

THE KINETICS OF OUR DISCONTENT

We're entering Tahrir Square, the place of our dignity
and our pride, where a tent and a blanket can solve
all of your problems.
— Ahmed Hassan¹

Marx says that revolutions are the locomotives of world
history. But the situation may be quite different. Perhaps
revolutions are not the train ride, but the human
race grabbing for the emergency brake.
— Walter Benjamin²

On 17 December 2010, the self-immolation of a Tunisian fruit seller set off a wave of uprisings that spread, with mercurial speed, around the Mediterranean basin and across its democratic divide. Within months, permanent occupations had become fixtures of the urban landscapes of Spain, Greece, Israel, Egypt, Libya and Syria. By autumn 2011, these uprisings had cascaded as far north as the United Kingdom and, crossing the Atlantic, inspired both the form and name of the Occupy protests in the United States. Beginning in the summer of 2013, Turkey, Brazil, Bulgaria and Hong Kong followed suit.

The defining and resonant feature of these global uprisings has been the occupation of public space. People from all walks of life came to the central squares of the world's cities and formed semi-permanent sites of protest. What happened during these occupations, how the people who were present took part in them, upended the prevalent repertoires and goals of social movements over the previous quarter-century. As opposed to the momentary gathering and subsequent re-atomization of aggrieved humans, the people who descended on Tahrir, Plaza del Sol, Zuccotti, Syntagma and Taksim decided to stay. Unlike classical social movements such as civil rights or women's suffrage, the occupations neither made specific claims to their governments nor aimed to integrate themselves within the existing socio-political order. Rather, they sought the radical

¹ Jehane Noujaim (dir.), *The Square*. Noujaim Films (Los Angeles, 2013).

² Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, iv, 1938–1940 (Cambridge, 1996), 402.

end of authoritarian dictatorships, undemocratic austerity, or the financial sector's dominance over modern forms of government. They were, in their tactics and their aims, as much about stopping or arresting the current functioning of society as they were about mobilizing themselves in the face of it.

Commentators have scrambled to make sense of this kinetic tension that was so characteristic of the Arab Spring, Mediterranean Summer and American Fall. While some corralled the occupations within the existing language of social movements,³ others revived alternate notions of direct (or counter) democracy and prefiguration; spontaneity, resonance, and the Eros effect; constituent power and the withdrawal of consent; uprising, resistance and commune.⁴ The impressive search for conceptual frameworks old and new speaks to the wide gulf separating the occupations from other recent forms of global protest. It is also indicative of a larger problem, one concerning the central category through which we have conceptualized social struggle in the modern period. In both their form and governing imaginaries, the 2011 uprisings challenged our collective understanding of social struggle; in particular, the almost unquestioned association made by academics and activists alike between modern social struggles and the category of *movement*.

This article examines the historical and conceptual relationship between movement and social struggle. It is a kinetic analysis of political contestation guided by the following questions: Why do we think of social struggles as movements? What exactly is in motion? Does this movement have a direction? A telos?

³ Not only have many of the national struggles taken on the name: that is, the Occupy Movement (US), the M15 Movement (Spain), and so on, but as time has passed, more and more commentators have begun to refer to the protests since 2011 collectively as the 'Movement of the Squares' or the 'Pro-Democracy Movement'.

⁴ See, Mark Engler and Paul Engler, *This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century* (New York, 2016); Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (New York, 2015); Stathis Gourgouris, 'Withdrawing Consent', *The Immanent Frame*, 11 Feb. 2011, <<http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2011/02/15/withdrawing-consent/>> (accessed 4 Oct. 2019); George Katsiaficas 'Eros and Revolution', *Radical Philosophy Review*, xvi (2013); Mehmet Dösemeci, 'Don't Move, Occupy!', *Roarmag*, 5 Nov. 2013, <<https://roarmag.org/essays/occupy-revolution-mehmet-dosemeci/>> (accessed 4 Oct. 2019); Gastón Gordillo, 'Resonance and the Egyptian Revolution', *Space and Politics*, 11 Feb. 2011, <<http://criticallegalthinking.com/2011/02/22/resonance-and-the-egyptian-revolution/>> (accessed 4 Oct. 2019); Mathijs van de Sande, 'The Prefigurative Politics of Tahrir Square', *Res Publica*, xix (2013).

Conversely, has struggle been thought and practised otherwise? Not as movement but as disruption, arrest, *stasis*? If so, what are struggles trying to stop? Asking these questions pushes us to think about struggle kinetically: that is, to analyse struggle through the register of motion and its interruption. It creates a set of tools to examine and describe the tactics, motivations and temporalities of those who sought to change the world they lived in.

This article is thus concerned with the politics of movement and the movement of politics. It examines the kinetics of social struggle, the kinetic concepts that we have used and still use to think about and analyse struggle historically. It questions why we have come to understand the history of social struggle through the category of movement, and the consequences and costs of this understanding for historical analysis. To do so, it introduces the analytical concept of *social arrest* and traces how a politics of disruption existed *alongside* and *intertwined* with movement, informing the thoughts and actions of past social struggles. The aim is not to ascribe these labels to particular social struggles nor to essentialize them as historical categories, but rather to examine how motion and its interruption, in both space and time, formed the terrain on which social struggle took place. The final section discusses the merits of kinetic analysis more broadly and enquires into its usefulness for historical inquiry.

First though, a brief sketch of how we got here. While it has a much longer history in the sciences and philosophy, the political use of the term ‘movement’ is quite recent, of mid-nineteenth-century mint.⁵ In its original entrance into the political realm, movement was used to distinguish the dynamic primacy of society over what its proponents called the ‘forces of order’. This referred to the state in the nineteenth century, and later on, as European parliamentary politics fell into legitimacy crisis shortly before the First World War, to political parties as well.⁶

⁵ One of its first appearances dates back to the French July Revolution of 1830, when the agents of change called themselves *Le Parti du Mouvement* and their adversaries *Le Parti du l'Ordre*. Giorgio Agambem, ‘Movement’, <<http://generation-online.org/p/fpagamben3.htm2005>>, transcribed and translated by Arianna Bove. Yet its first analysis as a political category does not appear until mid-century, briefly mentioned in the 1848 Communist Manifesto as the ‘Proletarian Movement’ and in 1850, given more systematic treatment by Lorenz von Stein. Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York, 2013); Lorenz von Stein, *The History of Social Movement in France: 1789–1848* (Totowa, 1964).

⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland, 1953).

As Giorgio Agamben notes, in both instances the use of the term ‘movement’ was always social and in antagonism to established and stagnant state and parliamentary institutions.⁷

However, the present prevalence of the term ‘movement’ as a political and analytical category has its roots in post-war progressive history, specifically in the First-World social struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. It was the relative success of the civil rights, anti-war, student, women’s and gay liberation struggles that established the hegemony of the term among activists and academics alike. The victories of ‘the Movement’ (the self-nominated term used by activists of the 1960s and 1970s) prompted the subsequent adoption of the term by future activists to describe a whole host of social struggles over nuclear power/weapons, fast-food culture, globalization, growth, evictions, human rights abuses and environmental destruction.⁸ In the 1960s, the term ‘movement’ also became a category of academic analysis. As a sub-field of political sociology, the empirical study and theorization of social movements originated at the intersection of political science and post-war sociology, since then becoming a prolific interdisciplinary and global field in its own right.⁹ These two trends, the adoption of

⁷ Agamben, ‘Movement’. It is at this time that the term movement was picked up by radical/revolutionary wings of European socialist parties and unions. For use of the term within the reformist/radical debates of the German SPD, see Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy* (Cambridge, 1993), and Rosa Luxemburg’s response, ‘Sozialreform oder Revolution’, in Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke, 1893–1919*, 6 vols. (Berlin, 1990), ii, 369–71. For its use by Lenin, see V. I. Lenin, ‘What is to be Done?’, in Joseph R. Gusfield (ed.), *Protest, Reform, Revolt: A Reader in Social Movements* (New York, 1970), 458–72.

⁸ The term ‘movement’ also gained currency throughout the non-Western world around this time. Though the Non-Aligned Movement had its origins in the 1950s, the term itself did not appear until the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries in 1976 where participating countries were for the first time denoted as members of ‘the Movement’. Documents of the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, 16–19 Aug. 1976, in Colombo, Sri-Lanka, United Nations General Assembly (31st Session, 1976).

⁹ Steven M. Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements: Theories from the Classical Era to the Present* (London, 2011), 75–7; Rudolf Heberle, *Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology* (New York, 1951). The French journal *Le Mouvement Social*, founded in 1960 by Jean Maitron, was one of the first journals in the field. The diffusion of the category of movement within academic analysis has also impacted our historical understanding of social struggle. As part of the ‘historic turn in the human sciences’, historical sociologists led by Sidney Tarrow, Doug McAdam and the late Charles Tilly have, since the 1980s, engaged in the theoretical and empirical work on the history of ‘social movements’. In 1994 Sidney Tarrow called for social movement theory to be embedded ‘into the concrete record of history’, while Doug

(cont. on p. 5)

the term movement by activists since the 1960s and the academic analysis of social struggle through the lens of movement, have been mutually reinforcing. The hermeneutic circle formed through the evolving interplay between the interpretation and practice of social movements (aided, in no small measure, by the 1980s migration of New Left activists into academia) accounts for much of the present ubiquity of the term ‘movement’ to describe contemporary social struggle and, conversely, our difficulty in imagining modern struggle outside this category.

