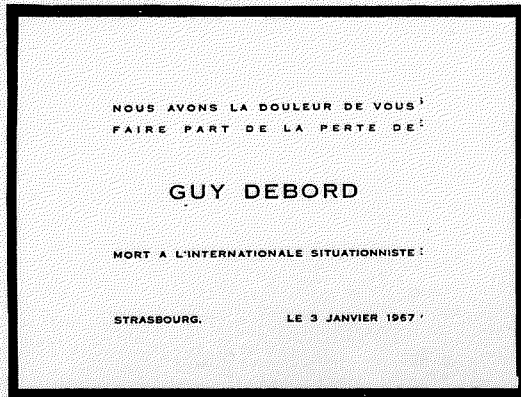


THE HACIENDA MUST BE BUILT

On the legacy of Situationist revolt

AURA



Essays and Documents

Richard Hooker
Stewart Home
Lucy Forsyth
Patrick French
Angus McDonald
Phil Edwards
Anthony H. Wilson
Mark E Smith
David Bellos
Jon King
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Gilles Tordjman
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The Hacienda must be built: On the legacy of Situationist revolt

Essays and documents relating to an international conference
on the Situationist International
The Hacienda
Manchester
1996



Edited by Andrew Hussey and Gavin Bowd

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1996

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Essays

Le Musée Guy Debord Gavin Bowd Andrew Hussey.....	p. 6
'We have a situation here, Lewis': <i>Of Situationism and Recuperation</i> Richard Hooker.....	p. 9
<i>Palingenesis of the Avant-Garde</i> Stewart Home.....	p. 18
<i>Supersession of the SI</i> Lucy Forsyth.....	p. 26
<i>Dérive: the détournement of the flâneur</i> Patrick French.....	p. 41
<i>Fables from an old almanac: Situationist (Anti-History)</i> Angus McDonald.....	p. 54

Documents

<i>From Being to Nothingness</i> Gavin Bowd Andrew Hussey <i>Situationist Fall-Out: Punk Rock, New Wave and the End of the World</i> Anthony H. Wilson Mark E Smith Jon King Stewart Home <i>The Hacienda must be destroyed</i> Phil Edwards <i>Waiting for Debord; Situation report on the Hacienda conference</i> Len Bracken <i>Swarmachines</i> Nick Land, Sadie Plant CCRU <i>Desperately Seeking the SI</i> Michel Prigent <i>Refutation of a few judgements passed on Guy Debord and his books</i> Gilles Tordjman <i>The Situationist International as Subject and Representation</i> Pascal Dumontier <i>Selected Documents</i> Ralph Rumney.

Essays

'Let moon-men fear to domineere
and halt before a Cripple'
Quoted by Norman Cohn in *The Pursuit of the Millenium*

Le Musée Guy Debord

By Andrew Hussey and Gavin Bowd

The situationist legacy belongs to no one.

In January 1996 the conference *The Hacienda Must be built: On the Legacy of Situationist Revolt* was held at the Hacienda nightclub in Manchester. The aim of the conference was to bring together commentators, critics and participants in the Situationist adventure to examine what remained of the Situationist utopian impulse: the death of Guy Debord inspired the event; the Hacienda nightclub was the most appropriate venue - a site whose name is taken from an article in *L'internationale situationniste*, and where, in an original application of theory, Mancunians threw off the shackles of everyday life.

This, at least, is the notion of Antony H. Wilson, owner of the Hacienda nightclub and, despite his media and showbiz connections, an avid *situphile*. The Hacienda seemed especially appropriate given that Wilson's mercurial presence on the Manchester scene recalls that of Gerard Lebovici's dual status in Paris as showbiz impresario and leading light of Champ Libre books. We were not only aware of these ironies, but welcomed them as tensions which might shape and inform debate about the relationship between situationist revolt and its recuperation in the condition of postmodernity.

As a consequence, the collection of essays herein ranges over the variegated problems of recuperation. Richard Hooker's essay, in particular, tackles head-on the question of paranoia - Hooker writes, 'Paranoia about recuperation is a unifying theme of the situationist project and it is one of its abiding interests'. At the same time, Lucy Forsyth, in a mixture of anecdote and analysis, demonstrates the contradiction between libertarianism

and vanguardism. Stewart Home, on the other hand, praises vanguardism as a revolutionary alternative to postmodern obsession with space at the expense of time. He writes 'the task of the avant-garde (...) is to carry on as before by providing those still trapped within the old modes of discourse with a myth that will deconstruct itself.'

Patrick French examines the collision between critical theory and social forms of transgressive revolt. He explores similarities and differences between the *dérive*, the wanderings through Paris of Baudelaire and the Surrealists, and the 'passages of desire' (to quote Adrian Rifkin) familiar to the urban gay imagination.

Other participants were invited to speak or give performances at the Hacienda - most notably Ralph Rumney, who although expelled from the SI in its earliest incarnation, nonetheless has remained faithful to that community. So faithful, in fact, that despite his guarded enthusiasm for the event, he finally bowed to Europe-wide pressure to condemn us. His denunciation, together with collected texts from the (original) London Psychogeographical Association (now based in Geneva) is enclosed as a barometer of the emotional temperature surrounding the event.

One of the main reasons for Rumney's withdrawal was the publication in the *Independent on Sunday Review* of an article by ourselves on the suicide of Guy Debord. This article was also cited by Pascal Dumontier, author of *Les Situationnistes et Mai 68*, and Gilles Tordjman, who has written on the SI for *Liberation* and *Les Inrockuptibles*, as a justification for non-attendance. They accused us of mendacity and disinformation; it may well be, however, given that the correspondence reproduced here is entirely borrowed from Debord's idiom (See *Correspondance I et II: Champ Libre*), that Dumontier and Tordjman prefer to remain faithful to the orthodox view of Debord promulgated by Champ Libre (now Editions Ivrea).

Paranoia in a more concrete form was expressed in a demonstration outside the Hacienda orchestrated by Michel Prigent, former cohort of Debord. Prigent's anger was directed mainly at Stewart Home and Sadie Plant - whose film *Swarmachines* closed the conference - as *situ* careerists.

The debate between Mark E Smith, Jon King, Antony H. Wilson and Stewart Home was entitled *Situationist Fallout: Punk Rock, New Wave and the End of the World*. Since many people have arrived at the Situationist critique via the theory of Greil Marcus' *Lipstick Traces*, or the practice of listening to the Sex Pistols or Gang of Four, we thought it impossible to hold this event without taking into account the most popular and public expression of the Situationist legacy: avant-garde rock'n roll. Jamie Reid performed *Shamanarchy*, whilst Mark E Smith, as critic and artist, challenged Antony H Wilson's version of Situationism as a joke at the expense of the working class. (He was particularly riled by Jon King's comments on the 'menace' posed by shopping malls and by King's suggestion that the spectacle could be challenged by promenading down streets with a paper bag on your head.)

This book exists as documentary of a conference which asked the question: who owns situationist ideas and tactics? The answers were as varied as those who travelled from America and Europe to discuss the legacy of a group which sought to reinvent the totality of human existence.

Before he died, Debord translated the Castilian soldier-poet Jorge Manrique. Manrique was a courtesan, a political strategist and an elegaic poet whose central theme was the decomposition of the lived moment. We thought it apposite to quote him as the envoi to this collection:

quan presto se va el plazer,
como, despues de acordado,
da dolor;
como, a nuestro parescer,
qualquiere tiempo passado,
fue mejor.

'We have a situation here Lewis': of Situationism and Recuperation

By
Richard Hooker

The other day I was on the six o'clock train between Glasgow and Edinburgh. As the train move out of Falkirk I opened a can of Pepsi at exactly the moment the man sitting next to me did the same thing. A few moments later I began reading Stewart Home's *Assault on Culture*. The man next to also started reading a book -on the technique of watercolour painting. As I read about the 'Specto-Situationists' he was reading about 'How to paint water', and 'How to paint foreground, middleground and distance. Very quickly I stopped reading and became transfixed by the space between the right margin of my book and the left margin of his, and what that space might mean. Was our choreographed thirst for Pepsi more important than the differences between the books we were reading? Who was assaulting culture? Does Stewart Home paint watercolours on the side? Why was this man reading such a bloody boring book? These are some of the questions that informed my thinking about recuperation. In other words, my interest is in the immediate value and suggestiveness of Situationism, rather than its history.

At its most abstract I take 'recuperation' to mean the false resolution of contradiction. Although this is a simple idea, the way the problem of 'recuperation' relates to situationism is thus

extremely complex because there are so many different kinds of contradiction inherent in the Situationist project.

I know that using the word 'Situationism' has variously been denounced as an act of recuperation by those to whom it is applied and because its use implies something tangible, a nonexistent unity of people and events. My defense is that I do see certain repeating of themes engaged by 'those anti-artists formerly known as Situationists' and that unless we are to become completely preoccupied by the detail of who said or did what to whom, (which does seem to me to be a condition of a lot of what is written on Situationism) it is important to have some sort of global take on what we are talking about. The global take presented here is that paranoia about recuperation is a unifying theme of the Situationist project and it is also one of its one of its abiding interests.

With this in mind I will present the idea of 'recuperation' and its relation to Situationism in three different ways. First, I will consider the problem of recuperation in the way we represent the Situationist project as a historical phenomenon. Second, I will consider the idea of recuperation as it is theorised by Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle*. Third, I will consider the idea of recuperation as it relates to the idea of détournement.

I

Recuperation: The Cultural and Political

Situationism is a part of a spectrum of radical critiques of capitalist society which have emphasised that revolutionary activity must engage itself with the necessary inseparability of the cultural and political. The Situationists were not the first or the last to believe in the unity of culture and politics; what I take to be unique about the Situationist project are the particularly heightened ways it exemplified and modified the tension between cultural and political transformation. We can recognise a related debate about recuperation and the integration of culture and politics in Lukács work of the early 1920s and in Surrealism, but neither of these seem to be quite as committed in the way they

engaged the synthesis of the cultural and political as the Situationists.

How then does this preoccupation manifest itself? There are the physical remnants of Situationism such as, for example, Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, films, paintings, records of derives etc., but there are also the arguments and exclusions which are part of the history of situationism and its eventual demise. In other words, at its most tangible, Situationism is a series of discrete historical objects and events that attempt to bring the cultural and political together. These can be variously discussed, analysed, imitated out of historical interest. But Situationism is also a dispute, sometimes pathetic, but always electrifying in its intensity, about how the cultural and political are most productively fused. This dispute is not an end in itself, but the context for the evolution of objects and events where that fusion of culture and politics is affected.

As Situationism was happening, the production and self-examination were less distinguishable than they are now. Within this false separation I want to focus on one argument that seems to be central and concerns the way the cultural and political spheres should relate.

To do this we need to consider a basic difference between the cultural and the political in the way they have traditionally embodied different kinds of 'activity'. The cultural, the idea of art, potentially contains within it idea of a kind of undirected. One of the great phrases from Kant's *Critique of Judgement* identifies the significance of the aesthetic in the way it seems to embody the idea of 'purposiveness without purpose'. Now, of course, Kant is a cornerstone of conservative readings of culture, but notwithstanding his reputation, this aspect of his argument inspired more radical thinking that has emphasised the liberating quality of the undirected activity of 'play' in general.

Against this broadly interpreted idea of the potential directionless of cultural activity is political activity. Political activity is more clearly associated with end orientated actions, both on the global sense of aiming to precipitate the revolution, and in the sense of taking particular steps towards a given political

end. The efficient use time and energy, even if that is in pursuit of a revolutionary end, is complicit with the method of the society it seeks to undermine. (It would seem to me that at one level the *dérives* could be cited as exemplary of action that is 'purposive but purposeless', the wasteful use of time and energy in a society of abundance.)

Now, I hope it is obvious that if you try to fuse cultural and political activity thus defined, you are dealing with mutually corrosive categories whose antinomical relation cannot be resolved in argument. The only way the cultural and the political can be fused is through activity itself. But that activity must be directed in a very peculiar way. To be both cultural and political it has to be orientated to a specific goal and be without one. This is what I take Debord to mean when he says that creativity is not about working within existing rules but constantly reevaluating the rules within which creativity can take place. He gives an interesting historical twist to Kant's insight, where, in paragraph 198 of *The Society of the Spectacle* he writes: 'People who denounce incitements to wastefulness as absurd or dangerous in a society of economic abundance do not understand the purpose of waste.'

What needs to be emphasised here, I suggest, is the extreme difficulty of of the demand Debord is making. Holding the cultural and political together is about living on a knife edge. This is one of the reasons why recuperation, which I suggested earlier can be defined as the false resolution of contradiction, is such a significant issue in the context of establishing a relation between culture and politics. Susceptibility to recuperation is intense if you are attempting to sustain a virtually unsustainable position.

An immediate implication of this particular characterisation of one of Situationism's main preoccupations is that it produces two kinds of difficulty for itself. On the one hand, it will always be criticised by the orthodox revolutionary Left for not engaging in more useful activity. Part of the way the history of Situationism has been represented is through an entanglement with the history is through an entanglement with the history of more orthodox revolutions and their associated expectations. It is difficult not to

feel that some of the disrepute of Situationism arises from criticizing it for not achieving something it was approaching extremely obliquely.

If this represents one kind of externally applied critique of Situationism, then internally the tension between the cultural and political action manifests itself as a guilty conscience that perhaps the orthodox political revolutionary is right after all, and this paranoia, it seems to me, to be both absolutely constitutive of Situationism and part of the reason for its demise. Situationist revolution aims to synthesize theory and practice, but the temptation is always to either to think without acting, or act without thinking.

To summarise what I have said so far, Situationism is, at one level about the simultaneous revolutionary transformation of the cultural and political spheres. This synthesis is extremely problematic in itself and is exemplified in the way Situationism gave renewed urgency and animation to an argument about the fusion of culture and politics. That argument is not an end in itself, it is constitutive of an atmosphere of tension wherein objects and events that embody the unity of culture and politics are produced and consumed within Situationism. The specific kind of recuperation to which Situationism is susceptible is that it is absorbed, absorbs itself, into either a primarily cultural or political form.

Recuperation and *Détournement* in *The Society of Spectacle*

In this section, I will move on to look at some of the ways Debord defines recuperative power of capitalist society. In the most general terms Debord says that power derives from the way capitalism transforms the way we relate to each other and our environment. Following Lukács arguments of the 1920s, most notably the essay 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat' from *History and Class Consciousness*, Debord argues that the power of Capitalist society derives from the way it functions as a system of representing the world to us. Capitalist society generates alienation, desires, needs. It acknowledges that

people feel these inadequacies and it supplies the possibility of fulfilling them.

