

ACCIDENT or ATTACK?



: on praxis

Author's note:

*Our honest hope is that authors stop outright prescribing action. They may say this or that must happen or is necessary to be done; we feel this is egotistical and too willing to encapsulate ideas and actions. Not to mention it ties itself down to singular modes of thinking. This piece, as well as any past and future writing may also seem to do this. However, our intention is not to prescribe action and discuss what should be done, our intention is to open up space; space for others to draw their own conclusions and use ideas presented in ways they want. The space we explore consists of: **the disbanding of the notion that Accidents are random and unexpected, the opacity of distinction between ACCIDENT and ATTACK, and how to use this new knowledge to escalate and intensify our actions.** We do not wish to establish any amount of Truth. Quite the opposite: we wish to destroy commonly accepted truths. Virilio's works, both 'The Original Accident' and 'City of Panic' challenge commonly accepted truths, which is why we have used them to our own selfish ends. With new lenses to look through regarding ACCIDENTS and ATTACKS, our hope is that both happen more frequently.*

-Tim Higgins. ...So What if All the Colleges Burn Down? 2010.

*...For the children who play with **fire**.*

On Substance.

Accidents do not exist. To believe that accidents come out of nowhere is to be blind to the nature of the Substance from which accidents arise.

“According to Aristotle, ‘the accident reveals the substance.’ If so, then invention of the ‘substance’ is equally invention of the ‘accident’. The shipwreck is consequently the ‘futurist’ invention of the ship, and the air crash the invention of the supersonic airliner, just as the Chernobyl meltdown is the invention of the nuclear power station.” (1)

Here the focus is on industrial accidents. The inevitability is that the course of Progress is marked with constant, “Revelations of substances,” Accidents. This new analysis asks a new question, not the question: “Why this and that Accident cropped up?” but the question: “What does this and that Accident reveal about its location, its context, its origin, the Substance from whence it appeared?”

‘the accident is the appearance of a quality of something that was hidden by another of its qualities,’ (2)

A new set of analyses ought focus its eye on not only the technological accidents, but the same accidents in other contexts. Technoscientific Progress—an assemblage of many industrial structures and forces of Progress—holds no unique claim over instances in which substances reveal themselves; “Accidents.” The status quo *social fabric*—an assemblage of the forces of Empire, systems of domination, surveillance, and normalization—has its own accidents. Accidents in which the Substance, the status quo’s social fabric, is revealed.

Many have seen these accidents: they call them ruptures, riots, vandalism, social war, insurrection, parties gone wild...

“And so, if for Aristotle some little time ago, and for us today, *the accident reveals the substance*, this is in fact because WHAT CROPS UP (*accidens*) is a sort of analysis, a technoanalysis of WHAT IS BENEATH (*substare*) any knowledge.” (3)

Thus, in the Accidents, the ruptures, the riots, and so on, the ugly face of the social fabric and its underlying nature comes to the surface.

The qualities of *domination*, *normalcy*, and *habit* are revealed in the Accident as mere *parts* of a whole Substance, because domination is not without an *additional part*: **those who seek to destroy it.**

Those with the desire to destroy; they exist as the Accident in social fabric; a revealing of the Substance, showing that there are cracks in the totality; that one can oppose the forces of Empire; that normalization is not absolute.

WHAT CROPS UP, as Accidents in social fabric—and additionally—the perforated line between ACCIDENT and ATTACK in social fabric, is very interesting indeed...

I. Accidents in Social Fabric

Similar to Technoscientific Progress, the Substance of Social fabric has accidents. Meaning: if to invent the Substance is to invent the Accident, then to invent the social fabric is *to invent the various forms of accidents that arise from it*.

“They say *invention is merely a way of seeing*, of reading accidents as signs and as opportunities. If so, then it is merely high time we opened the museum to what crops up impromptu...constituted by disasters, by industrial or other catastrophes.” (4)

Virilio writes of accidents occurring as parts of Technoscientific Progress, not as a result of said Progress; but as integral parts, Revealing of the Substance; the underlying knowledge. The occurrence of industrial accidents reveals a lot about the substance of Progress itself; Progress *by nature* has mishaps.

“To invent the sailing ship or steamer is *to invent the shipwreck*. To invent the train is *to invent the rail accident of derailment*. To invent the family automobile is *to produce the pile-up on the highway*.” (5)

Thus, the same logic applies to the Substance of social fabric: it makes sense that accidents occurring as parts of the status quo social fabric function the same way—as a Revelations of Substance; the underlying knowledge.

Dance parties, riots, confrontations, sabotage, social war, insurrection... reveal the Substance of social fabric: a social fabric constituted by domination, surveillance, forces of Empire, and all the singularities in friction with these forces. *Accidents* in social fabric demonstrate this imperfectness, the flaws that it possesses because of its own nature. That social fabric *by nature* has ruptures.

To invent the prison is *to invent the prison riot*. To invent the oppressive police force is *to invent the violent confrontation with the police*. To invent the Metropolis is *to invent the city on fire*. To invent systems of domination is *to invent those who violently fight to destroy them*.