Kinetic analysis questions this axiomatic association by examining the entangled histories of movement and arrest over the past three centuries. In doing so, it underscores how movement, as a practice and idea, was central to the establishment and legitimation of the capitalist economy. From the primitive accumulation and commodification of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to twenty-first-century austerity, kinetic analysis demonstrates how this economy has made its profits through the movement of goods, credit and human beings. It argues that, since this economy’s inception, social struggle in the Atlantic world took place on a kinetic register, as the struggle over the power of movement and its disruption. It examines the violence and coercion that accompanied this movement, of the force necessary to create regional, national and international markets for goods, and the mobile, docile, labour force required to supply them. Conversely, kinetic analysis investigates the three-century resistance to this economy through the struggles to arrest this coerced motion. It corrals the histories of Caribbean piracy, slave-ship mutinies, maroon communities and the food, enclosure and impressment riots of the eighteenth century; anarchist, syndicalist and Marxist workers of the nineteenth century; the New Left and the anti-war,

(n. 9 cont.)

McAdam argued in 1996 that the future for social movement studies lay ‘in getting in closer to the lived experience of the social movements themselves’. See Craig Calhoun, ‘The Rise and Domestication of Historical Sociology’, in Terrence McDonald (ed.), *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor, 1996), 305–38; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 3rd edn (Cambridge, 2011); Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald (eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge, 1996); Charles Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768–2004* (Boulder, 2004).

anti-growth, anti-globalization, slow-food and environmental struggles of the late twentieth century, as ongoing attempts to find freedom, not in mobility, but through its disruption.

Beyond this spatial register, kinetic analysis examines how the categories of movement and arrest have been understood temporally, as ways of making sense of human society in and over time. Accordingly, it traces the centrality of movement within Western notions of social progress and development, and how the politics of arrest inserted itself as a disruptive force within this temporality.

The global uprisings since 2011 resist the conceptual framework of social movement precisely because they are the latest manifestation of a long history that has practised a politics of and as arrest. Humans today, whether fighting home foreclosures, squat evictions, global financial capital, environmental extraction, gentrification, war profiteers, tax dodgers or ‘race-to-the-bottom’ trade agreements, are each, in their own way, confronting a regime of movement that emerged over three hundred years ago. If we are to make sense of the struggles of the early twenty-first century, we need to fundamentally interrogate our kinetic understanding of their predecessors. A kinetic analysis of the modern political terrain both unearths this history and describes why it has been covered up.

I

POLITICAL KINETICS

Freedom of movement is historically the oldest and the most elementary liberty. Being able to depart for where we will is the prototypical gesture of being free, as limitation of movement has since time immemorial been the precondition of enslavement.

— Hannah Arendt¹⁰

What [refugees] have lost are not specific rights but the right to *take place*, to reside, which conditions the possibility of political existence.

— Hannah Arendt¹¹

These two quotes, written by the same author seventeen years apart, offer contrasting takes on the relationship between

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York, 1968), 9.

¹¹ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 297.

movement, freedom, and the political. The first, which associates individual human freedom with the ability to move, is informed by classical strains of liberal thought. The second sees forced movement as antithetical to the formation of political community and hence, for Arendt, public freedom. Drawing on Heidegger's notion of clearing, and prefiguring her work on revolution a decade later, Arendt argued that *stasis*, the ability to dwell, to come together in a fixed place, is the precondition for collective human emancipation.

Together, these quotes go to the heart of a kinetic tension between social order, freedom and movement. As in physics, political movement is a relative phenomenon. Movement, or the arrest of it, is discernible only in relation to the field against which it operates. Many contemporary strands of leftist politics identify this field as a conservative social order that their progressive movements struggle against. For social arrest, the answer is less clear. If we are to make social arrest a legible category of social struggle — one not animated by conservatism or frustration — we need to trace the history of the kinetic interpretations of this social field.

From Plato's *Republic* to post-modernist explorations of hybridity and nomadism, the category of movement has played an important role in the history of political thought.¹² Yet it is to

¹² The relations between movement and political community were first systematically taken up by Plato. In *The Republic*, Plato crafted a triangular connection between liberty, danger and movement that was central to his conception of democracy. As Hagar Kotef points out, for Plato, democracy is the mode of governance of those who are bound to move, 'While we have become accustomed to thinking of the demos as the body of citizens or "the people", its original meaning was "country" (or land), and later the concept came to refer to the people of the countryside, and thus the poor. The demos, therefore, was composed of those who did not live in the city but had to walk to participate in acts of legislation and governance. When the demos entered the city, their movement violated the stability which was the privilege of the citizens-as-the-few, and subjected the city to its rule of excessive freedom'. Or as Plato put it in his satirical version of Athenian democracy, 'where animals roam freely and proudly along the streets, bumping into anyone who doesn't get out of their way'. For Plato, democracy's excessive movement constantly failed to produce and sustain order. In this formulation, movement becomes, both literally and figuratively, the interruption of established political order. The ambivalence of movement within Plato's thought, especially the tension between (an excess of) freedom and order, would later be worked out by the paradigmatic ideology of movement: liberalism. Hagar Kotef, *Movement and the Ordering of Freedom: On Liberal Governances of Mobility* (London, 2015), 4; Plato, *The Republic*, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari, trans. Tom Griffith (New York, 2000), esp. bk viii.

early strains of liberal theory that movement owes much of its prominence as a political category. In the first of the modern ideologies to challenge the order of things, key political concepts such as freedom, political community, subjectivity and the state, were all thought through a kinetic register.

From the earliest incarnations of liberal theory in the seventeenth century through to the present, movement has been central to liberal conceptions of freedom. Deriving from the Latin *liber* (free), the English word *liberal* came to mean ‘freely permitted’ or ‘free from restraint’ in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In its classical political formulations, liberalism stood as an oppositional ideology to all static or immovable structures within feudal regimes, including hereditary privilege, state religion, absolute monarchy and the divine right of kings. In the late eighteenth century, as an economic doctrine, liberalism took aim at restrictive trade preferences, state grants of monopolies, serfdom and slavery, calling instead for the unrestrained movement of goods, market forces and human beings.¹³ As Arendt remarked, ‘Liberty meant freedom from restraint, and as such was identical with freedom of movement. Freedom of movement was the materialization of the liberal conception of liberty’.¹⁴

¹³ Yet the task of a liberal political theory was not just to trace out the connections between movement and liberty but to provide a working framework for a free social order. Here theorists ran up against the quandary first identified by Plato: that excessive freedom of movement was inimical to a stable social order. Their solution, as Hagar Kotef has masterfully traced, was to identify social freedom as regulated or constrained movement. ‘Movement in liberalism is not unrestrained: The classic liberal subject was rather a subject who learned to tame his/her own movements and thus to allow the notion of an ordered freedom. With it, movement no longer manifested “a restless and inassimilable alterity busily working both within and against state power’s most cherished idea: social order”’. Rather, it was conceived as the manifestation (and precondition) of a free social order. Moreover, as Kotef argues, the twin historical contexts of capitalism and colonialism informed liberalism’s demarcation of whose (and what kind of) movement was to be regulated and constrained. Some subjects, based on their race, gender, class or ethnicity appeared free when moving (and as oppressed when hindered) and their ‘good’, ‘purposive’, ‘rational’, and often ‘progressive’, mobility, liberalism sought to maximize. The movement of other(ed) groups were, by contrast, often marked as disruption, danger or delinquency. Colonized subjects declared to be nomads, poor who were deemed vagrants or vagabonds upon losing their lands, and women whose ‘fragility’ necessitated ‘sedentary employments’, became ‘unruly’ ‘excessive’ subjects whose movement needed to be managed. Kotef, *Movement and the Ordering of Freedom*, 5, 63, 59, 74. It was in this manner that liberal theory (and regimes) became compatible with an assortment of non-liberal (in the classical sense) technologies.

¹⁴ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, repr. edn (London, 1970), 32.

In these formulations, the social field against which liberalism operated was filled with barriers that inhibited both the motion of society and the individuals that constituted it. By contrast, liberal thought has coupled movement to the key political categories of liberty and progress. It was in this coupling that the movement of society as teleological progression and the motion of goods and persons within it became inextricably linked. Early in the twentieth century, in one of the first reflections on the history of liberal theory, L. T. Hobhouse defined liberalism as a political critique whose main ‘business’ had been ‘to remove obstacles which block human progress’.¹⁵ Liberal society, as he conceived it, was an organism literally moving forward. The free subject, in turn, was defined as an individual capable of mobility.¹⁶ For the English jurist William Blackstone, whose *Commentaries* informed strains of American revolutionary thought, ‘Liberty is the power of locomotion, of changing situation . . . to whatsoever place one’s inclination may direct, without imprisonment or restraint’.¹⁷

The coupling of the freedom to move with liberty and progress served as the guiding principle and theoretical foundation for social movements when they first emerged as a political practice in the early nineteenth century. The mid-century struggle for women’s dress reform provides a case in point. The ‘bloomer campaign’, an effort to replace the confining fashions of Victorian dress with loose trousers and a corset-less top, equated freedom with a woman’s ability to move. Adopted by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone and Susan B. Anthony, the bloomer granted (middle and upper-class) women, previously restrained in both bodily movement and to the domestic sphere, a new mobility. Stanton likened the change in dress to liberation itself, ‘like a captive set free from his ball and chain . . . what a sense of liberty I felt with no skirt to hold or brush’.¹⁸

¹⁵ L. T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism and Other Writings* (Cambridge, 1994), 8.

¹⁶ Hagar Kotef argues that while modern theorists of liberalism such as Kant and Mill increasingly equated liberty with human will and an abstracted reason, the connection between movement and freedom remained a latent strain surfacing throughout the entire history of the liberal project. Kotef, *Movement and the Ordering of Freedom*, 80.

¹⁷ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England: In Four Books*, repr. edn (Clark, NJ, 2010), 130.

¹⁸ Kotef, *Movement and the Ordering of Freedom*, 85.

