preserve, on that very spot, one's head start over the enemy. Whence the construction, around the hillock, of protected enclaves, enclosures and fences intended to slow the aggressor down...this is the very aim of strategic information: to morally and physically deny the adversary the chance to rework his hypotheses, by redefining the space he must cross or the time he has to live".<sup>140</sup> Indeed, it is precisely the instrumentalization of natural, social and political space that is hinted at in this formulation that would later become the dominant element of ecological warfare, with its extension of colonialism from the level of nature to that of humanity itself; in its modern form, this began with Queen Elizabeth's 'acquisition' of Ireland in 1556, which was subsequently accompanied by the expansion of European holdings throughout the world. As was the case in many of the colonies, when Oliver Cromwell would unilaterally slash and burn the entirety of the Irish forestlands, he would do so in the hopes that animal and social bodies would no longer be able to find cover or sustenance within their territorial ecology, which was a considerable threat since its inhabitants knew its geographic contours much better than its conquerors. Despite the unanimity of official condemnation on paper, Virilio points out that this strategy of destroying the environment that civilian populations depend on for their survival, rather than limiting conflict to the actual combatants of the opposing military, is not an anomaly but rather the constant theme of Anglo-Saxon military history, which has always relied on the dominance of the 'fleet in being' in whatever form of 'ecology' is deemed to be the most efficient. As he explains, "the fleet in being is logistics taking strategy to its absolute point, as the art of movement of unseen bodies; it is the permanent presence in the sea of an invisible fleet able to strike no matter where and no matter when, annihilating the enemy's will to power by creating a global zone of insecurity".<sup>141</sup> It is based therefore on the violent transformation of the territorial ecologies of land, sea, air or space

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<sup>140</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 18.

<sup>141</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 38.

into an artificial climate that is then placed under the direct control of the conquering force, thus cultivating popular anxieties which the military can then shape to whatever end is preferred, no matter whether in peace or in war. The technical aesthetics of the 'fleet in being' are manifest, for instance, in the invention in the First World War of an armored tank capable of removing all obstacles to its own movement. Like the battleship that so easily dominated the seas of the earth, this was a tank that "climbs embankments, runs over trees, paddles through the mud, rips out shrubs and pieces of wall on its way, breaks down doors. It escapes the old linear trajectory of the road or the railway...[so that] battle has become like the naval glacis, without obstacles".<sup>142</sup>

But it wouldn't be until the Second World War that the expansion of ecological warfare into every sphere would bring forth the phenomena known as 'total war', with its setting into motion of everyone and everything, from architecture to technology to people to landscapes, all of which are suddenly overrun with military vehicles, soldiers, propaganda posters, underground bunkers, smoke screens and poison gas. With the Allied strategy of dominating the airspace as they had once dominated the sea, the symmetrically opposite move enacted by Hitler was to dominate the land such that the ramparts "moved from the limits of the city to the limits of the nation-state...to the limits of emergent land...space was at last homogenized, absolute war had become a reality"<sup>143</sup> through the installation of the Atlantic Wall along the coasts of the continent. This policy of *Lebensraum* was basically 'the old colonial imperialism applied to Europe', an endocolonialism taking over where exocolonialism had left off, in order to prepare the populations for this unprecedented domination of territorial, social and technical ecologies; it was for this reason that on February 18, 1943 Goebbels and Speer delivered the most famous speech of the Nazi era, 'On Total War'. To the wild cheers of tens of thousands at the Sportspalast, they proclaimed:

Total war is the demand of the hour. We must put an end to the bourgeois attitude which we have also seen in this war: wash my back but don't get me wet! The danger facing us is enormous. The efforts we make to meet it must be just as enormous. The time has come to remove the gloves and use our fists. We can no longer make only partial use of the war potential at home and throughout Europe. We must use our full resources, as quickly and thoroughly as it is organizationally and practically possible...the question here is not one of method, but the goal, namely eliminating the danger. The question is not whether the methods are good or bad, but whether they work. The National Socialist government is ready to use every means. We do not care if anyone objects. We are not willing to weaken Germany's war potential by measures that maintain a high, almost peace-time standard of living for a certain class, thereby endangering our efforts. We are giving up a significant part of our living

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<sup>142</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 56.

<sup>143</sup> P. Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology*, 40.

standard to increase our war effort as quickly and completely as possible. This is a means to an end...the people and leadership are determined to take the most radical measures. The broad working masses of our people are not unhappy because the government is too ruthless. If anything, they are unhappy because it is too considerate. Ask anyone in Germany and he will say: the most radical is just radical enough, and the most total is just total enough to gain victory.<sup>144</sup>

Just as this speech, along with a constant stream of propaganda on radio, television and film prepared the way for the concentration camps, extermination camps and blitzkrieg attacks, a similar phenomenon was developing amongst the Allied powers as well. In addition to the rounding up of Japanese and other ethnic and political minorities into military camps, under the oversight of Winston Churchill, the famous 'Operation Gomorrah' was unleashed, consisting of bombing attacks on all cities with populations of over 100,000 occupants, all of which was backed up by a Hollywood and mass media induced frenzy of support. It is this common escalation of the already excessive features of ecological warfare that leads Virilio to point out that "to see only the arrogance and violence of the enemy would be to abuse ourselves about ourselves. The bunker marks off a military space - that of the last war game, a game that all nations elaborated and perfected together in the course of the last century. The bunker of the Atlantic Wall alerts us less of yesterday's adversary than of today's and tomorrow's war: total war, risk everywhere, instantaneity of danger, the great mix of the military and civilian, the homogenization of conflict".<sup>145</sup> In fact, just as it is well known that the Nazis promoted the Volkswagen and the highway as means of totalizing the populations under their rule, Virilio points out that a similar process occurred in the United States with the mass production of the Ford, as a means of totalizing what had been to its indigenous peoples an infinite territory of territories. As he explains, this was "a revolution sufficient and able to modify the citizen's way of life by transforming all of the consumer's needs by totally remodeling a territory that (need we be reminded of it?) at the beginning had no more than 400 kilometers of road".<sup>146</sup> This was based of course on the New Deal principle of 'freedom from want' in which the production society of industrial capitalism was transformed into the consumer society of postindustrial capitalism, through the buying off of rebellious sectors with consumer goods rather than the social change they had been demanding, thus preparing the way for a 'total war' economy in the process. Given its basis in the New Deal, it is thus America rather than Germany that is the original 'suicidal state' although the latter is more commonly recognized as such as a result of Hitler's cooperation with them at the end of the war; as Virilio explains "Hitler finally found his most certain means of

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<sup>144</sup> J. Goebbels "On Total War". Retrieved July 15, 2003 from <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb36.htm>.

<sup>145</sup> P. Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology*, 45.

<sup>146</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 26.

government, the legitimization of his politics and of his military strategies...to associate his efforts with those of his enemies in order to achieve the destruction of his own people by annihilating the last resources of his habitat, civil reserves of every sort"<sup>147</sup> as seen in his eleventh hour 'Telegram 71' which he sent to the Allied forces stating, 'if the war is lost, let the nation perish'.

Thus it would be that in the aftermath of the Second World War, a global New Deal would underwrite the advent of what Virilio calls 'total peace', a further escalation of ecological warfare based on the permanence of the nuclear threat to all territorial, social and technical ecologies worldwide, thus promoting "the dissolution of the state of war and the military's infiltration into the movements of daily life"<sup>148</sup> taking over from the prior development of 'total war' after the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>149</sup> Its reign would be such that "the life of states, their destiny, will be subordinated to general strategy, as will be exemplified, on the practical plane, in the endowment of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council with the right to veto and the power of 'police'...the direct and immediate exploitation of the petty colonist, the trading post, these disappear, to be replaced by the immanent pressure on the developing countries in the zones treated, that is, the Third World".<sup>150</sup> Clearly then, the 'peace' that would follow the Second World War would not be one in which the world prior to the war would continue on as it had before in terms of content; rather, "peace will be the restitution of signs, the return to the objective world. And, European society, after the end of hostilities, will thus hastily reoccupy the civil space, depopulated by the bombardments, with familiar representations, in bright colors".<sup>151</sup> Yet despite this façade it was widely understood on a much deeper level that, as it was in the case of its American predecessor, the only way to maintain this system would be through constantly escalating preparations for war, transforming the 'free man' of the prewar era into the 'scared man' of the postwar era, an era in which citizens lose their specificity as rights bearing subjects and become little more than nuclear hostages instead; as Virilio observes, "one could see, in this nearly total disappearance of the idea of service at the core of the structures of the state, the sequels to postcolonial administration".<sup>152</sup> Thus with

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<sup>147</sup> J. Der Derian, ed. *The Virilio Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 40.

<sup>148</sup> P. Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*, 35.

<sup>149</sup> In addition to the sheer instrumentality of these events in that they essentially served the American military as mass involuntary experiments of the effects of nuclear bombing, it should be noted that this attack was one of the most extreme examples of ecological warfare in world history, which part of the reason why the developments in its wake have been so dramatic in their effects.

<sup>150</sup> P. Virilio, *The Virilio Reader*, 33.

<sup>151</sup> P. Virilio, *The Virilio Reader*, 36.

<sup>152</sup> P. Virilio, *The Virilio Reader*, 37.

appearance of the military-state in the aftermath of the nation-state it has been argued that the Allied forces were not the true victors of the postwar order, but that instead, although the Nazis 'lost the war, in the end, they won the peace'. Virilio elaborates that "after Hitler came the invention of the atom bomb, an invention that only reinforced the suicidal tendency through the truly suicidal policy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). In this sense we are all Hitler's children".<sup>153</sup> This is manifest in the way in which neoliberalism has extended the phenomena of the 'suicidal state' such that today it is no longer the sovereignty of the nation-state that is defended but rather that of the market; seen in this way, the era of total peace consisted of nothing less than a mutual agreement between the superpowers to end the era of the nation-state as such and to follow the Nazis in the endocolonization of their own peoples. In the case of the Soviet Union this would inevitably led to its total dissolution while in the United States it would only be taken far enough to dismantle the infrastructures of public service; thus Virilio argues that this state of anomie, held together only by the 'total peace' of the MAD, led to the triumph of instrumental science and technique over politics as a participatory process; as he argues, "in any final analysis, pure war [total peace] wasn't tied down to the confrontation between East and West, but to the development of science as technoscience...the division that existed between science and philosophy, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century say, was exploded with the advent of deterrence".<sup>154</sup>

Indeed, it would only be with the first major conflict of the postwar era that the strategies of ecological warfare, however 'total' they may have become in the past, would be completely synthesized with the imperatives of technoscience. Thus, with the Vietnam War, not only was the half-millenia old defoliation campaign a major element, but also infrared and thermographic technologies appeared on the scene for the first time, as did Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). As Virilio explains, "in Vietnam, after forty years of stagnation, the Americans were quick to see the importance of rethinking problems of aerial observation. A technological revolution gradually pushed back the limits of investigation into space and time until aerial reconnaissance, with its old modes of representation, appeared in instantaneous, 'real-time' information".<sup>155</sup> Similarly, infrared and thermographic technologies allowed the once limited time of war to extend to any time at all, thus destroying the temporal defense that nightfall once provided; this meant that the only means of resistance available to the Vietnamese would be to disappear underground or in the thick of forests not yet defoliated. Indeed, the incredible effectiveness of this strategy is precisely

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<sup>153</sup> P. Virilio, *Strategy of Deception*, 182.

<sup>154</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 167.

<sup>155</sup> P. Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (London: Verso, 1989), 18.

why Agent Orange was deployed into the territorial ecology in such enormous quantities, in the hopes that the cover of the forest would be forced to recede chemically as the cover of the night was being forced to recede electronically; as Virilio argues, "the disappearance of flora and fauna and the abrogation of natural economies are but the slow preparation for more brutal destructions. They are part of a greater economy, that of the blockade, of the siege, strategies in other words, of depletion".<sup>156</sup> Although ecological warfare extended to many new territorial, social and technical dimensions, the Vietnam era was still a time when the potential of media to negatively influence the outcome of war was not totally understood, such that photographers like "John Olsen and his cohorts showed piles of American corpses, soldiers out of their minds on drugs, the mutilation of children and civilians caught up in the terrorism of the dirty war"<sup>157</sup> all of which contributed greatly to the 'Vietnam Syndrome' in which public opinion shifted dramatically against the campaign. Since that time, of course, both the military and the media have kept a much tighter grip on the imagery of war, partially as a result of "the proceeding begun by General Westmoreland against CBS in 1984-1985 [which] highlighted the disastrous political fallout from a news system free to reveal the most sordid aspects of a conflict like the Vietnam War (the Mylai massacre, soldiers on drugs, etc.)".<sup>158</sup> Indeed, the legacy of this conflict would be seen in the wars to come, in which the technical ecology would be seen as an increasingly important military glaxis for the fleet in being; as Virilio argues, "after Vietnam, war has become an essentially electronic phenomenon...the Pentagon's latest technologies of war are virtual war technologies, information war technologies...the site of nuclear war is no longer the arsenal or even an air or space weapons system, but the C3I (Control, Command, Communication, Intelligence) in other words the management of war where all information converges and where everything should be known about everything at every moment".<sup>159</sup>

By the time of the first Gulf War, the nearly total replacement of the local territorial body with the global speed body would mean that ecological warfare would be no longer be so much about the temporary creation of an 'artificial climate' but would instead be about the violent expansion of the permanent one that was being installed worldwide, through the extension of 'polar inertia' from the civilian to the military domain. For Virilio, this is seen in "the inertia of the

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<sup>156</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 64. Perhaps the 'more brutal destructions' he was referring to were the hundreds of illegal carpet bombings of Vietnamese villages; as Feenberg has noted, this was a technique promoted by Behaviorists at the time as a means of breaking up the social ecology in order to 'condition' them into urbanization and capitalism rather than traditional rurality and communism.

<sup>157</sup> P. Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 56.

<sup>158</sup> P. Virilio, *Landscape of Events*, 29.

<sup>159</sup> P. Virilio, *Politics of the Very Worst*, 36.

Iraqi army with no maneuvering capability...the inertia of the centralized allied command, with all the techniques of instantaneous telecommunication at its disposal...the inertia of world public opinion manipulated by news agencies...and finally the 'polar' but no longer 'bi-polar' inertia of deterrence".<sup>160</sup> Indeed, according to Virilio, this is the whole point of the Revolution in Military Affairs, which suddenly unleashed a multipolar 'imbalance of terror' based upon the 'second deterrence' of weapons of mass communication, replacing the bipolar 'balance of terror' that had been based upon the first deterrence of weapons of mass destruction; as he argued at the time, "the Gulf Crisis is the test case of the deterrence of the strong by the weak, for it has blurred the very utility of deterrence between the strongest, i.e. the East and the West".<sup>161</sup> This shift toward the 'artificial climate' of the technical ecology reached such an extent that Virilio even argued that the 'true intervention force' was no longer any particular State or their military forces, but the medium of television itself in the form of Ted Turner's CNN, which George Bush used just as strategically as did Saddam Hussein; this was seen, according to Virilio, with the onslaught of 'live' images direct from the battlefield so constant that the global television audience could not bear but to keep their eyes perpetually glued to the screen, which was in the process of replacing their social ecology with a veritable flood of electromagnetic waves; as Virilio explains, "to focus and concentrate the public's attention is progressively to reorganize the public's regime of temporality, its use of time, much more than public opinion...it is therefore useless to investigate what still distinguishes 'news' from 'propaganda'; the question is already no longer current...disinformation never being a lie, but rather the excess of contradictory news".<sup>162</sup> It is in this way that one can begin to see the outlines of what a 'war of images' might consist of, an extension of ecological warfare to the realm of technical ecology, in which public opinion will be shaped more through the unreflective overconsumption of disinformation due to the ubiquity of 'live' television than from the premeditated propaganda of earlier times. Thus, while both wars were televised, for Virilio, the difference between the Vietnam War and the Gulf War was that "while the Vietnam War saw television in deferred time act almost exclusively on American public opinion (and we know the results) the Atlanta network in real time establishes the interaction of all peoples, as well as the public opinion of the entire world",<sup>163</sup> creating a globalized 'stadium effect' in which action and reaction ebbs and flows to the rhythm set by the mass media. Yet far from being stamped out in the process of this transformation, the tradition of

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<sup>160</sup> P. Virilio, Bunker Archaeology, 203.

<sup>161</sup> P. Virilio, Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light (London: Continuum, 2002), 20.

<sup>162</sup> P. Virilio, Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light, 22.

<sup>163</sup> P. Virilio, Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light, 47.

destroying social and territorial ecologies en masse has expanded alongside the new focus on technical ecologies, as seen not only in the economic sanctions which 'indirectly' killed millions of people throughout the 1990s, but also in the irreversible contamination of numerous regions of Iraq through their saturation with depleted uranium tipped artillery, which has a half-life of around 4.4 billion years, in addition to this of course, is the well known setting alight of the oil fields by Saddam Hussein, blackening the sky with a thick smoke screen that would also become one of the major ecological catastrophes of the century. Thus, while the global New Deal of the postwar era would put into place the permanent threat of nuclear deterrence and Vietnam would begin to replace it with an artificial climate of informational deterrence, the first Gulf War would be the event with which this technical ecology would become the primary terrain of global conflict, grafted over the continuing de-struction of territorial and social ecologies.

The overall effect of this transformation was that the bipolar *military* balance was suddenly thrown into a state of anomie, a process that the war in Kosovo would push further with the disruption of the multipolar *political* balance, since it was in this conflict that the US would seek to establish a unipolar world not only by breaking with the UN Security Council, but also with NATO, snubbing the vast majority of its member nations; as Virilio points out, "the decline of coalition warfare on the part of NATO and also the programmed end of coalition politics on the part of the UN can make a very substantial contribution to creating total American hegemony".<sup>164</sup> Indeed, the political background of the Kosovo War allowed America to use the excuse of a 'human rights war' to implement the doctrine of Global Information Dominance (GID), an expansion of the new form of ecological warfare tested in Iraq, in which the military attains complete control over the circumterrestrial perception of every square inch of the earth's surface, through a broad array of strategically placed global optics; as Virilio explains, "the power of this system rests on three fundamental principles: the permanent presence of satellites over territories, the real-time transmission of the information gathered and lastly, the ability to perform rapid analysis of the data transmitted to the various general staffs".<sup>165</sup> All three of these principles were key elements throughout the conflict in Kosovo, in which what Virilio terms a 'Perceptron' (after Foucault's Panopticon) brought together a vast network of spy satellites, GPS technologies, radar, audio and optical imagery as well as manned and unmanned reconnaissance aircraft; this

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<sup>164</sup> P. Virilio, Strategy of Deception, 37. This is of course, a prediction which has proven true in light of the recent events that have taken place in the second Gulf War, when the United States broke not only with NATO and the UN but virtually every country, as well as the vast majority of the people of the world as well. This undermining of international institutions will shortly become a crucial component in the expansion of ecological warfare which will violate increasingly numerous articles of the Geneva Convention.

<sup>165</sup> P. Virilio, Strategy of Deception, 18.

was of the utmost importance, since "deterrence can be maintained only by constant innovation in weapons systems capable of surprising and hence defeating the enemy...after the IMF or the WTO and beyond NATO and the United Nations, preparations are being made for the emergence of a world security force, which would depend not so much on a UN coalition policy as on the pure deterrent power of a 'weapons ecosystem' closely combining the atom and information bombs".<sup>166</sup> Thus the the Anglo-Saxon fleet in being would dominate the technical ecologies of cyberspace and outerspace just as they had the territorial ecologies of land, sea and air in the past; as Virilio puts it, "after the ground offensive, the invasion of countries along a now obsolete 'front line', we have today the aero-orbital offensive".<sup>167</sup> But the problems inherent in such an internally contradictory strategy of on the one hand promoting the ethics of America's supposedly 'humanitarian' concerns in the Balkans and on the other the anti-ethics of consistently placing logistics over strategy and tactics, are brilliantly illuminated by Virilio's insight that, paradoxical as it might be, when it is claimed that warfare will be based on empathy for the Other, the only options left are those of the extremes of either total war or total surrender. Thus he points out, "the untimely air offensive on the Balkans, which exceeds the legitimate authority of the UN in terms of international security, can be seen, then, to mark a deep transformation...total war is now directed not so much against the enemy's war machines as against the atmospheric ecosystem of the target country. Hence the strange inversion in the nature of the victims of a conflict unleashed 'in the name of human rights' - a conflict in which most of the casualties are civilian and the military personnel appear to be a protected species".<sup>168</sup> In addition to choreographing the perceptions of the global television audience through a steady stream of disinformation, the American led forces waged total war on the technical ecology by bombing RTS Belgrade television and concomitantly broadcasting radio and television propaganda from Hercules EC 130E planes, thus negating the possibility of any information sources independent of NATO control. In addition to this was the massive deployment of graphite bombs, knocking out electrical power throughout the cities and thereby cutting off communications of all kinds; as Virilio points out, "when you know that, in a nuclear war, atomic power stations are major targets, you can better understand the value of the test carried out by NATO in the Balkans".<sup>169</sup> In addition, the territorial ecology was also subject to the designs of 'total humanitarianism', as seen in the bombing of the polyvinyl chloride complex in Pancevo, a catastrophe that leaked toxic

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<sup>166</sup> P. Virilio, Strategy of Deception, 44.