Thus it is time to stop thinking of *dance parties, riots, confrontations, sabotage, social war, insurrection...* as **separate** from the status quo; as *accidents*. There is no randomness, no chance: they are all, *always*, waiting to happen.

“Creation or collapse, the accident is an unconscious oeuvre, an *invention* in the sense of uncovering what was hidden, just waiting to happen.” (6)

II. The Status Quo

Friction within the social fabric is pervasive: daily life, currently, is regulated, miserable, and boring—except when there is an *Accident*.

“Nothing lost, nothing gained. If inventing the substance means indirectly inventing the accident, the more powerful and high-performance the invention, the more dramatic the accident.” (7)

The status quo is a depressing sea of malaise, disassociation, and sublimated desire. It is unnecessary to add much description of how meaningless and painful modern existence is. What is of interest is how to destroy the structures that force life into such a state of misery and normality. If “the more powerful and high-performance the invention, the more dramatic the accident,” then, the coming accidents in social fabric are for sure dramatic ones. Terms like *insurrection* or *social war* are the closest anyone has gotten to describing the Accident in terms of social fabric.

They are dramatic because of what they *reveal* and not because of actual size. From vandalism to insurrection, each reveals unique and important aspects of social fabric.

A social fabric so incredibly cunning, destructive, encompassing both space and lack of space, both domination with teeth and domination with subtle coaxing, even domination of the imagination and emotion. This social fabric inspires simultaneous fear, anger, apathy, and dread.

Accidents in social fabric must be dramatic. To invent forces of domination, the Empire, and normalization, *is to invent massive negation of structures that support these forces, and sadistic vengeance against anything else driving these forces.*

Today, perhaps the most evident accident in social fabric is the *social war*—the daily struggle between relations to capital and systems of domination; fought by those who are both political and apolitical. To invent the bank is *to invent the bank robbery*. The rupture in social fabric, the Revelation of the substance: that the masses, existing in misery, fight back, and produce ruptures in daily life. Attacks on normalcy: one only sees the true substance when habit, commonly accepted truths, and so on, are shattered. The status quo is ripe for this type of activity. This happens in the Accident. These revelations are always dramatic.

III. Provoking Events

Within social fabric there is infinite potential for Accidents to be provoked, orchestrated, and participated in.

“Whether we like it or not, to create an event now means *to provoke an accident.*” (8)

As such, to create an event, a dance party, a riot, a confrontation, to sabotage, to vandalize... is to provoke an Accident; to reveal the Substance—the exposure of the underlying knowledge of social fabric to itself—to reveal the tensions the ruptures. To show to the social fabric that *it is not impregnable*. Thus demonstrating the reflexive nature of social fabric: the Accident functions as a mirror—displaying the true Substance of social fabric.

Within systems of domination, there are always spaces. Cracks to pry apart, points of entry, lines of flight. This is where events are created.

Events like: The demonstration turned black-hearted; leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. The spontaneous eruption of vengeance toward the structures of domination, which are not actually spontaneous. The dance party that becomes a riot, because everyone loves to dance and everyone loves to riot—desires that have always existed finally exposing themselves.

I. To create the event: to provoke the Accident: the Dance Party, is to reveal the substance of singularities together, sharing a common presence. All just waiting to destroy.

II. To create the event: to provoke the Accident: the Sabotage, is to reveal the substance of the sly, carefully planned attacks on structures of domination, Empire, and normalization. To invent the city is *to invent the saboteur*.

What’s more, the Accident (event) created, reveals the existence of singularities who oppose the established order. In friction with forces of domination, the Empire, and normalization, the *Accident* is not only the unveiling of this constellation’s existence, but its *desires*. Desires to immediately improve the conditions of these singularities’ lives, desires to destroy systems of domination, to exact sadistic vengeance on the forces of Empire and normalization, to destroy the habits of daily existence.

“To create an event today is to revive a kind of thinking that is resistant to the cyber-mentality...” (9)

Thus the Events: the *Accidents*; any time a social fabric functions abnormally: glitches, malfunctions, ruptures. Planned or unplanned. The sharing of common presence and the liberation of desires. The *dance parties, riots, confrontations, sabotage, social war, insurrection...*

IV. ACCIDENT or ATTACK?

If Accidents are always waiting to happen or can be provoked by the means of creating an Event, then they begin to resemble planned and intentional *Attacks*. If Accidents resemble Attacks and Attacks resemble Accidents—with the distinction between them blurred—Attacks are *also* part of the Substance and are, similarly, waiting to happen.

“ACCIDENT or ATTACK? From now on, uncertainty rules, the mask of the Medusa is forced on everyone thanks to Minerva’s helmet or, rather, this visual headset that endlessly shows us the repetition (in a mirror) of a terror we are utterly fascinated by.” (10)

ACCIDENT or ATTACK? An interesting question when asked of Technoscientific Progress: Did this or that industrial mishap happen on its own, or at the hand of a saboteur? It is an even more interesting question when asked of social fabric. Did this or that dance party, riot, insurrection, instance of social war... happen on its own, impromptu, or at the hands of careful planners? The answer could be: “One, The other, Both, or Neither.” At this juncture there is much interesting space to be explored. Is the Accident—the revealing of the Substance, the disruption of everyday life—planned; set forth by singularities previously and highly interested in creating the Accident (Event), or did it ‘crop up’ impromptu? ‘Crop up’ and be set forth the by the hands of singularities previously *disinterested* and apolitical, but pushed by the misery of daily life: finally cracking and pushing back against the forces of domination, Empire, and normalization?