Slide 1: *Dettox*

This process endlessly repeats itself. In a society of surplus there is always a better car, a more absorbant nappy, a more gentle detergent, a more compatible partner, a more revolutionary revolution, a more avant-garde work of art. In so far as capitalism creates problems and supplies their remedy, it is an internally sustaining system: the absolute unity of theory and practice.

As such, the 'society of the spectacle' is an incredibly powerful system of representation wherein all objects, events, feelings, emotions so perfectly embody its rules and what is actually 'the total practice of one social and economic agenda', comes to be taken to be the truth of everything. Thesis 6: it is the omnipresent celebration of choice already made...in form as in content the spectacle serves as the total justification for the conditions and aims of the existing system.

For example:

Slide 2: *Pampers*

1. These fulfil the desire for more time. As a commodity, time needs to be saved. Pampers are less time consuming than cloth nappies for the parent both in changing itself and in their processing--you just throw them away.
2. They are also better for baby because baby stays drier. Having a dry bottom is essential for the capitalist baby. It is not that any of us like having a wet bottom, but this experience, and the way the parent relates to it, is completely colonised by the nappy industry. These are not just drier than cloth nappies, but drier than the previous version of the same brand. These are 'pampers ultra plus' of which outmoded 'pampers' in a kind modernist pursuit of 'absolute dryness'. They are also less bulky and easier to learn to walk in than cloth nappies which tend to constrict the movement of the upper legs.

3. These are gender specific because girls and boys wet their nappies in slightly different places. Different sizes for different weights and ages of baby.

4. They come neatly packaged, with instructions on how to fit them and dispose of them.

5. This is one particular nappy from one particular brand. There are other brands and supermarket 'own label' varieties for the consumer who 'doesn't fall for brand names'. There are various kinds of cloth nappies all the way from a square of cotton to tailored pants, different detergents, nappy laundering services.

How does this relate to Debord's argument?

Thesis 40: 'The realm of commodities has meant the constitution within a natural economy of a surplus survival' or Thesis 44: 'Augmented survival'.

Thesis 37: 'The commodity ruling over lived experience'

Thesis 35: 'The commodity, which appears at first sight a very trivial thing, and easily understood, yet which is in reality a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties.'

Thesis 1: 'All that was once directly lived has become a mere representation.'

Thesis 4: 'The Spectacle is...a social relationship between people mediated by images.'

It is against this background of the all-consuming power of the spectacle to invade the minute detail of life that makes the problem of recuperation so acute.

1) The scale of the problem - the spectacular nature of existence reveals to us relations that we had never thought about and defines the way we have those experiences.

2) The specificity of the problem - where should revolution be directed? To transforming life with the same detail as the spectacle or establishing some kind of universal resistance to it?

III

Recuperation and *détournement*

As is well known, Guy Debord once described the Situationist project as taking Surrealism to its logical conclusion by adopting the principles of desire and surprise, not in the production of art, but life. One way to think of the idea of *détournement* is as the framework these principles might be deployed, as the antidote to recuperation.

There are two reasons why *détournement* is (and should be) difficult to define: a) as soon as you define it it loses desire and surprise, it must remain the spontaneous response to different situations; b) Within the history of Situationism there seem to be some fairly major disputes about the viability of certain acts of *détournement*.

Various ideas have been associated with the practice of *détournement*: subversion, plagiarism, and a quotation from Sadie Plant 'a challenge to meaning in the context in which it arises' (*The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in the postmodern age* p.86). Examples of such acts would include the subversions of comic strips; and the *L'internationale Situationniste* where collaged words and images are appropriated and subvert original meanings; Asger Jorn's paintings.

Within this pattern of *détournement* there seem to be two opposing views:

1) Different forms such as painting, writing, cinema, city planning, all maintain a relative autonomy, but in that relative autonomy they are simultaneously revolutionising themselves in parallel, so to speak.

2) Different forms lose their autonomy and are synthesised into a universal revolutionary activity.

Slide: Comparison of Jorn's *Poussin* 1962 with *Always Ultra Plus*
Both could be said to involve *détournement* qua plagiarism, subversion.

Jorn: within the tradition of the avantgarde, *Always Ultra Plus*, within the development of the sanitary towel.

The trouble with Jorn's paintings is that they do seem rather mechanical exemplifications of *détournement*. They work within an established practice of the avant-garde. In rejecting the possibility of discrete specialisms, Debord places more emphasis on transforming the context as a whole but this has the danger of being a terribly blunt instrument against the 'metaphysical subtleties of the spectacle', and it also seems to have led to establishing itself as just another specialism at a different level.

To conclude, the problem which is both the motivation and demise of Situationism, is how to hold together the cultural and the political. I have suggested that this is a terribly difficult thing to do, let alone sustain. It is bound up with the issue of whether we should aim to pick up apart the spectacle bit by bit, or whether we should aim at the whole lot. Ultimately, these issues are not resolvable. This should not be a cause for pessimism, but an acknowledgement that what is important is not to find an 'answer' but to live the contradictions which Situationism exemplified in a wasteful and productive way.

The Palingenesis of the Avant-Garde

By
Stewart Home

'Revolution must not only engender another conception of time, but must also assimilate it to a new synthesis of space. Both will be created simultaneously as they emerge out of the new relationship between human beings and nature. We said before that all which is fragmented is grist to the mill of the counter-revolution. But revolution means more than reclaiming just the totality; it is the reintegration of all that was separate, a coming together of future being, individuality and Gemeinwesen.' Jacques Camatte, *Against Domestication*.

One of the problems with recent academic critiques of the avant-garde is the way in which 'anti-art' has been conceptualised as privileging space over time. As a consequence, there has been little interest in viewing the avant-garde teleologically. Peter Burger in *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 1984) tends to interpret the avant-garde through the prism of Dada and Surrealism. A correction to this tendency begins to emerge in works such as Andrew Hewitt's *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford University Press, California 1993), a work that focuses on Futurism. However, while this move 'backwards' in 'time' is most welcome, academic theorising about the avant-garde has yet to get to grips with post-war phenomena such as Lettrism and Situationism.

What can most usefully be lifted from Burger is the notion of the avant-garde as an attack on the institution of art, which emerges in opposition to the absurd assumption that Dada and Surrealism were merely an attempt to supersede the dominant

artistic styles of their epoch. With regard to the author of *Theory of the Avant-Garde* and his collaborator in criticism, Christa Burger, Hewitt problematises the idea of the autonomy of art that they took up from the Frankfurt School. The following passage from *Fascist Modernism* (page 59) is typical of Hewitt's polemic: 'If capitalism provides the material preconditions for autonomous art, then it is the philosophical tradition of German Idealism that provides its ideological legitimation. At the end of the eighteenth century, the emerging literature is assigned a place within a discursive hierarchy regulated by the philosophy of Idealism. Thus, while art might be said to resist at the level of content capitalism's tendency toward economic rationalization, it can do so only within a prerationalized set of philosophical relationships. Contrary to its ideological status in the nineteenth century as an escape from ubiquitous social forces of rationalization, autonomous art is also a product of those forces.'

It has long been a banality among 'radical economists' that choice within the 'free market system' is already and always ideological; that rather than being 'value free,' choice (which is inevitably preconditioned) is an arbitrary a priori value. The 'free market' has never existed, it is a utopian construct designed to mask the 'social' forces that actually shape the economy. Historically, as 'the arts' are liberated from the shackles of the patronage system and thereby become 'Art' in its modern sense, precisely at that moment when the commodification of culture brings about the possibility of its ideological 'autonomy,' the institution of art emerges to regulate the cultural field. It follows from this that in attacking the institution of art, the avant-garde ought to develop a critique of commodity relations. The failure of the classical avant-garde, and I would subsume the Situationist International within this category, is its failure to make this leap to an issue that lies at the heart of Marxist economics. This failure arises from a desire on the part of the classical avant-garde to integrate art and life. The classical avantgarde is utopian precisely because it wants to deregulate art; but this literal/metaphorical acceptance of the absurd claims made by Capital's ideological apologists (who necessarily propagate theories which imply that

art does, or at least can, exist in the 'beyond' as a secular religion that 'transcends' commodity relations) is not without certain merits, because ultimately it brings those operating within the institution of art into conflict with the very forces that legitimate 'artistic' activity.

It is within the parameters of such a discourse that we must situate the 'praxis' of the Situationist International. Guy Debord states in thesis 191 of *Society of the Spectacle* (Black & Red, Detroit 1970, revised 1977) that: 'Dadaism and Surrealism are the two currents which mark the end of modern art. They are contemporaries, though only in a relatively conscious matter, of the last great assault of the revolutionary proletarian movement; and the defeat of this movement, which left them imprisoned in the same artistic field whose decrepitude they had announced, is the basic reason for their immobilization. Dadaism and Surrealism are at once historically related and opposed to each other. This opposition, which each of them considered to be its most important and radical contribution, reveals the internal inadequacy of their critique, which each developed one-sidedly. Dadaism wanted to suppress art without realizing it; Surrealism wanted to realize art without suppressing it. The critical position later elaborated by the Situationists has shown that the suppression and the realization of art are inseparable aspects of a single supersession of art.'

Debord, whose 'anti-career' began with a full-length feature film *Howlings In Favour Of De Sade* which contained no images, just black film stock interspersed with bursts of white light, was incapable of stepping outside the frame of reference provided by the institution of art, and instead theorised his way back to a one-sided understanding of the Hegel. It is perfectly clear from both *The Philosophical Propaedeutic* (*The Science of the Concept, Third Section, The Pure Exhibition of Spirit* theses 203 to 207 of *The Phenomenology of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (Section Three - *Absolute Mind* theses 553 to 571) that within the Hegelian system the supersession of art is in fact found in revealed religion.

Since among the more advanced sections of the 'bourgeoisie,' 'art' had by Debord's day come to replace revealed religion, the Situationists were forced to skip this particular Hegelian inversion, and instead jump forward to philosophy, which represents the highest achievement of 'absolute mind' in Hegel's system. In line with the young Marx, Debord viewed the proletariat as the subject that would realise philosophy, The Situationist conception of the supersession of art is also filtered through the ideas of August von Cieszkowski, whose 1838 tome *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie* was dedicated to the notion that 'the deed and social activity will now overcome (supersede) philosophy.' It was this source that provided the Situationists with the material to complete their false 'sublation' . allowing them to arrive back at the final category of romantic art within the Hegelian system, that is to say poetry.

restored to the purity of its moment of genesis - seen, in other words, from the point of view of the totality.' In the sixties, Debord and Vaneigem claimed that they'd superseded the avant-garde and were consequently 'making' a 'revolutionary' situation that went beyond the point of no return. However, all the Situationists actually succeeded in doing was restating the failures of Dada and Surrealism in Hegelian terminology, with the inevitable consequence that their critique was in many ways much less 'advanced' than that of their 'precursors'. Debord, who was a better theorist than his 'comrade' Vaneigem, appeared to be aware of this slippage although he didn't know how to 'overcome' it, and the fragment of Cieszkowski cited in the celluloid version of *Society of the Spectacle* (an English translation of the script can be found in *The Society of the Spectacle And Other Films*, Rebel Press, London 1992) is most telling: 'Therefore, after the direct practice of art has ceased to be the most distinguished thing, and this predicate has been devolved onto theory, such as it is, it detaches itself presently from the latter, in so far as a synthetic post-theoretical practice is formed, which has as its primary goal to be the foundation and the truth of art as philosophy.' Hewitt states in *Fascist Modernism* that 'History, to the artist of the

avant-garde, is available as commodity and the commodity, in turn, is intrinsically 'historical', second-hand. Perhaps, after all, the avant-garde does develop a style, one of bricolage, in which the commodification of history and the historicization of the commodity (that is, aestheticization and politicization respectively) converge.' I agree with Peter Burger when he suggests in *Theory of the Avant-Garde* that the failure of the Dadaist and Surrealist assault on the institution of art led to a widening of the definition of what is acceptable as art. This was a double edged 'failure', arising as it did from the desire of the classical avant-garde to integrate 'art' and life because as Hewitt implies, it leads to the history of art becoming available to the artist as a commodity. However, since the ideological 'autonomy' of art is grounded in its status as a commodity with a market value regulated by the institution of art, it must inevitably be protected as a piece of 'intellectual property' against its free use as a piece of bricolage in later works of art.

It comes as no surprise that as early as 1959, the Situationist Guy Debord had to rework his film *On The Passage Of a Few Persons Through a Rather Brief Period of Time* because he was unable to buy the rights to many of the scenes he wished to re-use from Hollywood 'classics.' Debord's constant recourse to cliché, is undoubtedly self-conscious and iconoclastic, so perhaps it is not ironic that his 'wholly near type of film' should sit very easily within one of the most despised cinematic genres of the post-war period, that of the mondo movie. Nevertheless, Debord was much more than simply a plagiarist, when his output is viewed from the perspective of avant-garde filmmaking, it appears highly innovative.

Once the practice of appropriation became widespread within the field of art, that is to say within that field of cultural practices regulated by the institution of art, then art as a discourse had reached its historical limits. These contradictions cannot be resolved within the discourse of art; within this discursive field it is not possible to advance beyond the solution offered by Hegel for whom 'plagiarism would have to be a matter of honour and held in check by honour' (*Philosophy of Right*, thesis 69). In other

words, while copyright laws remain in force, appropriation as an 'artistic' practice will continue to be dealt with by the legal system on a case by case basis. From my perspective, all that remains to be done is for the contemporary avant-garde to broaden its intransigent critique of the institution of art, while simultaneously offering a lead to all those who would step outside art as a frame of reference. This is not so much a case of 'overcoming' art as abandoning it; such a strategy was implicit in the activities of Henry Flynt, an individual active on the fringes of Fluxus who as long ago as 1962 gave up art in favour of a subjective modality which he'd named 'brend.'

The avant-garde is viewed as a nuisance by those who are happy with the world as it is. Art is a secular religion that provides a 'universal' justification for social stratification, it furnishes the ruling class with the social glue of a common culture, while simultaneously excluding the vast mass of men and women from participation in this 'higher' realm. The work of art is never a simple entity, a 'thing in itself,' but is literally produced by those sets of social and institutional relationships that simultaneously legitimate it. While the contemporary avant-garde shares its precursor's desire to attack the institution of art, it also differs fundamentally from its classical predecessor. If Futurism, Dada and Surrealism wanted to integrate art and life, today's avant-garde wants to consign the former category to oblivion. This is the return at a higher level of Islamic-cum-Protestant iconoclasm. While the classical avant-garde was ultimately Deist in its attitude towards art, its progeny has taken up a stance of intransigent atheism in its antagonistic relationship to the dominant culture.