<sup>167</sup> P. Virilio, Strategy of Deception, 51.

<sup>168</sup> P. Virilio, Strategy of Deception, 14.

<sup>169</sup> P. Virilio, Strategy of Deception, 27.

vapors throughout the region's water supplies and airspace, thus leading officials to calmly advise pregnant women to "abort their fetuses or avoid fertilization for at least two years".<sup>170</sup> Thus at the dusk of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Virilio reflects that it was a time in which world order shifted from the deterrence of the 'strong by the strong' in the years after 1945 until the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1989, to the deterrence of 'the weak by the weak' in the years until the appearance of the Kosovo War in 1999, which would then be followed by the deterrence of 'the mad by the mad' with the dawning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Indeed, this latest form of 'deterrence' if it can be even be called that, is best understood as 'global civil war' instead, a new development in the continuing tradition of the fleet in being which, in order to deflect attempts to destabilize the unipolar world put into place in the 1990s, will seek to synthesize the territorial, social and technical forms of ecological warfare into a new form of total war, one that, to quote Goebbels from the speech at the Sportpalast, would be 'more terrible and more radical than anything we can image today'. Robert Kaplan has succinctly articulated the form that this might take, in his embrace of the concept of 'combination warfare', developed by Air Force Colonels James Callard and Peter Faber, as the best means of maintaining what he called 'American Imperium'; as he explains, "in the twenty-first century a single conflict may include not only traditional military activity but also financial warfare, trade warfare, resource warfare, legal warfare and so on. The authors explain that it may eventually involve even ecological warfare (the manipulation of the heretofore 'natural' world, altering the climate). Because combination warfare draws on all spheres of human activity, it is the ultimate in total war".<sup>171</sup> Kaplan then proceeds to explain that although every front will be of importance in the overall strategy, the technical ecology will be the most important front of this war, since the use of preemptory attacks, anonymous actions, biological devastation and other such unpopular features will necessarily require a concomitant component of strategic disinformation, covert operations and imposed confusion. Virilio's observations in the years since the events of September 11, 2001 would seem to concur, although for different reasons; as he explains, "as soon as the terrorist becomes anonymous, as soon as he refuses to declare war and refuses to

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<sup>170</sup> J. Curtis "We Are the World...". Retrieved August 11, 2003 from <http://www.onlinecolumnist.com/070699.html>.

<sup>171</sup> R. Kaplan, "Supremacy by Stealth". Retrieved August 11, 2003 from <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2003/07/media-preview/kaplan.htm>. Kaplan is apparently unaware that the strategic modification of the environment as a method of warfare would not be a new development but is instead the continuation of a practice going back at least five centuries into Western military history. However, the concept of 'combination warfare' is disturbing nonetheless as it indicates an increasing willingness to flagrantly violate international accords such as the Geneva Convention and to tout the benefits of a unipolar world, no less under the 'proud' rubric of empire.

declare himself, and these acts go unclaimed, or the terrorist dies and he simply can't tell his story, the attack and the accident in some way become indistinguishable...when the Americans invent the graphite bomb to plunge an entire country into darkness, a black-out, they are in some way rehearsing the Total Accident; they're no longer playing at destruction...a cybernetic bomb could be a massive energy black-out; imagine if you could cut the electricity of the whole world all at the same time...this is the logic we are in...and on the other side, the terrorists have just used the same technique".<sup>172</sup> This is clearly seen in their apparent willingness to have instantly killed over 40,000 people had the towers instantly collapsed, as several engineers have attested they should have. Though it is likely that Kaplan would disagree, Virilio argues that it was the orbital strategy of Kosovo that paved the way for that which unfolded on September 11, where "the two officially declared enemies were never to meet physically anywhere, thus marking the disappearance of the battlefield...[and] in this way, the risks of fraternization between combatants, as well as any true proximity, were eliminated automatically, to the advantage of a global information system".<sup>173</sup>

Indeed, the global spy satellite system that the Pentagon spent the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century putting into place made a contribution of its own, since it has over time made it impossible for national armies to function without being detected immediately; a mass mediatization of political bodies reflected also in the tendency of many Americans during the events of September 11, to feel as though they were 'watching a movie' even amongst those who saw it occur directly in front of them. Thus he argues, "on September 11, 2001 the Manhattan skyline became the front of the new war. The anonymity of those who initiated the attack merely signals, for everyone, the rise of a global covert state - of the unknown quantity of a private criminality - that 'beyond-good-and-evil' which has for centuries been the dream of the high priests of an iconoclastic progress".<sup>174</sup> Just as was the case with the bombing of the World Trade Center, such developments as the Department of Defense and CIA sponsoring of the recent film *The Sum of All Fears* and the sudden appearance of the propaganda-oriented 'Office of Strategic Influence' each have the common effect of "casting doubt on the truth of the truth of the facts and in that way creating concern about diffuse threats, where disturbance of the perception of events always works to heighten popular anxiety"<sup>175</sup> since the question of whether an event was an attack or an accident, or whether a news item was information or disinformation is left wide open. This

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<sup>172</sup> P. Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 173.

<sup>173</sup> P. Virilio, *Ground Zero*, 44.

<sup>174</sup> P. Virilio, *Ground Zero*, 82.

<sup>175</sup> P. Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, 43.

is only amplified by such unsettling Pentagon projects as the High-Frequency Active Aural Research Program which is said to be already capable of artificially producing "floods, droughts, hurricanes and earthquakes"<sup>176</sup> which could be deployed as 'natural disasters', not to mention the even more disturbing Partnership for a New American Century's (PNAC) research into the development of a 'genetic bomb' which Thom Hartmann has described as such; "imagine a bomb that only kills Caucasians with red hair. Or short people. Or Arabs. Or Chinese. Now imagine that this new bomb could be set off anywhere in the world, and that within a matter of days, weeks or months it would kill every person on the planet who fits the bomb's profile, although the rest of us would be left standing. And the bomb could go silently, without anybody realizing it had been released".<sup>177</sup> When one considers that PNAC was once headed by Rumsfeld, Virilio's sometimes 'paranoid' sounding arguments thus seem to have considerable weight behind them, just as many of his other predictions have been borne out over time; what he concludes from all of this is that in an era in which "one man = total war"<sup>178</sup> the world must take seriously the threat of terrorism of all kinds, while also maintaining one's guard against the instrumental use of these same emotions in order to inspire popular anxieties, softening people up for manipulations of all sorts; as he puts it, to succumb to or to unleash this sort of rhetoric in this way "is to forget, rather quickly, that fear is a poor counselor, as all dictatorships have proven since antiquity".<sup>179</sup>

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the history of the empire of speed supports this conclusion dramatically, for whether one is talking about the civilian realm, the military realm or the ever growing 'zone of indistinction' in between, the one thing that is certain is that it is no longer possible to ignore the central role that the instrumental manipulation of corporeal perception has played throughout, whether one is referring to the animal body, the social body, the territorial body or the political body which they form together. What is much easier to ignore today is that the phenomena of the suicidal state that appeared at the end of the Second World War has today become the condition of all nation-states on a global level and that once the instinct of self-preservation has disappeared from the formerly dominant structures of power and the attempt to install a new form has begun, what is revealed is not 'the end of the world' as some

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<sup>176</sup> A. Barracca "The Impending Nuclear Wars". Retrieved September 26, 2003 from <http://www.namir.it/goya/clicca2.htm>.

<sup>177</sup> T. Hartmann "The Genetically Modified Bomb". Retrieved September 25, 2003 from <http://www.commondreams.org/views03/0910-15.htm>. The article cited PNAC's "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century" as stating, "advanced forms of biological warfare that can 'target' specific genotypes may transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool".

<sup>178</sup> P. Virilio, *Politics of the Very Worst*, 19.

<sup>179</sup> P. Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, 111.

have charged but to the contrary, 'the end of a world' and the advent of possibilities of resistance in ways that were unavailable in the past, as we shall see in the next chapter.

### CHAPTER THREE

## POPULAR DEFENSE AND THE REBIRTH OF THE POLITICAL BODY

In the previous chapter it was demonstrated that throughout the history of Western civilization, the empire of speed and its method of ecological warfare have been cooperating in the common project of uprooting, fragmenting and destroying the political body at an ever increasing pace, to such a degree that with the passage into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, humanity itself may be on the verge of disappearance with the sudden emergence of nanotechnology, bioengineering and 'accidental' warfare. With such a negative vision of the condition of our time, it is perhaps unsurprising that many of those who have commented on Virilio's work have complained of an excessive pessimism that leaves little room for political engagement. For example, Douglas Kellner has argued that "despite his humanism, there is little agency or politics in Virilio's conceptual universe and he does not delineate the struggles between various social groups for the control of the new technologies and the new politics that they will produce...Virilio has no theory of justice and no politics to counter, reconstruct, reappropriate or transform technology, as well as no counterforces that can oppose technology, other than critical intellectuals like himself".<sup>180</sup> In the first two sections of this chapter I challenge this interpretation through attentiveness to Virilio's insistence that resistance is always possible and that such examples as the Vietnamese Resistance, the Italian Autonomia and the International Dark Skies movement demonstrate the perpetual reappearance of the ancient method of 'popular defense', despite the fact that dramatic increases in the speed at which technology moves tend to undermine such attempts. These sections can be seen as reflections on the final four sections of the previous chapter, since they demonstrate how communities have resisted the de-struction of animal, social and territorial bodies through the primacy of conviviality and imagination over specialization and logistics. The concluding two sections are somewhat more speculative in nature, in that they consider what forms of resistance to the empire of speed might be possible within the worlds of art, architecture and the city, such that corporeally-based art might form an important divergence from technology that would challenge its instrumental logic, 'Oblique' architecture might encourage 'energetic being' rather than polar inertia and the political city might be reconstructed as a proximal and democratic space rather than a fragmented and totalitarian space. In this way, the concluding sections of this chapter can be seen as a reply to the problematic set up in the first section of the previous chapter,

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<sup>180</sup> D. Kellner, "Virilio, War and Technology" in Paul Virilio: From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond , 104.

in that they demonstrate how communities in the future might replace the single global city of the empire of speed with an infinite plurality of decentralized 'political cities' in which art, architecture and overall design are reconstructed according to what Heidegger called the 'unheard-of-center' linking animal, social and territorial bodies.

### 3.1 Popular Defense and Relative Speed

One of Virilio's most clearly articulated examples of such a political counterforce is that which he calls 'popular defense', a form of human security that explicitly resists the logic of assault, focusing instead on defending the sanctity of the political body through primarily nonviolent, low-tech means. In this sense his concept of popular defense overlaps with the more widely known concept of 'transarmament' advocated by Gene Sharp, Associate Professor at the Harvard Center for International Affairs. But whereas Sharp's conception calls for a 'civilian based defense' that would only replace the specialized security of the military institution with the generalized security of a population capable of defending itself, Virilio's conception goes beyond this to argue that as an alternative to the dead end of terrorism, it can easily become a form of popular resistance as well. This is seen in the fact that prior to the emergence of agriculture, sedentary society and the war machine, the generally accepted method of both resistance to centralized power and community protection in general was the spontaneous use of the basic implements of everyday life, in a "a defense without body, condensed nowhere".<sup>181</sup> Although this was easily the most democratic form of resistance ever to emerge in human history, Virilio argues that over time it has been forgotten as political struggles have uncritically adopted the 'assault' model of the war machine, only to find themselves locked into an authoritarian relationship with the very communities they claimed to be 'liberating'. This is the major difference that Virilio identifies as separating the 'military socialism' of the Red Army Faction, the Red Brigades, Stalin, and Mao from the popular defense embraced by the Communards against the French State, the Vietnamese against the United States, the insurrectionaries of May '68 against French State and capital and the Autonomia movement against the Italian State and capital. While the former uncritically accept the specifically sedentary legacy of 'war' and the separation of means and ends by placing technology and specialization at the center of their attack, the latter seek to reconstruct the nomadic method of defense instead, relying on the 'unheard-of-center' linking animal, social and territorial bodies; as Virilio argues, "even if tribal conflicts, the turmoil of nomadic and prehistoric origins, represented a tactical prefiguration of the conflict organized by sedentary

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<sup>181</sup> P. Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*, 71.

societies, we must await the rise of urban civilization for real war to emerge from the historical development of the city".<sup>182</sup> Over the course of the great transformation from the unity of rural tribal conflict to the fragmentation of postindustrial urban warfare, there have been three major epochs that have emerged:

1. The *tactical* epoch of the 'war of the siege' in which there was minimal violence, combined with a dispersion of centralized power, the lack of formal military organization and the centrality of *weapons of obstruction*, which fortify the edges of the city like a ring to defend their own territorial and social ecologies.
2. The *strategic* epoch of the 'war of movement' in which warfare become more specialized and violence increases along with the development of *weapons of destruction*; the fortified ring is dismantled and the gates are opened for the soldier-citizens to flood out into the thick of battle waging war on the territorial and social ecologies of others.
3. The *logistical* epoch of the 'war of blitzkrieg' in which science and industry have almost completely privatized the conduct of warfare, thereby increasing the possibility of a global catastrophe with the emergence of *weapons of communication* that disintegrate the urban separations of inside/outside by waging war on the territorial, social and technical ecologies of others.

Virilio's conception of popular defense is therefore one which is almost 'primitivist' in its implications in that it seeks to reconstruct the most liberatory elements of nomadic and early sedentary forms of tactical defense through the primacy of fortification over attack in order to resist the phenomena that emerged in the strategic and logistical epochs in which the military vanguard becomes a war machine, ruling through force over the very populations it claims to be liberating.<sup>183</sup> Therefore the difference between the 'tumult of the tribes' that he wishes to reclaim, and the 'militarism of the State' that he wishes to overcome is that in the former "there was no conduct of war to speak of...the act of violence really was part of the as-yet-badly circumscribed totality of social exchanges...until fairly recently the need for general defense was not felt by rural populations...thus from the beginning military intelligence has struggled against this".<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> P. Virilio, *Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light*, 6.

<sup>183</sup> Within the domain of political science, Michael Shapiro has significantly investigated the competing discourses of the history of warfare from the perspective of strategic and logistically-oriented 'security studies' discourses on the one hand and from that of tactically-oriented indigenous peoples on the other, which tend to get ignored as being legitimate forms of conflict. As he points out in regard to one case which he investigates, "the Pequot War has virtually no place in the Euro-American telling of the history of warfare or in the story of gradual proprietary control over the North American continent...the dominant, strategically oriented treatment of war, historical or contemporary, provides a rationale for violence rather than for respectful encounters. More specifically, a geographic imaginary, a nation-state oriented geopolitical map, which provides the ground plan for what are known as 'security studies', tends to frame conduct and events within a state-oriented cartography and thereby reproduces the structures of nonrecognition operating in the seventeenth century, when Pequots turned out to be easy prey for merchants, militias and moral consciences". M. Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>184</sup> P. Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*, 14.

Implied within this assertion is that for the return of the tactical to become possible, everyone must concomitantly become capable once again of confronting the question of death for themselves, women should not be reliant on men to organize the defense of the home nor should men be reliant on the State. Thus, for Virilio, the only way out is to "get inside Pure War, we must cover ourselves with blood and tears. We mustn't turn away. That is political and civil virtue...we're really in civilian life when we confront the question of death. Whence my interest in popular defense: how each man is able to take on his own defense".<sup>185</sup> Indeed, the potentialities of this method are seen in the fact that despite the 'superior' weaponry of the military-states over the past several centuries, indigenous peoples, peasants and others have repeatedly proven capable of protecting themselves and their territory by simply blending into the social and territorial milieu, engaging in a tactical defense based on their familiarity with the lay of the land; thus for Virilio, the ancient method of protection "returns through the impact of primitive societies which have death at their centers. And from this point of view I feel closer to rural societies than to my contemporaries. Primitives are at the heart of questions about death, science, politics and war".<sup>186</sup> Indeed it was precisely through the colonization of the indigenous peoples of Europe that the State established itself, giving way to the thousand-year truce with civil society that followed which produced the 'civilian rights' taken for granted today such as on-the-spot defense; for Virilio this means that "the principle aim of any truly popular resistance is thus to oppose the establishment of a social situation based solely on the illegality of armed force, which reduces a population to the status of a moveable slave, a commodity".<sup>187</sup> Thus if popular defense is to become a viable option, it must focus on bringing back that which was commonplace prior to the uprooting of political bodies from their respective milieus, when "defense of the group was indistinguishable from that of the legal settlement. Whether it was agricultural areas or the great industrial cities [when] the 'arms of the people' were but the transgression of the ordinary use of tools and the environment. (For example: hatchets, sickles, mowers, hunting equipment, ambushes and various kinds of traps in the country; barricades, machine shut-downs and strikes in the city)".<sup>188</sup>

But this potentiality is greatly complicated with the emergence of the empire of speed and the shift to logistical warfare in which the primary bases for the overall subsumption of popular defense by militarism are set into motion; after these have emerged, Virilio says, "nothing

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<sup>185</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 107.

<sup>186</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 129.

<sup>187</sup> P. Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*, 54.

<sup>188</sup> P. Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*, 53.

remains with which to defend oneself. All that remains is the single individual...he can't do anything. And there you have a panic situation that leads to the end of popular resistance".<sup>189</sup> The result is that the ancient method is replaced with 'unpopular' terrorism, which quickly settles into an instrumental cycle of attack and reprisal due to the sudden centrality of logistics over all else; as Virilio elaborates, "lets assume that tomorrow there aren't any P.38 manufacturers, that the Boeings are grounded by strikes, that there's no more fuel, no more cars, no more machines: terrorism would be finished. Terrorism is intimately connected with technologization. In this sense it's no popular defense, even if they think it is".<sup>190</sup> Indeed this is precisely why Virilio argues that the socialist vision (which he embraces an antiauthoritarian version of) has always failed, because it has uncritically accepted the illusion that the military is essentially 'neutral', that when it is not fighting it 'helps' society; as he explains, "that is why it is so urgent to exhaustively analyze this institution, rather than hang around its outskirts, failing (voluntarily or not) to effect the most necessary de-institutionalization of all: that of the military".<sup>191</sup> Indeed one of the great ironies of 'revolutionary' groups that employ such methods is that while they will often paint themselves as though they were the vanguard 'forces of liberation', acting on behalf of an oppressed people, by embracing the instrumental logic of the war machine, they are doing nothing less than recreating a miniaturized version of the regimes they claim to oppose while subsuming popular defense with the blitzkrieg of technology and the doctrine of security, all of which, ironically enough, is ostensibly undertaken "to fill the gap created by the disappearance of the population's right to armed defense".<sup>192</sup> This mimesis of the State in the dissolution of popular defense emerged largely with Eisenhower, who brought the war machine from its strategic to its logistical stage; thus since his time "we have the great surprise, no longer technical but scientific, a surprise of another kind: the advent of the nuclear bomb. Its no longer a quantitative problem that surprises the military staff, and thus the states; now it's a qualitative problem: the ultimate weapon. Logistics takes over".<sup>193</sup> Once it does, the doctrine of 'national security' overdetermines all else and politics is foreclosed by the permanent state of emergency; as Virilio puts it, "the new ideology is detained to fill the vacuum created by the disappearance of the right of populations to armed defense and by the progressive loss of their juridical-political identity: it is equivalent to putting the whole of civil society under a regime of military security."<sup>194</sup> Therefore in the wake of

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<sup>189</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 109.

<sup>190</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 111.

<sup>191</sup> P. Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*, 36.

<sup>192</sup> P. Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*, 73.

<sup>193</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 23.