If to invent the prison is *to invent the prison riot* and to invent Metropolis is *to invent the city on fire*, then the difference between the planned prison riot—ATTACK—and one that crops up ‘impromptu’—ACCIDENT—disappears. Prisons, *by nature* have prison riots. Similarly, if the invention of the Metropolis is also the invention of those who seek to burn it down, then the difference between a planned ATTACK on the metropolis and an ACCIDENT that leaves a city in smoldering rubble disappears. ACCIDENT or ATTACK? Neither lies in an easily determinable box anymore.

Virilio articulates the opacity of distinction between Accident and Attack in the case of the Hindenburg:

“Within thirty interminable seconds, the ocean liner of the air was blazing away like a torch in front of the news cameras and thousands of onlookers waiting for the zeppelin to land. Accident or sabotage? Three commissions of inquiry tried to determine the causes of this spectacular tragedy, in those days of political woes. The final verdict quickly favoured the accident argument, by the same token bringing about the final abandonment of passenger transportation by this type of air carrier.”
(11)

Even in such a widely recognized Mishap; disruption of normalcy; a zeppelin turning into a fireball, the question of “ACCIDENT or ATTACK?” Is not easily answered.

The opacity of distinction between ACCIDENT and ATTACK opens up new understanding of substances, their locations, and what the Accident uncovers about the systems and complex structures from which it crops up. Any substance, Progress or social fabric, is not always in absolute control of itself. Ruptures are always embedded in the substance.

All those who stand in friction with systems of domination, Empire, and normalization have, at their fingertips, the ability to create an Accident (Event) and the ability to Attack. They are all part of this antagonistic social fabric. There are those who exhibit 'antisocial' behaviour as a political choice (Attack), and those who exhibit it out of prescribed condition of existence (Accident). The smashed ATM machine: smashed as a pointed attack on banks and capital, or smashed in a fit of rage because someone overdrew their account? The difference between these sublimates. ACCIDENT or ATTACK? Neither lies in an easily determinable box anymore.

Thus the new lens: accidents are always waiting to happen: they are not unique. To invent a social fabric containing systems of domination *is to invent those who appose it, destroy it, and seek vengeance upon those who perpetuate it*. As such, the line between actively attacking forces of domination, Empire, and normalization and Accidents lies perforated. No hard line exists between ACCIDENTS—what may or may not crop up impromptu—in the form of *dance parties, riots, confrontations, sabotage, social war, insurrection...* and what may or may not be planned—devised ATTACK—in the form of *dance parties, riots, confrontations, sabotage, social war, insurrection...*

“An accident is in fact an assault on the propriety of substance, an unveiling of its nakedness, of the poverty of whatever, whoever is confronted by what happens unexpectedly – to people as much as to their creations.” (12)

More Accidents! More Attacks! Now!

“To be able to go forward in the face of the disaster and turn it into a *real* crisis.” (13)

The established order thrives on convincing the masses of the randomness, the “by-chance-ness,” of so-called accidents. If only the masses knew... “Veritable Chernobyls” only happen because it is understood as such that they crop up from nowhere. On the other side of the coin, *dance parties, riots, confrontations, sabotage, social war, insurrection...* only ***don’t happen***, because they too are expected to crop up from nowhere.

Neither Progress nor social fabric is without ruptures and disruptions in normalcy: once the line between ACCIDENT and ATTACK is blurred, the question ought to shift toward how this new lens and understanding of Substance can be used.

To be vague: *revolt and make it look like an accident!*

To exploit every disruption in normalcy to the largest extent,
because ruptures are part of the substance,
they are just waiting to be Revealed and exacerbated.

To Sabotage not only by cover of night,
but by cover of a storm.

To turn rolling black-outs into orgies of destruction.

To revolt at the *most* opportune moment!

To revolt at the *most in-*opportune moment!

To exact all the sadistic vengeance and more.

To fan the flames.

To not let anything break the fall of structures of domination
when they crash to the ground.

Understanding, everything singularities do, those in friction with forces of domination, Empire, and normalization, *the dance parties, riots, confrontations, sabotage, social war, insurrection...* these ACCIDENTS and ATTACKS will happen anyway.

We singularities are the Accident, the planners of the event, the saboteurs, the rupture we have been waiting for.

If, when morning comes, the masses will wake up to destruction—exacted by nature, or industry or Progress or social unrest—why not expose more Substance, add more to the damage total?

So long as there are forces of domination, Empire, normalization, the totality, there will be ACCIDENTS and ATTACKS.

Cites:

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“Creation or collapse, the accident is an unconscious oeuvre, an *invention* in the sense of uncovering what was hidden, just waiting to happen.” - paul virilio (*from the text*)



**So What if all
the Colleges
Burn Down?
Theory. Destruction. Critique.**

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