As a response to perceived social and state intransigence, early social movements described both the goal and the means of a political project to put society in motion. Yet for social movements to become intelligible as a political category, they required a conceptualization of a static and restraining social field against which to project themselves. This conceptualization, first furnished by liberalism, provided the backdrop for many social movements to this day.¹⁹ In the quite different context of (a masculinized) anti-colonial struggle, Frantz Fanon remarked on the affective register of confinement that had similarly animated early white middle-class feminism a century before. ‘The colonial subject is a man penned in . . . The first thing the colonial subject learns is to remain in his place and not overstep its limits. Hence the dreams of the colonial subject are muscular dreams, dreams of action, dreams of aggressive vitality. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, and climbing’.²⁰ Fanon portrayed movement as a dialectical reaction to colonial regimes of restraint. The anti-colonial struggle was animated psychically, but above all physically, by the spasmodic desire to free itself, violently, from confinement.

Within these political imaginaries, the state served as the quintessential arresting apparatus, one that interrupted and confined movement in the management of order. There is of course a long history in support of these claims. From institutionalized serfdom and slavery to the vagrancy and black codes following their abolition, from internal passports to mass incarceration, metropolitan policing to colonial governance, the disciplinary power of the state brought a vast array of ‘anti-nomadic techniques’²¹ to the management of human bodies. As James C. Scott powerfully demonstrated, ‘The state has always seemed to be the enemy of people who move around’.²²

¹⁹ While liberalism most forcibly connected movement to freedom, it was by no means the only theoretical strain to do so. Movement has also figured prominently in post-Marxist, post-colonial and post-structuralist thought where concepts as diverse as *slippage*, *rhizome*, *exodus*, *translation*, *nomadism*, *hybridity* and *trace* all symbolize forms of movement that unsettle or disrupt modernist structures — from totalitarian politics to identarian patterns of thought — which fix things into place.

²⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, repr. edn (New York, 2004), 15.

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1st Am. edn (New York, 1977), 218.

²² James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, 1999), 1.

Yet this conception of the state as an intransigent entity restraining movement to maintain social order tells a one-dimensional and increasingly anachronistic story. Parallel to these readings, there exists a long tradition of thought that conceived of the modern social field as one of permanent flux and motion. To arrive at a working theory of social struggle as social arrest, we must first trace these alternate historical interpretations. This means, above all, that the claims of modernism be taken seriously.

Constant, unceasing change has been the constitutive feature of modernist thought and its own historical self-interpretation. The self-erected boundary line of the modern period is, in the social, political and economic domains, the transition from a largely static to an ever-dynamic social order. The first modernist historian attributed this transition to the rise of the bourgeoisie. For Karl Marx, the revolutionary potential of bourgeois society arose from its ability to put everything into motion, 'Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations, everlasting uncertainty and agitation, distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier times. All new forms become obsolete before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air'.²³

Marxist scholars have traced how from the seventeenth century onwards, the increasing penetration of market forces brought with it an ever-intensifying *economy of movement*. Constant changes in the means and social relations of production necessitated the massive mobilization of human bodies, where 'whole populations [are] conjured out of the ground'.²⁴ 'The immense movements of peoples — to cities, to frontiers, to new lands — which the bourgeoisie has sometimes inspired, sometimes brutally enforced, sometimes subsidized, and always exploited for profit',²⁵ became the hallmark of the new social order. Beginning with the enclosure of the commons, peasants were pushed off their land and channelled into their new positions within the market economy.²⁶ If expropriation marked one mechanism of this conjuring of populations, the capture and

²³ Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, 223.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 225.

²⁵ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York, 1982), 92.

²⁶ P. S. Atiyah, *The Rise and Fall of Freedom of Contract* (New York, 1985).

movement of black bodies marked another. As Marcus Rediker, Ian Baucom, Greg Grandin and others have more recently demonstrated, forced unending movement became central to the establishment of the transatlantic maritime economy in the early modern world.²⁷

As early as Hobbes, the state itself has been viewed as both active (that is, itself in motion) and actively enlisted by the economy of movement. Hobbes's *Leviathan* is a body in constant motion. As Gil Anidjar notes, it is marked by both an internal movement, where Hobbes speaks of the 'sanguification of the commonwealth', the money and wealth that is the blood moving within and nourishing the state, and the external movement of its limbs of war, the expansion of the state's reach through conquest.²⁸ In contrast to the liberal conception of the state as immobile and closed in on itself, this conception of the state in/as motion has since informed the practitioners and historians of mercantilism, colonialism and imperialism, as well as the politics of modernist state development in the twentieth century.

Another line of scholarship has examined the state's involvement in the continued expansion and smooth operation of the market economy. Within this capacity, the principal role of the state was not to arrest, but rather to ensure (the right kind of) motion. In this light, early laws against vagrancy and vagabondage served not to prohibit mobility, but rather to direct human movement towards productive wage labour.²⁹ Paul Virilio, in his kinetic analysis of the French Revolution, states as much: 'The events of 1789 claim to be a revolt against subjection, that is, against the constraints to immobility

²⁷ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000); Greg Grandin, *The Empire of Necessity: Slavery, Freedom, and Deception in the New World* (New York, 2014); Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham, NC, 2005). The story of the *Sea Venture* in 1609, a Virginia Company vessel shipwrecked on Bermuda whose officers forced their men to leave a 'land of plenty and ease' to serve in the new colony, offers a particularly poignant example. Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 8–36.

²⁸ See Gil Anidjar, 'Blood', *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon*, i (2018), available online at <<http://www.politicalconcepts.org/issue1/blood/>> (accessed 4 Oct. 2019); Gil Anidjar, *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* (New York, 2014).

²⁹ Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 40–61; A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560–1640* (London, 1985).

symbolized by the ancient feudal serfdom — a revolt against arbitrary confinement and the obligation to reside in one place. But no one yet suspected that the “conquest of freedom to come and go” so dear to Montaigne could, by a slight of hand, become an obligation to mobility . . . the institution of the dictatorship of movement’.³⁰ In his kinetic history of the modern state, John Torpey argues that this process was largely completed (in Europe) during the nineteenth century, by which time states had consolidated the ‘monopoly of the legitimate means of movement’ from rival claimants such as churches and private enterprises. The establishment of this monopoly, manifest through the invention of the passport as well as legal differentiations between the citizen and its others (the alien, the migrant, the colonial subject), became, Torpey argues, a central feature of the modern state.³¹

In a clever kinetic inversion of Althusser’s famous police injunction (‘Hey, you there! Stop!’), Jacques Rancière further elaborated on the state’s role in establishing a regime of movement: one encapsulated in the simple act of a police officer urging bystanders of an incident to ‘Move along! There is nothing to see here’. For Rancière, the function of the state apparatus is to ensure the constant circulation of people, goods and services: ‘The police say there is nothing to see, nothing happening, nothing to be done but to keep moving, circulating; they say that the space of circulation is nothing but the space of circulation’.³² In their everyday operation, states are less concerned with arrest and repression than they are with making sure that nothing appears that may itself arrest the functioning of society, cause society to pause. During the 2014 #blacklivesmatter protests, this point was driven home by a Ferguson police department directive ordering ‘peaceful, law-

³⁰ Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* (Los Angeles, 2006), 53.

³¹ John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge, 2000). One must also add to this official monopoly the state’s active interventions into society to certify the smooth operation of the economy of movement. From a kinetic standpoint, seemingly disparate state initiatives as Keynesianism, the deployment of the military and police as strike breakers (and at times replacement workers), Soviet collectivization, or the development of information and transportation infrastructure can be understood as part of a broader effort to ensure the efficient movement of the economy.

³² Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics* (New York, 1995), 177.

abiding protesters to keep moving [barring them from] standing still for longer than five seconds'.³³

So far I have briefly sketched two historical-conceptual trajectories through which the state has been interpreted in the modern period: the first, as an inertial entity arresting and confining motion towards the management of order; the second, as an active entity that oversees a regime of incessant movement. To be sure, the history and present reality of every modern state displays both sets of characteristics. Stop and Frisk and the Ferguson directive to keep moving coexist as twin technologies to manage the black population in the United States. The brutal evictions of the 2011 occupations (in order to restore a disrupted regime of movement) went hand in hand with the physical arrest of many of their participants. Sites of mass incarceration and ordinances against loitering dot the same American landscape. Why then go to such pains to differentiate the two?

The answer lies in how the protagonists of historical social struggles have perceived the social field within which they struggled. For those who saw a static state built on order and confinement, freedom meant putting things into motion. Others, conversely, have conceived the modern state as an active coercive entity that itself oversees a regime of incessant movement. Faced with a social field in violent flux, these latter struggles were animated not by motion but the desire to arrest it. These differing conceptions, I argue, fundamentally affected their chosen tactics as well as the political imaginations that guided them.

II

THE LIFE-WORLDS OF SOCIAL ARREST

If the workers take a notion,
They can stop all speeding trains;
Every ship upon the ocean
They can tie with mighty chains;
Every wheel in the creation,
Every mine and every mill,

³³ *Mustafa Abdullah v. County of Saint Louis, Missouri, et al.*, Case: 4:14-cv-01436-CDP. Doc. #: 57. Filed: 11/05/14.

Fleets and armies of the nation,
Will at their command stand still.

Joe Hill³⁴

We shall not, we shall not be moved
We shall not, we shall not be moved
Just like a tree that's standing by the water
We shall not be moved.

Anonymous³⁵

This section selectively examines documents from two social struggles in order to provide material evidence for a politics of arrest at both a tactical and a temporal level. For the purpose of this analysis, I have chosen to focus on the workers' struggle where many of the modern tactics of social arrest were first developed, and the 'new' social struggles of the 1960s and 1970s through which the term 'movement' acquired its hegemonic status. The evidence presented in no way purports to be representative of the various struggles from which they speak, nor does it claim that the politics of disruption was the sole way their participants thought and practised struggle. The aim is to underscore the existence of significant currents of thought and action within each 'movement' that were fundamentally oriented towards and structured by the category of arrest.