<sup>194</sup> S. Lotringer, ed. *Itay: Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, 271.

this transformation "the rift is no longer between the right and left...but world-wide, between civilian populations and representatives of the military techno-structure".<sup>195</sup>

But simply because this great transformation has taken place and many of the resources that were available to civilian populations in the past have been subsumed by technique, this does not imply therefore that popular resistance must replicate the militarist form; in fact the recent history of popular resistance in the 1960s shows quite clearly that 'the ancient method' can easily render the war machine useless so long as it is updated sufficiently. Along with that which it resists, Virilio concedes that "the art of defense must constantly be in transformation; it is not exempt from the general law of the world: *stasis is death*";<sup>196</sup> but as noted, this does not imply the need for the total symmetry of terrorism, for as he warns, "revolution is movement, but movement is not a revolution".<sup>197</sup> Therefore rather than 'speeding up' and attempting to maintain this impossible symmetry with the ever changing movements of the State, it is instead through slowing down - *but not stopping altogether* - that political struggles might once again bring forth the unheard-of-center linking animal, social and territorial bodies and in the process reclaim the ancient legacy of popular defense. For example, while the State promotes the primacy of 'eye-catching' accelerated audiovisuals for propaganda purposes, political struggles might promote books as a resistance to this, since "reading implies time for reflection, a slowing-down that destroys the mass's dynamic efficiency";<sup>198</sup> another good example that Virilio gives of this 'resistance of the brake' is that of the strike; as he argues, "the general strike was a formidable invention, much more so than the barricades of the peasant revolt, because it spread to a whole duration. It was less an interruption of space (as with the barricade) than of duration. The strike was a barricade in time".<sup>199</sup> This was an important development because it meant that large groups of people would for the first time have the opportunity to interact outside of the tightly structured speed-time imposed by imperial power, since "time is lived - physiologically, sociologically and politically - to the extent that it is interrupted. While, perhaps, continuous time is that of chronology or history, it certainly is not that of everyday experience. Interruptions of activity or productivity are essential to the structuring of real time, for individuals and for social groups, and here the day is the reference point".<sup>200</sup> Thus for Virilio it is the tactical interruption of the imposed acceleration of continuous time that would constitute the most effective form of

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<sup>195</sup> P. Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*, 60.

<sup>196</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 13.

<sup>197</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 21.

<sup>198</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 5.

<sup>199</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 41.

<sup>200</sup> P. Virilio, *Lost Dimension*, 82.

popular defense after the shift to logistical warfare; as he argues, "if we consider the recent histories of popular opposition and of organized civil resistance, we see that the newest innovations are neither the riot nor the urban insurrection but rather the strike and especially the general strike, that inertia programmed in advance, propagated by the workers' syndicalists of the last century. No longer a struggle for space, now time is interrupted...work stoppages, occupations and trade disruptions".<sup>201</sup> Yet because of increasing automation and the replacement of the metabolic vehicle of the laborer with that of the technological vehicle, even the strike has become increasingly less plausible, forcing those who would resist into other alternative venues as tax strikes and street occupations; as Virilio elaborates, today "the revolutionary contingent attains its ideal form not in the place of production, but in the street, where for a moment it stops being a cog in the technical machine and itself becomes a motor, in other words a producer of speed".<sup>202</sup>

Even this statement ought not be taken at face value, for, as noted earlier, although revolution necessarily consists of movement of some form, movement in and of itself is not a revolution and in fact can easily become its opposite. This ambiguity is precisely why Virilio eventually rejects the rhetoric of revolution in favor of that of popular defense, since in almost every case imaginable 'revolutions' have had far too much in common with the 'warfare' he has always rejected, thus he explains, "to my mind there is no more revolution except in resistance".<sup>203</sup> As he sees it, the common organizing principle between war and revolution is found in their mutual embrace of the ideology of progress and the separation of means and ends; indeed his contention is that this overlap is so pervasive in its effects on society that political struggles, unknowingly following the States, dictators and ideologues that came before them, often lose sight of the original factors that had motivated them in regard to what in particular needed to be changed and what in particular needed to remain, opting instead for the unbridled nihilism of either total war or total revolution. According to Virilio, this uncritical embrace of the ideology of progress "is probably one of the unheeded causes of the French defeat of 1940, at a time when the war of extermination had long since supplanted the Enlightenment Revolution with the darkness and fog of totalitarianism".<sup>204</sup> In the final account then, his contention is that "the West's so-called revolutions have never been made by the people, but by the military institutions...lets make no mistake: whether it's the drop-outs, the beat generation, automobile drivers, migrant workers,

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<sup>201</sup> P. Virilio, Lost Dimension, 127.

<sup>202</sup> P. Virilio, Speed and Politics, 3.

<sup>203</sup> P. Virilio, Pure War, 83.

<sup>204</sup> P. Virilio, Unknown Quantity, 113.

tourists, Olympic champions or travel agents, the military-industrial democracies have made every social category, without distinction, into unknown soldiers of the order of speed".<sup>205</sup>

Thus in order to clarify Virilio's argument and its continuing relevance after the shift to logistical warfare, we will now consider several examples throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in which the tendencies of popular defense, revolution and war have contended with one another in the heat of major rebellions of the mid-twentieth century, including the Prague Spring of 1968, the Vietnamese Resistance of 1956-1975, the French Events of May 1968 and the Italian Hot Autumn of 1977, all of which occurred in the early years of the logistical epoch, before the rise of the technologies of absolute speed. In order to place these events within the proper context however, it will be necessary to start with one of the first revolutionary events of Western modernity that helped to set the stage for them in the first place, that of the Paris Commune. For Virilio there were two major tendencies that emerged within the course of these events, one of which defined revolution as war and the other which defined it as popular defense. It is for this reason that he aligns himself with the Communards rather than the would-be generals; as he explains, this is because for the former "it was a socialism which refused war. Thus the conflict between the two generals of the Paris Commune, who wanted to organize a popular war, and the Communards who didn't, who wanted it to be the people's war, a war without strategy...[so that] socialism would be a continuation of peasant guerrilla warfare by other means - and not a passage to industrial war and everything else Marxism will bring".<sup>206</sup> Unfortunately the outcome of this struggle would fall to the generals and the logic of speed to take over the original aims of the popular revolt from that point forward; as Virilio laments, "the events of 1789 claimed to be a revolt against subjection, that is against the constraint to immobility...but no one suspected that [it could] become an *obligation to mobility*".<sup>207</sup>

However this did not mean that the spirit of the Communards was lost completely, since throughout the Sixties there were a number of instances in which popular resistance movements embraced the ancient unity of animal, social and territorial bodies in order to wage a civilian based defense of both the rural and urban milieu; for instance, as Virilio points out, "popular defense reaffirmed its authority in Vietnam as a non-military entity, with specifically civilian and non-violent means and stakes. In the midst of an ecological war waged by the Americans like an

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<sup>205</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 119.

<sup>206</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 106.

<sup>207</sup> P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 30.

extermination campaign, the survival of the people had held to the absolute assimilation of its substance to its subsistence".<sup>208</sup> This confrontation was based on a double movement between the interlocutors which was similar only to the extent that they diverged; whereas one relied on the de-struction of the political body through the primacy of technology, the other relied on the defense of the political body through the primacy of the milieu - in this sense it was a confrontation in which "those who conduct the hunt visually are concerned to annul distance, first on board their means of transport, then with their guns. As for the escapees, they use their weapons not so much to destroy as to establish a distance: they live only in what separates them from their pursuers, they can survive only through pure distance, their ultimate protection is the continuity of nature as a whole".<sup>209</sup> This is seen most clearly after the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964 when the Vietnamese resistance shifted its strategy from one of direct engagement to one of avoidance as extensively as possible achieved through the defensive unity of animal, social and territorial bodies, which relied not so much on high technology as on 'high tactics'. This is seen for instance, in the method of 'one slow, four quick' in which extensive planning, sometime lasting for months on end, preceded every engagement with the Americans, which, when it occurred, consisted of quick advance, quick attack, quick clearance and quick withdrawal, thus allowing for minimal casualties and maximal effect. This unity is also seen in the famous Cu Chi Tunnels in which a vast underground network stretched for hundreds of miles across the country, not only allowing the constant movement of combatants and their supplies (tanks were often disassembled, transported on foot and then reassembled at the destination) but also the secure storage of sleeping quarters, meeting quarters, kitchens, hospitals and repair shops. Complementing this network, above ground 'forest tunnels' were formed by cutting a path through the lower canopy of trees while leaving the second and third intact, thus rendering them practically invisible from above or outside; this was complemented by nomadic Vietnamese bases which never stayed in one place for more than a few days, thus making them much more difficult to undermine than the sedentary American bases which were massive, immobile fortresses that were often attacked at will, since the tunnel networks usually passed directly underneath them. Even the logistics that were used by the Vietnamese came from the milieu since they were often fashioned from the unexploded shells left in their thousands by the American forces, rather than from their own materiel; but the single most important weapon that was put to use in the Vietnamese defense was the overall strategy of 'people's war' in which every single person in the

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<sup>208</sup> P. Virilio, Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles, 52.

<sup>209</sup> P. Virilio, War and Cinema, 19.

territory under attack was considered to be part of the resistance rather than only a specialized class of 'soldiers', as seen in the fact that combatants were supported with shelter, food, storage, intelligence, labor and recruits everywhere they went. Thus Virilio concludes that due to its ability to merge with the territorial and social ecologies and to master the question of when it would and it would not engage the opposition, "the resistance put up by the Vietnamese people against the American technological assault is still a war of time, but it can no longer be a war of military encounters...the success of the Vietnamese now depended solely on the duration of the populations' physiological resistance, their degree of adaptation to an environment which had suddenly become foreign and deadly, in which they needed daily ingenuity and patience more than heroics".<sup>210</sup>

Within the urban environment the scenario was quite different of course, as seen in the example of the Prague Spring of 1968, when the civilian population was forced to defend itself from invading Soviet troops after their national military was ordered not to do so by the government; since there was no possibility of replicating the Vietnamese strategy of blending into the territorial ecology of the organic jungle, locals mounted a popular defense through the social ecology of the 'concrete jungle' instead. Though there were many elements to their resistance, the most important was the subversion of the street signs that would have allowed for the invading forces to succeed instantaneously, so long as they had access to maps and other devices to guide them through an unfamiliar locality; as Virilio explain, "during the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the citizens of Prague undertook the first nonviolent defense of the city by removing all the street signs and building numbers so that the foreigners could not tell where they were. Residents have a mental image of their city; they don't need signs".<sup>211</sup> In other words, because they were not yet entirely uprooted by transportation and transmission technologies operating at absolute speed, they could still rely on the inner ecology of their mental maps in order to defend themselves; this strategy was extended further by the painting of every available surface with slogans such as 'an elephant cannot swallow a hedgehog', while outside of Prague other cities and towns painted false place names on the welcome signs as well. But there were many other tactics that were used at the time that are not as well known, though they reflect the concept of popular defense quite well, including the throwing of paving stones and Molotov cocktails at troop detachments as well as the setting alight of Soviet tanks, not to mention the much more widespread use of explicitly nonviolent tactics such as the blockading of key bridges and roads, hour-long citywide general

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<sup>210</sup> P. Virilio, Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles , 51.

<sup>211</sup> P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews , 121.

strikes, as well as simultaneous noisemaking with car horns, church bells and other such devices. Sabotage was also a major element used by the resistance, as seen in the instance in which rail workers disabled a train headed for Prague with equipment intended to jam to clandestine radio broadcasts, as well as the shutting off of water supplies at almost all locations where Soviet troops had been staying, thus forcing them to import water from nearby countries. In cases where this was not possible, rumors were spread amongst the troops that the water had been poisoned and that it was unsafe to drink, thus forcing them to drink from puddles and other unhealthy sources; overall then the strategy employed by the civilian population was to make it as difficult as possible for the troops to carry out their activities, through the total redefinition of the social ecology in which they had to move. Although it was eventually unsuccessful, the Prague Spring is remembered by many as one of the most inspiring examples of nonmilitarist resistance ever. As one theorist of civilian based defense has argued, "the story of Czechoslovakia in 1968 is a testament to the power of civilian resistance and the limitations of military force. Even when the country was bristling with Warsaw Pact troops and military equipment, in no way could it be said that the Soviets were in control of Czechoslovakia. If it had fought, the highly trained Czechoslovakian army would only have lasted a couple days, and then the country would surely have come firmly under Soviet control. Instead, an improvised campaign of noncooperation kept the Soviets from installing their puppet government for eight months!"<sup>212</sup>

The very same year the one instance of popular defense in which Virilio himself took part occurred in France, the famous Events of May '68. During that time, he assisted the famous occupation of the Sorbonne, on the outside of which he painted the now famous words 'all power to the imagination', which would later become the slogan of the reclamation of the ancient method; as he explains, "when I speak of revolutionary resistance or popular defense, I'm getting to the root of an essential popular scientific invention. I remember the speeches in the Richelieu Amphitheatre at the Sorbonne, before the taking of the Odeon Theatre at the very beginning of May '68, I went in: the place was packed. I heard a guy, probably a communist say, 'I read on the walls of the Sorbonne: 'Imagination comes to power!' That's not true, it's the working class!' I answered: 'So, comrade, you deny the working class imagination'. It was pretty clear, one referring to a horde able to take power like a mass of soldiers, and the other (me) referring to the

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<sup>212</sup> Fragments, "Nonviolence in Czechoslovakia 1968". Retrieved June 22, 2003 from <http://www.fragmentsweb.org/TXT2/czechotx.html>.

active imagination - the autonomists".<sup>213</sup> Indeed, as he affirms, "when the Sorbonne was occupied by the students in '68, I made a huge poster with this phrase. So you see, it was not so much the 'red' dimension, but rather the Situationist, anarchist, romantic dimension of May '68...I still believe that the Events of May '68 signify something quite different to what it is popularly supposed they were about, which for the moment remains invisible".<sup>214</sup> In subsequent texts he elaborates on this statement, arguing that their real importance was that they were the harbingers of future forms of resistance, in that they explicitly resisted the logic of war and revolution; as he explains, "the events of that spring remained 'events'. - a kind of literary commune and no more...the concept of 'revolution' had exhausted its ideological potential and was now nothing more than a muffled disquiet, the waiting for a nameless catastrophe".<sup>215</sup> Indeed in addition to the occupation of the Sorbonne, he would go on to play a key role in the taking of the Odeon Theater, along with many of those active in the literary, dramatic and artistic worlds, including such groups as the French Happenings, the Living Theater and figures such as Judith Molina, Julian Beck, Jean-Jaques Lebel and Sylvere Lotringer. Thus Virilio argues that with the progress of the dromological society, the power of the proletariat has gradually disappeared and with it the possibility of revolution as amounting to anything other than war, as seen in the turn toward a popular defense based largely on the expansion of art into the space-time of everyday life, thus leaving those who would resist with the task of rethinking the legacy of popular defense. The real victory of the Events is not that a revolution 'almost' took place but rather that a 'revolution of everyday life' took place instead, with the result that afterward, "the Communists, who have always accepted the Marxist model of military proletarianization, will find themselves confronting radicals and socialists who, since May 1968 have invested in a socialism 'with a human face'".<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> P. Virilio, Pure War, 82. Indeed, in the situation which he described as prior to the formation of the military, it was the imaginative and spontaneous use of the implements of everyday life that allowed for defense, rather than the unthinking embrace of high-tech weaponry and unbridled violence.

<sup>214</sup> P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews, 56.

<sup>215</sup> P. Virilio, Unknown Quantity, 113.

<sup>216</sup> P. Virilio, Speed and Politics, 98. Despite their other differences, this is a point on which Virilio and Feenberg clearly agree, as seen in the latter's review of his own participation in the Events, in which he reflects that what was most significant about them was that the vanguard leadership approach of the French communist parties and labor unions was finally replaced with horizontally and democratically articulated relations between workers, students and other sectors of society against the common enemy of technocracy. As he argues, "what was unique about the Sorbonne, to which Cohn-Bendit had referred, what made it the model of the entire revolt, was its refusal of all leadership. People normally fear revolutions, on any scale, not necessarily because they fear disorder (for in fact, disorder is often exhilarating) but because they fear the severity of a new order that succeeds the abandon. On the reverse side of the wild card that is revolution lurks the constant threat of dictatorship. In the French movement, which was directed specifically against an authoritarian regime, the participants were not about to allow another system to install itself where the previous one had cruelly ruled. Herein was the beauty of the Sorbonne of these times: it fought

Although he did not participate in it personally, another instance of popular defense in which Virilio had some influence was that of the Italian Hot Autumn of 1977, in which the logistical assault of the Red Brigades contended with the tactical defense of Autonomia; in regard to the former, Virilio's reaction was to question whether their apparent hatred for spontaneous popular revolt was not merely a mirror image of the regimented militarism of 'pure war' promoted by the capitalists and fascists they claim to oppose; as he asked, "military socialism, or a new detonator of the a-national military class? The Euro-terrorism of the Red Brigades confronted us with the question".<sup>217</sup> As Virilio saw it, the authoritarianism inherent to terrorism is revealed most clearly in its embrace of the instrumental logic of speed; as he argued, "terrorism is only the last simulation of the revolutionary loading of the masses into the internal war-machine...the instantaneousness of explosions, the sudden flare of assassinations, appear to the individual as the paroxysm of speed; they allowed for the casualties of the media hierarchy, the shattering of the mirror of travel".<sup>218</sup> Thus like many other French intellectuals such as Debord, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari he would side instead with the latter, seeing them as the modern defenders of the right to on-the-spot defense that has persisted from antiquity; as he put it, "the ancient rites... of defending one's home and plot of land against any and all besiegers, soldiers, bandits and scoundrels...unconsciously, these rites are still observed today by the Autonomists".<sup>219</sup> This is important, he argued, because with the endocolonialism developing out of nuclear deterrence, such guarantees are being dismantled at an increasing pace in the will to homogeneity through the global deregulation of commerce and exchange; as he elaborates, "the will to autonomy was the will to get away from cultural and political conformity. I do nothing different: my work is in this direction. Independently of Italy it cannot be condemned, since there's nothing else to be done. I don't believe in revolution, but I do believe in revolutionary resistance. That requires widening the rift, as much as you can, in an inquiry which becomes more and more essential, in a return to our identity as mortal beings - to our statute as occupants of time - and not only to wealth, places, space. All the work of consciousness raising within the Autonomist movement was originally

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not only against the regime, but against the revolution, or at least against the revolutionary tradition. It was the libertarian valve of the movement, open wide, imposing no order and very little opinion, refusing no one the floor, denying nothing but constraint...here was the revolution within the revolution, a radically new model proposed to the twentieth century, a revolution without dictatorship, ruled only by the imagination". In this final sentence, in which Feenberg implicitly refers to the slogan 'all power to the imagination', which as we saw above, was originally popularized by Virilio, we see the convergence between their otherwise divergent approaches. A. Feenberg, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets: The French May Events of 1968* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) , 38.

<sup>217</sup> P. Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles* , 41.

<sup>218</sup> P. Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles* , 89.

<sup>219</sup> P. Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles* , 45.

that".<sup>220</sup> However despite his words of praise for the movement, he has not always seen eye to eye with them, since, as Lotringer has pointed out, although they were quite influenced by *Speed and Politics*, they also largely misinterpreted it and at one point even called for a rejection of military intelligence, which Virilio would clearly support, in favor of 'techno-scientific intelligence', which he would just as clearly reject. Indeed, it was precisely for this reason that he wrote *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*, in order to articulate a strong critique of technology combined with a comparison of the concepts of popular defense and terrorism, hoping that this would support Autonomia in their own quest to distance themselves from the logistical warfare of the Red Brigades, without leading them towards an uncritical embrace of technology in the process. In addition to this, after having helped to set up the free radio station Radio Tomate with Felix Guattari in Paris, he emphasized that the attempts of Autonomia with free radio would likely be doomed to ineffectuality since, as he argued, "the problem is not to use technology but to realize that one is used by it...when you spend several thousand francs on material for a free radio, you know how to buy, you know how it works, but you don't know what to do while on the air!"<sup>221</sup> In addition to this critique of their technological fetishism, Virilio has more recently argued that the call for self-management is no longer sufficient since it will inevitably play into the designs of neoliberalism and endocolonialism; as he explains, "today we can't hear a demand for autonomy without hearing 'social disintegration' at the same time. Not a diaspora of regained freedom, of tribal or rural societies, of the famous self-managed, self-regulated commune, etc., but rather the absolute regulation of absolute inertia...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".<sup>222</sup> Unfortunately then, "calls for worker management and worker control - posted by the unions - correspond to and are echoed by the call for a minimum State - broadcast by the new economists...the demand for autonomy is a symptom of a collective and simultaneous desire for inertia".<sup>223</sup> However despite these critical notes, he has made a point to emphasize that he respects the fact that they disbanded once their struggle had ended rather than carrying on the mantle for posterity's sake; as he puts it, "only the movements which were

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<sup>220</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 81.

<sup>221</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 80.

<sup>222</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 101.