The institution of art long ago adopted the ironic pose of postmodernism, which is why the contemporary avant-garde denigrates space in favour of time. To be avant-garde is to be ahead of the pack and this inevitably entails a 'teleological' conception of history. The avant-garde uses the 'myth of progress' in a manner analogous to Georges Sorel's conception of the 'General Strike'. The avant-garde does not believe in 'absolute' progress. Progress is simply a means of organising the present, it is a 'heuristic' device. In its 'affirmative' guises, 'progress' is an

empty conception that offers men and women the illusory compensation of future revenge for the humiliations they suffer in daily life. A mythic conception of progress moves women to action, it is the means by which they can organise the transformation of geographical 'space'. This transformation will entail a complete break with the ideological trappings that have been familiar to us since the Enlightenment. Just as the Christian religion ceased to be a viable vehicle for social contestation in the eighteenth century, the political party as an engine of social change is not utterly exhausted. The future of mass struggle lies in that there until very recently viewed as 'fringe' phenomena, that is to say near social movements with an absurdly faked antiquity; the ever growing band of 'Druid' Councils offer an excellent example of this type of organisation.

My mythic notion of progress would be an anathema to the classical avant-gardists of the Situationist International. However, while I agree with Kant that 'culture' must be brought before the judgement of tradition, the founding father of transcendental idealism failed to ask by what tradition is any particular theory or cultural artefact to be judged? The contemporary avant-garde insists that the only tradition by which anything can be judged is one that does not yet exist, in other words, the culture we are elaborating in our theory and practice. Fluxus was not a 'genuine' avant-garde, it was simply a womb out of which intransigents capable of superseding the Situationist International have subsequently emerged. If various young adults are currently experimenting with Fluxus-style assemblages, multiples and mailings, this is a perfectly healthy first step towards avant-garde iconoclasm. To borrow Wittgenstein's metaphor, Fluxus is a ladder with which youth can climb above the world as it is, and then proceed to throw Fluxus away.

While Debord and his comrades wanted to supersede art with the 'highest' achievements of 'absolute mind,' that is to say philosophy, recent theorising about the avant-garde can be read as an attempt to transform culture into a religion of the most 'primitive' type, that of the 'divine King' or a vegetation cult. Paul Mann in *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde* (Indiana

University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1991) states that: 'Death is necessary so that everything can be repeated and the obituary is a way to deny that death ever occurred. Under the cover of the obituary artists and critics continue exactly as before, endlessly recuperating differential forms, endlessly manufacturing shabbier and shabbier critical goods... The death of the avant-garde is old news, already finished, no longer worth discussing; but those who think so have not yet even begun to think it. There is no post: everything that claims to be so blindly repeats what it thinks it has left behind. Only those willing to remain in the death of the avant-garde, those who cease trying to drown out death's silence with the noise of neocritical production, will ever have a hope of hearing what that death articulates.'

The task of the avant-garde then, is to carry on as before by providing those still trapped within the old modes of discourse with a myth that will deconstruct itself. What is as yet particular must become general, that is to say we require the social construction of a near 'subjectivity' so that, once belief is recognised as 'our' enemy, it becomes possible for 'everybody' to step outside the frames of reference provided by art, religion and philosophy. This must necessarily take the form of what the discredited 'culture' viewers as a fraud and a sham. Rather than attempting to 'resolve' contradictions, the 'avant-garde' puts them to 'work' as the engine of an as yet unknown 'disorder'.

The Supersession of the SI

By
Lucy Forsyth

First of all I need to say that I've been under quite a lot of pressure not to appear as a speaker at this event. The pressure has come from ex-associates in England and France, who fear that the whole event is a quagmire of recuperation, in short a spectacle--an attempt by those who have a place in the spectacle, or who still seek one, to appropriate or hijack revolutionary theory, for the purposes of self-promotion, or to recuperate it by commodifying it--as is instanced by the creation of this venue, the Utopian hacienda--a historical project become commodified. (It was suggested that I could be more critical and negative if I were to send a tape recording as an intervention, as Debord once did to the Revolutionary Surrealist Group.) These concerns about the presentation and the re-presentation of the SI need to be born in mind but they have also provided a convenient screen which immobilises any public debate and discussion. The underlying fear seems to be that the purity of the movement will become tainted.

A mechanistic use of the concept of the spectacle will lead to a mechanistic understanding of recuperation. The term 'recuperation' implies to appropriate, almost with the sense of picking up the scraps but it also means to regain, recover, and to improve. The Hacienda club has provided a literal space for psychogeographic inspired activities for youth culture, and it is enabling also some sort of metaphorical space for reflection and discussion this weekend. It's partly up to us how we use it, and what we make of it.

There is going to be a battle engaged about the legacy of the SI now, especially since Debord's death. I think it's significant

that almost a quarter of a century after the Situationist International's dissolution, there still remain those who think it's important to continue the intransigent resistance to 'recuperation' and incorporation to what they see as of the spectacle, be it academic discourse or the media spectacle, or commodification (or combinations of the three). One of the contradictions of consumer capitalism is that you can buy critiques and subversive ideas in the form of commodities, in the same way that you can buy anything else--subject to availability.

A first skirmish since Debord's death on behalf of the media spectacle was evidenced on the *Late Show* in January 1995 when the response to Debord's suicide was to trivialise it into the form of a spoof of a thriller, taking up the French press's speculation that there was a link between Debord and two other French literary figures, who all killed themselves within a week of each other. The manufacture of confusion and mystification have always been a tactic of power, and instead of trying to engage with Debord's life and work, the *Late Show*, as part of the capitalist cultural media adopted the tactics of trivialisation and confusion. This merely confirms many of Debord's theses about the spectacle.

I came across Situationist writings at the end of 1977 in England, in the best way, through a chance meeting. I had already come across their ideas, without realising it, four years before that, amongst people living in various communal houses in South-West France after a fierce occupation of the University there. So after reading *La Societe du spectacle*, and some numbers of the *Internationale Situationniste*, I thought it was really important to make their writings available in English. We canvassed a few publishers with a reworked version of *The Society of the Spectacle*. We received what came to be the customary hostile response, with the exception of one liberal publishing Julian Freedman, the only one to take it seriously enough to send it to a reader, who declared it to be 'too late for that sort of thing'. The implication was that the book was merely linked to the extremism

of May 68, which was now on the wane, and about to become extinct.

So I set up Chronos Publications with Michel Prigent in 1978, with what little money I had, with the intention of making Situationist texts available in English. (Just for the record it was published Debord's *Preface to the Fourth Edition of The Society of the Spectacle* in 1979, Gianfranco Sanguinetti's *On Terrorism and the State* in 1982, Debord's anonymous text *To Libertarians* (1983), and a reworked version of *The Veritable Split in the International* (1985)). Sometimes we put our own names to the translations, sometimes we were anonymous or used pseudonyms, for the sake of not losing our unemployment benefit. All of this with hostile reviews, for the most part, especially when reviewed by the Left. (In fact, one hostile reviewer has now interestingly become a translator and media expert on Debord, and took part in the *Late Show* item I mentioned.)

Now, almost twenty years later the SI is now being widely read to have reached the point where there is a viable market for Situationist-related publications. In the last five years two major accounts of the SI have appeared, Greil Marcus's *Lipstick Traces* and Sadie Plant's *The Most Radical Gesture*, both of which have been quite fresh and imaginative in their approach, but they have both concluded admiringly that the Situationist project is a mad, wonderful, visionary, poetic dream and thereby skirted round some of the problems I believe it has. Whilst I welcome the SI receiving the serious attention it deserves, many of the problems of the Situationist project have still been left unaddressed.

I assume that there are two different kinds of people here this weekend--those who became familiar with Situationist ideas within the radicalism of the 60s and 70s, and a younger group who have become interested in them more recently. The first kind might have had to run the gauntlet of the 'pro-situ' phenomenon. Pro-situs were described in the *Split* book as those approbationary contemplatives of the SI who don't know how to do anything else. So there was a phase in the 70s where situphiles were slagging each other off for being pro-situs. By the end of the decade, the phenomenon had ceased to exist. There was a double-bind

situation: those who were critical were labelled anti-situationist, those who were approving were labelled pro-situs. The newer group amongst entrenched positions and disputes held by older situphiles, without having to be too much involved with them.

In this talk I wish then to start to open up a type of space, which allows for dissidence, against what might be becoming an orthodoxy of radicality. The first battle has been to create some space for the Situationist project to be given serious consideration. It wasn't an easy one for small publishing enterprises trying to publish Situationist texts. The second battle, perhaps more of a lighter skirmish, is to be able to examine the SI and its project critically from a sympathetic perspective. I'm taking for granted that most people here have been inspired by various elements and strategies from Situationist ideas or within what Debord has called this vast subversive sequel that couldn't fail to be opened out. Rebellion and subversion will always be admired and loved.

I'm going to start off by being anecdotal, which I hope will lead to shedding some light on symptoms of more profound problems.

When someone you know dies it's like putting a full-stop suddenly in the middle of an unfinished conversation. I've been feeling quite angry with Debord since 1983 (silly as it may sound), and have been irritated by his last three publications *Considerations sur l'assassinat de Gerard Lebovici* (1985), *Panegyrique* (1989), and *Commentaires sur la societe du spectacle* (1988)--so much so that I didn't bother to read them when they were sent to me. I was angry with him for being unaccountable, and for his paranoia when it was unwarranted, not helped by the alcohol, and for making it impossible to reason with him at times.

We were friendly for about a year or so. I met him with Michel Prigent, (who had corresponded with him for about ten years), Jean-Francois Martos (who later wrote a very insipid, cautious 'official' history of the SI, published by Ed. Gerard Lebovici) and his partner, Etienne Mosca. Guy (as he becomes now in this narrative) and Alice Becker-Ho were spending the

winter, as they had done before in Arles, in a small rented house, in the old quarter of the town. They had stopped living in Paris some years ago, and had spent some time in Italy--hence Debord's commentaries about the situation there in his *Preface to the Fourth Italian Edition of The Society of the Spectacle* and some time in Seville about 1978-80, hence *To Libertarians*, part of the anonymous *Appels de la prison de Segovie*, published by Champ Libre.

We stayed a couple of days in Arles, as the four of us were on our way to Barcelona. More about that later. We spent those days chatting, eating and drinking. Alice always did all the cooking and washing up, and Guy held court with us all round the kitchen table. The house had three floors with a largish room on each floor and you walked straight into the main downstairs room, the kitchen, from the street--with no porch or hallway like many houses built for artisans or mill workers that I know in Yorkshire. They didn't have a television, but occasionally went to watch the news with the old lady opposite, who thought that Guy, usually discretely and soberly dressed in dark cord trousers and a shirt, worked in a bank!

I was surprised at this very urbane response to many things and his witty sense of humour, which is totally absent in the spectacle book, but noticeable in the *IS* journals and his films. When it was mentioned to him that an English situphile had slagged him off in print for starting to become an alcoholic, he replied with a big smile: 'I've been one for a long time'.

I tackled him later about this very set and segregated division of labour between himself and Alice. (Don't get me wrong: she joined in the discussions as well, but in any disputes she always supported her husband). His response about the household tasks was the completely unironic 'Elle fait la vaisselle, je fais la revolution' (She does the washing up. I do the revolution)--which indicates the complete absence of any feminist politics, even at that late date, in the Situationist circle. Gianfranco Sanguinetti, a long-standing member of the SI, who helped finance many of its ventures, co-author of *The Veritable Split* with Debord, author, under the pseudonym of Censor of the *Veridical*

Report on the Last Chance to Save Capitalism in Italy (not Debord as our conference organisers stated in the article in *The Independent*)...this person was reputed to boast that no feminist had ever darkened his threshold. It's ironic that the subsequent translators of his later *On Terrorism and the State*, myself for an English version and Els Van Daele for a Dutch one, were both women, and both of us criticised him in his introduction for his dissimulating arrogance. (He claimed that he knew straightaway when Aldo Moro, the Italian Prime Minister, was kidnapped in 1978, that it was the work of the secret services and not the imputed Red Brigades, whilst from Debord's correspondence with him, it was clear that he doubted this at the time).

Tim Clark told me that he and other members of the English section raised concerns about what they saw as a particularly continental type of sexism within the SI, but these issues were quashed. This absence of feminist perspective raises deeper problems within the Situationist programme, I believe.

One element in the SI's Utopian programme is the 'abolition of work'. Work here is taken to be wage labour, based on the model of production-line type factory work. An article in an early issue of *Internationale situationniste* by Asger Jorn, entitled 'La fin de l'economie et la realisation de l'art' stresses the optimism about technology--that automation on the production line will do away with boring, repetitive work. Jorn points out one of the essential contradictions of capitalism that, at the same time, as it creates the technological conditions to emancipate human beings from tedious labour, this emancipation cannot be effected under capitalism because it would abolish the relations of production endemic to it as a system (class domination). He goes on to point out that, freed from the necessities of laborious work, the conditions could be laid for the realisation of the historical artistic project--the realisation of art--the alchemical transformation of art into life and life into art. Jorn's article, and the esteem Debord had for him, laid some important founding blocks for much of the SI's programme. The paradigm of work here is, as I've said, 'productive labour'. It ignores non-productive labour like services (including public utilities), health care, what's called 'social

services' (over the next decade in Europe, for example, there will be a huge labour intensive demand for looking after the elderly), housework, and childcare. Suddenly this sort of Utopianism of the abolition of wage labour seems to recede centuries into the future as a realistic project. Debord wouldn't have liked his wine to be made by machines, and most of his arguments about the loss of quality in food production are based on the industrialisation of its production.

This hiatus about non-productive forms of labour in the SI's theory probably is connected to its being composed of privileged males, mostly from the *haute bourgeoisie*, not traditionally involved with this form of skilled labour and from their privilege as males, not having to be concerned with care for children and the elderly.

The next anecdotal section concerns the tension between libertarianism and vanguardism. We left Arles and went on to Barcelona, and agreed to smuggle into Spain copies of 'Appels de la prison de Segovie' and other literature to help orchestrate a campaign for the freeing of fifty or so anarchists, who had recently been imprisoned for robbing banks and distributing the proceeds to the unemployed. 'Appels' contained some 'detoured' popular Spanish songs like 'La cucracha'--whereby democracy can't be enacted in Spain without the consent of the military (referring to Tejero's attempted coup). Debord romantically envisaged possibilities of another movement like that of 1936 in Spain emerging after Franco's death.

Our friends in Barcelona set about making a poster containing the text of 'To Libertarians' and the songs. Later a French friend brought some copies back to Arles, whence we had returned. Debord threw a wobbly because they (the Spanish) had altered some of the detoured Spanish songs. He called them plagiarists and manipulators and a few traditional Spanish homophobic insults (at which we protested!). There was no libertarian sense of autonomous practice, when it came to altering Debord's words. Our French friend, Arthur (who had so many surnames I never knew his real one, the favourite one was Cravan) was sent packing and friends were encouraged to break with him

for his defence of these comrades. A couple of the Spanish friends involved in doing the poster then wrote to Debord explaining that they were autonomous libertarians, practising their autonomy, and that they judged it more apt to change the words. Debord quietly accepted this and was finally pacified.