Tactical arrest

Workers have, over the past two centuries, developed, discussed and carried out an astonishing array of strategies to achieve their aims: the strike, unionization, petition, barricades, collective bargaining, marches, occupations, revolutionary communes, arbitration, political parties, soviets, armed struggle, cooperatives, blockades, mutual aid societies, insurrection, slowdowns, sit-ins and sabotage, to name just a few. Some of these tactics have been employed for the recognition or betterment of workers' lives within the existing social order; others have been deployed to overthrow it. Many have, depending on historical circumstance and the groups using them, been a tool for both. This section discusses two of these strategies: the general strike and sabotage. Tactically, they lie at opposite ends of the spectrum; the first requires the co-ordination

³⁴ Joe Hill, 'Workers of the World, Awaken!' (1910), in *Songs to Fan the Flames of Discontent: The Little Red Songbook* (Detroit, 1995), 8.

³⁵ American folk song of unknown (though most likely slavery era) origin. For a history of the song, see <<http://folkmusic.about.com/od/folksongs/qt/ShallNotBeMoved.htm>> (accessed 4 Oct. 2019).

and consciousness of a sizeable percentage of the working population, the second only the will of an individual worker. My aim is not to trace out a full history of these two strategies, but rather to show how the workers who thought through and deployed them conceptualized what they were doing through the category of arrest.

Though the general strike as a tactic of social arrest had its golden age in the decades preceding and immediately following the First World War, its history goes back to the eighteenth century where it was introduced as a way of manifesting the power of the 'productive over the idle classes' through a general work stoppage. Well before Abbey Sieyès's championing of the Third Estate, Jean Meslier (1729), Sylvain Maréchal (1775) and Constantin Volney (1788) all advocated for a generalized arrest of work as a means to overthrow the deadweight of the clergy and nobility.³⁶ Quickly overshadowed by the insurrectionary Jacobin script and hampered by the limited means of communication and organization to carry it through (a problem that plagued the Glasgow strike of 1820), the general strike went out of favour as a tactic of social struggle.³⁷ Its late nineteenth-century revival, in both Latin Europe (Italy, France, Spain) and the United States coincided with the emergence of syndicalism.³⁸

³⁶ Phil H. Goodstein, *The Theory of the General Strike from the French Revolution to Poland* (New York, 1984), 13. In the first year of the revolution, the moderate Comte de Honoré Mirabeau urged his fellow revolutionaries to, 'Take care. Do not irritate these people that produces everything, and that, to make itself formidable, has only to become motionless'. Jean Jaurès, *Studies in Socialism*, trans. Mildred Minturn (New York, 1906), 127. Though no general strike materialized during the course of the revolution (in fact, the revolution produced its kinetic opposite, the first *levée en masse*), these eighteenth-century conceptualizations of the Third Estate are highly significant. Alongside natural rights, numerical majority, or its productive capacity vis-à-vis the other first two estates, they highlight how the Third Estate's power and legitimacy within society were understood through the people's ability to arrest them.

³⁷ There were, of course, notable exceptions. The *Grand National Holiday* proposed by William Benbow and nearly implemented by the Chartist Convention in 1839, as well as early tracts of international anarchism before the loss of its mass base and its tactical shift to the 'propaganda of the deed', form lines of conceptual continuity in the mid-nineteenth century. Niles Carpenter, 'William Benbow and the Origin of the General Strike', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, xxv (1921), 491–9.

³⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois's study of Southern slaves' gradual work stoppage during the American Civil War as a potential general strike stands as a major exception. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (New York, 1998), esp. ch. 4. Its broad-based support and theoretical attractiveness during this period were the direct result of two largely independent trajectories taken by previous Marxist and anarchist traditions. On the one hand, revolutionary syndicalism came of age during a lull in radical Marxist practice between the pioneering revolutionary ideas of Marx in the mid-nineteenth century and the Leninist conception of the revolutionary vanguard

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Syndicalist leaders celebrated the general strike as the supreme tactic in the struggle against capital.³⁹ Whether workers were simply to cross their arms (the *bras croisés* mass strike laid out by Pelloutier and Briand) in a non-violent and legal arrest of the existing order, or to precipitate an inevitable armed confrontation with the state (as advanced by Eugene von Guérard at the 1896 CGT Congress and famously espoused later by Rosa Luxemburg) the ‘general strike, when called, would bring life in bourgeois society to a complete halt’.⁴⁰ As the German Stephan Naft expounded in his treatise, *The Social General Strike*, ‘[would] completely interrupt production in the whole country, stop communication and consumption for the ruling classes long enough to totally disorganize the capitalistic society; so that after the complete annihilation of the old system, the working people can take possession through its labour unions of all the means of production’.⁴¹ In these conceptualizations, immobilization was seen as either precipitating the workers’ seizure of power or as the revolution itself.

These theoretical formulations both helped to shape and were shaped by the increasing frequency of general strikes that enjoyed a global, if brief, historical moment in the two decades bracketing the First World War. In the ephemeral instances when a general strike was successfully implemented, social arrest went beyond a generalized work stoppage and overflowed into total paralysis of

(n. 38 cont.)

party, which culminated in the 1917 Russian Revolution. At a time when many socialist parties had given themselves over to a deterministic conception of history, which combined a theory of the economic inevitability of socialism with increasingly reformist and bureaucratic tendencies, the practice of direct worker action became alluring. On the other hand, anarchist militants, having largely abandoned insurrectionary politics after the failures of both the propaganda of the deed and the Paris Commune, gravitated in increasing numbers toward radical worker unionism by the turn of the century. Their new message, that the worker’s struggle needed to develop outside the state, and create the institutions that would replace it, found a receptive audience among workers who, faced with limited franchise and governments that rarely failed to intervene on behalf of capital, had soured from ‘political solutions’. For a fuller account of the rise of Atlantic syndicalism, see Ralph Darlington, *Radical Unionism: The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism* (Chicago, 2008).

³⁹ The most famous work from this period, reaching far beyond syndicalist circles, was Georges Sorel’s *Reflections on Violence* (Glencoe, Ill., 1950).

⁴⁰ James Joll, *The Anarchists* (New York, 1964), 198–9; Goodstein, *Theory of the General Strike from the French Revolution to Poland*, 57; Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike* (Berkeley, 1986).

⁴¹ Stephen Naft, *The Social General Strike* (Chicago, 1905), 7.

the social order. Throughout the series of turn-of-the-century general strikes in Belgium and Spain, it was often the ‘first thought of the workers to cut off all means of communication and transportation to prevent police and military co-ordination as well as the movement of troops and their supplies’.⁴² Elsewhere, arrest of the old order was coupled with the establishment of a new regime of movement under worker control. During the 1905 Russian general strike, worker control of the railroad, postal and telegraph services disrupted communications and troop movements while simultaneously allowing the newly formed soviets to carry out day-to-day operations. General strike committees and trade councils, from Seattle and Winnipeg in 1919 to the United Kingdom in 1926, put in place new regimes of movement to contend with the logistics of providing basic supplies and keeping emergency services in operation. The kinetic shifts brought about by the general strike were a frequently remarked facet that signalled the (hoped for) transition of power. As R. E. Scouller, a Glasgow member of the National Union of Clerks during the 1926 UK general strike, explained: ‘I handled most of the requests for permits to move. Some were granted immediately, supplies for hospitals, etc. But those trying to move commercial stuff never got beyond Glasgow. It was quite an experience to have contractors ask permission to move stuff and be refused. Some young people thought the revolution had arrived’.⁴³ Formal and informal systems managing movement were central features of the temporary bodies of ‘dual power’ that emerged through the general strike. Through their experiences in these strike committees, workers realized that power lay in the hands of those who decided who and what could move.

If the revolutionary general strike was the rarely attained holy grail of workers’ struggle, sabotage was a routinely employed strategy of industrial warfare. Unlike the general strike, which required daunting degrees of co-ordination and participation, workers could sabotage individually and at any time.⁴⁴ Within

⁴² Naft, *Social General Strike*, 9.

⁴³ R. A. Leeson, *Strike: A Live History, 1887–1971* (London, 1973), 89.

⁴⁴ The word ‘sabotage’ is derived from two meanings of the French *sabot*; the first referring to a wooden shoe (thrown as early as the fifteenth century by Dutch workers to break the cogs of textile looms), the second to the brake applied to the wheel to bring a horse wagon to a stop. Eric Partridge, *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (New York, 1977), 843.

the labour struggle, sabotage as a tactic of social arrest comprised a great number of historical practices including soldiering on the job, playing dumb, working to rule, slowdowns, machine tampering, diversion, and direct actions crippling the means of production. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the IWW activist and founding member of the ACLU, claimed that even contraception, as the purposeful arrest of the labour supply, was a form of working-class sabotage.⁴⁵

Sabotage was understood as a practical tactic to: disrupt local production (and to prevent scabs from resuming it); oppose the rationalization of work-time; and as a revolutionary tactic to debilitate the entire social order. Sabotage has been playful: ‘a bar of soap tossed into a boiler . . . or a thousand trees planted root-side up in a field in Washington’, and organized: ‘Hundreds of plant workers split[ing] the week into twenty-minute periods, each shutting the line down when it was his turn’.⁴⁶ Sabotage also reached beyond the factory setting to disrupt the state’s response. In Parma, Italy, during a farm-workers’ strike, engineers removed vital parts of the locomotives, forcing government troops to walk to the city. En route, bridges disappeared in advance of their arrival.⁴⁷ During a strike in Holland, saboteurs sunk a ship cross-wise under a bridge, preventing all water-borne traffic.⁴⁸ This hope in the collective application of sabotage led many of its proponents to see it as a revolutionary tactic of mass arrest. Emile Pouget’s classic 1908 work *Sabotage* likened it to ‘a pestiferous epidemic, becoming to the body social of capitalism more dangerous and incurable than cancer and syphilis are to the human body’.⁴⁹ Labour opponents of sabotage saw it as an archaic weapon ‘not fitted for the *movement* of our day’, one that ‘must be rejected to give place to the weapons of civilization — the ballot and orderly industrial organization’.⁵⁰

The general strike and sabotage were two prominent tactics of social arrest utilized by workers in their struggle against the

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *Sabotage: The Conscious Withdrawal of the Workers’ Industrial Efficiency* (Chicago, 1916).