<sup>223</sup> P. Virilio, *Lost Dimension*, 125.

able to cease, to stop by themselves before dropping dead, have existed! The Autonomists, if they shut down operations...show that they're not Stalinists".<sup>224</sup>

### 3.2 Popular Defense and Absolute Speed

After the global wave of popular resistance movements in the 1960s, the empire of speed proceeded to complete its ongoing transformation from the primacy of technologies of relative speed, such as the train, the plane and the automobile (which were inscribed in space) to the technologies of absolute speed, such as the Internet, satellite broadcasting and closed circuit surveillance (which were inscribed in time); as Virilio points out, "soon after 1968, it is true, surveillance cameras had appeared at the entrances to the grande ecoles and universities, and this new equipment was also used to keep watch on the boulevards and major junctions of the capital".<sup>225</sup> With this great shift from war on the territorial and social ecologies to war on the technical ecology as well, came a concomitant shift in the tactics employed by the 'descendants' of these movements, which like those before them, sought to maintain the continuity of the ancient method of popular defense even in the midst of a rapidly changing world.<sup>226</sup> This double movement between the two emerged because while in the centuries before Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Chernobyl and other such technoscientific atrocities had taken place, "it was normal then to believe in the completely beneficial nature of science and technology; this would be inconceivable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century".<sup>227</sup> Thus in the new millennium, only those tactics which counter the violence of technocracy with the asymmetrical strategy of imaginative resistance and minimal violence will be left as viable options; as Virilio explains, this is because "one cannot use violence against what is already violence, one can only reinforce it, take it to extremes - in other words, to the State's maximum power...[and therefore] today, the only recourse is non-violence".<sup>228</sup> Of all countries in which a movement of this sort might emerge, Virilio argues that the United States would be the most important since "they occupy the best position insofar as

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<sup>224</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 83.

<sup>225</sup> P. Virilio, *Polar Inertia*, 57.

<sup>226</sup> Though Virilio seems to shy away from the continuing relevance of such confrontations in his more recent writings, Kroker has pointed out the example of 'the Mowhawk Refusal' which took place in Montreal in the summer of 1990 as one example of a Virilian popular defense in the epoch of absolute speed, with its logistical deployment of the Canadian war machine against several dozen tactically-oriented indigenous defenders of a sacred pine grove from development by way of an expanding golf course. As he points out, "in a perfect Virilian gesture, the Mowhawks not only reclaimed the sacred pine grove at Oka, but also took physical control of the Mercier Bridge - one of the main traffic arteries between the South Shore suburbs and the Island of Montreal" A. Kroker "The Possessed Individual". Retrieved October 10 from <http://www.ctheory.net/book2.asp?bookid=5>.

<sup>227</sup> P. Virilio, *Politics of the Very Worst*, 120.

<sup>228</sup> P. Virilio, *Pure War*, 56. It should be noted that 'pacifism' and 'nonviolence' are not necessarily opposed to minimal violence so long as it is in self-defense, is popularly based rather than specialized and does not involve guns or bombs.

they also have an extraordinary amount of information on the war machine at their disposal, which doesn't exist elsewhere"; indeed, it was for this reason that he "personally got in touch with the Archbishop of Seattle, Raymond G. Hunthausen, who was one of the first...to encourage in his parish the non-payment of that part of federal taxes reserved for arms development".<sup>229</sup> But he does not limit the concept of popular defense to such timeless tactics of this sort since as he sees it, one of the primary motives driving the transformation from relative to absolute speed has been the recuperation of the demands made by such movements; for instance, Virilio argues that with the dissolution of the separation between peace and war as a result of the new primacy of logistics, resistance to war must oppose not so much war itself as the tendency toward war, the perpetual preparation for its realization through the continual production of its logistical means; in other words, for him, what isn't being asked nearly enough today is "how do you kill the ultimate weapon? We could say the same thing about what happened in 1789. How do you kill the monarch after a revolution which has done away with the monarchy? Today the question would be: how do you kill nuclear monarchy, the weapon present 'by divine right' at the center of our society, of our societies? That's the real question".<sup>230</sup>

Similarly, movements opposing censorship have been upstaged with the advent of 24-hour live coverage, providing the illusion of total objectivity while undermining the critical distance afforded by technical delay in the process; thus Virilio argues that popular resistance movements must incorporate into their struggles tactics more appropriate to the information overload being deployed by power; indeed as he puts it, "faced with war, we must be not only be conscientious objectors but also objectors to the objectivity of its representation. We must not believe our eyes".<sup>231</sup> Indeed, for Virilio, the advent of 24-hour live coverage was nothing less than the realization of what might have otherwise seemed positively Orwellian in its implications; as he points out, "President Richard Nixon proposed the institution in the USA of an electronic process allowing the television sets of all American citizens to be turned on remotely, by executive order, for direct alerts. With Ted Turner and his network CNN, it is no longer a matter only of alerting the USA but the world, the citizens of the entire world".<sup>232</sup> In this sense then, it is of little import whether generals or newscasters are occupying the broadcast centers since the effect in the long run is essentially of the same nature; thus the ethical standards which in the time of the media of relative speed barred such totalitarian developments must be rethought and fought for as a means

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<sup>229</sup> P. Virilio, Pure War , 132.

<sup>230</sup> P. Virilio, Pure War , 61.

<sup>231</sup> P. Virilio, Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light , 41.

<sup>232</sup> P. Virilio, Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light , 58.

of popular defense. This is also why it is no longer enough to oppose the authoritarian policies of politicians or the State as such, when the far more totalitarian power afforded to the media, scientists and engineers has largely superseded them; as Virilio sees it, the ideology of progress which allows for this ignorance "would explain the appearance of new popular heroes capable, like the scientific hero, of destroying themselves by spectacularly flouting any prohibition, any limit, any law...turning to good effect the tried-and-tested methods of the mass media, with coups d'etat based more on the mass media than on military force, and an investigative, incriminatory journalism transformed into a secret police".<sup>233</sup> Thus, contrary to the cyberutopians of our time, Virilio argues that while the clash between the empire of speed and representative democracy will likely result in some form of a computerized 'direct' democracy, it will undoubtedly be based on some form of opinion-poll type decision-making, which would be highly mediated by the mass media, allowing the qualities of saturation and separation inherent to it to become new methods of control; as Virilio asks, "is a real time democracy possible? An authoritarian politics, yes. But what defines democracy is the sharing of power. When there is not time to share, what will be shared? Emotions".<sup>234</sup> Thus, he implores of us the need to question technology at least as much as we question politics, since in our time it is much more the case that politics has become a form of technology than it is that technology has become a form of politics; as he argues, "we have to acknowledge that the new communication technologies will only further democracy if, and only if, we oppose from the beginning the caricature of global society being hatched for us by big multinational corporations throwing themselves at a breakneck pace on the information superhighways".<sup>235</sup>

One of the most outstanding instances in which the hidden authority of technicians has been boldly challenged is that of computer scientist Clifford Johnson, who in 1984 brought a lawsuit against the American government for allowing the development and deployment of 'Launch on Warning' capability, in which, based on the 'infinite wisdom' of game theory, a computer would automatically retaliate with nuclear force against any perceived or misperceived threat, long before the offending missiles had even reached American soil. In this case, which Virilio calls 'the trial of the century', any pretense of participatory democracy or political rights that may have once attained, have been totally eclipsed, since not only is the right of the group to decide over that "of the powerful man, the last man, he who decides [cancelled out, but] now, he too will no

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<sup>233</sup> P. Virilio, *Ground Zero*, 24.

<sup>234</sup> P. Virilio, *Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light*, 43.

<sup>235</sup> P. Virilio, "Red Alert in Cyberspace!". Retrieved June 20, 2003 from <http://www.wasontinstitute.org/infopeace/vy2k/red-alert.cfm>.

longer have that right, if he delegates his right to an automatic machine. We truly have here a political question".<sup>236</sup> Indeed the argument made by Johnson was that with the ongoing probability that this 'war declaration machine' would eventually err in one way or another, possibly triggering a global nuclear war with cataclysmic consequences for millions of human beings in the process, it was no longer a question of whether a 'person should be allowed to push the button' but rather one of whether 'the button should be allowed to push the person'; noting that since the Second World War there had been nineteen occasions in which the US had threatened to use nuclear weapons as well as several thousand false alerts that others intended to use nuclear weapons against them, he argued that constitutional, statutory and international law had been grossly violated in at least four ways:

1. That only Congress was to have the authority to declare war and that delegating this power to a computer violated this sanctity as well as that of international peace.
2. That only Congress was to have the authority to 'qualitatively expand war' and that nuclear first strike policy violated this sanctity as well as that of proportionate response.
3. That only the President was to have the nuclear launch authority of 'Commander-in-Chief' so as to maintain civilian control over the military and that delegating this to them had violated this sanctity.
4. That only the republican form of government was to have authority within American borders and that delegating war powers to a computer violated this sanctity.

Despite the overall strength of his claims, which were never denied, Johnson's initial lawsuit was thrown out on the charge that he had named Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, who the court did not feel bore the same responsibility as did the directly involved military officers; but then when he launched a subsequent lawsuit in 1989 naming General Chain of the Strategic Air Command and others directly involved as the court had asked, this was also thrown out on the ground that Johnson himself lacked 'standing' to bring a lawsuit of this character. Although the lawsuit was ultimately unsuccessful, Virilio's enthusiasm for it implies that it was nevertheless valuable for raising public awareness, not only of the extent to which the political system is being taken over by the empire of speed but also of the powerlessness of citizens to do anything about it through official channels and of the subsequent need to go beyond these into the realm of popular defense; indeed, Johnson confirmed this sentiment when he stated, "above all else, let us

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<sup>236</sup> P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews, 81.

recognize that salvation from technology does not lie in more technology, but in the human spirit that shall forever master its hollow inventions".<sup>237</sup>

Though it was heavily reliant on mass media technologies, the occupation of China's Tiananmen Square by over one million students in May 1989 was one of the most inspiring examples of the human spirit that Virilio argues underlies the perpetual reappearance of popular defense. It was also one that went well beyond the boundaries imposed by the official channels, to such an extent that the students would in the end, face the war machine's threat of death directly. However, from the start, the occupation had been one in which logistics were deemed more important than tactics, timed as it was to coincide with the arrival of Gorbachev, since this would be a moment when thousands of news cameras from all over the world would be present, with the hopes that television images of the occupation would be rebroadcast throughout the country, allowing the 'multiplier effect' to set in with hopes that this would inspire students in other cities and towns to rise up as well, while garnering worldwide support at the same time. Thus the situation that played out in Tiananmen Square where demonstrators strategically constructed signs written in English so as to speak to the millions watching their sets from the living rooms of the world; as Virilio notes, "the students repeatedly showed signs of collusion with their far-off TV 'viewers' by writing banners in French or English, by deploying exotic symbols such as the 'statue of liberty' beneath the portrait of Mao Tse-Tung or by making frequent references to the French Revolution".<sup>238</sup> In this sense, what was really taking place in this instance was the exponential expansion and virtualization of the agora throughout the audiovisual empire and into the living rooms of millions of fellow 'citizens' all over the world, including an entire stadium in Hong Kong, which was retrofitted with a giant television screen. In this occupation the students had chosen to wage their resistance as though it were tactical but within the logistical context of the technical ecology; thus Virilio has argued that the famous massacre that occurred on June 7, "may well be described as a 'siege', a new kind of 'state of siege': not so much an army encirclement of city-space as a temporal siege, siege of the real time of public information. The key element is no longer the familiar censorship preventing the disclosure of things that the state wishes to keep secret; it is the replaying of recorded material, the retarded ignition of the living

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<sup>237</sup> C. Johnson, "The Constitution Versus the Arms Race". Retrieved September 22, 2003 from <http://www.cpsr.org/publications/newsletters/old/1980s/Spring1987.txt>. This text is from a speech given at UBC in November, 1986. The underlying implication that I am making here is that the political system, as Jacques Ellul, John Street and others have argued, is essentially another form of technology which ultimately accepts the separation of means and ends, one that as a result, may be no more trustworthy than that of the war declaration machine promoted by the Pentagon.

<sup>238</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 66.

light of events".<sup>239</sup> This is seen in the numbing media saturation brought about by the constant replaying of isolated incidents when protestors attacked soldiers, vehicles and other things in the hopes that this would overshadow the massacre that was being carried out by the State. It is also seen in the sudden outlawing of any independent photographic device in the City, the violation of which was declared punishable by death.

By the end of that year the new importance of the virtual agora would reaffirm its importance once again in the Romanian Revolution, in which the most important event would be the seizure by hundreds of angry civilians of Television Romania's Studio 4 (TVR), what had been the official national television and radio station. This event occurred nearly two weeks after the initial uprising in Timisoara, which began as a popular defense in real space, when thousands of civilians of all religious backgrounds came together to defend Father Laszlo Tokes, a minister at the Reformed Hungarian Church who like many ethnic minorities before him, was being evicted and harassed by the Romanian Communist government. After a peaceful candlelight vigil turned into a spirited occupation of the city streets, thousands more from the neighborhoods joined in, and what had started as a relatively calm show of solidarity spontaneously transformed into a determined movement to overthrow the government, engulfing the entirety of the city within just a few days. But after Ceaucescu's troops opened fire on the ever-growing crowds, all communications between Timisoara and the rest of Romania were cut while the President addressed the nation on television from Bucharest, only to be stormed while on the air by hundreds of angry civilians, resulting in his narrow escape by helicopter; in the aftermath, TVR became known as 'the heart of the new Romania', broadcasting the progress of the revolution and urging the population to carry it all the way through, while defending it from troops who repeatedly tried to reclaim it by force. Unfortunately, the new 'National Salvation Front' that would take over in the years afterward would reintroduce many of the same forms of censorship that had been in place under Ceaucescu, thus leaving behind a legacy of disillusionment and apathy; it is for this reason that Virilio laments that in both China and Romania, "the crises of the media were more important than those of the political. For how can we control a revolution when we ignore, fundamentally, where and when it really began? ...how can we fail to recognize that for every major historical change, for each stage of the course of our history, there is a corresponding 'seizing of power' of a new technology of communication? We can hardly conceive of the Renaissance without the printing press, with the publishing, in a few lustra, of millions of

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<sup>239</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 67.

books. The century of the Enlightenment would perhaps not have happened without the powerful contribution of secret newspapers, and the French Revolution without the entirely novel liberty accorded to the daily newspaper".<sup>240</sup> Thus, the major problem that he identifies with both the Events at Tiananmen Square and the Romanian Revolution that allowed each to disintegrate in the end, was that while they both contained key elements of tactical popular defense, they both finally allowed the logistics of the media to overcome the tactics of the street demonstrations rather than subordinating them to the primacy of the politics at the core.

Virilio's reaction was essentially the same in regard to the popular defense mounted by all sides during the Kosovo War, the most celebrated event of which has become the clandestine migration of Radio B92 from the airwaves to the Internet, intended as a challenge to the Serbian authorities who had cut off its signal. Rather than celebrating this event at face value like so many of his colleagues, Virilio argues that it would be more interesting to ask why the American-led forces allowed it to continue when other media, such as RTS Belgrade Television, were bombed as quickly as possible; as he points out, not only was the Internet heavily "promoted in a multi-million dollar campaign at the end of the Gulf War, [but further, it] is of military origin and has military purposes. In the field of information it plays more or less the same role as jamming of enemy broadcasts in earlier world conflicts. As Negroponte has rightly remarked, with the 'liberation of information' on the Web, what is mostly lacking is meaning or, in other words, a context...[and thus] the difference between (true) information and (false) deception fades a little more each day".<sup>241</sup> In this sense his argument is that rather than serving as a liberatory force, even in the Kosovo War the Internet served the function of the military that invented it, in that it transformed warfare into cyberwarfare, an 'artificial climate' in which the civilian populations could not possibly predominate. Even so, the over-reliance on technology amongst anti-militarists on all sides was the least of the obstacles faced by the general population, as the popular defense that might have been successful within the mountainous Serbian state by the Albanians and others, was vastly complicated by the total disregard for civilian life shown by the American-led NATO forces, whose orbital strategy of ecological warfare both undermined resistance and accelerated ethnic cleansing. Indeed, as Virilio points out, unlike Palestinians, Yugoslavians of all kinds were still tied to their social and territorial milieu, meaning that popular defense may well have developed into far more than the few short lived attempts that did occur; as he explains, "this is why the West is afraid of it. They fear having an Afghanistan or a Vietnam in

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<sup>240</sup> P. Virilio, Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light, 60.

<sup>241</sup> P. Virilio, Strategy of Deception, 78.

Europe...the Yugoslavians had a self-managed society including the sphere of defense. The civil war could develop so quickly in Yugoslavia, because the armaments were distributed throughout the territory, except for the tanks that were located in the barracks of large cities".<sup>242</sup> Ironically then, while populations that were supposedly being 'helped' such as the Albanians, were ultimately forced into defending themselves from both American-led NATO forces and Serb forces as well, the latter who were being 'attacked' were able to begin adapting to this new strategy "by scattering and remaining static - that is to say, by apparent inertia - as they await a frontal assault which the Allies seem unable to resolve to undertake".<sup>243</sup> In other words the Serbs were engaging in a form of popular defense of their own, where the primary strategy would be to blend into an environment which they were much more comfortable with than their 'opponents' who had come to an unfamiliar mountainous terrain, one which had successfully repelled the attempts of the Soviets, Nazis and others to seize control of it in the past.

Although these examples all share the flaw of placing logistics over tactics, this does not therefore mean that there have been no examples in our time which suggest the possibility of a truly popular defense; indeed, Virilio has gone to great lengths to suggest ways in which the concept might be made more relevant in recent years, primarily under the broad rubric of what he has called 'grey ecology'. Indeed, as he has articulated the concept from the beginning, popular defense has always involved the convergence of popular resistance and ecological struggles into a 'movement of movements', in which the boundaries separating political struggles organized around territorial, social and technical ecologies are eroded, so that the knot tying them to one another could be seen and acted upon directly; thus from Virilio's perspective the problem with 'popular resistance' movements today is that they primarily focus on the social ecology while ignoring the territorial and technical ecology, just as the problem with ecological movements today is that they primarily focus on the territorial ecology while ignoring the technical and social ecology. Thus the popular defense of grey ecology seeks to bring social ecology and territorial ecology together while simultaneously drawing attention to the technical ecology, with its largely unconsidered effects such as 'dromospheric pollution', in which the lived experience of the world's ancient expanse and plurality is obliterated by the sudden predominance of transportation and transmission technologies operating at the speed of light; in this sense, grey ecology is not simply concerned with the material aspect of pollution with which we are already familiar, but

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<sup>242</sup> J. Der Derian "Future War: A Discussion With Paul Virilio". Retrieved June 20, 2003 from <http://www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/vy2k/futurewar.cfm>.

<sup>243</sup> P. Virilio, Strategy of Deception , 19.

also with the spiritual aspect of pollution, which is what really allows it to complete the project by destroying the very possibility of experiencing the world as it was prior to technologization. Although there have not been many political struggles that have developed around these issues in recent years, for Virilio the greatest resistance that the grey ecological movement could wage at this time would be to actively transform the way people live in the world, by acting against the empire of speed on a consistent and regular basis in our everyday lives; suggestions he has made to this end include;

1. Rather than protesting only when media are involved, actively engaging power in real space.
2. Rather than driving or flying everywhere, spending more time walking, bicycling or rowing.
3. Rather than constantly moving, putting down roots in a particular locality.
4. Rather than confining oneself to the urban environment, regularly exploring wild spaces.
5. Rather than allowing silence to predominate, talking to one another more often.
6. Rather than allowing the image to predominate, beginning to read and write on a regular basis.
7. Rather than confining oneself to one's home, making an effort to be out in the community.
8. Rather than allowing long-term ties to fall apart, holding onto family and friends.
9. Rather than allowing oneself to be infantilized by technology, embracing responsibility.

Yet there have been a few examples of grey ecological movements that have emerged in recent years, ranging from those brave souls who have crossed the Atlantic and Pacific oceans by rowboat in order to challenge the contraction of distances and the polar inertia of the 'comfort society', to worldwide organizations challenging the unbridled pollution of the night's darkness and the censorship of bodily perception to imaginative anarchists disrupting the sanctity of urban surveillance cameras which in the aftermath of September 11 have mushroomed exponentially the world over. The common thread linking all of these divergent struggles and suggestions is the need for an updated theory of the revolution of everyday life, one which would be capable of challenging the organized loneliness and dromospherical pollution of our times by reclaiming the unity of our animal, social and territorial bodies; indeed, as Virilio argues, "if there is a solution

today it lies in reorganizing the place of communal life".<sup>244</sup> Therefore, "while citizenship and civility depend not only on 'blood' and 'soil', as we keep being told, but also, and perhaps especially on the nature and proximity of human groups, would it not be more appropriate to come up with a different kind of ecology? A discipline less concerned with nature than with the effects of the artificial environment of the town on the degradation of the physical proximity of beings, of different communities"<sup>245</sup>. Ironically enough, one of the greatest defenders of this vision may be found in a man who has risked his life to row across both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, Gerard d'Aboville; while humming the Alan Jackson country song 'Here in the Real World', he rowed his 26-foot boat *Sector* from Choshi, Japan to Ilwaco, Washington in 134 days, facing near-death situations several times along the way. Events of this sort are significant according to Virilio, because with the ever increasing temporal pollution of the oceanic dromosphere, "its just a big garbage can now. With the invention of supersonic planes, cruise ships were eradicated. Now the Atlantic is only used by a few transporter or cargo ships. It is no longer traveled by man, except as a playing field for solitary crossings or oarsmen like Aboville"<sup>246</sup>. Thus rowing across the ocean can be seen as a form of resistance to the predominance of the supersonic plane, and is not to be taken as proof that he had 'conquered' the plurality and expanse of the world, as the astronaut conquers gravity or the cybernaut conquers distance, but on the contrary that the conviviality of animal and territorial bodies had *allowed* him to complete his journey (as he said himself, 'I did not conquer the Pacific. It let me go across'); this humble perspective from one of the bravest souls on earth is that of one who would defend nature against technocracy and thus the proximity of the local against the separation of the global. But the journey was also one which he undertook in order to challenge the false sense of freedom offered by the more 'efficient' transportation technologies and by a society which seeks to specialize risk, as the military institution does by recuperating popular defense; as he argues, "when I say that I value my personal freedom above all else, I also accept the other side of that coin, namely that I take full responsibility for my actions and conduct...true responsibility, the ultimate exercise of one's freedom, is to know that in the event you fail, you expose yourself to the supreme penalty, death. That in itself is enough to make me feel the full weight of what I do. All the rest is so much literature"<sup>247</sup>.