What do I want to draw from this? Firstly, this flight of paranoia of Debord's was definitely induced or enhanced by alcohol. He already was starting to suffer from alcohol-related gout quite badly at this time. I can recall an amusing episode when an old friend of Michel Prigent's from Arles, an Armenian tailor called Cesar, was introduced to Debord--in fact, they knew each other by sight as he, Debord and Alice had been the only people in the cinema when Bunuel's films had been playing in Arles. Cesar was sixty and looked forty. He explained that he didn't drink alcohol and ate a lot of Bulgarian yoghurt. Debord commented 'that's very good' and poured himself another large glass of whisky.

Away from the anecdotes, back to the heavy stuff. Secondly, I don't think it was possible for Debord and consequently the SI to let go of a vanguardist position, and to become a libertarian group. He definitely didn't think it was a desirable or necessary part of the SI's role--he constantly stressed that the SI wasn't a fraternity of equals, (this always made me feel very uneasy in terms of any kind of collaboration) and that neither was it a revolutionary organisation (*Veritable Split in the International*, theses 49 and 50). I should think it's pretty certain that the major splits in the SI were fuelled by a similar lack of accountability and dishonesty, but they might have been 'right' historically in terms of the SI's 'progression' from a poetico-artistic avant-garde to one seeking to elaborate a revolutionary critical theory.

Debord has always claimed that he never needed to change his mind about anything, yet in the 80s he vowed Paris (as he'd known it) no longer existed and that he'd never go back there. In the 90s he went to live there again. In 1967 he swore that the Stalinist Gallimard publishers would never have a word the SI had ever written. In the 90s he negotiated a copyright agreement with them for all his works.

I'm not a stickler for intransigence; sometimes we have to weave and negotiate spaces, but Debord and Situationist theory encouraged these types of intransigent positions. But then in his own case it's more important for him to find a publisher than not to be in print, in the final analysis. Interestingly, Debord in conversation was often less dogmatic than his followers. I think that there was a real deep unresolved tension between the poetico-artistic part of himself and the intransigent revolutionary. In conversation he described himself as a professional revolutionary, particularly for instance to Alice Becker-Ho's mother when she demanded to know his intentions towards her daughter (!). He commented that on his passport he described himself as *cineaste*. Whilst this can also be a matter of tactics, I see it as an indication of opposing parts.

In conversation his attitude to media figures was more particular than a mechanistic application of the concept of the spectacle. He thought that Brigitte Bardot with her reclusive life and campaign for animal welfare was not reinforcing the spectacle (this was before she teamed up with a National Front member). He admired Orson Welles a great deal, didn't begrudge him doing adverts for sherry to finance his artistic projects, and mooted the idea of obtaining him to read the English narration of *In girum*. He thought Welles could be sounded out through Gerard Lebovici, his publisher's contacts with the film world. He thought that Georges Brassens, who didn't live too far away from Arles, had never 'done anything bad'. In conversations we had about Shakespeare where I pointed that Shakespeare had some quite dodgy political views, he always defended him on the grounds of being a poet. So, in the long run, poetry, the creation of metaphors and the detournement of other ones, is the most overriding and enduring factor. By 1980, he knew he was starting to be hailed as classical literary stylist in France.

At times I wonder whether Debord and, dare I say it, Situationism (lambasted by the SI as a meaningless term) have the same relationship as Marx and Marxism. The writings of Marx embody a diversity of approaches and readings, ambiguities, tensions, which Marxists turned into dogma, to the extent that

Marx claimed he wasn't a Marxist. The SI rescued the young Marx, the alienation theses, and the Hegelian dialectic in order to supersede Marxism. Is Debord's thought becoming dogmatised by his own followers, or does the problem lie with his own thought?

In talking of a supersession of the SI I am aware that I am focussing almost exclusively on Debord. He emerged, after the exclusions of the artistic tendency in the early 1960s, as the overwhelmingly central figure who shaped the direction of the SI, and claims this (*In Girum*) and he is one of the few who have continued to have a public voice in his writings and film. (The only others doing this, to my knowledge, are Raoul Vaneigem and Tim Clark). The mythology and cult of personality which has surrounded Debord have only increased after the SI's dissolution. Indeed, there is a veritable cult of personality and mythology, which has surrounded him since the SI's dissolution, and a lack of accountability.

Theory of the spectacle -is it found wanting?

The concept of the spectacle combined with the SI's anti-hierarchical solutions to it, the emphasis on play, subversive pleasure and the encouragement of people's own creativity, are probably the most innovative developments within an emancipatory project rooted in western Marxism. The concept of the spectacle is a useful analytical tool to explicate the basics of the condition of postmodernity. This is a situation where the economic structure and class antagonisms analysed by Marx are still intact, and where commodity relations have colonised all aspects of life and culture, intensified by new systems of technology, communication and information. The spectacle rests on the paradigm of intensified alienation, where 'all that was once directly lived has become distanced as representation'. It offers an explanation for the feeling of powerlessness, apathy and boredom which is seen to characterise the experience of modern life and where all moments and activities are mediated by the commodity form, in such a way that it is almost impossible to have any contact with anything which is not a commodity. Self-

fulfilment, self-expression, pleasure and independence are posed as only available through consumption.

The concept of the spectacle modernises orthodox Marxist accounts of power and class domination, and at the same time preserves the possibility of a revolutionary critique based on what is thought to be a 'unitary' theory that explains contemporary world conditions. It provides a perspective from which a 'total critique' of every aspect of daily life, social organisation, culture and discourse was possible, and grounds for challenging the modern conditions of capitalist social relations. It provides a theory to explain and challenge the way in which the increasing role of the mass media's information and advertising industries messages, signs and images confound images with reality, and cloud the possibility of distinguishing authentic desires, and real experience from their manipulated and sometimes fabricated representations.

However, there is some slippage in the use of the concept of spectacle (as Thomas Y Levin has pointed out. 'Dismantling the spectacle: the cinema of Guy Debord', *On the Passage of a Few People*) between the spectacle as the realm of representation, into which all lived experience has moved away, and the allegorical construct of spectacle as a historical, socio-economic condition. The two are usually conflated and the concept is used rhetorically rather than analytically. It ends up with a tautology whereby present spectacular-capitalist conditions, all representation is necessarily spectacular, in the sense of reinforcing the alienated spectacle. In this way it becomes a kind of blanket term, and is not sufficiently analytical to be tested out in use. Thus it depends on the arbitrary designations of the charismatic leader to decide, for instance, that Orson Welles doing sherry adverts is acceptable--perhaps it's an acceptable compromise for tactical reasons, perhaps it's a quality sherry and not an impoverished commodity, and that the Beatles, as shown on the film of *La Societe du spectacle*, were part of the spectacle. John Lennon in an interview with himself and Yoko from 1971 stated that the band had become stooges of the music industry, but also, rightly I think, that the pleasure in their music help liberated young people from their oppression (presumably psychic, sexual, familial as well as

political) and encouraged them to rebel. So the concept of the spectacle as a kind of seamless recuperator and commodifier is too mechanistic. People can also steal back from the spectacle, and it doesn't always manage to contain watertight boundaries, John and George spoke out against the Vietnam War. On Wednesday this week Joanna Lumley headed a group within Compassion in World Farming who are campaigning for the EU to change its ruling about livestock--that the animals should be seen not as a product (a commodity) but as sentient beings.

Putting the theory to the test

In 'La Societe du spectacle', what struck me when I first saw it was how well the spectacle concept worked in relation to images of women--you have the commodified fashion models and objectified strippers contrasted with the interspersed footage of Alice Becker-Ho dancing naked. The contrast is between objectified simulation in order to excite pleasure in the male viewer, and between sharing Alice's pleasure in her childlike naked dance. It's the contrast between spectacular and commodified images of women (the fashion models are filmed, dressed and posed in certain ways to enhance a certain exaggerated exercise of form on the female body, in order to sell the style and lifestyle of the period), and between a real woman, Alice, filmed as a subject without artifice. The spectacle theory can't explain the present sexual economy whereby it is almost exclusively women's bodies which are parcelled for masculine heterosexist scopophilic consumption, but it can explain the growing objectification in erotica of all sexual orientations under capitalism.

The second thing in the film which struck me was the images of the industrial manufacture of cream cakes--prestigious objects which conceal the misery of their production. It's more than just Marx's notion of commodity fetishism where the products of human labour magical and alien disguising the alienated labour they contain, but also a qualitative intensification of this alienation--industrially produced food is packaged and

marketed as prestigious produce, disguising both the relations of production, and alienated labour and the cheap materials (artificial cream) they are made from. Also disguised are the nature of the by-products in terms of waste and pollution. Much of the rest of the film illustrates the violence which underpins this system of production, and consumption.

The concept of spectacle seems to work best first and foremost with advertising -probably the most powerful medium of contemporary capitalist social relations where it is undeniable that pleasures dreams, desires and aspirations are evoked and presented as only realisable through consumption, and the partial fulfilment they provide only seeks to reinforce what is really lacking - the ability to choose or define the whole system of relations in which these abundant choices are made.

Can the notion of spectacle explain the complexity of all types of social phenomena? What about the complexity about consumption of pop music and popular culture and film in relation to a politics of identity and playing with signs and codes? Debord's answer that it is all to be detoured, rather than pastiched. (Some films make serious attempts to engage with issues like America's involvement with the Vietnam war.)

If you believe in the concept of the spectacle, you have to believe that it is predicated on an intensification of alienation in both leisure and work. Alienated consumers are condemned to consume and reproduce the dominant images --an aimless and decentred construction of appearances. No major social movement exists to challenge it because 1) either because people are too alienated to be able to join together to form the movement which dissolves all existing conditions, and in some sense get the society they deserve (*In girum*) - or 2) because the spectacle has pre-empted and recuperated all possible opposition 3) the opposition is not effective yet because revolutionary Situationist theory hasn't met up with the working class (something Raoul Vaneigem pointed out and criticised for daring to say it (*Veritable Split*), or 4) contrary to what the SI thought in the 1960s - as a world system the forces of production are not yet sufficiently developed to necessitate a change in the relations of production or

5) that the theory for an emancipatory project is not yet sufficiently developed.

The other possibilities are that the theory of the spectacle is not sufficient to cover the complexity of social relations under capitalism, and/or that its solutions --the abolition of the separation of individuals, the commodity economy and the state-- are problematic.

The spectacle as the organising principle of capitalist social relations resides on the 'logic of the commodity'. In the 'old' Marxist-speak, the logic of the commodity economy rests on two sets of features: 1) that surplus value can be extracted from it i.e. profit --to be used for capitalist accumulation, investment and diversification, to enable colonisation of new geographical regions for the purposes of further market penetration, further profits etc. and the circle continues, and 2) the conditions of production entail alienation --of the producers from the product, from their own creativity, and from the relations of production --no autonomy over the workplace or the production process.

In the spectacle concept, the commodity form and its structural inability to fulfil, masks the inability of its subjects to choose or define the whole in which the abundant choices are made. What is really at stake is a complex account of power -as workers' living standards improve, deprivation becomes qualitative rather than quantitative. The absence of autonomy, self-realisation, self-management, and a participation and control in the system's decision-making is intensified. Alienation and its separation of individuals into consumers can be ruptured or suspended during shared moments of contestation which exceed spectacular relations. The commodity form is self-perpetuating, but why?

In a classical Marxist account it's to ensure the bourgeoisie economic and political power. In spectacle theory there is less of a sense of it being in the interests of class domination, that commodities and their discourses rule our lives but of the commodity form as a mystified and static category. Is this not a theoreticist and rhetorical account of power relations? It seems to

lack a notion of hegemony as opposed to domination. Hegemony is the process of struggling over power, between different groups and the outcome is never known in advance. That is why human history contains crucial, make-or-break situations, whose outcomes are irreversible. Situationist theory also seems to lack a theory of hegemony in terms of socialist oppositional strategy.

For Marx the working class has to be the fulcrum of revolutionary change because it's the main wealth producer. For Situationist theory the bourgeoisie must be more alienated and deluded relations than the subordinate classes, as they have the greater ability to buy and consume, so it would presumably be more in their interest than other classes to abolish the alienation of the commodity form, because the other profit aspect of capitalist production -the extraction of surplus value through economic exploitation in production -has been theoretically downplayed.

In trying to tease out some problems I need to say that I am not expecting revolutionary perfection in one person or theory any more than you can expect socialism in one art work. It might be untenable to try to maintain that a single unitary theory can be adequate with which to construct an emancipatory discourse and project.

The unfinished conversation needs to become a public debate, if it is not just to remain a mad, visionary dream or even a dystopic nightmare.

Dérive: the *détournement* of the *flâneur*

By
Patrick ffrench

The following might appear to sit rather uncomfortably with the spirit of Situationist revolt in its focus on the literary antecedents of the *dérive*. I hope that the implication that the *dérive* is an opening out beyond the closed world of literature and the Academy will come out. I want to guard against the idea that writing or theoretical analysis are in themselves forms of *dérive*, against a metaphorization of *dérive*. *Dérive* is first of all an act and an experience, which cannot be superseded or sublated into theory or writing. However, it does give rise to analysis. It is the emphasis on analysis in Situationist praxis which transgresses the closure of theory and of the Academy.

What relations can be mapped out between the 19th century myth of the *flâneur* and the situationist theory and practice of the *dérive*, given that the latter is defined as 'opposed on all points to the classic notions of the voyage or the walk (*promenade*)'? What is the itinerary from the myth of the *flâneur* to the theory and practice of the *dérive* and what gets lost and gained on the way? The following is a reading of *dérive* and other critiques or possible *détournements* of the saturated myth of the *flâneur*.

The *flâneur* is a detached consumer of the pleasures of urban life who emerges in the early 19th century, to find its most focused expression in the second half of the century in Baudelaire's writings, by which time the commodification of 19th century Paris has rendered such disinterested pleasures increasingly difficult, and the *flâneur* an ironic, alienated and

melancholic observer of modernity. The *flâneur* comes into existence, as a myth, at a moment when it cannot be anything other than ironic and melancholic and this may have a lot to do with Walter Benjamin's own melancholic temperament as the exemplary reader of the *flâneur* myth. This melancholy will come to define the *flâneur*'s relation to the present. Baudelaire's *flâneur* exists after Haussman, the urban architect who imposed order on old Paris with the rationalised plan of the boulevards, and with the increasing control of social experience and movement across urban space. The *flâneur* is looking back to a time before Haussman.