⁴⁶ Walker C. Smith, *Sabotage: Its History, Philosophy, and Function* (Spokane, 1913).

⁴⁷ Bill Watson, *Counter-Planning on the Shop Floor* (Cambridge, 1971), 17.

⁴⁸ Naft, *Social General Strike*, 10.

⁴⁹ Emile Pouget, *Sabotage* (Chicago, 1913), 34.

⁵⁰ Charles M. Carlson, *The Clog in the Machine or Sabotage: A Harmful and Obsolete Weapon for the Workers* (Sydney, 1913), 18.

existing order. One could add alongside these the port blockade, the sit-in, the barricade, and propaganda of the deed. Through these practices, workers realized their power by disrupting existing regimes of movement, be they of production or the state apparatuses in its service.⁵¹ As the epigraph by Joe Hill underscores, workers' participation in politics was manifest through and as interruption. Social arrest was not only a key strategy of worker struggle, but equally importantly, a site for the appearance of the worker as a political subject. The politics of interruption disclosed a very particular and agonistic social field to the worker: an unceasing regime of movement set up by capital, ensured by the state, hostile to, yet utterly dependent on the working class. Within this social field, workers understood themselves to be — and were understood as — an arresting power.⁵²

In terms of efficacy and deployment, these tactics were certainly not the most common nor the most powerful weapons of the labour struggle. Historically, collective bargaining or the push for, and use of, political franchise have been utilized more often and yielded far more tangible fruit. The tactics of social arrest, advocated by vocal though numerically smaller groupings of anarchists, syndicalists and radical Marxists, have also had a much rockier history within more mainstream currents of north Atlantic trade unionism and social democracy. Nonetheless, the politics of interruption or politics *as* interruption remained an important and cohesive political subculture of worker struggle, an undercurrent of thought and practice that would soon be picked up and amplified by their successors in the New Left.⁵³

⁵¹ This is essentially the main thesis of Timothy Mitchell's *Carbon Democracy*, which argues that the ability of workers to disrupt the global economy of coal was undermined by the transition to the oil economy. Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (New York, 2011).

⁵² A consciousness radically different from, though often operating in concert with, the worker subject that emerged through collective bargaining, manifestations or parliamentary politics.

⁵³ It is possible to trace this undercurrent of arrest in the periodicals and magazines of the early New Left on both sides of the Atlantic. Publications such as *Dissent* and later *Radical America* in the United States or their smaller German equivalents such as *Funken*, *Pro und Contra*, *Sozialistische Politik*, and *Die Andere Zeitung*, examined worker tactics and strategy while eschewing the orthodoxies of old labour. See Maurice Isserman, *If I had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York, 1987), 77–125 and 171–221; and Gregor Kritisidis, *Linksozialistische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer* (Hannover, 2008). These undercurrents are also evident in the lyrics of the popular protest song 'We shall not be moved' whose

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The New Leftists of the 1960s and 1970s were, more than any other group, responsible for the coupling of the term ‘movement’ to social struggle. Activists of the New Left, through their continued participation or later migration into academia, stamped the term onto the struggles that came after them. Ironically, the set of global struggles that referred to themselves simply as ‘the Movement’ were shot through with tactics of social arrest.

From the Prague Spring to Mexico, the German to the American SDS, French May to Italy’s Hot Autumn, an anti-establishment ethos defined the struggles of the New Left. The ‘Great Refusal’, as it has been called, was directed at both capitalism and real-world socialism, centres of authoritarian power and patriarchal authority, old-leftist ideological dogmatism and bourgeois cultural conformity alike.⁵⁴ This section focuses on two major tactics deployed by various New Left groups: the occupation of public space and the theatrical disruption of everyday life.

The New Left occupations of public space had their historic origins in the revolutionary takeover of factories in post-First World War Spain and Italy and the sit-in strikes that swept across France and the United States in 1936.⁵⁵ In the post-war

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changing third line has been adapted to reflect the needs of various social struggles since the 1930s, figuring prominently in the workers’ and civil rights struggles of the United States. Alternate verses have accordingly included: ‘We’ll build our one big union’; ‘The union is behind us’; ‘We’re fighting for our freedom’; and ‘Black and White together’.

⁵⁴ The term, taken from Herbert Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man*, an influential text for various New Left struggles, was later popularized by Wini Breines. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston, 1964); Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962–1968: The Great Refusal* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1982).

⁵⁵ First utilized on a large scale in 1906 by three thousand workers at the General Electric plant in Schenectady, New York, the original intent of the ‘sit-in strike’ was to deter scabs from resuming work. See Joel Seidman, *Sit-Down* (New York, 1937). Thirty years later, in 1936, over 150,000 French metal workers hunkered down in their factories, followed six months later by workers at the great General Motors auto plants in Flint and Cleveland. See Michael Torigian, ‘The Occupation of the Factories: Paris 1936, Flint 1937’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, xli (1999). The resounding success of these sit-in strikes, leading to closed-shop agreements across America’s mass production sector and the world’s most progressive system of industrial relations in France, brought them international renown. Factory occupations had also been part of a more disruptive revolutionary history, particularly in Italy where, in 1920, over half a million metal workers occupied their workplaces, formed factory councils and armed Red Guard units, barricaded the factories, and attempted to resume production under worker control.

period, civil rights activists had occupied the segregated lunch counters of the American South, refusing to move when they were denied service.⁵⁶ The tactic of occupying a fixed space and refusing to disperse was soon incorporated into the global student and anti-war struggles of the era. In 1964, UC Berkeley students staged a sit-in of Sproul Hall to protest against university restrictions on political speech where Mario Savio expressed the feelings of an entire generation of students who would soon take over their campuses:

There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part. You can't even passively take part! And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus and you've got to make it stop! And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!⁵⁷

By 1970, students worldwide had seemingly made good on Savio's words. In Italy, the occupation of the University of Turin in 1967 ignited a wholesale student takeover of campuses in Florence, Pisa, Venice, Milan, Naples, Padua and Bologna; while in 1968, German students occupied the Free University in Berlin and barricaded the entrances to campuses in Frankfurt, Hamburg, Göttingen and Aachen.⁵⁸ In the United States, the 1968 occupation of Columbia University by the Students for a Democratic Society, was within two years replicated across the country as over four million students (joined by 350,000 faculty in over eight hundred universities) went on strike, taking over university buildings and burning down Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) offices.⁵⁹

The New Left soon took their tactics of social arrest outside the university to disrupt 'business as usual' within society at large. In the United States, students blocked railroad tracks and

⁵⁶ In Nashville, police arrested eighty-one students for the kinetic offense of loitering. Within a few years sit-ins spread to sixty-eight other cities of the segregated South challenging the norms governing where black bodies could be situated. James Talley, '75 Students Arrested Here', *The Tennessean*, 28 Feb. 1960.

⁵⁷ Mario Savio, 'Sit-in Address on the Steps of Sproul Hall, 2 December 1964, The University of California at Berkeley', in *Takin' It to the Streets: A Sixties Reader*, ed. Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, 3rd edn (New York, 2011), 94.

⁵⁸ George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston, 1987), 52.

⁵⁹ United States President's Commission on Campus Unrest, *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest* (New York, 1970), 17.

city streets and staged sit-ins on America's highways.⁶⁰ Anti-war demonstrators chanting 'Hell no, we won't go!' occupied the Pentagon steps, blockaded draft-induction centres and obstructed draftees in attempts to arrest the movement of American bodies to fight a foreign war in Vietnam. In May 1971, 35,000 anti-war protestors occupied West Potomac Park in Washington, engaged in massive disruptions, and announced that 'because the government had not stopped the Vietnam War, they would stop the government'.⁶¹ The very names of the American anti-war campaigns — 'the anti-war moratorium' in San Francisco, the 'Stop the Draft Week' in Oakland, and 'The Chicano Moratorium' organized by Mexican American activists throughout the American Southwest — drew attention to this arresting function in an age otherwise dominated by the term 'movement'.⁶² The German New Left built street barricades and overturned Springer Corporation delivery trucks in order to physically arrest the distribution of false reports of their activities.⁶³ French government repression of the university occupations led to the construction of barricades in the streets of Paris and the spread of the occupations to factories, which paralysed the country for the better part of May and June 1968.⁶⁴

Alongside the occupations, the theatrical, often playful, disruption of everyday life was another highly visible tactic of social arrest. A continuation of the light-hearted, if at times

⁶⁰ Katsiaficas, *Imagination of the New Left*, 123.

⁶¹ L. A. Kauffman, *Direct Action: Protest and the Reinvention of American Radicalism* (New York, 2017), 1–4.

⁶² *Aztlán and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War*, ed. George Mariscal (Berkeley, 1999); Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley, 2005). The city of Oakland in California was brought to a standstill in 1967 as protesters built barricades across roads to prevent buses carrying recruits to the Army's conscription centre. For documents on the Stop the War Week in Oakland, Calif., see <<http://hrmediaarchive.estuarypress.com/stop-the-draft-week-december-1967/>> (accessed 4 Oct. 2019).

⁶³ Michael A. Schmidtke, 'Cultural Revolution or Cultural Shock? Student Radicalism and 1968 in Germany', *South Central Review*, xvi (1999), 87.