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<sup>244</sup> P. Virilio, *Politics of the Very Worst*, 52.

<sup>245</sup> P. Virilio, *Open Sky*, 58.

<sup>246</sup> P. Virilio, *Politics of the Very Worst*, 61.

<sup>247</sup> G. d'Aboville, "Alone: The Man Who Braved the Pacific and Won". Retrieved October 1, 2003 from [http://www.oceanrowing.com/Gerard\\_d\\_Aboville/](http://www.oceanrowing.com/Gerard_d_Aboville/).

Another important element of grey ecology is that which Virilio refers to as 'freedom of perception', in order to draw attention to the fact that our ancient ability to perceive the world directly through our bodies is being increasingly cancelled out by the tyranny of artificial prostheses, a form of censorship so pervasive that it is usually not even noticed; as he points out, "in the not so distant past the spectacle of the world was limited, if that is the word, to the rhythm of the seasons, the alternation of night and day over the changing horizon of the landscape. But now the prevailing rapid transport and transmission technologies have managed to mobilize our field of perception non-stop...at a time when everyone is rightly asking about the freedom of expression and the political role of the media in our society, it would surely be a good thing if we also asked ourselves about the individual's freedom of perception and the threats brought to bear on that freedom by the industrialization of vision and of hearing".<sup>248</sup> One of the best examples of this that he brings up is the pollution of our perception of darkness as a result of the total saturation of artificial light, a phenomena which has reached such an extent that two-thirds of the planet no longer experience 'night' as such; as Virilio points out, "on the European continent, for example, half the population are no longer able to see the Milky Way, and only the desert regions of our planet are still plunged into darkness - to the point where it is no longer merely the night sky that is threatened, but indeed the night, the great intersidereal night, that other unknown quantity which constitutes our only window on the cosmos".<sup>249</sup> It is for this reason that he points to the emergence of groups such as the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) as an example of ways in which civilians might defend their 'freedom of perception' in the epoch of absolute speed; with 10,000 members from all fifty of the United States as well as seventy other countries around the world this burgeoning group features a Speaker's Bureau, a monthly newsletter, CDs, videos, over 180 information sheets and a healthy respect for unimpeded bodily perception. For instance, one information sheet entitled 'Reclaiming the Milky Way' argues that the reason one becomes relaxed while driving in the darkness of country roads after having left the glare of the city is that 'our eyes are being allowed to work as nature intended' after millions of years of gradual adaptation to a gradually changing milieu, from the time when Homo Erectus hunted, ate food, gave birth and engaged in a wide range of other activities all without so much as the light of fire, to the appearance of candles 20,000 years ago, to the appearance of the kerosene-powered 'city of light' in the early nineteenth century and finally to the sudden appearance of carbon filament light in 1879, which transformed everything far more quickly than humans could adapt.

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<sup>248</sup> P. Virilio, *Open Sky*, 96.

<sup>249</sup> P. Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, 129.

However, contrary to a recent episode of *The Simpsons* which implied as much, they are not arguing for the need to return to the days of Homo Erectus before fire was invented, but rather for the return of the 'city of light' which, because it was kerosene powered, was far dimmer and therefore far less damaging to human perception; indeed, as the IDA put it, "street lighting levels in those days were still dim enough to allow our eyes to work as nature intended. We could still use the light-collecting rods in our retinas, developed through millions of years of human evolution, to see the stars...[but] for the past hundred years, lighting companies, utility companies, national, state and local governments, and now gas stations, commercial centers and convenience stores have set their own agendas about what's best for us during the dark hours of our lives. They played on our insecurities and our fear of crime...[while in fact] the reality is that more lighting gives us the feeling of more security, not more security...but now there is a movement in this country, and in other countries around the world, to restore the dark night skies and to allow our eyes to reclaim the Milky Way".<sup>250</sup>

Another way in which our perception of the world is being censored is that which results from the increasing prominence of surveillance cameras in our everyday lives, from the global spy satellite system, easily capable of zeroing in on any person at any time, to the government, military and private surveillance cameras proliferating throughout the urban centers of the world, with such features as face-recognition software with direct feeds to Pentagon offices, this globalization of panopticism has now supplanted the situation of just a few decades ago when we could still perceive the world directly without this paranoia-inducing saturation of the visual field. One group that is attempting to challenge this development by reversing the flowchart and using the imperial weapons of surveillance against them, is the Situationist-inspired Surveillance Camera Players (SCP), out of New York City; the tactics which they employ originally emerged during the Nazi surveillance of the English military - as Virilio explains, "rather than attempt to interfere with this, the Allies decided to take part in the *mise en scene* of Hitler's newsreel and intelligence films. Their main technique was not classical camouflage but on the contrary, overexposure".<sup>251</sup> Thus, phoney vehicles, ships, troop deployments, radio-conversations and other oddities appeared throughout the landscape as choreographed decoys in order to trick the aerial cinematographers; "and to add a final touch of authenticity, public figures, including King George himself, and Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery, were invited to visit the spurious docks,

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<sup>250</sup> IDA, "Reclaiming the Milky Way". Retrieved Sept. 28, 2003 from <http://www.darksky.org/infoshts/is154.html>.

<sup>251</sup> P. Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 63.

ships and building sites."<sup>252</sup> This kind of theatrically-based counter-information warfare is exactly the kind that is now being used by the SCP, who perform plays in front of surveillance cameras installed inconspicuously in public places in order to draw attention to them; of course, unlike the Allied forces, their purposes are not to defend yet another form of centralized power but rather to undermine it altogether by disrupting the surveillance system as much as possible; as Bill Brown, one of the group's founders, has explained his vision for what might replace it, such a transformation would necessarily require:

a gradual collapsing back to the human scale. Surveillance cameras are a specialized outgrowth of the police department. The police department are themselves a specialized outgrowth of the community as a whole. So that you could say it is possible to be unconditionally opposed to the cameras by saying 'I not only want to get rid of the cameras, I want to get rid of the police departments themselves'. Replace both by communities that watch themselves....you can still have governance; it would be self-governance, as in the police come from the community instead of being an artificial prosthesis, in the same way that the cameras are an artificial prosthesis jutting out of the police...if we want to stop crime what we do is start educating people to watch out for each other...as recently as when I was 25, this city scared the shit out of me and I couldn't bring my girlfriends here, I couldn't take my wallet out because someone would come and steal my wallet. I realized that if that's what I believed, then that's what all these people believe, which is why they want a cop on the beat and a camera and an army. Get rid of this internal infantilization and we don't even need armies.<sup>253</sup>

Clearly then the SCP are one of the best examples of popular defense to have emerged in the era of absolute speed, not only because of the related arguments they make in this statement, nor the Virilian language with which they do so, but also because of the tactics they use while working towards this vision; throughout the downtown areas of North America, Europe and the rest of the world they have mapped out the locations of surveillance cameras and then disseminated this information to the population in order to inspire locals to become engaged in the issue themselves rather than relying on some exterior entity to take care of it for them. In doing so they have helped to disclose the locations of thousands of surveillance cameras throughout New York City, where, after September 11, those who once called him a conspiracy theorist are beginning to take him seriously, as officials proceed to install hundreds more in the name of the war on terror; they have also demonstrated that, for whatever reason, Portland, Oregon has a far higher proportion of government owned cameras in public places than most American cities, as well as that its newer buildings, such as the Hatfield Federal Building, have gone so far as to incorporate them into their exterior architecture, making them more difficult to spot. In addition to such cartographic

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<sup>252</sup> P. Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 64.

<sup>253</sup> Bill Brown, "Streets Into Stages: An Interview With the Surveillance Camera Players' Bill Brown". Retrieved September 22, 2003 from [http://www.surveillance-and-society.org/articles1\(3\)/interview.pdf](http://www.surveillance-and-society.org/articles1(3)/interview.pdf).

disclosures, the group also leads regularly occurring walking tours of the cameras' locations, and in the summer months, even perform unannounced plays in front of them, including silent adaptations of Orwell's *1984* and Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*; while the plays are largely directed at the security officers, police officers and military personnel on the other side of the lens, they typically draw sizeable crowds of pedestrians in the process, thus helping to demystify the seriousness, secrecy and ubiquity on which they thrive. While the SCP clearly pose no physical threat to those entities who place these cameras in the public arena, any lingering doubts as to whether they are understood as a threat nonetheless, should be dispelled by the fact that in the past several years their website has been visited literally thousands of times by such international entities as NATO and the International Atomic Energy Agency, by such American entities as the CIA, FBI, NSA and Department of Homeland Security, and by such foreign entities as the Australian Department of Defense, the Taiwanese Coast Guard, the English Defense and Research Agency, the Brazilian Supreme Federal Tribunal, the Argentinean Supreme Court, and the British Columbian Data Network Services. Much like Virilio himself, while the SCP are apparently obsessed with the totalitarian elements of new technologies, they are careful not to allow the resistance they are mounting to be recuperated by the very technologies they critique, placing their website at a rung below the politics of everyday life; in fact, as Brown puts it, "I want to suggest that technology is never a useful tool in solving problems relating to fear, psychology, safety...these need human solutions, not technological ones".<sup>254</sup>

### 3.3 Aesthetics of Resistance

While it is certainly true that the concept of popular defense as articulated by Virilio refers primarily to confrontation within the realm of the political, another important source of resistance to which he returns throughout his work is that of aesthetics. Like Heidegger, he argues that that the ancient ecology of *techne* was concealed by the instrumentality of technique and that this will be revealed in the unfolding of the arts. But unlike Heidegger, Virilio is alive in a time in which this legacy has been forgotten, over the course of the past century of the development of contemporary art, which leads him to be very critical of most of it. In this period in which the empire of speed was set into motion, he points out that there has emerged an aesthetics of disappearance which has uncritically converged with technique, thus supplanting the aesthetics of appearance which Heidegger had seen as a possible source of divergence from it; as Virilio explains, with the latter, "there was an enduring material support to the image: wood or canvas in

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<sup>254</sup> Bill Brown, "Streets Into Stages: An Interview With the Surveillance Camera Players' Bill Brown".

the case of paintings; marble in the case of sculptures....but with the invention of photography, of the photogramme, that is of instant photography, and of cinematography, from that moment onwards one enters into an aesthetic of disappearance...things owe their existence to the fact that they disappear".<sup>255</sup> This is an important point because to a great extent this history of the convergence of art and technique mirrors that of the atrocities of the twentieth century, in which the most powerful states owed their exist to the fact that millions of 'bodies-without-souls' were forced to disappear; as Virilio puts it, "I would even say that Nazi nihilism introduces this question. The death camps were an attempt to bring on this disappearance. I think this feeling of perfecting disappearance is there among the dangers of the virtual. We would be confronted with a kind of negationism, a virtual one denying the reality of bodies, of the earth, of the mind".<sup>256</sup> While this may sound extreme at first, Virilio points out the importance of peering into the abyss even if one does not choose to believe what one sees there; what he has seen then, is that contemporary art has lost its emancipatory potential and has become complicit instead with the de-struction of the body; as he points out, "these days when people get down to debate the relevance or awfulness of contemporary art, they generally forget to ask one vital question; contemporary art, sure, but contemporary with what?"<sup>257</sup> The weight of this question is confirmed in the reflections of aesthetician Jacqueline Lichtenstein, who upon visiting the museum at Auschwitz had the terrifying feeling of being in the presence of images from contemporary art, leading her to lament that "they had won, since they'd produced forms of perception that are all of a piece with the mode of destruction they made their own".<sup>258</sup> However, while it is certainly true that most contemporary art conforms to this aesthetic, Virilio concedes that there have been some exceptions to the rule, which can be seen in his articulation of the divergence between what he calls 'pitiful' art, which embraces the aesthetics of appearance, the unity of bodies and popular defense, and what he calls 'pitiless' art which embraces the aesthetics of disappearance, the de-struction of the body and terrorist assault; as he explains, "terrorism isn't just a political phenomenon, it's also an artistic phenomenon. It exists in advertising, in the media, in the reality show, the pornographic media...after the end of abstract art, after all those people who were still people of culture, we have stuttered the horror revealed by Auschwitz and Hiroshima".<sup>259</sup> In fact, Virilio takes this critique so far that he even dismisses some of the more radical artists such as the Dadaists, Futurists, Surrealists and Situationists with whom he has been associated, as being

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<sup>255</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 41.

<sup>256</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 151.

<sup>257</sup> P. Virilio, *Art and Fear* (London: Continuum, 2003), 27.

<sup>258</sup> P. Virilio, *Art and Fear*, 28.

<sup>259</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 137.

complicit due to their collective embrace of an aesthetic of pitilessness;<sup>260</sup> for example, he points out that this can be seen in the frank statements in support of total war and 'revolutionary' dictators made by Hulsensbeck, Marinetti and Breton, just as it can in the defense of sadism and random killing put forth by Debord.<sup>261</sup> A similar pitilessness is seen in such recent examples as what he describes as 'the truly decisive step' when Gunther von Hagens opened his *World of Bodies* in Mannheim, Germany with the intention of 'breaking the last remaining taboos'; the display featured 200 plastinated corpses, "standing tall like statues of antiquity, the flayed cadavers either brandished their skins like trophies of some kind or showed off their innards in imitation of Salvador Dali's *Venus de Milo with drawers*"<sup>262</sup>. Virilio saw this as akin to the pitiless aesthetic of Ilse Koch of Buchenwald, who turned the skins of extermination camp victims into lampshades and other 'taboo-challenging' pieces of the early twentieth century; indeed, as he quotes of an anxious art dealer of that time, "the new German painting, naturally, represents current sensibility in Germany...furious, murderous demoniacal heads - not in the style of the old masters but in completely modern manner: scientific, choking with poison gas".<sup>263</sup>

Clearly then, the Nazis were not alone in their pitiless aesthetic, for just as they embraced photography and film as a means of winning hearts and minds, so too did the Soviets with their penchant for 'Socialist Realism' and the documentary film; although it is generally overlooked, Virilio points out that this is also reflected in the West by the British Documentary Movement and 'Mass Observation' which he says emerged largely as "a reaction against the art world".<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> As noted above, Virilio sees the relationship between art and technology as being one of antagonism rather than mutuality and argues therefore that with each new introduction of technology art develops a form of resistance to it, as seen in the examples of impressionism, pointillism and cubism with the arrival of photography. The importance of this relationship between art and technology is seen in the way in which Futurism did the opposite by embracing the new technologies only to become Fascist in the end. For this reason it may be surprising to some that Virilio considers himself a Futurist of a sort, but precisely the opposite kind; as he explains, "like them, my approach is Futurist, but whereas their work is positive, mine is negative. And I completely reject the Fascist impulse that I perceive in their work. For me its quite clear. Those who are optimistic about technology are very closely allied to Fascism. He who is critical of technology is not Fascist". P. Virilio, *Virilio Live*, 158.

<sup>261</sup> Allan Antliff points out however that qualitatively-oriented art forms such as Cubism, which Virilio defends as a form of resistance to the supposedly objective 'aesthetics of disappearance' of photography, were often equally complicit with virulent nationalism and the logic of total war, especially as expressed by the United States in the First World War. He argues that in many cases, the Bergsonian qualitative paradigm of lived experience lead to a kind of cultural elitism which was expressed not only as the most fully modern of the arts of the time but also as the most fully nationalist as well as seen in the involvement of many of these thinkers in the Celtic League, which he describes as "a leftist organization with racist leanings and strong pro-France, pro-nationalist stance". A. Antliff, "Max Stirner and the Politics of Marcel Duchamp's Ready-Mades", *Ye Drunken Sailor* 6 October 2002, 22. He goes on to demonstrate that the Dadaist rejection of Cubism was in part motivated by its connections to Stirnerian individualist anarchism, which would certainly be anathema to the Proudhonian collectivist anarchism of Virilio, though it should be noted that the latter has forthrightly rejected French nationalism, embracing a radically democratic politics of the city instead.

<sup>262</sup> P. Virilio, *Art and Fear*, 41.

<sup>263</sup> P. Virilio, *Art and Fear*, 33.

<sup>264</sup> P. Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, 25.

Thus for Virilio, the reason photography and film were so revered by these regimes was precisely that they contributed to the pitiless de-struction of the lived experience of the body; since the speed of the shutter was far quicker than that of the human eye, it was thereby supposed that this fact allowed it to escape the 'mere subjectivity' of human perception and to replace it with what was supposed to be an objective, scientific account of the world; as Virilio elaborates, "considered irrefutable proof of the existence of an objective world, the snapshot was in fact, the bearer of its own future ruin...the more instrumental photography became (in medicine, in astronomy, in military strategy) the more it penetrated beyond immediate vision, the less the problem of how to interpret its products managed to emerge beyond the déjà vu of objective evidence".<sup>265</sup> Thus for Virilio, interpretation is always present since not only is there always some body behind the camera imposing their view upon the world, but the very form of the camera itself is totally imbued with the values of the culture that produced it; therefore in the midst of a pitiless age, "it is art that tells the truth and photography that lies. For in reality time does not stand still...duration is automatically defeated by the innovation of photographic instantaneity, for if the instantaneous image pretends to scientific accuracy in its details, the snapshot's image-freeze or rather image-time-freeze invariably distorts the witness's felt temporality".<sup>266</sup> Although he maintains that it is speed that mobilizes the progression of photography, Virilio does concede that none of this would have come to pass had it not been for the tendency of the visual arts - including aesthetics of appearance such as painting - to become transformed into 'logos' of a sort, as occurred with the *Mona Lisa*, whereas with other art forms this was not necessarily the case; as he elaborates, "while theater and dance - those arts involving immediate presence - still demand prolonged attention, we sum up the visual arts immediately, or as good as. The very recent development of real-time computer imagery only ever accentuates this effect of iconic stupefaction".<sup>267</sup> Many of these same feature are found in the medium of film, which not only 'puts a uniform on the eyes' such that the entire audience views the work from precisely the same perspective (as opposed to the multiperspectival character of theater), but eventually even destroys the early features of analogue, silent, monochromatic film in order to replace these with a perceptual regime whereby the digital, the sonorous and the multichromatic prevail; the tragedy of this 'progression' then, is the de-struction of the imagination and interpretation that had originally given art its phenomenological character, thus allowing prosthetic perception to take over for bodily perception, regardless of protest; as Virilio observes, "nowadays everything that

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<sup>265</sup> P. Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, 21.

<sup>266</sup> P. Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, 2.

<sup>267</sup> P. Virilio, *Art and Fear*, 90.

remains silent is deemed to consent, to accept without a word of protest the background noise of audiovisual immoderation...no silence can express disapproval or resistance but only consent. The silence of the image is not only animated by the motorization of film segments; it is also enlisted in the general acquiescence of a total art - the seventh art which, they would claim, contained all the rest".<sup>268</sup>

Yet it would not be long before this assumption would prove to have been rather presumptuous with the appearance of such phenomena as 'transgenic art' such as that produced by pitiless 'artists' like Eduardo Kac, who seek to create a totally artificial universe by splicing the genes of dogs, rabbits, fish, plants and amoebas with Green Fluorescent Protein simply for the amusement of watching them glow green. Virilio's reply is that this is not, as some have argued, a new category of art like any other but is instead the destruction of art in its entirety, achieved by attacking the very root of its appearance; as he explains, "transgenic art is renewing the other arts from the inside. Because its focus is the map of the human genome. And we can't treat genetic science as just another science in parallel with the others. It is inside all of the other sciences. It is a way to focus science on its source - the living organism and the knowledge of it...[thus] it exterminates the source of the other arts. The living organism is irreplaceable. The living organism is not of the same nature as what produces it".<sup>269</sup> As Virilio sees it then, transgenic art is nothing less than the example *par excellence* of the growing complicity between art and technology, a convergence that has been organized in such a way that art has already lost its specificity and has thus been redeployed as one more element of the digitalization of everything that exists; as he puts it, "the instrument of number is preparing to dominate the analogon once and for all - in other words to dominate anything which presents a resemblance, or relations of similitude, between beings and things. This leads, self-evidently, to the denial of any phenomenology. Far from wishing to 'save phenomena' as philosophy demanded, we shall henceforth have to mislay them, to lose them beneath calculations, beneath the speed of a calculation which outstrips any time of thought, any intelligent reflection".<sup>270</sup> Thus the unmeasured aesthetics of appearance will suddenly become subject not only to the calculations of the scientific expert whose accumulation of information sets things into motion but also the calculations of the corporate sponsor whose accumulation of capital will open the door; one example of the latter that he gives is that of "a powerful cosmetics multinational [that] recently

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<sup>268</sup> P. Virilio, *Art and Fear*, 74.