The Lettrist and Situationist theory of the *dérive* is an implicit critique of the *flâneur*, a *détournement* of *flânerie* and a politicisation of it. It is a movement in groups, not of solitary individuals. It speeds up, too. *Dérive* is a 'technique de passage hâtif', 'a technique of rapid passage'. The theory of the *dérive* articulated by Debord in 'Theory of the *dérive*' reveals that the *flâneur* is at the mercy of reified social conditions without being aware of it, and without any analysis. A politicised *détournement* of *flânerie* might take off here, recalling Benjamin's note that Haussman's boulevards were constructed in order to allow the swiftest passage possible from the barracks to the working class areas where riots were likely to erupt, and made deliberately wide to prevent the building of barricades. Debord takes up Benjamin's idea in 1955: 'The notion of utility should be situated historically. The concern to have open spaces allowing for the rapid circulation of troops and the use of artillery was at the origin of the urban renewal plot adopted by the Second Empire. But from any standpoint other than that of police control, Haussman's Paris is a city built by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Today's urbanism's main problem is ensuring the smooth circulation of a rapidly increasing quantity of motor vehicles.' One might see, moreover, a prolongation of this critique/*détournement* of urban topography in Paul Virilio's recognition that social space is now constructed according to anti-terrorist strategies. The city wall whose modern representation is the Parisian *périphérique*

becomes in post modernity the sensitiser installed in the doorways of shops, libraries, airports, etc. The distinction between these different technologies of critique and the *flâneur* resides in the unpoliticised nature of the *flâneur*'s status as detached observer. Detached and therefore suffering under the illusion of being outside the political, outside the polis. Benjamin's critique also seems to fall prey to the romanticism implicit in the notion of the solitary wanderer. As Adrian Rifkin points out in *Street Noises*, Walter Benjamin's attempt to demythify the *flâneur* gets caught up in another post-romantic myth: 'Benjamin's words may seem to co-exist almost too comfortably with their objects'. Benjamin himself becomes a secondary kind of *flâneur*, the critic as *flâneur*, the *flâneur* as book collector, a myth perpetuated in Susan Sontag's account of Benjamin's melancholic bent. The reading or analysis of the *flâneur* inevitably gets caught up in the myth of a melancholic, detached observer, and its demythification seems only possible through a less intellectualised, more immediate encounter or a different, politicised critique of urban space. An alternative form of *détournement* of Haussmanisation is to be found in the immediacy of the event: barricades were built in the Paris Commune; in 1968, whatever recuperation of that event has been made since, the paving stones of the boulevards were ripped up and used as missiles against the riot police.

Returning to Baudelaire and Haussman's Paris, the poem 'Le cygne' ('The Swan') is the archetypal image of the noble savage out of water, presenting the image of a swan almost literally stranded in the detritus left after the cutting through of one of Haussman's boulevards:

Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville
Change plus vite, hélas, que le coeur d'un mortel
Old Paris is no more (the form of a city
Changes faster, alas, than the heart of a mortal)

His, for he is invariably male, mode is that of a swan out of water, a pre-modern man lost in modernity and regretting it, but at the same time deriving a masochistic pleasure from his alienated plight.

The *flâneur* was always a consumer of sights. But, as Walter Benjamin points out, it is the commodification concomitant with capitalism which forever ruins the possibility of a disinterested, detached observer. The *flâneur* is from now on either a producer (an artist) or a buyer. Looks are locked in to commodity fetishes, a problematic already implicit in Baudelaire's uneasy position with regard to modernity. Baudelaire's prose poem 'The Counterfeit Coin' is a *mise en scène* of the opposition between the exchange of commodities in the marketplace, in this instance a tobacconist's, a typical *flâneur's* destination, and a disinterested *potlatch*, as Derrida elaborates in *La fausse monnaie*. The *flâneur* experiences the contradiction between a disinterested 'aesthetics' and the insertion of the artist into the world of commodity fetishism in which he produces and consumes objects like anyone else. Whence the Situationist *détournement* of Baudelaire's phrase: *fourmillante cité, cité, plein de rêves, ou le spectre en plein jour rencontre le passant* (Swarming city, city full of dreams, where the spectre meets the passer-by in broad daylight) by *Dans le décor spectaculaire où le regard ne rencontre que les choses et leur prix*,¹⁰ (In the spectacular decor where the gaze meets only objects and their prices). This reveals the basis of *flânerie* in the culture of commodities.

The *flâneur* also engages in a singular relation with the crowd. Baudelaire conceives the *flâneur* as the direct descendant of Poe's Man of the crowd, the poet merges with the mass. Yet this is not a communitarian enterprise; the merger with the crowd is at the same time the loss and re-affirmation of individual identity: 'De la centralisation et la vaporisation du moi, tout est là...' (Between the vaporisation and the centralisation of the self, it's all there) wrote Baudelaire in *Mon cœur mis à nu*. Loss of identity is always countered by a movement towards a more individual sense of self in Baudelaire's dualistic universe. So the merging with the crowd is part of a dialectic of the shoring up of the individual, part of a never-ending existential dialectic of self-completion. The crowd is, specifically, undifferentiated, it is 'the crowd', a totalised mass. This is an identification with an all which is nothing, a community which is everyone and no-one, and

therefore a fascistic, demagogic perspective of the community as totality. The *dérive*, on the other hand, always takes place in groups. It displaces the individual and the subjective in the activity of a group whose interaction and debate is the basis for a critical analysis and a mapping of the psychogeography of the urban space in question.

The *flâneur*, as suggested earlier and by many other commentators, is always male. Its counterpart may be prostitution, but there women are always consumed, never consumers, never the origin of the gaze. Another possibility for *détournement* of *flânerie*, then, depends upon a sexualised analysis of the *flâneur* and a subversion of the gender positions upon which it relies. The *flâneur* finds a modern descendant in contemporary gay writing: the notion of *loiterature* or of *cruising* resonant in works by Renaud Camus, Alan Hollinghurst, or the Barthes of *Empire of Signs* or *Incidents*. But there again, the loiterer, the active consciousness is a consumer, taken up in the search for bodies with whom to enact sexual transactions, as Baudelaire's *Petits poèmes en prose* were often mini-narratives of encounters with prostitutes, itinerant beggars, shopkeepers. Both depend upon the identification of the male gaze as that of a consumer... or do they? In Renaud Camus's *Tricks*, or Hollinghurst's *The Swimming Pool Library*, the transactions are enacted on the basis of a code common to both partners, a code which is not possible between the detached, solitary poet and the objects of his gaze. *Cruising* undermines the power relations of *flânerie* as it is based on a secret code of gestures, micro-folds in the narrative of the body, which perversely ignores class and race divisions and the codes of human exchange which the *flâneur* observes.

The *flâneur* is always a man, and women's mode of urban passage is limited to shopping, according to the 19th century myth. But this is subtly subverted in women's writing and its critique. Another *détournement* of the gender positions of the myth of the *flâneur* is elaborated in Sally Munt's essay 'The Lesbian *flâneur*'.

Here the *flâneur* is a metaphorical cross-dresser, subverting the code of *flânerie* by slipping for a moment into the

assumed position of the consuming male gaze. Munt refers to Djuna Barnes's character Robin Vote in the novel *Nightwood*. In the novel, Robin Vote is first encountered as an artist's model, in the pose of Manet's *Olympia* and the narrator describes her thus: 'The woman who presents herself to the spectator as a 'picture' forever arranged is, for the contemplative mind, the chiefest danger. The aesthetically viewed woman, then, is already caught in a dangerous ambivalence, between the frozen past and the active future, the fixity of the painting and the promise elicited by a desiring look. The disinterested male gaze of the *flâneur* becomes troubled before the aesthetic representation of woman. Baudelaire's *flânerie* is already inhabited, undermined, by the troubling look of Victorine Meunier, the model for Manet's *Olympia*, the trouble deriving from the possibility of the other gender looking back at you and holding you fascinated in their gaze. In *Nightwood*, the female character Robin Vote becomes a *flâneur* of sorts. Crossing Paris 'her thoughts were in themselves a form of locomotion. She walked with raised head, seeming to look at every passer-by, yet her gaze was anchored in anticipation and regret. Djuna Barnes's sentence captures the essence of melancholic, male *flânerie* but in the context of a subtle rewriting of its codes. Robin Vote's femininity reveals, as it were, the true dynamic of looks implicit in *flânerie*, 'anchored in anticipation and regret', in the belief in a utopian future rooted in the nostalgia for the past. The myth of the *flâneur* is deconstructed and reworked by redistributions of the gender roles implicit in the myth.

The myth of the *flâneur* is perpetuated, but also differentiated, from Baudelaire through the principle avant-garde of the twentieth century: Surrealism. In Breton's *Nadja*, the identity of the *flâneur* is fragmented and differentiated as a series of ghosts, which the narrative consciousness meets in the course of an itinerary around Paris. These ghostly encounters are readable as part of psychoanalytic sub-text which underpins Breton's enterprise: as the return of the repressed, in the form of the uncanny. The Surrealist *flâneur*, in his encounters around Paris, meets the uncanny forms of the other selves that haunt him.

... the objective chance of *flânerie* has turned into the psychoanalytically determined return of the repressed, a recognition echoed in Gilles Ivain's 'Formulary for a New Urbanism', where he writes: 'Toutes les villes sont géologiques et l'on ne peut faire trois pas sans rencontrer des fantômes...' (All cities are geological and you can't go three steps without meeting a ghost) In her book *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution*'s Margaret Cohen argues that the 'haunting Paris itinerary' traced in *Nadja* plugs into the history of violent revolution in Paris. The repressed or the uncanny is part of a collective unconscious, traces of which are present in the monumental sites of Paris. Here the *flâneur's* depoliticised strolling takes on a political dimension, coincident with the individual subject's own imaginative reconstruction of urban space. The *flâneur* as detached voyeur, either separate from the crowd or immersed in it, all or nothing, becomes the fragmented, differentiated self, without sublation into a dialectic of becoming, and this move coincides with a politicisation of *flânerie* in which it becomes a re-encountering of the political past in the urban present.

This movement from the dialectic of becoming to the fragmentation of identity can be traced across different texts, from Baudelaire down to Breton. Margaret Cohen reveals this passage in relations between the image of the helmsman in Baudelaire's poem 'Les sept vieillards', and a passage from *Nadja*. Baudelaire's poem begins with the phrase already quoted: *Fourmillante cité, plein de rêves, où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant*, a phrase which encapsulates the poet/*flâneur's* turn towards the past, the sense in which he is concerned with the past, with the ways in which history as spectre emerges in fragmentary, inexplicable form in the present. The *flâneur* is at the mercy of the spectre, of a phantasmatic reality emerging from the past of the city but also from his own past. The poet figure in 'Les sept vieillards' (The Seven Old Men) sees an old man of evil aspect, followed by his double, followed by five others... and only misses seeing the eighth through turning away and returning home: *Exaspéré, comme un ivrogne qui voit double*

/ Je rentrai, je fermai ma porte, épouvanté / Malade et morfondu, l'esprit fiévreux et trouble / Blessé, par le mystère et par l'absurdité. / Vainement ma raison voulait prendre la barre / La tempête en jouant déroutait ses efforts / Et mon âme dansait, dansait, vieille gabare / Sans mâts, sur une mer monstrueuse et sans bords! (Exasperated, like a drunkard seeing double, I went home and shy my door, frightened, sick and chilled, my mind feverish and confused, wounded by mystery and absurdity. In vain my reason tried to take the helm; the storm blowing baffled all its efforts, and my soul danced like an old barge without masts on a monstrous and shoreless sea!')

The poet's intoxication cannot be controlled by reason, and the home to which he returns opens out onto a limitless sea. The *flâneur's* encounter with the *spectre* of his own fragmented self, turns into the intoxicated vision of a double 'comme un ivrogne qui voit double'. And this intoxication overturns the opposition between the inside and the outside; the home turns into a limitless sea. The *flâneur's* intoxication, reason being unable to take the helm and weld the visions of the double into a coherent whole, deconstructs the very opposition upon which *flânerie* rests: the opposition between the private and the public, home and the crowd. It may give rise to an enterprise such as that of Proust, a panoramic totality written from inside a cork-lined room.

The narrator of *Nadja*, as Cohen reveals, uses the trope of the impossibility of taking the helm in his description of the encounters in the book: 'il s'agit de faits qui, fussent-ils de l'ordre de la constation pure, présentent chaque fois toutes les apparences d'un signal, sans qu'on puisse dire au juste de quel signal, qui font qu'en pleine solitude, je me découvre d'in vraisemblables complicités, qui me convainquent de mon illusion toutes les fois que je me crois seul ... la barre du navire.' (It's a question of facts which, even of they were on the order of pure observation, present on each occasion all the appearances of a signal, without our being able to say precisely what signal, and which have the result that, in complete solitude, I uncover in myself implausible complicités which convince me of my illusion each time I think of myself alone at the helm of a boat.') Breton's insight is that even

in solitude, he is peopled by others, and this insight is provoked by the *signals* of the various encounters of his itinerary around Paris. Breton's reading brings out in Baudelaire's nightmare *flânerie* the political dimension in which the signals, the sites observed by the *flâneur* ruin the separated ego who loses himself in the crowd only to reassert his dominance over them, and affirms the multiple, fractured identity that runs underneath, the *flâneur's* self as a palimpsest of the ghosts of history. It is difficult not to read another echo of Baudelaire's 'Les sept vieillards' in the recounting in *Nadja* of a film: a Chinese man, having found a way to multiply himself, invades New York: 'Il entrait, suivi de lui-même, et de lui-même, et de lui-même, dans le bureau du président Wilson, qui ôtait son binocle' (He entered, followed by himself, and by himself, and himself, and himself, the office of president Wilson, who removed his monocle). Breton's narrator finds himself unable, or unwilling, to explain his fascination with this scene; but the reader can reconstitute it as an allegory of the fragmented self, a deconstruction of the man of the crowd and of the existential dynamic of the *flâneur*, who becomes the crowd only to expand his ego, to take over the world, not seeing the illusion that this only leads to a fragmented, disparate self which cannot be guided by the helmsman of reason.

The relation between the subjective dynamic - the return of the repressed and the historical/political dimension, the force of history as reified in objective reality, will also preoccupy Walter Benjamin. His whole reading of the *flâneur* can be seen as an attempt to weld together the subjective, psychoanalytically framed aspect of *flânerie* with the historical, political dimension. However, his, and the Surrealist, attempt to translate the individual experience of the *flâneur* into a political consciousness through the ghostly presence of the past in the present relies on a more or less Jungian or psychologist concept of the collective unconscious which foreshadows the Lettrist and Situationist version. The notion of the collective unconscious becomes, in Situationist theory, a vision of the unconscious as the reservoir of all the reified social conditions which structure and determine life.