⁶⁴ Of note is the largely spontaneous nature of many of these tactics of social arrest. The building of the barricades in the Latin Quarter, the occupations of the Pentagon steps and the French factories were initiated on the spot without any prior planning and, in the case of the workers, against the orders of union and party leadership. See Ronald Fraser, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York, 1988), 211; Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left*, 33. The barricades in particular drew on a much longer history that had associated this tactic of social arrest with insurgency and revolution. Mark Traugott, *The Insurgent Barricade* (Berkeley, 2010).

threatening, pre-modern popular practices (charivari, rough music, carnival),⁶⁵ theatrical disruption was also a product of the many unique features that made up the New Left: the relative affluence, education and privilege of its (white) members; their connection with various artistic currents; and perhaps most importantly, their avowed aim to devolve and ultimately destroy power rather than attempt to seize it. In this last sense, playful disruption served as a counter-strategy to the established social order, a ‘politics of subversion’ that exposed its mechanisms and flows in an attempt to disarm, through interruption, the regime of ceaseless unreflecting movement.

Examples abound on both sides of the Atlantic. In Amsterdam, the Dutch *Provos* wreaked havoc on rush-hour traffic by releasing thousands of chickens onto the streets, while students at the University of Santa Barbara treated the main road leading into campus with lard, bringing traffic to a standstill.⁶⁶ In 1970, over one thousand students at the University of Connecticut walked into a ROTC building armed with brushes and painted the walls with flowers, cartoons and peace symbols.⁶⁷ The Yippies brought panic to the New York Stock Exchange by throwing money onto the trading floor and staged a ‘yip-in’ that shut down Grand Central Station before being brutally dispersed by the police.⁶⁸ Both events took aim at the city’s most famous sites of circulation, momentarily disrupting the flow of financial capital and human beings within the economy of movement. The point of such disruptions, as the West German Situationist group *Subversive Aktion* proclaimed, was to ‘interrupt the influences on the individual posed by society, allowing them to pause and reflect so that they could define themselves independently from authority’.⁶⁹ Theatrical disruption interrupted the routine

⁶⁵ E. P. Thompson, ‘Rough Music’, in E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991), 467–538; E. P. Thompson, ‘Rough Music Reconsidered’, *Folklore*, ciii (1992). For its continued use in the modern period, see Ilaria Favretto, ‘Rough Music and Factory Protest in Post-1945 Italy’, *Past and Present*, no. 228 (Aug. 2015); Ilaria Favretto and Xabier Itcaina (eds.), *Protest, Popular Culture and Tradition in Modern and Contemporary Western Europe* (London, 2017).

⁶⁶ Richard Kempton, *Provo: Amsterdam’s Anarchist Revolt* (New York, 2007). See also Katsiaficas, *Imagination of the New Left*, 123.

⁶⁷ Urban Research Corporation, *On Strike . . . Shut It Down! A Report on the First National Student Strike in US History, May 1970* (Chicago, 1970), 37.

⁶⁸ *The Village Voice*, 28 March 1968.

⁶⁹ Schmidtke, ‘Cultural Revolution or Cultural Shock?’, 83.

uncritical flow of society, driving ‘a wedge between one-dimensional individuals and their society’.⁷⁰

New Left tactics of arrest were a continuation of those practised by workers. The general strikes, sit-ins and industrial sabotage that arrested production found their counterparts in the public occupations and theatrical disruptions of the New Left. What had changed was the site on which they were performed. Whereas workers targeted capitalist production, the New Left sought to interrupt the circulation of the entire social body, which was itself often likened to a giant machine. Subsequent social struggles took these tactics of social arrest to other sites, modifying them accordingly. Tree-sitting, blockades, monkey wrenching and other forms of ‘ecotage’ were developed by environmental groups in order to arrest the extraction of natural resources or the establishment of toxic industries.⁷¹ If environmental activists shifted the site of confrontation to the natural environment, cyber hackers adapted these tactics to the virtual world. Distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, which cripple the operation of everything from banking services to government agencies, practice, in their own way, the same politics of interruption.⁷²

While social arrest has been a continuous and constituent part of modern social struggle, it has undergone significant changes in practice over its history; specifically, a gradual shift from the material value of arrest towards its performative value. The barricade, as a tactic spanning the pre-modern, modern and postmodern eras, offers a case in point. From its inception in the sixteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century, the barricade functioned as a tactic of urban guerrilla warfare, arresting the movement of government troops through the city. By the time the workers’ struggle adopted the practice, the

⁷⁰ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 15. For guerrilla theatre as a tactic of social arrest, see John Weisman, *Guerrilla Theater: Scenarios for Revolution* (New York, 1973).

⁷¹ Dave Foreman, *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* (Tucson, 1987); John Davis (ed.), *The Earth First! Reader: Ten Years of Radical Environmentalism* (Layton, UT, 1991); George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Atlantic Highlands, 1997); Alexandra Plows, Derek Wall and Brian Doherty, ‘Covert Repertoires: Ecotage in the UK’, *Social Movement Studies*, iii (2004).

⁷² Harry Halpin, ‘The Philosophy of Anonymity: Ontological Politics Without Identity’, *Radical Philosophy*, clxxvi (2012); Richard Stallman, ‘The Anonymous WikiLeaks Protests Are a Mass Demo Against Control’, *Guardian*, 17 Dec. 2010, <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/dec/17/anonymous-wikileaks-protest-amazon-mastercard>> (accessed 4 Oct. 2019).

development of modern artillery made short work of these hastily assembled fortifications (a reality that the 1871 Parisian Communards were to realize all too late). For the workers' struggle, the real disruptive value of the barricade lay in fraternization. The barricade forced troops to momentarily stop moving, creating a stand-off between them and the insurgent workers. The arrest of the physical motion of soldiers brought them into physical contact with the people, providing workers with the opportunity to disrupt their allegiance. Friedrich Engels, in his introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850*, argued that stalled in front of the barricade, 'the soldiers would either confront "the manifestation of the people", or if the spell of the barricades was broken, "rebels, agitators, plunderers, levellers, the scum of society"'.⁷³ By 1968, the barricade's principle significance shifted once again, becoming a symbol for social arrest itself, a marker of the transition between 'the state of everyday political existence, with its presumption of continuity . . . and the insurrectionary situation, which remained exceptional, and was perceived to hold both the potential for sudden violence and the promise of meaningful change'.⁷⁴ This performative function, long outlasting the barricade's usefulness as a site of military confrontation or fraternization, explains its continued use into the twenty-first century (Istanbul's Taksim Square being perhaps the most famous recent example). These historical shifts, likewise evident in the practice of the general strike and sabotage/ecotage, attest to the endurance and adaptability of the politics of arrest through dramatically different political and tactical landscapes.

Time interrupted

The previous section detailed how a politics of arrest informed the disruptive tactics of the old and new Left. It examined arrest and movement through the physical motion of bodies and things in society. In this sense these kinetic struggles were a continuation of a 'pre-modern' politics waged between those who profited from

⁷³ Friedrich Engels, 'Introduction', in Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850* (New York, 1934), 14. A decade later Leon Trotsky would similarly claim that, 'Here, at the barricades, the soldier hears — perhaps for the first time in his life — the workers' conscience, his fraternal appeal'. Leon Trotsky, *1905* (New York, 1971), 332.

⁷⁴ Traugott, *Insurgent Barricade*, 189.

the regime of movement and those who took a physical stand against it. This kinetic struggle, evident in eighteenth-century Atlantic piracy, anti-impressment, enclosure and food riots, slave-ship mutinies and maroon communities, was relocated to the site of production by workers and to the entirety of social relations by the New Left.

Yet, for the 'modern' period, the category of movement implies more than a spatial analysis. Embedded within the historical use of the term is a relation of struggle with time. This section unpacks the kinetics of social struggle through a temporal register. Moving beyond the tactical dimension, it examines the intentions of social struggles, how their protagonists understood what they were doing and why they were doing it.

In the late eighteenth century, liberal thought, by referring to the movement of society through time, added a new temporal vector to the category of movement. The new language of movement naturalized change, cementing the view that political and social transformations were normal and not exceptional. It also gave these transformations a direction. When understood correctly, change was not random but guided by the development of society towards its own ultimate realization. Taken together, these two characteristics became the basis for the liberal idea of human progress. Propelled by man's scientific and mechanical domination of nature and the gradual tearing down of the world's physical and political barriers, liberal society was moving towards an end where freedom, understood increasingly as the freedom to transact and produce everywhere and without hindrance, would be actualized. In the two centuries since its first enunciation by the late-Enlightenment thinkers Condorcet and Kant, this progressive, linear and universal(izing) temporality has infiltrated nearly every form of modern government, informing the cosmology of most bourgeois, communist, colonial and post-colonial states. The 'geo-culture of the modern world system', as Immanuel Wallerstein called it, has equally gripped many of the social struggles that have sought to subvert them.

Within the new liberal hegemony in imagining politics, disruption no longer implied a disturbance of the present order but one whose chaos now upset the orderly movement of society towards freedom. This liberal world view was something that the practitioners of arrest had to contend with. Their response was to

come from the most unlikely of sources: the theoretical patriarch of the modern state and order, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel's ideas of historical change shared many assumptions with the liberal model. He too felt that the social world, much like the natural, was in a state of perpetual movement, and that this movement was governed by fundamental laws of development. He too was confident that the application of reason (or its unfolding through human history) would lead to greater freedom. What distinguished Hegel's theory of historical progress from others was the way in which this movement occurred. For Hegel, the world was in constant flux, but this motion was neither orderly nor linear, but rather brought about by antagonism, tension and dialectical conflict.