<sup>269</sup> P. Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 128.

<sup>270</sup> P. Virilio, *The Information Bomb*, 124.

formed partnerships with the Palazzo Pitti and the Barberini to co-produce art shows and participate in the 'restoration' of old works of art which will, we are told, be readapted to current tastes".<sup>271</sup> Such instrumentalizations of the 'old masters' while clearly reflecting the anti-ethics of transgenic art are also not so distant from the assertions of artists such as Stockhausen, who has forthrightly proclaimed that the WTC bombings were 'the greatest work of art ever'; for Virilio, deliberately pyrotechnical statements of this order are not so much evidence of the transgression of the confines of the old order as they are evidence of the extent of its deepening through the insemination of contemporary art with the totalitarian dictum of 'beyond good and evil'. Thus in light of the emergence of transgenic, digital, corporate and terrorist art, Virilio argues that the outcome has been the destruction of the body that is its basis; as he puts it, "the art of the motor - cinematographic, video-computer graphic - has finally torpedoed the lack of motorization of the 'primary arts'. And I don't just mean the oceanographic arts or those that have come to light at Thule in Greenland but also, equally the gesture of the artist who, first and foremost, brought his body with him: *habeus corpus*; all those corporal arts whose vestiges remain the actor and the dancer. Such motorization thus prefigures the disastrous virtualization of choreography, the grotesque dance of clones and avatars".<sup>272</sup>

While photographic, filmic and 'biological' art all conformed to the pitiless aesthetic of the de-struction of the body so too did the so-called countercultures that expressed their divergence through the mediums of clothing and music; in fact, as Virilio sees it, the primary elements of these milieu such as baggy clothing, piercing, body modification, scarification, tattoos, heroin, punk, hip-hop and rave all revolve around the de-struction of animal, social and territorial bodies, which is why he refers to them as 'counternature' rather than 'counterculture'. The popularity amongst these crowds of combat boots, army pants and coats thus begs the critique of the soldier's costume, which emerged as it did in an attempt to camouflage himself from the perceptual prostheses of the enemy; as Virilio recounts its history, "during the war of 1914 the authorities agree on the evident advantage in renouncing bright colors in the manufacture of uniforms and in adopting a habit of neutral shade to diminish the visibility of troops in the field...they picked sky-blue, field gray, gray-green, and finally English army khaki".<sup>273</sup> By the time of the first Gulf War at the other end of the century, the camouflage suit has been largely replaced by the antichemical suit, a costume which he sees as having several important features in

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<sup>271</sup> P. Virilio, *Ground Zero*, 58.

<sup>272</sup> P. Virilio, *Art and Fear*, 95.

<sup>273</sup> P. Virilio, *Aesthetics of Disappearance*, 89.

common with the bodybag and which appears everywhere from Mardi Gras festivals to the runways of Paris; thus over the course of the century "not only have the beautiful sparkling uniforms of wars past disappeared forever, to be replaced by the khaki work clothes of the soldiers; but now the dappled combat uniform has also disappeared into a wrapping not so different from a garbage bag".<sup>274</sup> Despite the distance between these sartorial transformations, the underlying theme that has remained for both the counterculture and the military is the importance of hiding the contours of the body behind the veil of sameness; this is because, as Virilio has it, "the disappearance of the body's characteristics in the uniformity of the civil or military dress goes along with the disappearance of the body in the unidirectionality of speed".<sup>275</sup> In fact it is for just this reason that for the countercultures of rave, punk and hip-hop, "music is the art of reference, that is, an art of time and acceleration. It's an art of time and speed. It even the first to have given form to speed. It's not by chance that young people only have one art, and that's music".<sup>276</sup> Yet while music is based on the aesthetics of disappearance, Virilio points out that it is in fact a holdover from a time when the aesthetics of appearance were still dominant, meaning that not all forms of music are equally pitiless; indeed, he points out that he has been a jazz enthusiast since the Second World War, when it was the music of the Resistance. In addition to this, Virilio points out that jazz also has more of an aura of proximity to it than hip-hop, punk or rave; as he elaborates, "the destruction of jazz by rock was a very significant moment of deconstruction. The process of subjectivization in jazz is based on alterity. And to have alterity, you need two bodies. Hence the jam session. In rock though, the link with alterity is broken. People have ended up dancing on their own".<sup>277</sup>

From the basis of these critiques then, it can be inferred that a 'pitiful' aesthetics of resistance would be one that would mount a popular defense of the body, of alterity and of the aura of the original piece, since, as Virilio notes, "what, at first glance, distinguishes the true work of art, as Rainer Maria Rilke wrote, is its 'infinite solitude', the enigmatic attraction of a uniqueness which, paradoxically, offers the multitude of its sensory adequations to those who, in looking at them, produce half the picture".<sup>278</sup> Which is why he sees Impressionism as having been such an important form of divergence when photography was first being introduced; as he explains, "for one brief moment Impressionism - in painting and music - was able to retrieve the flavor of the

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<sup>274</sup> P. Virilio, Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light , 71.

<sup>275</sup> P. Virilio, Aesthetics of Disappearance , 90.

<sup>276</sup> P. Virilio, Pure War , 173.

<sup>277</sup> P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews , 153. This is also seen in punk, hip-hop and rave.

<sup>278</sup> P. Virilio, Ground Zero , 50.

ephemeral before the nihilism of contemporary technology wiped it out".<sup>279</sup> So, instead of the nihilistic embrace of acceleration, individuation and violence, Virilio argues that it is now time to reclaim the legacy of artistic resistance as seen in pitiful artists such as Debussy, Coltrane, Monet, Bonnard, Chaplin, Dylan and others of this ilk; as he puts it, "it is once again necessary to diverge. It is necessary to become a critic. Impressionism was a critique of photography and documentary filmmaking a critique of propaganda. So today we have to institute an art criticism of the technosciences".<sup>280</sup> Just as "Joyce, Beckett and Kafka were writers who diverged writing"<sup>281</sup> even amongst the typically pitiless artists of cinema and television there have been those who have subverted the primary function of the medium, including such examples as Wiseman, Rosellini, Godard, and Loach; while he may be largely negative about the emancipatory potential of technique he clearly does not write it off altogether, it would be incorrect to assert that Virilio is some sort of technological reductionist,. However, although he has conceded the possibility of divergent music and film, it is no secret that Virilio is primarily interested in art forms which he sees as reinscribing the animal, social and territorial bodies within the *hic et nunc* of being; as he puts it, "to think about the here and now, the temporality and presence of art, is to oppose its disappearance, to refuse being a collaborator".<sup>282</sup> Therefore what is closest to an aesthetic of resistance is that which emphasizes the importance of corporeality even in the midst of its disappearance; as he explains, "since art has already left its spaces and begun floating through the worlds of advertising and the media, the last that resists is the body...that's why I'm in love with bodies. I think that alongside 'SOS save our souls' we should invent 'SOS save our bodies from electromagnetic electrocution'".<sup>283</sup> Art forms that he emphasizes in this regard include dance, theater, painting, sculpture, land art and architecture, those forms that have always been the bases of the aesthetics of appearance; one playwright who he has influenced in this sense is Heiner Muller, who both diverges film and reinscribes theater at once; as Virilio remarks, "here is a theater that really plays with the deferred time of video: you have a video receiver that functions as a rear-view mirror, letting the spectator see something other than what's to be seen on the stage".<sup>284</sup> As for dance, Virilio points to Sergei Diaghilev, emphasizing that he had told his dancers to 'astonish' him by rejecting the banality of the machine and embracing the fluidity and spontaneity of organic life instead; as he elaborates, this is

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<sup>279</sup> P. Virilio, Art and Fear , 48.

<sup>280</sup> P. Virilio, Politics of the Very Worst , 33.

<sup>281</sup> P. Virilio, Politics of the Very Worst , 24.

<sup>282</sup> P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews , 142.

<sup>283</sup> P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews , 136.

<sup>284</sup> P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews , 134.

important because "the work of art is not academic; it conforms to no preconceived plan and expresses only the extreme veneration of receptiveness or, more trivially, of the extreme vigilance of the living body that sees, hears, intuits, moves, breathes and changes".<sup>285</sup> Thus he argues in favor of bringing back an aesthetics that could intersect meaningfully with a politics of real space, one that would privilege proximity and communication rather than alienation and mutual silence while also drawing attention to the biggest question of our time, that of the body and its destruction by the empire of speed.

One particularly outstanding example of this is seen in Virilio's longstanding project to curate a 'museum of accidents' which would embrace the aesthetics of appearance since it would expose the hidden nature of technological substance; but as he sees it, up until the museum is actually built, television will remain the closest thing to a museum of the accident since it really is the only 'place' where we come into contact with their effects on a regular basis. In other words, since television exists in real time rather than real space it is therefore based upon an aesthetic of disappearance, which means that the accident is still largely hidden to us; for instance if one goes to any of the hundreds of 'museums of science and industry' that dot the American landscape in real space, one finds that while the technology is everywhere apparent, its accident has been censored. It was toward this eventual goal that Virilio put together an exhibition on the accident at the Fondation Cartier in Paris, accompanied by the book *Unknown Quantity*, which consists of large photographs taken from the mainstream press, of the major accidents of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; in doing so, he effectively reinscribed these fleeting images into real space so that they could be comprehended and contemplated in a way not otherwise possible. The exhibition and book can thus be seen as a form of popular defense, an equivalent for the general public to what the simulation industry is for government and business; a medium with which to 'expose the accident in order not to be exposed to it' - as Virilio explains, "this is the very point, the avowed aim of the Fondation Cartier exhibition. A pilot project for, or exactly a prefiguration of, the future Museum of the Accident...[which is important because] as one witness to the rise of nihilism in Europe put it, 'the most atrocious act becomes easy when the path leading to it has been duly cleared'.<sup>286</sup> In this sense, then, the exhibition *Unknown Quantity* can be understood as a direct challenge to those art forms that have become little more than propaganda for the empire of speed such as 'transgenic art' or 'implantation art' in which the artist advertises the 'liberation' of the body in the age of genetic engineering and biotechnology by torturing and altering not only her own body,

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<sup>285</sup> P. Virilio, *Ground Zero*, 50.

<sup>286</sup> P. Virilio, *Unknown Quantity*, 8.

but often those of others as well, with or without their consent. Thus, just as astronomers have recently begun to plan ahead for the next collision with 'near earth asteroids' such as that which impacted Tunguska, Siberia in 1908 or Flagstaff, Arizona several millennia ago, Virilio argues that his project is no less serious, since "accidents always reveal something that is indispensable to knowledge. You can't create the positive without creating the negative...that there are negative monuments for me is an extraordinary advance [because] negative means that we remember in order not to do it again".<sup>287</sup>

### 3.4 The Political City Against the Global City

Perhaps the most interesting element of Virilio's conception of the 'new politics' is to be found in his vision of the local political city as a potential replacement for the global totalitarian city, an image that is important not only because it challenges the supposed inevitability of the empire of speed, but also because it provides something tangible toward which popular defense and aesthetic resistance might be working. While some might argue that this vision is naïve since, as is commonly argued, 'the local is just as homogenizing as the global', what this perspective ignores is that ironically, the more that local populations interact through high speed transportation and transmission technologies, the more they become essentially the same, so that all differences are subsumed in the universality of technique. Rather than promoting diversity and plurality of cultures as is commonly believed, as though it were simply a neutral tool to be used by 'progressive' minded cosmopolitans, Virilio points out that the common feature of contemporary technology is that all animal, social and territorial bodies are forced to conform to its internal logic, as we saw throughout the second chapter. Thus the mistake that is commonly made by those who reject localization as an alternative to globalization is the unfounded assumption that it is necessarily opposed to interaction, a prejudice which ignores that the decentralist critique of technological globalization is based instead on a rejection of the privileging of the *quantitative* logic of interaction via technique over the *qualitative* logic of interaction via the body. This is seen clearly when one considers that when the world consisted primarily of autochthonous societies that relied primarily on small-scale democratic technics, interaction between cultures was still widespread, with the difference that it was not privileged over and against the autonomy of the local community as is the case today.<sup>288</sup> Thus while

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<sup>287</sup> P. Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 147. The preservation of Auschwitz and other concentration camps are good examples of this.

<sup>288</sup> Indeed, on the East Coast of what is now the United States, indigenous tribes such as the Creeks, Cherokees, Powhatans and Werowocomos were often more than willing to allow escaped European indentured servants and

internally there may have in some cases (but certainly not all) existed a 'stifling conformity' within tribal societies, on the global scale the world was never more diverse than it was in the age of the hunter-gatherer.<sup>289</sup> So to argue today that the advocacy of cosmopolitanism is the progressive embrace of 'diversity' and that the advocacy of autochthony is the overly-romanticized embrace of 'homogeneity' is to succumb to the ideology of a linear progress that has become increasingly untenable, especially in light of contemporary political anthropology which has thrown into question the prejudiced view in which such societies were held to be 'backward' or in 'need' of modernization.<sup>290</sup>

Though he is somewhat ambiguous about what would be the best form for the local political city to take, Virilio is never absolutist in his theorizing since on the one hand he emphasizes that the ancient Greek polis was far more democratic than the cities of today because, as is affirmed in the *Constitution of the Athenians*, 'it is the people who make the navies work and who give to the City its power', which he says, implicitly refers to the fact that they could go on strike and thus exert their will, and thus "as opposed to the traditional autocratic regimes, the sharing of power in Athens goes hand in hand with the physical power of displacement".<sup>291</sup> Yet

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African slaves to 'naturalize' into their communities, just as they often opened their ranks to the remnants of tribes decimated by European colonists, all of which lead to the appearance of hundreds of hybrid cultures such as the Melungeons (from which my father's family descends) which maintained a mixed-blood indigenous identity until the formation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the 'Racial Integrity Act' of Walter Plecker. See J. Adams "Self-Determination on the Paleface Reservation: The Melungeon Reemergence in Southern Appalachia". Retrieved October 25, 2003 from <http://www.interracialvoice.com/jason.html>.

<sup>289</sup> This argument also ignores the 'stifling conformity' that is characteristic of globalization, which may well appear to be 'cosmopolitan' due to the presence of a vast array of different kinds of people within a common space, but which in fact is nothing of the sort, since the pressure on all peoples to conform to a single political, economic and cultural standard has never been greater. Amory Starr makes a cogent remark in this regard that recalls the observations of Simone Weil, which is that "the claim that community is always false, always exclusionary, always repressive, tends to be made from a particular historical perspective – by people who don't live in communities. Those who reject community are the first people in history to attempt to live without that institution" A. Starr, *Naming the Enemy: Anti-Corporate Movements Confront Globalization* (London: Zed Books, 2000), 206. She also points out that claims of 'essentialism' ignore arguments by such thinkers as Gandhi, Vandana Shiva and Ashis Nandy that for example, "ancient Indian identity is fluid, fragmenting, multiple, not homogenizing" in contrast to contemporary prejudice to the contrary. A. Starr, *Naming the Enemy: Anti-Corporate Movements Confront Globalization*, 211.

<sup>290</sup> The work of Pierre Clastres and Marshall Sahlins is instructive in this regard, each of which demonstrate that the quality of life within autochthonous societies was by almost all standards superior to our own, from such key indicators as working hours per day to provision of food and shelter for every member of the community. P. Clastres, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology* (New York: Zone Books, 1989). M. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine, 1972). In addition to this one should note the work of critical scholars and antiglobalization activists more recently to develop the concept of a 'subsistence perspective', which could easily be seen as a 'human security' addition to Virilio's 'international security' notion of 'popular defense'. While the latter is a theory about how 'every man is able to provide for his own defense' the former is about how every community is able to provide for its own sustenance, through the privileging of the qualitative logic of use-value over and against the quantitative logic of exchange-value. See V. Bennholdt-Thomsen and M. Mies, *The Subsistence Perspective* (London, Zed Books, 1999). I. Angus, "Subsistence as a Social Right: A Political Ideal for Socialism?" in *Studies in Political Economy* 65 (2001): 117. A. Starr and J. Adams, "Antiglobalization: The Global Fight for Local Autonomy" in *New Political Science* 25, No. 1 (2003): 19.

<sup>291</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 92.

on the other hand, he also points out that the polis was characterized by the fact that those who moved the fastest were also those who wielded the most power, as seen in the fact that at the very top of society sat the hierarch who 'can charter a trireme' whenever he likes, while at the very bottom of society the slave could not travel at will, but only when he was hired out or conscripted as a rower. Thus it can be inferred that while Virilio rejects the exploitation of the slave by the hierarch as well as his exclusion from the decision-making body of the citizenry, he also acknowledges that in those times there was greater opportunity for democracy, since the metabolic vehicle was still indispensable to the functioning of society. It is because of the negative elements of the polis that Virilio has often embraced rural life instead, arguing that the life of the nomad allowed for more convivial relationships on all levels; indeed the first thing to remember when considering his vision of the new politics is his emphasis on the fact that prior to the sedentary city there really were no 'politics' as such and thus there was no 'war' either, though there certainly were 'tumults'; as he puts it, "although the nomad's tribal confederations characterized a tactical antecedent of the conflict organized by sedentary societies, it is not until the rise of cities that true war emerges from the historical development of the city-states".<sup>292</sup> His embrace of the most emancipatory elements between the two is also seen in his vision of the interstitial 'livable landscape', in which he describes his love for the hybridity of the coast; as he explains, "it's a relative landscape – the interface between earth, sea and sky. It's a place where relativity is acted out through both static and dynamic forces...I like landscapes where you can feel the planet, where the territorial body of planet Earth is tangible on a smaller scale. I love the local when it enables you to see the global and I love the global when you can see it from the local. We must keep these both together and never lose them".<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 91.

<sup>293</sup> P. Virilio, *Politics of the Very Worst*, 112. This embrace of the space between the nomad and the sedentary, between the local and the global, lends further credence to the argument that Virilio's rejection of the global city is not an indication of some kind of essentialist parochialism on his part, but rather that he rejects the primacy of the quantitative logic of exchange-value over and against the qualitative logic of use-value. For an interesting conceptualization of how the global might be seen from the local within the discipline of political science, see W. Magnusson and K. Shaw, eds., *A Political Space: Reading the Global Through Clayoquot Sound* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002). In this collection, the contributors consider the importance of considering the global politics of what are generally assumed to be 'irrelevant' local spaces through attentiveness to the multidimensionality of the qualitative. They argue that contrary to the one-dimensional articulations of space produced not only by developers, economists, politicians and scientists but also by environmentalists and others with singular goals in mind, in fact there are 'many Clayoquots' simultaneously, which consist of all of these dimensions and many more such as those of culture, media, technology, national identity and gender, all of which are related to globally relevant issues of the relative distribution of power and authority. More recently, RBJ Walker has argued that the two extremes of the ancient polis and the postmodern cosmopolis, which are often juxtaposed against one another in such a way that one is seen as the problem and the other the solution, are equally implicated in repressive structures of domination and subjugation and that is necessary therefore to try to think beyond the confines of this opposition, perhaps for instance, along the lines that Virilio does here. As he notes, "one can see the limits of any attempt to work on the basis of a

Yet in the ancient polis the process of integrating the stranger of 'the global' into the political life of 'the local' did not emerge naturally but as a result of the constant threat of civil war that lingered in the background; as Virilio sees it, this is the original source of 'citizenship', which from its inception has been defined negatively to the exclusion of both the external Other and the internal Other. However, unlike the stranger without, the stranger within was thought suspicious not because he might attack but because he might not; this was because of the fact that he did not own property which lead many to question whether his potentially muted loyalty would not cause him to avoid giving his life in the event of war. Yet while he was thought suspicious in this sense, he was certainly not seen as a threat to the citizenry in the same way as was the external Other, which therefore gave him at least a modicum of freedom within the space of the polis; indeed, as Virilio points out, the original function of 'the ghetto' in which he lived was "on the one hand a place of retreat and exclusion from the social fabric; and, on the other, a space of relative liberty for the like/unlike, foreigners as potential enemies on the way to assimilation or complete exclusion".<sup>294</sup> Therefore while the legacy of 'blood and soil' is one that Virilio would just as soon forget, there were certain aspects of the city external to this that were not entirely negative, such as the emergence of new relations of proximity between animal and social bodies that allowed for a greater degree of participation in decision-making than had been the case previously; indeed, as he argues, "this double challenge to the urban order explains the appearance of the public place (agora, forum), at once a 'political stage' for democratic confrontations and a 'staging ground' for the mobilization of soldier-citizens".<sup>295</sup>

Thus the great transformation from the ancient polis to the global city of today can be seen in the expansion of its worst elements such as the exponential increase in the power of the speed-classes and the exclusion of ever greater numbers from decision-making, just as it can also be seen in the eclipse of its best elements such as the emergence of the public place that allowed for a political relationship of conviviality; as Virilio explains, "it is relative speed, on the one hand, with seafaring, the train, the car, the plane (the airport following the train station) that will permit the progressive development of an industrial democracy; while absolute speed on the other hand, with telecommunications and tele-command (the teleport following the airport) will finally give

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modern framing of an opposition between the polis and the cosmopolis, rather than of some understanding of their co-constitution as the limits of modern political possibility/impossibility. R. Walker, "Polis, Cosmopolis, Politics" *Alternatives* 28 (2003) 267-286.