The unconscious becomes equated with social structure, as a conservative force to be overcome by the analytic force of the ego. What leaves a hole in this theoretical map, what is irreducible to a theory of the unconscious or of social determination is drunkenness. A different itinerary of urban passage can be traced from De Quincey's opium influenced crossings of London recounted in *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater* to Debord's *Mémoires*, which refers to De Quincey's 'North West passages', alleys of desire leading North from Oxford Street to his lover in the North, and to Situationist theory and practice of *dérive*. Intoxication creates a different urban topography. De Quincey's English text was, of course, more or less translated by Baudelaire for his own *Les paradis artificiels*. Baudelaire's *flâneur* poet is also the *houka* smoker and the one who cries for an incessant intoxication: 'Enivrez-vous sans cesse'. (Get drunk, continuously) Benjamin too points to the coincidence of 'profane illumination' of the *flâneur* and the hashish smoker: 'the most passionate investigation of the hashish trance will not teach us half as much about thinking... as the profane illumination of thinking about the hashish trance. The reader, the thinker, the loiterer, the *flâneur*, are types of illumination just as much as the opium eater, the dreamer, the ecstatic.' Here the alternative, more immediate form of encounter with the myth of the *flâneur* and with its practice, mentioned earlier, comes into play. The *flâneur* as intoxicated implies a different version of the passage from the detached, ironic and melancholic observer and from the critic/*flâneur* who exploits him. While the latter observes the reality of commodity fetishism, the intoxicated *flâneur* seeks to invent, in a kind of immediacy, a new affective reality. If the 19th century *flâneur* turns a melancholic gaze towards the past and an alienated one on the present, the intoxicated *dériveur* enjoys the possibilities of imaginative realities projected into the future, on the basis of the fragmented reality of commodification. The intoxicated *flâneur* creates a different topography, an imaginative, alternative and immediate dream topography of the city. The theory of the *dérive* is an attempt to join this intoxication, or delirium with an analytic, constructive critique of urban space. It

is also turned towards the future rather than melancholically regretting the past. *Dérive* invents or reinvents, after De Quincey, this form of intoxicated or oneiric urban topography. Situationist *dérive* plots an itinerary between bars. *Dérive* or analytic pub-crawling. Drinking is an integral part of the Situationist *dérive*, which takes place in an alcoholic stupor where paranoid persecution fantasies and absurdist drama are prominent. See the account of the *dérive* presented in Potlatch and translated in *On the passage of a few people across a rather brief moment in time*.

Drunkenness and intoxication are linked, moreover, to the fragmentation of the self and the renunciation of the attempt to weld the disparate fragments of the self constructed through the encounters of the city into a unified whole. To Breton's *Nadja*. But this dimension is effaced in Situationist theory and practice. It is an element which does not come into the picture at all. In Debord's article in the *Internationale situationniste* 2, 'Théorie de la *dérive*', Breton's notion of the unconscious as a liberating force becomes overturned. The unconscious becomes, rather than a subjectively located reservoir of spectres, a Lukacsian notion of reification, divorced from the subject. It is thought as a conservative force, the place where socially determinative factors take effect and rule over life:

La part de l'aléatoire est ici moins déterminante qu'on ne croit'. (The part of chance is less determining than one might think).

'L'action du hasard est naturellement conservatrice'. (The effects of chance are naturally conservative)

'... on peut dire que les hasards de la *dérive* sont foncièrement différents de ceux de la promenade, mais que les premières attirances psychogéographiques découvertes risquent de fixer le sujet ou le groupe dérivant autour de nouveaux axes habituels, où tout les ramène constamment.' (One can say that the chances of the *dérive* are radically different from those of the walk, but that the psychogeographical attractions discovered initially by the *dériveurs* risk fixing the subject around new axes of habit, which always pulls you back.)

This level of determinism, is, in turn, able to be analysed by the conscious ego, mapped out, in order to then change reified

social conditions in a movement towards unitary urbanism. The ego is endowed with the potential to free the self from the determinism of the unconscious, through critique and analysis. Play becomes less aleatory, more analytic, whence the concept of the ludic-constructive which is central to Situationist theory and defines its paradox, perhaps prepares its disappearance. Consequently, Debord criticises the submission to randomness implicit in Breton's Surrealism, and Surrealism's neglect of the practical, concrete possibilities of revolt. But this implies a dependence upon a 'traditional scientist psychology', as exemplified by the work of Chombart de Lauwe, whose studies of Paris Debord refers to, transposing the ego back into a position of intentionality and control when it had been, or at least simulated, fragmented, non-unified and dispersed.

So, in the movement from the *flâneur* to the *dérive*, there is a movement towards theorisation, towards analysis and away from chance and the unconscious. This is a movement traced also within the history of the Lettrist International and the Situationists, from the more ludic journal *Potlatch* to the more serious *Internationale Situationniste*. As we know, the notions of *détournement* and *dérive* were elaborated during the period of Lettrism and particularly of the Lettrist International, after 1952, prior to being developed in the Situationist International after 1957. The movement from Lettrism to the Situationist International is one from a Surrealistic, utopian world view to a more Western Marxist inspired perspective. The Lettrist International can be called the 'utopian' phase of the movement, the phase in which the emphasis is upon play more than upon analysis. This is exemplified by the reprinting of Debord's 'Théorie de la *dérive*' in the SI without the two accounts of the *dérive* originally alongside it in *Potlatch*. However, traces remain of the aspects of liberation, of imaginative force and of creation. Traces of the intoxication, delirium aspect of the *flâneur*... Debord's *Mémoires*, written in 1952, with traces of De Quincey within them, and his later *Panégryrique* might suggest this itinerary.

The *dérive*, then, is fundamentally opposed to the *flâneur* in the emphasis on analysis. It overturns the *flâneur's* subjection to the aleatory aspects of the unconscious, a movement already implicit in Breton's attempt to link the ghosts he encounters around Paris with its violent political history. The unconscious shifts from being, in Baudelaire's universe, projected onto the mass of the crowd from which he is separated, from being an aspect of an existential dialectic of becoming, to being projected onto history, to then be equated with all forms of determinism of social life, reification. In the theory of the *dérive* the dominance shifts from the unconscious, from chance, to the ego and to its constructive analysis of urban space. The ludic becomes constructive, and not a subjectin to the aleatory effects of chance - the unconscious. But in this shift the subjective element of the *flâneur* is effaced in favour of an interaction between individuals in a group. Rather than a relation within, to the unconscious as a hidden reservoir, the relation becomes a relation to others. Delirium and intoxication, important aspects of the myth of the *flâneur*, become, in Breton's *Nadja*, causes of the fragmentation of the ego. In the *dérive*, where play is constructive, not the opposite of analysis, intoxication is part of this interaction between members of the group. The theory of the *dérive* proposes that the unconscious, in other words, is a political machine like any other, a force of regulation, and that the subject, the individual only exists as a function of the machinic functioning of the forces of determinism, freedom from which is to be found in the *ludic-constructive*, or intoxicated-analytic activity of the group.

Fables From an Old Almanac: Situationist (Anti-)History

By
Angus McDonald

This article is a development of a talk which ended up opening a partially academic conference at short notice. In developing the article, some hindsight concerning the conference has been indulged - including the truth that the worst received events of the conference were the most "academic" papers, criticised from the floor for their authors' apparent lack of interest in engaging with the people present in the Hacienda. The manner of a talk at a partially academic conference rather than of an academic monograph has been retained, as appropriate to the event and the subject matter.

1) Is it good to talk?

Talking about the situationists, again. What disposition of forces does talking about the situationists, again, give rise to? Those who would rather not talk about the situationists again? Those who would rather talk about the situationists, endlessly. Those bored with the situationists. Those enthused by the situationists. "We are bored with the situationists, we really have to strain to still discover mysteries in the adventures, the latest state of humor and poetry." "Of all the affairs we participate in, with or without

interest, the groping search for a new way of life is the only aspect still impassioning."

Those who would rather not talk about the situationists, again, or for the first time, include those who have had their say before, who consider that they have said all that needs to be said, that any further comment is at best idle chatter, more likely recuperation, and unavoidably betrayal. This includes the situationists of course, but also the early generation of translators, commentators and circulators. This is not to say that they will not talk, but that their talk will consist mainly of admonitions against any readings against the orthodoxy by newer generations of commentators. In this, although the SI disavowed founding a doctrine of Situationism, Debord certainly and unfortunately perpetuated a mode of "debate" - call it the debordesque - assiduously taken up by the disciples (minus the wit). This vow of silence exists to prevent the loss of the original thought in a gloss of annotations and commentaries, and in this is not unworthy.

There is another honourable category who would rather not talk about the situationists, again, and this is those who passing through or playing with situationist ideas once, now do something else, and would rather talk about that.

The final category who would rather not talk about the situationists deserve to be challenged on their silence, however. This is those whose own activities are discredited or devalued or demoralised by the knowledge of the situationists' existence. Those who would rather not acknowledge the challenge the situationists threw down to their activity. In art, in cinema, in philosophy, in critical theory, particularly in the media, there are those who would still rather not talk about the situationists. Including those who may never have heard of them.

Then, it must be good to talk about the situationists again?

That depends on those who want to do so.

There are those who feel that their contact with a moment of the situationist adventure gives them endless indulgence to talk about the situationists again and again. These will inevitably bore us.

There are those who missed it when it happened (wherever and whenever that was) and talking about the situationists now, simply don't get it. These will fail to interest us.

There remain those who find something to say about the situationists. It is best to be as bored with the situationists as they were with the surrealists, as enthused by the situationists as they were by the Watts riots. The topic has the merit of clarifying the merit of the speaker fairly quickly. On this topic, whether you have anything to say or not quite quickly becomes apparent.

On balance then: yes it is good to talk of the situationists, again. The talk will perhaps stimulate some new thoughts, revive some old associations, expose some fools, introduce some new possibilities. On the down side, some more fog may be cast over the ideas, some more banalities repeated, some boredom perpetuated, some opportunities missed, and some egos given an entirely unearned further opportunity to "perform". So what? Lesser dangers than the silence which surrounded the situationists in the times when it was virtually impossible to find anything out about them in the UK, 20 years ago. From nothing to surfeit: the skill then required was to find out scraps in unlikely contexts and try and make a picture with so many pieces missing. Now required is the skill of discriminating through the available comment and information. The inquirer still has to think - as it should be.

2) Reading the traces

The situationist adventure left behind traces. These traces are not the SI, not the adventure. It is only these traces which can be curated. The traces classifiable as Art were curated at the ICA in 1988. The ICA show coincided with an interest in the 20th

anniversary of May 68. Now the traces classifiable as French Culture are curated at the Hacienda in 1996. The Hacienda event coincides with (is prompted by?) an interest sparked by the suicide of Debord. The commentaries of Home and Plant (and with reservations, Marcus) have appeared in the same period, to more immediate usefulness, because they addressed the traces classifiable as Ideas.

This article will use the situationists as a source of Ideas, not as Art or French Culture. Both the ICA and the Hacienda shows ended up addressing the reception of situationist Ideas in the UK, and this is fruitful for opening up an independent path away from the self-abasing assumption of the appropriate role of English commentaries on French Art and Culture (and, indeed, Ideas): to exist only as commentaries. For situationist Ideas followed a path of development in the UK largely independent of the SI, which despite its name was rarely international - or was "international, co-ordinated in Paris". The development of situationist Ideas in the UK has been in large part posthumous to the existence of the organisation. The Ideas are available for use in the world, there is no organisation to join or authority to appeal to for adjudication of disputes over usage. This has been the context of the English-language and the global reception for nearly 25 years. Debord's death changes this very little. Debord was not the SI (except at its most insignificant).

This article investigates the situationist adventure along one axis: the Idea in History. This evidently Hegelian notion is stripped of its teleology and necessity, but still employed for its relevance to an understanding of the Spirit in Time of the force of Ideas.

What were the situationists trying to teach? It is unfortunate indeed that Vaneigem's contribution is in eclipse, and that the English version of his key book never carried a more literal translation of its title. For the answer to the question is contained there: "how to live, for the use of the young generations". That addressee is showing its age, and is in any case unnecessarily

exclusive. The key point is that the situationists undertook to endorse adventures in how to live.

That one adventure might recognise and reverberate with the echoes of other adventures was always to be expected.

Some remarks on the use of situationist thought here and now (Manchester 1996) might be appropriate. The spirit that might benefit most from inquiring of the situationist adventures, we can assume, is one asking the question, "how to live (here and now)?" Any other spirit of enquiry will be academic or frivolous, in any case, beside the point.

The situationist spirit can be further defined as the re-discovery of the stirnerite spirit in which the hegelian project was involuted. All that is conceded to be of interest is weighed only in a reversed perspective of its use to me, rather than my use to the project. The notion of reversal of perspective, again one fruitfully employed by Vaneigem, is one that allows of an understanding of the appropriate spirit in this Idea.

The situationist adventures - now, maybe the plural is more appropriate - must not become objects of sublime awe before which the interpreters abject themselves, nor considered full sets of instructions only requiring implementation. Ask only, can I use this stuff? If you can, use it. If not....

Jackson Mac Low, american poet and anarchist, has said this:

An 'anarchist' does not believe, as some wrongly have put it, in social chaos. He believes in a state of society wherein there is no frozen power structure, where all persons may make significant initiatory choices in regard to matters affecting their own lives... How better to embody such ideas in microcosm than to create works wherein both other human beings and their environments and the world 'in general' are all able to act within the general framework and set of 'rules' given by the poet 'the maker of plots or fables' as Aristotle insists - the poet is preeminently the maker of the plot, the framework - not necessarily of everything that takes place within that framework! The poet creates a situation wherein he invites other persons and the world in general to be co-creators with him! He does not wish to be a dictator but a loyal

co-initiator of action within a free society of equals which he hopes the work will help him bring about.

This, where, as far as I know, Mac Low intends no explicit reference to the SI, gives as expansive a definition as could be hoped for of the spirit in which the situationist game might be engaged. The SI certainly did lay down rules: their collective poetry sought the creation of situations making active participants of hitherto passive spectators. They made plots, they made fables. They related the minutiae of the situations so created to a global critique of society anarchist in content and stirnerite in inspiration (the "free society of equals!"). As well as describing all this so well, Mac Low also prescribes the best approach for us now: co-create the situation. This is the only appropriate employment of the situationist book of games.

Situationist thought now needs to think again about leaving the twentieth century, when it looks as if we will after all, but in a disappointingly docile fashion.

So, the SI: summoning up the subterranean spirit of (resistance to) the 20th century.