Inspired by the violent upheavals of the Haitian Revolution, Hegel examined how contradictions in existing social systems led to their sublation. Describing the relationship of the master and the slave, Hegel argued how the slave, becoming conscious that his master is utterly dependent on the thing that he owns, realizes the contradiction within slavery and begins a 'struggle to the death', risking his own life for his freedom. Crucial for Hegel was that the freedom from slavery cannot be granted to slaves from above but must be the result of their self-liberation from below. Social and political transformation, in Hegel's view, was therefore never orderly or self-evident, but always violent and destructive. By stressing the necessity of violent confrontation in the resolution of the dialectic, Hegel inserted disruption into the very heart of the unfolding of world history. In this way, arrest, paradoxically, became the means of advancing society, of moving from a lower or less free stage to a higher and freer social order.⁷⁵

Beginning in the 1840s, a group of philosophers, intellectuals and militants, comprised chiefly of Marxists and anarchists, took up Hegelian dialectics to argue for the necessity of arrest as a means of emancipating the working class. They argued that human society was filled with contradictions that, at moments, would erupt into outright conflict, arrest the existing order, and rupture history. Similar to Hegel, their dialectical view of social development through time embedded arrest into the very logic of

⁷⁵ For Hegel, of course, the culmination of this dialectical development was, in the realm of politics, the enlightened despotism of the Prussian state, and in the realm of thought, himself. It would be left to a later generation to translate his ideas into a theory of working-class liberation.

movement. In doing so, this group transformed arrest from a reactionary force retarding historical movement into the engine of progress itself.

Most workers, to be sure, could not read, nor cared for the finer points of Hegelian philosophy. But the new temporality of arrest found elective affinity with strains of millenarianism common among an industrial labour force of recent peasant origin.⁷⁶ The belief in a coming apocalyptic transformation of society had a long history among religious, spiritual and later secular groups across the Atlantic.⁷⁷ To the extent that these millenarian traditions combined a deep and total rejection of an existing evil world, and a passionate aspiration to another, better one, with the belief that only a complete and radical rupture would allow passage between the two, their understanding of social development and arrest shared a similar trajectory to much of radical Marxist and anarchist thought.⁷⁸

As developed by the nineteenth-century workers' struggle, the new temporality of arrest involved the interruption of linear progressive time, a form of *resistance*, whose etymology from the Latin *stare* and Greek *stasis*, means to *come to a stand* or to *cause to stand*.⁷⁹ Within this temporality, struggles moved the existing social order forward precisely through the act of arresting it. It was of course, not the only way that workers understood the relationship between social struggle and time. Rather, the temporality of arrest worked and developed alongside the temporality of movement, which continued to inform

⁷⁶ Revolutionary millenarianism dates back, according to Eric Hobsbawm, to Joachim of Flora (1145–1202), the inventor of the doctrine of the three Ages of the World: the age of the Father (Law), the age of the Son (Faith), and the future age, that of the Holy Ghost. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Glencoe, 1959), 25.

⁷⁷ Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, rev. edn (New York, 1970); Richard Landes, *Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience* (New York, 2011); Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley, 1980).

⁷⁸ Michael Löwy, 'Eric Hobsbawm, Sociologist of Peasant Millenarianism', *Estudos Avançados*, xxiv (2010).

⁷⁹ Nicole Loraux, *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens* (New York, 2006), 104–8; Dimitris Vardoulakis, 'Stasis: Beyond Political Theology?', *Cultural Critique*, lxxiii (2009); Rebecca Comay, 'Resistance and Repetition: Freud and Hegel', *Research in Phenomenology*, xiv (2005); Howard Caygill, *On Resistance: A Philosophy of Defiance* (London, 2013), 9.

significant currents of the worker struggle within north Atlantic trade unionism and social democracy.

We can see these two temporalities at play in debates over the general strike. Over its long history, the general strike was viewed both as a tactic to progress the agenda of the working class within the capitalist system and as a strategy to radically subvert it. In the first temporal register, the general strike stands as a tactic of temporary arrest within a broader integrationist movement: either political (to obtain franchise or trade union rights) or economic gain (solidarity strikes as manifestation of union power or for the eight-hour working day). The second, ‘profoundest conception of the General Strike’, historically adopted by anarchist, syndicalist and radical socialist groups was, as Naft put it, ‘the one pointing to a thorough change of the present system: a social revolution of the world; an entire new reorganization; a demolition of the entire old system of all governments’.⁸⁰ Similarly, one can distinguish between the uses of sabotage as a tactic to enforce ‘a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay’ — a claim made to, and legible within, the system of wage labour — and sabotage understood as, ‘Nothing more or less than the chloroforming of the organism of production, the knockout drops to put to sleep the ogres of . . . King Capital’.⁸¹ In these latter conceptualizations of the general strike and sabotage, the slowing down or stoppage of work was conceived not within a linear temporality to better the conditions of the working class but rather as the radical rupture of time that would arrest the existing social order.

The workers’ struggle embedded arrest temporally within the logic of movement. The New Left activists of the 1960s were the first, if only momentarily, to sever this connection. While older leftist commentators continued to assess the ‘proper time’ of revolution through a developmentalist logic, lamenting the false consciousness of the proletariat and questioning how students could constitute a revolutionary class, New Left activists understood social arrest as a means of practising emancipation

⁸⁰ Naft, *Social General Strike*, 5. Ralph Chaplin, editor of the IWW publication, *Solidarity*, makes a similar distinction. Ralph Chaplin, *The General Strike* (Chicago, 1933).

⁸¹ The quote is from Arturo Giovannitti, an Italian-American leader of the 1912 Lawrence Strike, in the introduction to the 1913 English translation of Pouget’s *Sabotage*. Arturo Giovannitti, ‘Introduction’, in Pouget, *Sabotage*, 6.

itself. A politics of disruptive direct action that, in Martin Luther King's words, rejected the liberal 'who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time, and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season"'.⁸² For New Left activists, there was no waiting for the revolution, no predetermined progressive project within which social arrest was inscribed. 'The future will only contain what we put into it now. Don't consume Marx, live him' wrote students on the walls of Paris. Or as Jerry Rubin of the Yippies claimed, 'Revolution meant the creation of new men and women. Revolution meant a new life. On earth. Today'.⁸³ Within the politics of the New Left, social arrest increasingly took on a prefigurative dimension, its disruptive practices creating both physical and epistemic space for the immediate transformation of social relations.

A broad anti-imperial subjectivity animated this shift in the temporality of social arrest. The New Left shared the feeling that the existing organization of human beings, how they related to one another, the ways they spoke, what they saw and desired, was a mechanism of social control. For New Left activists, these more subtle mechanisms worked alongside the explicit forces of state and economic repression to colonize the lives and even minds of human beings. In 1967, the SDS Women's Liberation Workshop drafted a resolution which defined the role of the American female, including the role of women in SDS, as one of colonial dependence and exploitation.⁸⁴ Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panther Party claimed that, 'People are colonized, oppressed, and exploited on all levels. Intellectually, Politically, Economically, Emotionally, Sexually, and Spiritually, we are oppressed, exploited, colonized'.⁸⁵ For the New Left, the social order was not simply in the wrong hands — something that could either be reformed or wrested — but was in itself suspect. Anti-imperialism, in this broader sense, meant neither the

⁸² Martin Luther King, Jr, 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail' (1963), <https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html> (accessed 4 Oct. 2019).

⁸³ Jerry Rubin, *DO IT! Scenarios of a Revolution* (New York, 1970), 56.

⁸⁴ Students for a Democratic Society, 'Statement from the Women's Liberation Workshop' (1967), <<http://www.sds-1960s.org/Guardian1967-07-15.pdf>> (accessed 4 Oct. 2019).

⁸⁵ Eldridge Cleaver, 'Introduction', in Jerry Rubin, *DO IT!*, 8.

modification nor the seizure of power but rather, and more profoundly, the destruction or devolution of it. As the Italian student activist and later cultural historian Luisa Passerini remarked, 'We realized that, notwithstanding its fascination, the idea of an assault on the Winter Palace was archaic'.⁸⁶ Rejecting both reform and revolution (as previously understood) the anti-imperial politics of the New Left stood against the encroachment of social control into the national, institutional, communal and individual domains of human existence. Put positively, in attempts to disrupt the system of university education, arrest intrusion into black neighbourhoods or decolonize everyday life, New Left activists asserted the autonomy of these spheres in the face of their colonization. As a Berkeley leaflet on student self-management stated, 'protest becomes an outmoded concept . . . we are not intent on petitioning leaders to take action on our behalf. Reconstitution is about making our own politics'.⁸⁷ A sentiment echoed by the popular slogan of the French student revolt first written on the Sorbonne amphitheatre, 'We won't ask, We won't demand, We will take and occupy'.⁸⁸

Disruption of the social relations of power simultaneously cleared or created space for prefigurative forms of liberated social organization. Occupied university buildings were reconfigured to house direct democratic assemblies, the factories of France became sites of worker-student fraternization, and American highway blockades allowed students to converse with stalled drivers about the state of the nation (though how well this last tactic worked is open to some debate). In 1967, San Francisco hippies held a 'Human Be-In' at Golden Gate Park, where Timothy Leary, told a crowd of thirty thousand to 'Turn on, Tune in, and Drop out', detach themselves from the existing hierarchical structures of society and simply be. Strike waves in Italy led to the formation of direct democratic unitary base committees (CUB) in Italian factories and radical experimentation in worker self-management. Advancing the

⁸⁶ Luisa Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy, 1968* (Middletown, 1996), 111.

⁸⁷ Richard E. Peterson and John A. Bilorusky, *May 1970: The Campus Aftermath of Cambodia and Kent State* (Berkeley, 1971), 141.

⁸⁸ Angelo Quattrocchi and Tom Nairn, *The Beginning of the End: France, May 1968* (New York, 1998), 45.