<sup>294</sup> P. Virilio, *Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light*, 9.

<sup>295</sup> P. Virilio, *Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light*, 8.

rise to the latest of revolutions".<sup>296</sup> The effects of this are seen for instance in the steady increase of 'totalitarian individualism' noted previously, in which, as the population has expanded and technology has advanced, the family has disintegrated from extended to nuclear to singular form; Virilio argues that the most significant result of this deconstruction is that it "progressively relieves threatened populations of any prospect for organized resistance"<sup>297</sup> which is why he argues that "the reconstructed family is in a way a self-defense invention in reaction".<sup>298</sup> A similar effect is notable in the form of contemporary buildings, in that they are planned from the start with an expected duration of less than one century; indeed, as Virilio notes, "you see the exact same parallel happening today in labor relations in the shape of short-term employment contracts. I believe the concept of duration cannot be separated from the idea of solidity".<sup>299</sup> Thus in the global city of today there is as little emphasis on the embedding of a building within a topological context as there is on the embedding of a human being within a social context, unlike "the olden space-time [which] was an extensive space, a space where duration of time was valued. Whatever was short-lived was considered an evil - something pejorative. To last a short time was to not be present; it was negative. Today we are entering an era of intensive time; that is to say that new technologies lead us to discover the equivalent of the infinitely small in time".<sup>300</sup> As a result of this excessive acceleration, the inhabitant of the global city loses the security once afforded by his citizenship, which allows the instrumentality of technique to replace the conviviality of politics; as Virilio explains, today "the topical character of the city of free and equal men assembled in a public place is to be succeeded by a teletopical metacity where the public image 'in real time' will probably supplant the quite real space of cities of the republic".<sup>301</sup> Thus with the emergence of the virtual agora of the television and the computer, the sharing of decisions suddenly becomes impossible, since the deliberative ethic of careful reflection is replaced by the totalitarian panic of decisions-on-the-spot; indeed, this is why the politics of the local have become topical once again such that "ecological defense...becomes the last truly political stakes of civilian populations...since it means the simple freedom to come and go, as well as the freedom to remain, to stay put".<sup>302</sup> Thus for Virilio, the whole purpose of reinventing the political city in our time is for 'citizens' and 'strangers' to join together in order to counteract the mediatization of the political body being imposed by the technological prostheses of polar inertia; however, this vision

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<sup>296</sup> P. Virilio, Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light , 15.

<sup>297</sup> P. Virilio, Lost Dimension , 126.

<sup>298</sup> P. Virilio, Politics of the Very Worst , 63.

<sup>299</sup> P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews , 59.

<sup>300</sup> P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews , 71.

<sup>301</sup> P. Virilio, Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light , 14.

<sup>302</sup> P. Virilio, Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles , 91.

of the 'new polis' does not merely challenge the law of least action in regard to technology but also within the arena of politics. For example it is well known that the American political system appears to most of its people as little more than a great political machine which only requires their engagement once every four years, while the rest of the time they are more or less confined to a state of political inertia; a move toward a more radical form of democracy would thus require a 'strategy of most action' as a means of challenging the ideology of comfort and consumerism.

This is precisely the idea that had united the divergent groups in the Events of May '68, was their common opposition to the emergence of a consumer society; as Lotringer elaborates, "those it used to enslave as workers now were being reinvented as consumers. The nature and scope of 'alienation' as a result, was changing drastically. What mattered most at this point was to instill in workers desires that the industry itself would satisfy".<sup>303</sup> This relationship of dependency and inertia is precisely what Virilio's *Groupe Architecture Principe* had been planning to shock people out of, through a totally redesigned city that would throw the body into action and encourage the reemergence of social relations of proximity; coming out of a cultural milieu which put great emphasis on multidisciplinary, their unique conjunction of art theory, political philosophy and critical architecture resulted in the concept of the 'Oblique Function' in which the Euclidean geometry which underlies both the inertia-inducing 'first urban order' of horizontality (as in the sprawling ghettos of Soweto) and the alienation-inducing 'second urban order' of verticality (as in the concentrated skyscrapers of Manhattan) would be replaced with a 'phenomenological' geometry, thus giving birth to a type of 'topological' architecture that would mimic the proximity, fluidity and unevenness of nature. Indeed, as Virilio argues, the Oblique Function would disrupt the tyranny of politico-corporeal inertia through an "ergonomics of the space-time of being, an ergonomics which does not exist, but which is to be put together from the dynamics of being, through what I have called 'energetic being', no longer an ergonomic being".<sup>304</sup> In this sense the Oblique Function would complement popular resistance movements by promoting activity and communication in real space rather than inertia (horizontality) and concentration (verticality) in real time; as he explains, this is because "as soon as the third spatial dimension (the oblique) is brought into the relationship with regard to space and weight changes, the individual will always be in a state of resistance - whether accelerating as he is going down, or slowing down as he is climbing up, whereas when one walks on a horizontal plane weight is

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<sup>303</sup> P. Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 13.

<sup>304</sup> P. Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 75.

nil (or equal)".<sup>305</sup> In this sense then, every moment of life becomes reorganized by the constant resistance to gravity with the result that the inert body becomes a sort of 'perpetual dancer' through the extension of the logic of the staircase into the totality of the structure; but this does not mean that the creature comfort of furniture will be forced to disappear, rather it means that it becomes integrated into the topology as well, "you pull out table, chairs, bed from an inclined place and you push it back when you're done with it...the idea is that the floor is both furniture and building...as with planetary reality, it is the ground that contains life".<sup>306</sup> Of course, this critique was not only of architecture as such, but extends to the city as well, which in our time has been designed around the centrality of the automobile, the polar inertia of 'mobile architecture' rather than the Obliquity of 'inhabitable circulation'; thus, as Virilio notes, "we come back full circle to topology, choreography and the return to the body. In a car the body is dead and I still hold to this critique".<sup>307</sup> Having been designed in the form of a grid so as to conform to the dictates of the speed of the automobile on the one hand and the surveillance of police on the other, an Oblique city would thus be more like a labyrinth that could not be so easily traversed or surveilled as though it were some great race-track or prison. As imaginative and open-minded as they clearly were however, it should not be forgotten that Architecture Principe did not embrace the seemingly related visions of such architects as Utudjian who declared that in order to transgress the two urban orders it would be necessary for humanity to move completely underground; indeed, for Virilio this means little more than essentially succumbing to the aesthetics of disappearance demanded by the ongoing threat of nuclear war. Similarly, the concept of the Oblique Function was not imagined as some sort of computer-mediated direct democracy as advocated by Robert Paul Wolff, (despite Virilio's anarchist sympathies); this is because as he saw it the quality of reflection was far more important than that of reflex, which would most likely become the deciding factor if technological prostheses were made central to the political process, not to mention that this would only reinforce the global city rather than reinscribing the locality of the political city; as he argues, "while direct democracy may be viable for microscopic societies like the Swiss cantons or university AG's, it cannot be viable on a world wide scale".<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> P. Virilio, Virilio Live: Selected Interviews , 53.

<sup>306</sup> P. Virilio, Crepuscular Dawn , 29.

<sup>307</sup> P. Virilio, Crepuscular Dawn , 38.

<sup>308</sup> D. Dufresne "Cyberresistance Fighter: An Interview With Paul Virilio". Retrieved May 18, 2003 from <http://www.apres-coup.org/archives/articles/virilio.html>. This statement recalls Maria Mies' argument that there can be no global commons because commons always presuppose the existence of a community, which by necessity a profoundly local concept.

Interestingly enough, it was in the years just before one of the most sustained attempts at implementing such visions that Virilio and his colleague Claude Parent had finally brought together all of the necessary elements for rigorously testing the real impact of the Oblique Function over a sustained period of observation; as he explains, "we were going to lock ourselves up in Nanterre, close to the campus where May '68 was just about to explode, not far either from the new La Defense district where we had contacts with a few urban specialists...we couldn't just hand out plans merely tested with three boards and climbing on top of them to see if it felt good or not. We had to live inside it, figure out if the system of rebalancing had to be widened or reduced".<sup>309</sup> Of course, all of this came to a swift conclusion when Virilio became swept up in the fervor of the moment, only to seek exile in several foreign countries afterward; this left an anxious Parent behind, who had become increasingly put off by the radical direction his colleague was taking, a sign that it would not be long until the interdisciplinary nature of the intellectual milieu from which Architecture Principe emerged would be destroyed, indeed, as Virilio lamented recently, "now everyone is back in their little compartments".<sup>310</sup> Despite this regression, the positive aspect to it was the shift in his focus from the study of spatiality as such, to the study of temporality and its effects upon spatiality in particular, which then allowed him to develop the concept of 'urban revolution' (which he insists he coined long before Lefebvre); as he explains, "I was convinced that the Watts riots, the Detroit riots, or those in Newark were the beginning of an urban revolution. I thought that the next war was going to be a war of cities. I wasn't thinking about the oppositions among minorities; I thought the city had become unliveable...the recent riots in Los Angeles were repressed by troops like those coming back from Iraq, and who took care of the urban revolution. What is happening right now all over France is of the same nature. The suburbs are on the verge of civil war - a civil war of cities".<sup>311</sup> Though the relationship between Groupe Architecture Principe and Lefebvre was often tense (as Virilio notes, "he was one of my enemies - all those 'liberals' we didn't see much of in 1968, as usual") both he and Parent were considerably influenced by the ideas expressed in *The Urban Revolution* in terms of the importance of temporality in the production of urban space. There were also connections with the unitary urbanism of the Situationists; as Virilio remarks, "we read the Situationists a lot...in fact my architecture was called '*des sites de derivation*'. What drew our attention to the Situationists' approach was the concern with the first urban riots (for instance the Los Angeles 'Watts riots' in the 1960s; riots in Chicago, Detroit). We wanted to go out there and talk with the

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<sup>309</sup> P. Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 43.

<sup>310</sup> P. Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 45.

<sup>311</sup> P. Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 51.

people who were rebelling in the ghetto, not about racial issues but about their living environment, about urbanism".<sup>312</sup> More recently of course, the question of urban revolution has been thrown back into the spotlight by the events of September 11, 2001 in which terrorists knocked down the World Trade Center with two hijacked passenger jets; as he argues, "as an urbanist, I will underline that terrorism has just inaugurated an anti-cities strategy. This means that all towers are today threatened. Instead of being a place of dominion, as the dungeons of the past, the tower has become a place of weakness: vertically, it is henceforth the equivalent of the outer wall which the artillery blew up".<sup>313</sup> Yet this does not detract from Virilio's theories of popular defense or the Oblique Function, but rather reinforces them, since, as he has consistently argued, the verticality of the global city has never been anything but a catastrophe for humankind; as he puts it, "it's the Tower of Babel. We come back to the idea of the skyscraper: Babel is the great catastrophe. Two historical catastrophes in the Bible are total accidents: one is Babel and the other is the Flood. It is not by chance that they are linked together...thus we were absolutely critical of New York".<sup>314</sup>

In this sense then, Virilio's conceptions of popular defense, aesthetics of resistance and the Oblique Function, as we have examined them over the course of this chapter, not only are not lacking in regard to agency, justice and politics as has been argued by such critics as Cubitt and Kellner, but in fact have never been more relevant to those who wish to develop the 'new politics' appropriate to a highly technologized society. As we have seen, the common denominator of these three concepts is that they all seek to reinvent the polis in such a way that the body rather than speed becomes the categorical imperative of politics, art, architecture and the city, thus reinvigorating the possibility of conviviality between disunited animal, social and territorial bodies. Thus just as the tactical unity of these bodies was shown to be the single most important factor in maintaining the legacy of the 'ancient method' of spontaneous popular defense against the perpetual acceleration of the imperial logistical assault, so too did we see that in the art world this tactical unity could help to maintain the critical function of aesthetics in the face of such essentially propagandistic horrors as 'biological art' and other forms of 'expressive' corporeal destruction. The long-range potentialities of these were finally revealed in the concluding section which articulated Virilio's vision of the local, proximal, topographical, low-tech 'Oblique' city as the future replacement for the global, fragmented, horizontal/vertical, high-tech city of polar

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<sup>312</sup> P. Virilio, *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, 55.

<sup>313</sup> P. Virilio, "A Crash of Strategic Thought". Retrieved May 8, 2003 from <http://slash.autonomeia.org/article.pl?sid=01/10/16/1227234&mode=nested>.

<sup>314</sup> P. Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, 34.

inertia. Over the course of this chapter then, we have confronted the imperial ideology of progress and 'inevitable acceleration' that was outlined throughout the previous chapter as an ecological assault on the body with the radical potentiality of a democratic and ecological resistance of the body. This confrontation was important not only in order to challenge those who claim that Virilio leaves no room for politics, but also because, as he puts it, "there will be no truly philosophical politics, I mean, any political philosophy other than barbarism if we don't control speed the way we monitor wealth, if economy is not extended to time, since time is money and speed is power".<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> P. Virilio, Crepuscular Dawn, 65.

## CHAPTER FOUR CONCLUSIONS: DEMOCRATIC BODIES AND AUTHORITARIAN TECHNICS

### 4.1 Principal Findings

At the beginning of this thesis, I made the case that contrary to those who argue that science and technology are inherently objective and complementary to a democratic political culture, in fact they are subjective and parasitic upon it and that Virilio's major contribution to political science had been to articulate how democracy was being transformed into technocracy as a result. I demonstrated that one effect of this transformation could be seen in the way that political science had embraced the ideology of objectivity, causing it to fall into several false dichotomies such as postmodern/constructivist or socialist/liberal that Virilio's phenomenological approach to science and technology and anarchist approach to politics could help to bridge, thus reinforcing the Perestroikan movement for methodological, racial, ethnic, gender and class pluralism within the discipline. Throughout the thesis, by taking an approach that focused on Virilio's theory of the 'political body' as being based upon the conviviality of its animal, social and territorial components, I was able to show that it was through the transportation and transmission technologies of polar inertia and the 'rational' methods of ecological warfare which only work to the extent that they split this unity, that democracy became transformed into technocracy. It also allowed me to counter the claims of such thinkers as Cubitt and Kellner, who have argued that Virilio's pessimism about the technologies of our time somehow cancel out the possibility of a 'new politics' appropriate to the current epoch, by showing how he had in fact made a point to emphasize the many times during the 1960s and in the decades since that animal, social and territorial bodies had spontaneously come together to mount a popular defense against these attacks, and that he had gone to great lengths to articulate what 'popular defense', an 'aesthetics of resistance' and a 'political city' might look like in our time.

In chapter 1 we learned that the Platonic philosophy of the body in which body and soul were held to be separate entities to such an extent that the body was even seen as the 'prison' of the soul had been problematized over the course of the twentieth century in the works of thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty, Arendt, Foucault and Agamben. It was shown that while Merleau-Ponty was one of the first to demonstrate that body/soul and body/world formed a single system that could not be separated, as well as that the attempt to do so inevitably led to the objectification of

the body under the gaze of the scientist or technician, it would nevertheless not be until the later work of Arendt that this argument would be extended into the realm of the political. Her contribution in this regard would be to demonstrate that the separation of body/soul and body/world in many ways formed the basis for German and Soviet forms of totalitarianism, which replaced the conviviality of the political body with an 'iron band of terror' based upon the 'organized loneliness' of multiple separations, not unlike Foucault's description of the disciplinary architecture of the Panopticon. Indeed, in many ways it was his elucidation of the aesthetic of multiple separations that brought together the most important points made by Merleau-Ponty and Arendt, in such a way that it could be shown that the body is always invested in a political field; and just as Foucault demonstrated that the body of the king is produced inversely to that of the condemned man, Agamben builds on this by locating its origins in ancient Greek and Roman thought. As we saw, he points out that throughout the history of the West, a distinction has always been made between the realm of the qualified 'political' life of *bios* and that of the unqualified 'unpolitical' life of *zoe*, which in the case of the *Homo Sacer*, was produced inversely to that of the sovereign; it is this which he describes as the 'common center' linking fascism, Communism and liberalism, which is also the negative basis from which he argues that the 'new politics' of *zoe* will emerge.

Section 1.3 clarified Virilio's relationship to this lineage, showing how these arguments had helped him to create a framework within which he could articulate the political importance of maintaining the 'common center' of animal, social and territorial bodies as a barricade against that of fascism, Communism and liberalism, which for him resulted not so much from 'sovereignty' as Agamben had argued, as it did from technology. Virilio's argument was that just as the sovereign once stripped those whom he conquered of their rights through a process known as 'mediatization', today when transportation, transmission and transplantation technologies move around the world at the speed of light, it really is the 'media' that is the imperial sovereign, since it is the primary force that uproots, fragments and destroys the political body. Technocracy is then able to exercise its rule by replacing the organic perceptual organs of its billions of subjects with prosthetic replacements such as computers, cameras, phones, headphones, televisions, radios and other devices which are retrofitted in such a way as to allow for the direct and total control of their perception of the world, thus supplanting the lived experience of the body with the artificial experience of technology. This is an important point because it demonstrates the reason why the unmediated body is of such importance to Virilio's conception of politics, which is that the body is never singular but is always plural, is always bound up in

relations with other animal, social and territorial bodies with which it forms a system and which prevents them from becoming objectified as raw material for the imperial ambitions of others.

As important as the first chapter was for setting up the overall focus of thesis, the primary source of insight is to be found in the relationship between chapter 2, which focused on the destructive impact of the 'empire of speed' on animal, social and territorial bodies as well as the violent methods of ecological warfare it had employed to enforce this, and chapter 3, which demonstrated how civilian populations had mounted a 'popular defense' against these onslaughts several times throughout the late twentieth century as well as what an 'aesthetics of resistance' might look like in the twenty-first century with regard to art, architecture and the city. While the focus of chapter 2 was essentially what Feenberg would probably call 'substantivist' in that it described the ways in which technology was both value-laden and had become increasingly autonomous over the past several centuries, chapter 3 would more appropriately be described as 'critical-theoretical' since it not only demonstrated the possibility for democratic control over technology given the transformation of aesthetics, but also considered several concrete examples in which communities had attempted to assert their autonomy from technocracy.

As we saw in section 2.1, the conception of technocracy which Virilio articulates is unique in that he specifically refers to it as an 'empire of speed' in which the technological vehicles of automobiles, tanks, planes and trains have come to replace the metabolic vehicles of men, women and children, thus rendering them superfluous and without value. It was demonstrated that unlike many of his fellow critics of technology, Virilio is not only concerned with the question of instrumentality as such but also with the way in which the speed at which transportation, transmission and transplantation technologies accelerate physically, technically and ideologically allows for the further solidification of the hierarchy of 'speed-classes' in which the most powerful sectors of society are those which move the fastest. As he described this history, Euclidean geometry set the stage for this development by promoting the straight line as the shortest distance between two points, and thus the fastest route by which imperial power could move between here and there, while coming up against as few obstacles as possible in the process. As we saw, he goes on to point out that the faster technologies move as a result, the more extensive imperial control becomes, since the muscle power of the proletariat is no longer required and strikes are unlikely to wield nearly as much power as they once had in the past. Indeed, for Virilio this is the primary purpose of the technique of globalization, which is primarily about the installation of a new form of totalitarianism which he calls 'globalitarianism' since for the first time in world history, rather than aspiring to universal domination as an *eventual* goal, it achieves this from the

very *outset* as a result of its very form, which he describes as taking that of a single 'global city' into which all nations, cities, peoples, families, couples and individuals are integrated.