From 1996 in an arbitrary fashion decade hopping to detect a vortex. Just trying to make a shape which is not history, but psycho-history. Marcus, amongst others has tried this. But to retell dada/lettrism/punk again would be a bore. Read him by all means. Another strategy informs this. Cut through the twentieth century. Locate a series of points, chosen not because we already identify the situationist spirit at play. Then see whether the points chosen carry any situationist trace anyway. If there is a Spirit in History, find the traces.

Spiral this story. Leave the 20th century for sure, but to the 21st or the 19th?

Maybe we will jump into the 21st after all - if we back up to the 19th for our approach. Or is it a question of losing the 19th century baggage?

3) "Fables from an old almanac"

The Times of the SI: a Situationist Calendar"

In August 1964 an article appeared in the 9th issue of the SI journal called "Now, the SI". The article asserted, "...the situationists already have a history ... and ... a central role in the cultural debates of the last few years."

If that identifies the time of the SI as 1964, other possibilities include 1953, May 1968, the summer of 1976, or tomorrow.

The phase in the reception of situationist ideas that we now find ourselves in correlates to Chtcheglov's phrase, fables from an old almanac^{viii}. By this is intended a number of inferences. There is no longer one chronology of the presence of the situationist spirit. The spirit of the situationists extends backwards and forwards, in fact acts as an orienting device to create its own forebears and successors. There are then many improbable tales to be told.

An almanac lists anniversaries. The old story of the SI has already become a bore. Starting with the almanac, I have used a spirit of arbitrariness (or a formula akin to John Cage's compositional technique) to detect the situationist moment in a series of anniversaries spanning the decades of the twentieth century. To leave this century was always their aim. This I take to mean to break the spirit of this century. It seems we will after all leave the twentieth century under the shadow of the dominance of the society the situationists opposed. What traces have they nonetheless left upon the face of this society?

An almanac, a form of calendar: "calendar" (Kalendae) identifying the dates when interest on debts became due. What debts are incurred by the SI? What debts are due to the SI? (What this conference calls "the legacy" of the SI).

This calendar cannot be a chronology, for the Situationist calendar identifies those moments of Now which attempt to shatter history. When these Now-Times have participated in the

spirit of the SI/when the spirit of the SI has participated in these Now-Times, then the Situationist calendar records a psycho-history which cancels overdue debts. This is akin to the moments of now-time which Walter Benjamin has thought of as those breaks through which redemption could at any moment appear. This seems to fit.

The "anniversaries" are anniversaries of nothing. The mania for marking, for instance, the 20th anniversary of May 68, the 20th anniversary of punk, are of no interest. These are parody anniversaries, like the parody tourism of the surrealists in organising an outing to an arbitrarily selected spot on the map. They are spanned out over the 20th century in ten year gaps, from a basepoint of today to a series of moments. Yet I do not want to make a linear trail through them. More a vortex.

First then, back to the centre of the vortex. Some points for a constellation of the situationist spirit.

From 1996 to 1956: In 1956 the context is the consolidation of an anarchist communist philosophy, a council communism in the face of Hungary. This source gives us the context in which many of us eventually encountered the situationists; through the politics of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, in the work of Castoriadis and Lefort. This break with Cold War polarities, a break also with the politics of Sartre, is a defining moment in clarifying how the history of socialism will be understood by the situationists, and their development of the notion of the bureaucratically administered society. It is the explicit re-assertion of an anarchist tradition, sometimes called ultra-leftism, and the beginning of a critique of marxism worked through hegelian marxist premisses.

This was a politicising of the situation in 1946: the situationists also reached us as the furthest extension of something called existential marxism in postwar France. Sadie Plant's development of the links between the SI and postmodern thought is a useful corrective, but mustn't end up obscuring the originating milieu in which the situationists first adventured. The left bank milieu of every cliché of existentialism: the life lived authentically,

the freedom of Paris, philosophising in the cafe... Artaud out of the asylum, Dubuffet and art brut laying the ground to be developed by Cobra. Debord at his most elegiac is remembering this time^{ix} already with nostalgia in *On the passage of a few persons through a rather brief period in time*: "Here a systematic questioning of all the diversions and works of a society, a total critique of its idea of happiness, was expressed in acts ... No one counted on the future. It would never be possible to be together later, or anywhere else." "The joy and the melancholy of this is the core of the SI adventure.

Combined with the anarchism of Durutti, the Frankfurt thought of Adorno and Benjamin (the Arcades project), the extremity in the face of fascism of Artaud amongst the Tarahumaras, Bataille's *Acéphale* and *College de Sociologie* projects: 1936 is ample in precursors of the adventure.

The surrealism of 1926, Dada/Cabaret Voltaire of 1916: there is no point in this arbitrary tail/tale which does not give up upon examination a part of a family tree which runs through the situationists.

Spinning forward on the axis, the situationists had their first public impact in 1966 with *On the Poverty of student Life* in Strasbourg, in Britain Trocchi was expanding project Sigma into an evolution of situationist inspired counter-culture; in 1976, the situationist spirit gave punk an edge in the realm of Idea it would otherwise have lacked: a presence recognised by those who circulated the pamphlet *The End of Music* a few years later.

In 1986, the subterranean spirit of the situationist is at first glance at a low ebb. In fact a turning point was being reached: alongside the no doubt obscure texts of the Pleasure Tendency, Here and Now, Smile, Third Assault and a few others, the era of isolation where an idea of the absolute uncompromising autonomy of "the SI against an equally monolithic world" was coming to an end in a commentary which began to historicise the SI. Stewart Home and Sadie Plant and others began to connect the SI to other currents before and after.

In 1996, what the old school would have called recuperation continues apace. This conference is the next unavoidable step in contextualising the SI. No one of these efforts can be definitive, and if any attempt is made to make that claim then denunciation must follow, but a proliferation of contexts for connecting the SI to other discussions and struggles is entirely appropriate.

4) From Isolation to Connection

In the shift from isolation to connection, the crucial steps have been the 20th anniversary of the May events of 68, Sadie Plant's book *The Most Radical Gesture*, the ICA show, Greil Marcus's book *Lipstick Traces*, and Stewart Home's book *The Assault on Culture*. The books, it must be said, have been better than might have been feared. This is because they were written by enthusiasts, not for a market interested in the situationists. (We might well expect a decline in quality in the next generation of commentaries.)

All in their different ways mark the transition from isolation to connection. The supporters of the ideas of the SI cannot in the face of these growing commentaries stand aloof from the world as it has done. Home shows there is not one SI, but various factions. He decentres the specto-situationists and reminds us of the Scandinavians. Plant makes the connections to Lyotard and Baudrillard and so to Deleuze and postmodernism clear: not only the SI as existential marxism, but also post structuralism.

These developments demand a better response than simple retrenchment into purity. The SI needed disciples, an oral tradition, in the underground years but no more. Now it needs wit and imagination in the definition of the links worth making.

Is this an end to the notorious combativeness of SI-style polemics, then?

No, it remains to ask why some have rediscovered and commentated and curated on the SI after the years of silence. Who can speak on this topic remains worth arguing about. Peter

Wollen for instance, central to the ICA show, never managed to call Debord to mind in all the years of praising the radicality of Godard in film theory: nothing to say about Debord's films then.

Or Philippe Sollers, touchingly evoking Debord in *Watteau in Venice*, so little wish to talk about the SI in the high era of structural poetics. What is it with these ex-Maoists?

That connection and visibility is now inevitable does not mean an abdication of taste and judgment. No one SI, no one history, but some stories are still better than others.

Even amongst the anecdotes, some are better than others: this one is insufficiently told: Debord, dressed as a victorian schoolgirl, "orally pleasures the actor Bouyxou, who is himself dressed as Marie Antoinette, in an anonymous super 8mm short film made in the 1960's", according to Cathal Tohill's book on cinema, *Immoral Tales*.

But as Home pointed out vis-a-vis Johnny Rotten and Greil Marcus reducing the punk moment to one person and elevating that person to unique status sets the terrain for a very reactionary and mystificatory rhetoric of individual genius.

In this context connecting the SI to the rest of the world is only one development. Also fracturing the SI is important. Just as surrealism is Breton and Artaud and Bataille, the SI is also Vaneigem and Jorn and Trocchi...

No need really to take sides in the various excommunications. Nor to take the view that the last one left standing won all the fights. Back into the detail by all means, but back to develop some of the incomplete adventures, wouldn't that be one way to leave the 20th century?

5) a thought in conclusion.

The whole evolution of situationist thought has never broken out of the tale first told in the development of young hegelian thought culminating in 1846. The Feuerbachian influence on the theory of spectacle is obvious. Marx dominates that group, yet in many ways the most influential yet subterranean moment of that

thought was Stirner. Stirner's thought has gained attention more recently in connection with Derrida's book on the spectres of Marx. The connection to emphasise now may well be the situationists as a development of Stirner's project. The SI also provide a way to re-enter the 19th century: to take the debates of the historical socialist and anarchist movements as something not yet finished with, something untimely, yet precisely for that reason necessary to recall to understand what is out of time in our own times.

My emphasis here has to some extent been against situationist thought as a site for a purely academic activity, but in other contexts, taking them as seriously as they would expect was their right has to be encouraged. The point is to find ways to continue to find the SI interesting - it cannot happen under the banner of the SI which has not existed since 1972, it can only happen by the combinations and mutual influences of SI thoughts loose in the world.

Those who touch these ideas may be surprised to find how many others are touched by them and honour them in their lives and thoughts. If this means that some are over-protective, at least the motive should be understood - this stuff is precious. It is also appropriately something that transcends commodity exchange: the SI is a gift which proliferates every time someone passes it on. No one intended this, but we have behind our backs created a community, one which abhors the current use of the term, dispersed and fragmented but not isolated, one which nonetheless finds itself surprised in its ability to refer to - us.

Documents

Non tengamos tiempo ya
en esta vida mesqujina
por tal modo
que mj voluntad esta
conforme con la djuna
para todo
Jorge Manrique

From Being to Nothingness

By
Andrew Hussey and Gavin Bowd

The hamlet of Champot in Haute Loire does not appear on many maps; the granite plateaux of the Auvergne, and, higher up still, the dense and impenetrable woods, make this a hostile place. Despite a meagre influx of disaffected hippies who fled Paris or Lyons in the early seventies to scratch a living from the poor land, this lonely corner of France has been for years a byword for depopulation and rural wretchedness. The emptiness and silence of Champot is a long way from the clamour of the Paris, where Guy Debord, theoretician of the Situationist International, inspiration behind sundry forms of art terrorism from punk rock to Damien Hirst, and author of *The Society of the Spectacle*, had spent most of his life in arguments and in bars. But it was where, racked by depression, he killed himself on November 30th 1994.

Debord was remembered by his Auvergnat neighbours, generally considered by the French a clannish and surly race, as an especially austere figure even by their own tough standards. The last person to see and speak to Debord was a local stonemason from Bellevue-la-Montagne who had been called to the house to repair wind damage, and to build the farmhouse walls even higher. He heard the facts of Debord's death with an indifferent shrug. 'It wasn't normal the way he hid himself away,' he said. And indeed Debord had spent nearly a decade in the farmhouse he shared with his companion Alice Becker-Ho, drinking, playing endless war games, and ruminating on the victory of the 'spectacular society' he had predicted and hated (One of his disciples, Carlo Freccero, had become head of Silvio Berlusconi's

media empire and claimed that Debord had taught him all he knew).

It was several days before details of Debord's suicide reached Paris. When the news arrived, the French media, 'the spectacle' against which Debord had waged such an implacable war, accorded him the status of one of the great thinkers of the age. Philippe Sollers, the most influential and noisy figure on the Parisian intellectual scene, appraised Debord's suicide as a 'postmodern' gesture of defiance, drew a comparison with Antonin Artaud's description of Van Gogh as a 'suicide of society' and asked young people to make sure 'they heard the sound of the gunshot which killed him and realised its revolutionary significance'.

But Debord's death also stimulated the Parisian appetite for gossip and conspiracy. It was noted that no Parisian journalist had seen Debord's body; and in Bellevue-la-Montagne, villagers remembered that Monsieur Debord had been visited by the police in his farmhouse only days before his suicide. Adding grist to the rumour mill, two further suicides followed in the next weeks: the writer Roger Stéphane and the bookseller Gérard Voitey, both intellectuals and both associates of Debord. Conspiracy theorists began to talk of terrorism, murder and manipulation; they, like the obituaries in *Le Figaro* and *Libération*, recalled the unsolved murder, ten years earlier of Debord's patron and publisher Gérard Lébovici. Other, more restrained commentators pointed to Debord's alcoholism, Voitey's financial problems and the despair that overwhelmed Stéphane, and blamed the spiritual and political malaise afflicting Mitterand's France. On one thing they were agreed: there was a sickness afoot: was it social, or criminal, in origin? In death, as in life, Debord and mystery walked hand in hand.

On the face of it, the refined, rarefied world of Roger Stéphane had little in common with the paranoia that surrounded Debord and his inner circle. Although only ten years older than Debord, Stéphane belonged to the generation of Gide, Malraux and Cocteau and liked to present himself to the world as an

avuncular, fogeyish figure. He was held in high regard - he had won the prestigious Prix Sainte-Beuve - but his novels, with their delicate, intimate portraits of mandarin society, had a small readership. He was best known and best loved for the television programmes he made in the Sixties and for his gentle probing interviews with leading politicians and writers. Although formerly a passionate Marxist and distinguished *résistant*, he was patrician in his manner, an aesthete who always wore a red spotted bowtie, had written an elegaic book about TE Lawrence and who was openly and happily in love with the young men he collected around him. Yet just five days after Debord's suicide Stéphane too killed himself.

At first no connection was made between the two deaths. But then, on 7 December 1994, came reports of the suicide of Gerard Voitey, director and publisher of Editions Quai Voltaire and owner of the bookshop of the same name. An amiable fan of the *non-intello* joys of rugby and Elvis Presley, Voitey published mainly travel books, and translations of Paul Bowles and Evelyn Waugh. Most recently, however, his imprint had been responsible for three novels by Roger Stéphane. The first reports of Voitey's death, in *Le Figaro*, said that he had died in hospital after smashing his car up. But within hours - and against his family's wishes - policereported that Voitey had been found in his car in a wood near Chantilly and had shot himself with a 38 calibre pistol just above his right ear.

As soon as this became public knowledge, the deaths of Voitey, Debord and Stéphane were linked - *Le Figaro* first made the connection in its December 8 issue. Fuel was added to the fire by the author Denis Tillinac who had dined with Voitey on the night of the publisher's death. The pair met in La Méditerranée, a lively and suitably middlebrow establishment on Place de L'Odéon. Voitey, says Tillinac, was agitated and nervous. 'He was disturbed by the suicide of his friend. He said, 'I just can't see Guy with a bullet in his head. I just can't see it'' With Voitey, as with Debord, there was a Lebovici connection; it was soon revealed that after Lebovici's murder had been killed, Voitey had temporarily taken over the Champ Libre publishing house. He was

encouraged to buy the business by Debord and Lebovici's widow, but turned down the opportunity; nevertheless, he had continued quietly to invest in Champ Libre, using it to prop up other businesses he was involved in; these, unfortunately, were kept going by an uneasy mixture of hubris and fraud.