Situationist-inspired concept of *détournement*, Rancière remarked on this constituent function of social arrest: 'Politics consists in transforming the space of circulation into the space of the manifestation of the subject: be it the people, workers, citizens. It consists in reconfiguring that space, what there is to do there, what there is to see, or to name'.⁸⁹ An idea perhaps inspired by the graffiti adorning the entrance of the occupied Odéon Theatre in Paris 1968, 'When the National Assembly becomes a bourgeois theatre, all the bourgeois theatres should be turned into national assemblies'.⁹⁰ Social arrests both enabled and were fuelled by the desire to reconfigure spaces of movement for other means. As Wini Breines observed, 'time and again huge meetings formed in the midst of political action to debate and discuss politics'.⁹¹ Cultural critic and political activist Dwight MacDonald reflected of the American SDS that, 'Hyde Parks suddenly materialized and as abruptly dispersed, even the jocks were arguing'. Many in the New Left felt that the direct democratic practices and the breakdown of traditional roles and division of labour enabled by the occupations were themselves a form of social arrest.⁹² Carl Davidson, a national officer of the American SDS, remarked that ' . . . participatory democracy is often like a chronic and contagious disease. Its effect is disruptive in the total sense. And within a manipulative, bureaucratic system, its articulation and expression amounts to sabotage'.⁹³

Within these spaces created by social arrest, the New Left fashioned their own freedom. A freedom that could, in fact needed to, materialize in the here and now, that refused to be deferred to some future date or state. Across the Atlantic, in countless occupations, sit-ins, strikes and blockades, humans (did their best to) put into practice the very non-authoritarian society that they preached. This prefigurative politics of social arrest, latent within the rights-based new social movement 'campaigns' of the late twentieth century, became the dominant

⁸⁹ Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics* (New York, 1995), 177.

⁹⁰ Andrew Feenberg and Jim Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets: The French May Events of 1968* (New York, 2001), 44.

⁹¹ Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left*, 36.

⁹² See Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956–1976* (Oxford, 2007), 190–228.

⁹³ Carl Davidson, 'Toward a Student Syndicalist Movement', in I. Wallerstein and P. Starr (eds.), *The University Crisis Reader*, 2 vols. (New York, 1971), ii, 107.

feature of the occupations of Wall Street, Plaza del Sol, Gezi Park and Syntagma Square.

III

KINETICS: A USEFUL CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS?

So far, this article has examined the tactical and temporal kinetics of struggle. What remains unanswered is the usefulness of this register for our understanding of the history and present reality of social struggle. On a historiographical level, I argue, kinetic analysis intervenes in and reshapes debates central to the study of social struggle. On a normative level, it questions the tactical and theoretical complicity of a politics of movement with the order it confronts.

The kinetic analysis of social struggle overlaps, at certain points, with the history (and historiography) of long-standing debates over reformist versus revolutionary paths to human liberation. This is particularly the case for the workers' struggle where both the tactics and temporality of social arrest align closely with revolutionary thought and practice. The advantage of kinetic analysis is that it relays and relates the histories of struggle before and after the industrial proletariat without over-determining them through the latter's categories. The modern categories of reform and revolution did not exist before 1789. The politics of motion and its disruption did. Likewise, the struggles of the New Left and their successors moved outside the reform/revolution binary in the way that this was understood from 1789 through 1917. A kinetic analysis allows us to understand their politics outside the straightjacket of what workers had previously attempted. By underscoring how motion and its arrest formed the terrain on which politics took place, kinetic analysis allows historians to span a much longer historical framework than that circumscribed by categories of reform and revolution. It allows us to analyse the three hundred-year history of struggles against the economy of movement on their own terms. Within this larger framework, working-class debates over reform and revolution appear as a historically specific manifestation of kinetic struggle made possible by the French Revolution and largely rendered obsolete after 1968.

Kinetic analysis also reveals (and can correct for) an epistemological imbalance in the historicization of social struggles. While the historiographical record of social movements is filled with accounts of the continuity, refinement and resonance through time of a politics of movement, much less work has been done in this regard for the politics of arrest.⁹⁴ In fact, all too often the history of disruption has been written out of, tangentially referenced by, or seen as a primitive precursor to, the history of social movements. A kinetic focus on social arrest thus allows hitherto unconnected struggles sharing similar tactics and aims to be brought into historical conversation. By forming constellations between, for instance, late nineteenth-century worker sabotage and late twentieth-century environmental ecotage, between seventeenth-century British Diggers and twentieth-century German Autonomes, between the Paris Commune and Occupy Wall Street, histories of social arrest trace configurations of struggle that have been overlooked by, or remained marginal to, the history of social struggle as seen through the rubric of movement. A history of social arrest would reveal that the practices and mentalities of interruption, so often treated as spontaneous or disorderly outliers to the organization and structure of social movements, possess a long and continuous history of their own.

Relatedly, this epistemological imbalance has resulted in the near total segregation of the academic study of social movements from that of revolution.⁹⁵ Kinetic analysis reveals that this 'arbitrary, ahistorical and damaging move' to quote Sidney Tarrow, has been anything but contingent.⁹⁶ The linear and progressive temporality within which struggles *qua movements* have been analysed has been difficult to reconcile with the radical ruptures of time and order that accompany

⁹⁴ There are of course many notable exceptions, including recent works: Engler and Engler, *This Is an Uprising*; Kauffman, *Direct Action*; and Traugott, *Insurgent Barricade*.

⁹⁵ The seminal introductory text to the study of social movements, Tilly, *Social Movements* is particularly notable in this regard with a near total absence of revolution in its nearly two hundred pages.

⁹⁶ Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge, 1998). Social movement scholars have sought to address this divide through the more recent analysis of contentious politics. Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, 'Toward a Comparative Perspective on Social Movements and Revolution', in Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman (eds.), *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure* (Cambridge, 1997).

revolutions. A focus on histories of social arrest, by contrast, would draw attention to practices and mentalities of interruption that share a temporal affinity with revolution. In doing so, it would allow for the history of revolution, one that occupies a very tangential place within (if not altogether excluded from) the history of social movements, to be written back into a now much broader conceptualization of social struggle. Within this new field, social arrests would become either precursors to, or the aborted children of, a now more expansive revolutionary history.

Alongside these historiographical interventions, the kinetic analysis of history holds normative value. Scholars do not write in a political vacuum. They are both influenced by and address themselves to the assumptions and concerns of their own society. We are currently living within a globalized regime of movement that employs the history of progress to understand its own past. For the purposes of its own self-reproduction, there is a tendency for this regime to inscribe past social struggles within a teleology of the present: a considerable interest in underscoring historical practices and imaginaries that conform to and explain its self-image — ones that are simultaneously legible for the present regime of movement and serve to make this regime itself legible. The contemporary popular narrative of New Left struggles as a period when various ‘movements’ sought to incorporate the concerns and bodies of blacks, students and women more equally into the existing social order, is a case in point.⁹⁷

Normatively then, kinetic analysis differentiates between accounts that read history with or against the grain. Yes, the worker’s struggle was responsible for ensuring workplace safety, reduced working hours and living wages, but it also sought an end

⁹⁷ This view has been reinforced not least by the ‘two sixties’ of the New Left, segregating it into an earlier, reformist and integrationist period and its later degeneration into chaos and violence. See Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Toronto, 1987); David Chalmers, *And the Crooked Places Made Straight* (Baltimore, 1996), 68, 77–8, 86; Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity* (Oakland, 2006), 7–8. A similar bifurcation exists in German and Italian popular narratives, which mark a shift from the positively remembered late-1960s student movements to the much more infamous descent into armed conflict of the late 1970s. See Karrin Hanshew, *Terror and Democracy in West Germany* (Cambridge, 2012); Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties* (Cambridge, 2013). For the Italian version, see Katsiaficas, *Subversion of Politics*, 8–59.

to wage slavery and the alienation of mankind. Yes, the feminist struggle was responsible for ensuring women's franchise, *de jure* social equality, and control over female bodies, yet it also sought to dismantle the hierarchical institutions of state and family that still govern our contemporary society. These distinctions are not just a matter of emphasis but have serious political implications for the present. While feminism understood as movement can position the recent struggle to have women serve combat roles in the US military as the continuation of earlier battles for social equality, feminism as arrest would recover the significant currents within the feminist struggle that advocated not for the equal right of women to kill but for the abolition of war.

Perhaps the worst form of this presentism occurs when social struggles are themselves seen as the products of the shifting values, categories and operation of the regime of movement. As Kristin Ross has devastatingly argued in her discussion of the memory of 1968:

The official story does not limit itself to merely claiming that some of May's more radical ideas and practices came to be recuperated or recycled in the service of Capital. Rather, it asserts that today's capitalist society, far from representing the derailment or failure of the May movement's aspirations, instead represents the accomplishment of its deepest desires.⁹⁸

Inscribed into the regime of movement, May 1968 is stripped of its political subjectivity, becoming a necessary moment of cultural transformation itself produced by the modernization of France from an authoritarian bourgeois to a liberal financier state.⁹⁹ A history of social arrest, conversely, captures struggles at the moment of their own epistemological resistance to the contemporary social order. Attuned to tactics and temporalities of disruption, it is more immune to co-option by progressive teleology. Instead, it fills the past with dead ends, alternative visions, and subjectivities of refusal that sought outcomes other than those that came to pass. And these, after all, have been the bread and butter of the historian's craft all along.

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⁹⁸ Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago, 2002), 6.

⁹⁹ An argument that applies equally well to the role of the 'environmental movement' as the necessary transformation of capitalism from an extractive to an ecological enterprise.

ABSTRACT

Why do we think of social struggles as movements? What is in motion and where is it going? Has struggle been thought and practised otherwise? Not as movement but as disruption, arrest, stasis? If so, what are struggles trying to stop? Asking these questions pushes us to think about struggle kinetically: to analyse social struggle through the register of motion and its interruption. This article questions why we have come to understand the history of social struggle through the category of movement and the consequences and costs of this understanding for historical analysis. Against this association, it underscores how movement, as a practice and idea, was central to the establishment and legitimation of the capitalist economy and, using two case studies of labour and the New Left, examines how significant strands of these struggles sought freedom in the arrest of its coerced motion. Drawing from these examples, the final section discusses the usefulness of kinetic analysis for historical inquiry.