Sections 2.2 through 2.4 examined the fates of the various 'bodies' to which Virilio refers under the broad categories of the animal, social and territorial, carefully considering the impact of the empire of speed on each one, as well as articulating the constantly changing relationships that emerge between them in the process. The first example that is considered is that of the animal body, which he argues is rendered superfluous by the speed body of the technological vehicle, as seen in the way that the new technologies 'disable' the able body through polar inertia, the phenomena in which the more the vehicle moves the less the animal body moves. This was seen for instance in the 'datasuit' currently being developed by NASA in which the animal body is replaced by a robotic 'double' on the surface of a distant planet, just as it is in the way in which remotely guided missiles can be guiltlessly fired at a target thousands of miles away since the 'soldier' who pushes the button is no longer obligated to experience the horrors which he inflicts directly. Thus the less the animal body moves, the less the lived experience of being-in-the-world takes precedent, meaning that the artificial environment of the empire of speed increasingly becomes the only environment within which animal bodies interact, with often violent consequences as a result. Once this occurs, the animal body's sense of centeredness on the territorial body of the earth begins to become uprooted, such that it is left with a sense of disorientation and homelessness in a world which had always been its milieu up until that point. As we saw, the increasing number of remote control devices such as television, voicemail, sprinkler systems, heating, garage doors and others within the 'intelligent home' only contribute to this phenomena in that the occupant no longer moves around the home but enshrouds herself within an electronic cocoon instead, not to mention that even when she is 'away' the house is still haunted by its 'occupant' just as the occupant is still haunted by the 'house'. This invasion of the body is taken still further with the advent of nanotechnology, biotechnology and cloning, which threaten to colonize the animal body in much the same way that the territorial body was in centuries past, through the completion of the eugenics project of 'artificial selection' that was begun by both the United States and Nazi Germany in the early twentieth century. Thus the fate of the colonized subject of the past becomes the fate of animal bodies in general, with the rise of 'superhumans' and 'subhumans' which will render the original human superfluous, a form of endocolonialism which would rival that of Auschwitz-Birkenau, but would be accepted in the name of 'scientific progress'.

It was then shown how the social bodies of the couple, the family, the city and nation suffer a similar fate since they are the human context within which the animal body once defined itself prior to its colonization by the empire of speed. With the couple the colonization takes the form of cybersex in which either both partners maintain a false sense of intimacy by engaging in some form of 'sexual' activity through either email or webcams over the Internet, or in which one dissatisfied partner retreats to online pornography rather than resolving their issues, thus driving the couple that much farther apart as a result. Because he argues that the tendency which this reveals is that of 'totalitarian individualism' Virilio cannot accept that the concept of the cyborg is somehow 'liberatory', since as he points out, it essentially amounts to the replacement of real emotions with electrical impulses, while disunited animal bodies slowly wither away, their very source of reproduction having been uprooted by technique. This anomic effect, which he warns may one day lead to a sudden drop in population, is also seen in the decline of the extended, nuclear and even single-parent family and its replacement with the totally individuated being, a perfect mirror image of the changes within technoscience, which it has become reliant upon for the satisfaction of its basic communal needs. As was argued, once the couple and the family have become uprooted, the city and the nation become uprooted as well, such that the only 'territory' which they still possess is that of the media, as seen in the rise of global civil war in the past several decades. The replacement for both the city and the nation then, is that of the single global city in which every locality becomes 'linked' as its virtual suburbs through transcontinental television, email, cell phone, magazine, newspaper and airline networks, to such an extent that, as we saw, the frontiers of nations henceforth run through the center of the 'city' as seen in such localities as Berlin, Belfast, Beirut, Detroit, Liverpool and Los Angeles.

As we learned it was rather difficult to separate the animal, social and territorial bodies from one another in considering Virilio's critique, since they were so heavily intertwined in their origins, yet because the territorial body is the very basis of orientation for animal and social bodies alike, it was much easier to see how it had been transformed by the empire of speed. As was shown, the effect of this is to be found both in the territorial environmental sense of green ecology, in which the living body of the earth is polluted with chemicals, oil and radioactive elements, as well as in the technical environmental sense of grey ecology, in which distances and differences are polluted by the effects of ever-increasing acceleration. This is seen in phenomena such as how with the increasing deregulation of communications technologies, the semblance of locality that was once enforced by law is now becoming subordinated to a globalitarian agenda, such as that promoted by corporate radio conglomerates Clear Channel, which because of

deregulation now owns over 1,200 stations nationwide in the United States, taking advantage of this fact in order to organize right-wing 'Rally for America' demonstrations in support of the war in Iraq. It is also seen in the retreat of humanity into cyberspace with the Internet, cell phones and satellite communications and outerspace with missions to the moon, space stations and Mars, all of which have the effect of standardizing the diversity of the surface of the earth and uprooting every locality, the ill effects of which Virilio identified in the psychological delirium experienced by such revered astronauts as Buzz Aldrin after returning from space. Similarly, in the space-time between the disasters of green and grey ecologies, we saw that incidents such as Chernobyl can be seen as harbingers of what is to come, since they extend both into time, with the permanent contamination that will still be there after millennia, and space, with the nuclear cloud that extended across Europe, Asia and other continents as well, which shows that both grey and green ecology are now intertwined.

While it was important to show the effects of the empire of speed on each of these bodies individually so as to reflect Virilio's own insistence that speed rather than war is the central concern of his work, in section 2.5 we moved on from this to examine the method of 'ecological warfare' by which this is enforced, despite its having been banned by the Geneva Convention. As we learned, Virilio defines the term as the sudden and violent installation of an 'artificial climate' in the place of the territorial, social and technical ecologies which had up until that point sustained animal, social and territorial bodies; in other words, ecological warfare consists of attacking the milieu of combatants and non-combatants alike, thus forcing defenseless populations into the horrors of total war through the omnipresence of violence. As he traced the history, ecological warfare begins and expands along with the history of colonialism, beginning with the colonization of nature that was the advent of agriculture; just as this led for the first time to a need for a specifically military space within which foodstuffs are defended from the enemy without, when the colonization of foreign lands arose with Queen Elizabeth in the 1500s, so too did the practice of destroying the territorial ecology within which indigenous peoples could both hide as well as rely upon natural sources of sustenance. This of course set the pace for the ensuing Anglo-Saxon military tradition of the 'fleet-in-being' in which either land, sea, air or space are dominated by a constant logistical assault, a strategy that was to become the basis not only of colonial domination but also of the Second World War, the Vietnam War, the first Gulf War, the Kosovo War and the War on Terrorism.

In the Second World War for instance, the Axis powers relied on a strategy of dominating the land, in which they extended the ramparts of the city to the edges of the European continent,

whereas the Allied powers relied on one of dominating the air, in which the intimacy of ground combat was replaced with the insulation of bombing raids. Between the opposing forces, the common thread that was revealed was that of total mobilization, in which entire populations were set into motion through radio, television and film propaganda as a means to the end of total war, orchestrated in such a way that atrocities from Operation Gomorrah to Auschwitz-Birkenau to Hiroshima-Nagasaki would be readily excused by the frenzied masses without a moment's thought. In the aftermath, the German suicidal state of the Nazis would become the global suicidal state of America with its global New Deal, in which the world economy would be based upon the constant nuclear threat of Mutually Assured Destruction and the contemporaneous taking hostage of billions of living bodies within an 'artificial environment' of total peace that was often more terrifying than that of total war. This legacy continued with the Vietnam War in which for the first time infrared, thermographic and UAV technologies would be added to the arsenal of ecological warfare, thus allowing for its extension even further into both day and night as well as deep within potentially lethal situations, in addition to the continuation of total defoliation inaugurated by Queen Elizabeth against the Irish. Indeed, as we saw, it is because of the emergence of these new technologies and the way in which they were superimposed over prior techniques that Vietnam has so often been described as the gateway event that led to the phenomena of 'information warfare' that has dominated every subsequent conflict since.

It was with the first Gulf War that for the first time ecological warfare would not rely so much on the 'temporary' creation of an artificial climate but would instead rely upon the strategic deployment of the permanent technical ecology that had been put into place both during war and peace, in the form of the global spy satellite system, global telephone, television and Internet communication within both the 'military' and 'civilian' realms, which by that point had become ever harder to distinguish. With the introduction of live global television, images from the battlefield suddenly acquired an appearance of objectivity quite different from that during the coverage of prior wars in which news was always temporally deferred, thus allowing for disinformation to become a new form of censorship to replace the misinformation of times past. All of this was superimposed over the continuing backdrop of ecological warfare on the territorial ecology attained through the deployment of hundreds of thousands of depleted uranium tipped shells, which contaminated entire regions for billions of years to come, just as in Kosovo at the close of the decade these were also used extensively, as a complement to the bombing of the chemical factory at Pancevo which unleashed a toxic cloud of an order that Milosevic could only have dreamed of. In addition the legacy of 'Global Information Dominance' that began in the first

Gulf War was also expanded on in Kosovo, as we learned, with the bombing of RTS Belgrade television, the broadcasting of pirate television stations from airplanes and the dropping of graphite bombs to knock out the electricity.

The real turning point however, was shown to be that which has emerged in the past few years after September 11 in which the territorial, social and technical forms of ecological warfare would be fused into a new form which Robert Kaplan has called 'combination warfare' which would no longer choose one single glaxis to dominate as in the past but would seek to dominate all of them simultaneously. This would involve not only the strategic use of infrared, thermographic, real time television, graphite bombs and 'conventional' ecological warfare but would also introduce the officially-sanctioned use of anonymous attacks, Hollywood blockbuster films, propaganda offices, artificially produced 'natural disasters' and even such seemingly off-limits weapons as 'genetic bombs', as advocated by the Partnership for a New American Century. Thus over the course of the chapter we learned not only how the animal, social and territorial bodies were being uprooted, fragmented and destroyed by technology in general but also how a constantly evolving method of ecological warfare had been enforcing this development worldwide through the gradual convergence of territorial, social and technical strategies into that of 'combination warfare' in which 'anything goes' is the only ethical standard that is respected.

The structure which chapter 3 took formed a sort of mirror image to that of chapter 2 in that while the former ended section 2.5 with an in depth discussion of the imperial expansion of ecological warfare throughout the history of the twentieth century, the latter began sections 3.1 and 3.2 with an account of popular resistance to this project during the same period, which also used an 'ecological' method but in precisely the opposite manner. Similarly while sections 2.1 through 2.4 considered the form taken by the empire of speed and the ways in which technology was deconstructing the animal, social and territorial bodies in general, sections 3.3 and 3.4 considered the ways in which art could form an aesthetics of resistance to this, as well how the form of the city and its architecture could be reconstructed in such a way as to complement a politics of real space rather than real time. In this sense then, we could say that section 3.4, 'The Political City Against Globalization' answers the problematics introduced by section 2.1 'Empire of Speed', just as section 3.3, 'Aesthetics of Resistance' answers those of sections 2.2, 'De-struction of the Animal Body', 2.3, 'De-struction of the Social Body' and 2.4, 'De-struction of the Territorial Body'; likewise, section 3.1, 'Popular Defense and Relative Speed' and 3.2 'Popular Defense and Absolute Speed' could be seen as having answered the problematics raised by section 3.5 'Ecological Warfare and the De-struction of the Political Body'. The most important

accomplishment of chapter 3 however was not to be found in these specific examples but rather in its overall effect of problematizing the common notion that Virilio's pessimism about the technologies of our time leaves little hope for popular resistance or for a 'new politics', by demonstrating how to the contrary it was precisely because of this pessimism that a more thoroughly 'new' politics becomes possible.

This is seen for instance in section 3.1, where it was argued that the ecological method of popular resistance had roots extending at least as far back into human history as the ecological method of total war, emerging as it did with the tactical epoch of warfare in which the defense of the community consisted of the spontaneous use of the general implements of everyday life, rather than as a specialized 'military body' condensed around the strategic deployment of weapons technologies, as became commonplace in the ensuing strategic and logistical epochs of warfare. By considering the examples of the French Communards, the Vietnamese Resistance, the Prague Spring, the Events of May 1968 and the Italian Autonomia movement, we were able to see that Virilio had not lost hope for the viability of the 'ancient method' in which every one looks out for themselves and for each other through 'the transgression of the ordinary use of tools and the environment', even in the face of superior technology and strategy on the part of their militarist adversaries. The major distinction then was between those who conceived of revolution as war, such as the two generals of the Paris Commune, and those who conceived of it as popular defense, such as the Communards, who advocated a 'people's war, a war without strategy' instead, much like that which was employed by the Vietnamese in resistance to the American aggression. As we saw, this involved the assimilation of animal bodies and social bodies to their territorial milieu through the tactical use of the underground Cu Chi Tunnels, the lower-canopy forest tunnels, nomadic rather than sedentary bases, the primarily non-violent strategy of 'one slow, four quick' and above all else, the rejection of guerilla warfare in favor of the 'people's war' of the Communards, in which the entire population were part of the resistance rather than only a singular military body. The Prague Spring was shown to have reflected this as well, with the way in which the entire population worked together to cover up all the street signs and house numbers throughout the city so that the invading Soviet army would be disoriented, as well as their shutting off of water supplies, the occupation of major city squares and government offices, citywide general strikes of workers and the concurrent 'silence strikes' which livened them up. We also considered the Events of May 1968 and how a new form of popular defense emerged there which not only involved the spontaneous method of general strikes and building occupations (as at the Sorbonne and the Odeon Theater) that perpetually recur in such situations,

but which for the first time involved a prominent aesthetic component, in which the separation between art and everyday life would be dissolved and the imaginative popular bases of 'events' would replace the specialized strategy of 'revolutions', as would also be the case in the Italian Autonomia movement as well.

But just as we saw that Chernobyl formed as a sort of gateway between the de-struction of green ecology and grey ecology in which elements of both converged into one, so too would the Italian movement become the halfway point between popular defense as it appeared in the epoch of relative speed and popular defense as it would appear in the epoch of absolute speed. Plagued as it was by the recurrent adoption of logistical strategy over tactical defense in such instances as the primacy accorded to pirate radio stations by the Autonomia movement and of terrorism as embraced by the Red Brigades, later developments such as the Clifford Johnson trial, Tiananmen Square, the Romanian Revolution and Kosovo would confirm the continuity of this development, as investigated in section 3.2. For instance while the Clifford Johnson trial was perhaps one of the few moments in recent history when the 'totalitarian robot' of technocracy has been directly challenged, features built into the judicial process in order to bar true civilian control prevented it from having any real effect aside from that of educating the public. A similar phenomenon emerged at Tiananmen Square, in which the logistical strategy of the media unfortunately predominated over that of the popular defense they were ostensibly mounting through the occupation; as we saw, while the timing and use of Western language, symbols and signs demonstrated a desire to 'use the media' to their advantage, in the end they were used *by* the media when the State run television stations constantly replayed isolated incidents in which protestors attacked soldiers and their vehicles, thus 'justifying' the massacre that was to follow. In the Romanian Revolution, the seizure of Studio 4 by hundreds of angry citizens would predominate over the much more widespread examples of popular defense that emerged in cities such as Timisoara where civilians had taken over the streets of the entire city, bringing it to a standstill; as in China, the long range outcome was not liberation but the return of official media censorship under the auspices of the 'National Salvation Front' instead. And in the popular defense that emerged during the Kosovo War, the most celebrated event would not be that of the few attempts at tactical defense in real space but that of a media-centric logistical strategy in real time, the celebrated migration of Radio B92 from the airwaves to the Internet, as though this somehow marked a turning point in which civilians became empowered rather than just disoriented by a Pentagon-sponsored barrage of information, complemented by the incessant

barrage of American and NATO bombs dropping all around them, rather than on military targets as had been promised.

Aside from the more positive aspects of these, which certainly were important though not dominant aspects, we saw that Virilio's primary interest in recent years is to be found in less high-profile examples within the realm of everyday life, such examples of the 'grey ecology' that he sees as replacing 'green ecology' as D'Aboville's rowboating of the Pacific Ocean, the International Dark Sky Association, and the Surveillance Camera Players. Unlike the above examples, movements of these sorts recognize implicitly that the empire of speed is attacking them not just in regard to the territorial and social ecologies but also in regard to the technical ecology; in response to this 'combination warfare' a new approach would be necessary, as seen for example in D'Aboville risking his life to row across the Pacific Ocean, largely for the purpose of proving his own freedom to travel as he saw fit rather than according to the transportation structure presented to him, which though considerably 'safer' and more 'comfortable' also involved the suspension of one's freedom of perception. This is also seen in the International Dark Sky Association's campaign against the light pollution that has ruined the ability of most people to even see the Milky Way at night and in favor of a return to low impact forms of lighting such as the original kerosene-powered 'City of Light' of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With over 10,000 members around the world and an ongoing campaign based upon raising public awareness about the negative effects of light pollution and the way in which 'security' fears are used to justify its expansion, we learned that the group's mission is in many ways similar to that of the Surveillance Camera Players who are also fighting against the doctrine of security which has justified the deployment of millions of surveillance cameras, though in a considerably different fashion. As we saw, rather than fetishizing 'counter' technologies like some anti-surveillance entities have, this group engaged in a tactical defense of the urban milieu by mapping out the locations of thousands of cameras and distributing these to the general public, by leading guided tours of surveillance camera locations and by performing attention-gathering silent plays in front of them, arguing that surveillance cameras, police and militaries could all be replaced by communities that police themselves instead.

Perhaps it is because of this new focus on events of these sorts that Virilio has recently returned to discussing the potentiality of aesthetics as a resistance to empire and technology, as we considered through section 3.3; while most contemporary art had embraced an aesthetics of disappearance, in which 'things owe their existence to the fact that they disappear', we saw that he had not lost hope in the possibility of an aesthetics of appearance instead. For instance while

he pointed out that the appearance of photography as a primary medium for the 'pitiless' arts converged with the appearance of the Nazi death camps which also 'owed their existence' to the fact that they too made the body disappear, we also learned that he emphasized the importance of painting as a form of divergent 'pitiful' arts, in that it emphasized the appearance of the body instead. Likewise, while such pieces as von Hagen's recent 'World of Bodies' involved the display of hundreds of plastinated dead bodies as though they were mere statues like any other, bringing to mind such figures as the 'Bitch of Buchenwald' and her lampshades of human skin, we saw that Virilio offered such counterexamples as the choreography of Sergei Diaghilev in which the 'astonishing' body was presented as a work of art-in-motion unlike any machine or corpse could ever offer, no matter how 'taboo-breaking' or repulsive. And in contrast to the 'museums of science and industry' which dot the landscape of the West, in which the substance of technology is privileged over the accident, we saw that Virilio proposed a 'museum of accidents' in which the aesthetics of disappearance that keeps us fawning over the new technologies rather than critically analyzing them is replaced by an aesthetics of appearance in which the various accidents over the course of the past century would be displayed, thus reinscribing that which disappears within real space rather than real time.

Indeed this was the very purpose of section 3.4, in which we considered Virilio's vision of how the global city that was formed through the deterritorialization wrought by the empire of speed could be replaced with a locally based 'political city' which would bring together the best elements of hunter-gatherer society and the early polis. As we saw, this would include from the former the unity of animal, social and territorial bodies that allowed for conviviality and a less violent way of life more closely in line with nature, and from the latter the proximity of 'citizens' and 'strangers' which allowed for the possibility (if not the reality) of a truly democratic culture in which all might participate. Although the *Groupe Architecture Principe* was only around in the years leading up to the Events of May 1968, it was from their ideas that we acquired an idea of what Virilio's political city might look like, with its rejection of both vertical and horizontal surfaces in favor of a 'topological' form of architecture that would recreate the natural lay of the land in the space of the city, thus literally combining the lifeworlds of both the nomad and the sedentary in a single place. Rather than contributing to the polar inertia and electronic cocooning that have progressively destroyed the possibility of participatory politics, we saw that the 'Oblique Function' would throw the body into action constantly, privileging 'energetic being' over 'ergonomic being' in such a way that rather than privileging the movement of the

technological vehicle, the city would be reconstructed so as to promote the movement of the metabolic vehicle and the proximity of the political body.

In light of all of this, it should be clear that the true relevance of this study is not only to be found in its elucidation of the technocratic uprooting of animal, social and territorial bodies over the course of the past several centuries, but also in its predictions for the directions which this will likely take in the near future, as well as the methods by which the public might seek to resist these developments. Just as Virilio was already predicting the rise of information warfare by the early 1980s, for which he has since been lauded as being one of the first political theorists to grasp the importance of, his prediction in the past several years regarding the likely political impact of genetic engineering, cloning and other such developments are worth considering in detail as well, as are his visions for what forms the social and political movements of the near future are likely to take and the kinds of things they might be demanding. Political scientists in particular have much to learn from Virilio since he is one of the only 'French theorists' who has carried on the critical tradition as laid out by the much more familiar figure of Foucault, without lapsing into the nihilism of denying the existence of reality or totally rejecting empirical study in the process. Further, by approaching politics from the theory of technocracy as does Virilio, political scientists can move beyond the 'end of history' rhetoric and begin to consider not only the commonalities between fascism, Communism and liberalism due to their common origins in the ideology of progress and the exclusion of *zoe*, but also the new forms of politics that will be needed as technology assumes a more and more important role in the everyday life of politics.

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