Much the same might have been said of Guy Debord, who had always combined revolutionary zeal with a taste for high life and financial intrigue. Although he revelled in Parisian bas quartires, preferring the windowless dive *Chez Julienne* on the rue Dauphine to the clean new Paris of La Défense and *Le Fast Food*. Debord was fascinated by maverick businessmen like Voitey or Lebovici. They, in turn, as unrepentant *soixante huitards* were dazzled by Debord's uncompromising uncompromising rhetoric. Debord lived life with a certain grandeur; although, as he proudly observed, he had never done a day's work in his life. Auvergnat villagers told journalists of Rolls Royces parked outside Debord's house and of lavish drinking parties with Parisian guests; it was reported too that Debord, spent months at a time in an exquisite manor house in Normandy where he entertained in lordly style; and Voitey and Stephane, both admirers of the classical precision of Debord's writing would often dine with him and drink his *grand crus* at a plush residence in the rue du Bac - a residence owned by Debord's brother-in-law, an antique dealer, and the place where the revolutionary zealot was happy to lodge when in Paris. It was a style appreciated by Gerard Lebovici.

Until he was murdered in the early spring of 1984, Gerard Lebovici was one of the most flamboyant figures on the Parisian media scene. Lebovici, or *le roi lebo* as he liked to be known, was an energetic and charismatic man, who, as producer and impresario, styled himself the 'godfather' of French cinema'. He deserved the sobriquet: he dined and drank in the company of Yves Montand and Jean-Paul Belmondo, he made deals with television companies; he cut a swathe through the world of high finance,

He was also, in the best Parisian tradition, a political radical with a rakish and bohemian edge. As an unrepentant *soixante-*

huitard, Lebovici founded and directed Champ Libre, a ferociously iconoclastic Left-wing publishing house, which published, amongst other things, Guy Debord's *Contre le cinema*. Lebovici was also on friendly or even intimate terms with many of the wilder elements on the French Left, people like Debord, and others who had advocated violent revolution in 1968. More specifically, he had a taste for intrigue. He liked to imply that he knew dangerous people: he openly boasted that his Italian wife, Floriana, had once worked for Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, the wealthy Italian playboy, publisher and Red Brigade terrorist who had blown himself up with one of his own bombs in 1972; his most successful publication in 1984 was the memoirs of the notorious underworld figure Jacques Mesrine, appositely entitled *L'instinct de mort*. Nonetheless, it was, for *le tout Paris*, an horrific shock when Lebovici's body was found riddled with bullets, in an underground car park near the Champs Elysees.

No matter that Lebovici was doing lucrative and dangerous business with the underworld; no matter that there were other suspects, liken those associates of Jacques Mesrine who felt they had been hard done by in the book Lebovici had published; the French Press preferred to lay suspicions at an unlikely door; that of Guy Debord.

The newspapers bristled with theories. The tabloid end of the market - *VSD* and *Paris-Match* - all but accused Debord of murder, describing him as a avengeful and murderous Leftist guru who, once crossed by his disciples had no hesitation in summoning up the dark forces of Far Left terrorism to exterminate them. Publications ranging from the mainstream *Journal du Dimanche* to the communist run *L'Humanite* added their tuppence worth: that there was no recently published photo of Debord meant that he was trying to avoid the public gaze. That he had never had a job in his life meant that he was an agent financed by Moscow gold. That he was married to Alice Becker-Ho showed his role in a plot involving People's China and shady Hong Kong antiques dealers. That he maintained an active interest in Italian politics proved that he was connected to the Red Brigades. Spy,

crook and terrorist, Debord was a 'gimcrack Mephisto' who had drawn Lebovici into his murky and deadly world.

"Never," protested Debord, "have so many false witnesses surrounded a man so obscure." This was to protest too much; having modelled himself on Machiavelli and Saint Just, Debord had, over the years, purposely cultivated an image as a hardheaded, ruthless revolutionary. Indeed, at the height of Debord's influence over the Situationist International, Alex Trocchi said of him: 'If Guy had had guns then, he would have used them, and first of all on those who were once his friends.'

Debord's ability to both appal and fascinate were the distinguishing features of his career. Born in Paris in 1931, Debord first came to a kind of prominence amidst the turbulence of the Parisian Avant-Garde scene in the 1950s. His first association was with the Lettristes, a floating group of 'delinquent intellectuals' led by the megalomaniac Romanian poet Isidore Isou; he - and they set - their faces against the serious and intense mood of a Paris in which Sartre, Camus and their hangers-on postured endlessly in debate. Debord attacked the shibboleths of work, art and leisure with an iconoclastic fury. These ideas were worked out at cafe tables across Paris, in a blur of alcohol, tobacco smoke and a furious desire to create moments of poetic intensity, or 'situations', which stood in direct opposition to the mediocre comforts of the new consumerism. Inspired by De Quincey's intoxicated peregrinations around London and Manchester, he and such like minds as his then girlfriend Michele Berstein and Asger Jorn practised the *dérive*, a poetic game in the course of which the drifted drunkenly around Paris inventing their own city. In 1957, in a bar in the Italian village of Cosio d'Arroscia, the Situationist International was founded in a week of sprawling drunkenness and free love.

Petulance and jealousy were to be the dominant forces in shaping the Situationist International, which, with its congresses and declarations, in fact never numbered more than thirty members at any one time. The mood of the organization was far from brotherly; excommunications occurred with a vicious frequency.

Along with his friend and collaborator, Raoul Vaneigem, Debord was intransigent in his insistence on total cultural revolution. But if Vaneigem was the Romantic who taught his lycee class while wearing a tutu and was finally sacked for offering practical courses in sexuality to his students, Debord was a hardnosed strategist whose theories looked beyond the promises of liberation inherent in such slogans as *Abolish Work* and *Power to the Imagination*. Indeed, the Situationist International anticiapted 'the events' of May 1968. But once the barricades had been cleared from the streets, and de Gaulle's party voted back into power, May soon appeared to be another failed revolutionary insurrection. The SI was initially buoyed up by the May events that it had anticipated and animated. But Debord found that the SI belonged to a historical moment that had passed. It was also attracting the type of adherent who would not think for himself, but instead looked to hierarchy and the sacred thought of a leader. It was in order to save the essence of revolt that Debord and his remaining comrades dissolved the SI in 1972.

He had already quit Paris. It was no longer the city he had loved and in which he had practiced the poetic game of the *dérive*, drifting through the magical, splendid chaos of Les Halles markets and bars. For after May 68, Paris itself came under assault from the developers. Les Halles were ripped out of the heart of Paris, leaving a gaping hole that would eventually be filled by a shopping mall. Property prices shot up, pushing out towards the suburbs the once revolutionary Parisian working class. Debord wrote: "I think this city was ravaged slightly before all the others because its neverending attempts at revolution had always worried and shocked the world too much." The dictatorship of the automobile carved out polluted passageways which threw up obstacles to any *dérive*. "When you see the banks of the Seine, you see our problems: all you find there now are busy columns from an anthill of motorised slaves." From 1970 onwards, Guy Debord took his leave of Paris and headed for the French countryside and foreign cities. Apart from writing an anonymous, though influential, pamphlet on the state of Italian capitalism in the mid seventies, he withdrew from the world of publication.

It was in this period, though, that Guy Debord became closely associated with Lebovici - indeed, the few films he had made were shown more or less continually to small band of devotees and the curious in the Studio Cujas in St.Germain, a tiny Left Bank cinema owned by Lebovici. After Lebovici's assassination, Debord returned to the published domain to refute the lies put about by the journalists. If they found him 'enigmatic', he claimed, it was simply because he refused to join the media circus which lined the pockets of mediocre intellectuals. Debord portrayed himself as a man with no regrets, who had never sought 'success'. He asserted his love for food, drink, women and lucid thought, and reiterated those dislikes which made him so unbearably troublesome: work, the media, parliamentary democracy, conformism of any kind. More petulantly, he initially insisted that none of his films should ever be shown again. More pertinently, he fought libel actions against *Journal du Dimanche* and *Paris-Match* and won substantial damages; other papers apologised and withdrew their allegations. He produced a pamphlet, *Considerations sur l'assassinat de Lebovici*, and republished it in 1993 together with *Cette Mauvaise Reputation*. In both, he implied that Lebovici had been killed as part of a conspiracy, possibly involving the Mafia and state forces of reaction; he too, he was at pains to point out, was the target of an international conspiracy involving Rupert Murdoch, the CIA, *The Times*, *The Village Voice* and other deadly agents of the Spectacle.

None of these elliptical and occasionally threatening tracts did much to dispel the atmosphere of danger that surrounded Debord. In the wake of his suicide, of course, they positively flew out of the shops, fuelling rumpurs of secret dealings and political scores being settled. Coupled with the deaths of Voitey and Stephane, the affair took on a life of its own. For Parisian radical circles, it summoned up a *nostalgie de 68* -as well as darker memories of clandestine operations in the Seventies when soured revolution turned to terror.

The truth is less mysterious, though no less compelling. In the first place, there is no reason to believe that Debord's grief and

fury at his friend Lebovici's death were anything other than real, and every reason to be sure that Debord neither had - nor could have -any influence whatsoever on Lebovici's murder. The simple reason for this is that, by the early eighties, Debord was a chronic drunk; as he wrote in one of his last books: "Of the small number of things which I have liked and done well, drinking is by far the the thing I have done best. Although I have read a lot, I have drunk more. I have written much less than most people who write; but I have drunk more than the majority of the people who drink." Drunkenness offered Debord relief from the nightmare of the spectacle: "a magnificent and terrible peace, the real taste of the passage of time." Debord was a drinker for as long as he was a rebel: "it is fact that I was continually drunk for periods of several months on end; and, in between, I drank a lot' As a result, he had dissipated any of the intellectual sway he might have once held over radical groups. He was considered by militants, most notably Action Directe, then the most fearsome terrorist group in France, to be a failure and was associated by them with the collapse of 1968. Carlo Freccero, the top executive for Berlusconi, says that neither the academic world, nor the world of radical terror would take Debord seriously. Freccero wondered whether the news of his death was real or simulacrum, and decided it was an inevitability: 'Perhaps only death could free Debord from the invisible cage he as in, and that the spectacle has built around us'

Debord was effectively a slow suicide, brought down by the failure of his revolutionary ambitions and despair. Although his friends are polite about his alcoholism, Debord himself flaunted his condition first of all as an obstinate refusal of the bourgeois world, and then as a mark of martyrdom. From the early eighties onwards alcoholic depression blurs Debord's icy wit and blunts the precision of his writing. In the end he was crippled and in pain from peripheral neuritis, a terminal condition induced by alcoholism and which burns away the nerve ends leaving no sensation in the hands, feet or face. By November 1994, Debord's condition had worsened to an intolerable extent: he wrote in a final letter to Brigitte Cornand 'With all incurable disease, there is nothing to be learned from acceptance or resignation'.

It is, too, unlikely that Stephane's death was precipitated by grief for Debord, whose appetite for self-destruction had long ceased to appall his friends. Although the loss of a near contemporary and a friend would certainly have depressed Stephane, he acted always with a studied seriousness: there is no reason to disbelieve his assertion that France was sick, that the Mitterrand generation had won, French political and intellectual life was in its death throes. Stephane left an elegant and precise suicide note in which he apologized to his friends for his brutal departure, and quoted Gide's dying words 'c'est difficile de s'en aller'; Jean d'Ormesson, the most mandarin of contemporary French writers, described his friend as being possessed of a 'lucid serenity'. It was a cutting, and perhaps fatal irony that Stephane, in a television programme in 1964 had been the first to ask Mitterrand about his Vichy years. As for Voitey, he was terrified of imminent bankruptcy. (The best explanation for the Lebovici affair is not the one offered by the police or the press, but by those who knew the extent of Lebovici's dealings with the underworld. At the time of his death, Lebovici was involved in a face-off with a Parisian cartel which specialised in porn videos. Two days before his death, 15 members of the cartel were arrested; Lebovici, who was setting up his own video operation with money derived from the sex shop trade, was suspected of tipping off the police. His reward: six bullets in the back of the neck).

The suicides of Roger Stephane, Guy Debord and Gerard Voitey may have nothing to do with political revenge or vendetta; they are, nonetheless, connected in the larger sense of weariness and grief. These emotions were rooted not just in personal loss, but also as Stephane indicated in his suicide note, in a feeling that French public and political life is rotting away from the inside. Guy Debord's final testament bears the same message: the film *Guy Debord - son art et son temps* presents an apocalyptic vision of France and takes as its central metaphor the notion of a cancer drifting down the rue de Buci, creeping across the Pont Neuf and eating away the heart of Paris.

As the rumours about Debord, Stephane and Voitey have circulated around Paris, the past years has also seen the suicides of

two distinguished philosophers: Sarah Kofman and Gilles Deleuze. Kofman killed herself in a fit of depression over wartime memories, while Deleuze, tormented by illness, flung himself from the window of his Paris flat. It is curious that neither of these deaths was noted with either surprise or shock, only mild regret; suicide is now an accepted way out, part of the cultural climate in France.

But one story has prompted shock. It has been reported that in a final act of vainglory, Francois Mitterrand intends to be buried on the ancient battleground where Vercingetorix made his final stand against the Romans. This has provoked disgust in those who see the Mitterrand years as the cause and effect of the fatigue which has effectively paralysed French political life. Prime Minister Juppe may currently be in trouble, but the centre-right holds the imagination of the French middle-classes and looks likely to do so for a long time; the French Socialist party, it seems, has committed suicide. In the twelve months since Stephane, Debord and Voitey put an end to themselves, even sober commentators - men who eschew conspiracy theories - have come to see the suicides as emblematic of a generation which not only lost its nerve on the brink of revolution, but, in a wider and more despairing sense than the Sex Pistols could ever have imagined, could quite literally see no future.

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10 December 1995*

THE HAÇIENDA MUST BE BUILT
On the legacy of Situationist revolt.

The Haçienda

'We will wreck this world...'

Saturday 27th January

11.00 Pascal Dumontier (author of *Les situationnistes et mai '68*):
'L'internationale situationniste comme sujet et comme représentation'
Gilles Tordjman (journalist *Libération* and *Les Inrockuptibles*)
'Réfutations de quelques jugements récemment portés sur Guy Debord et ses livres'

Chair: Professor David Bellos (Prix Goncourt de la biographie 1994:
Georges Perec: Une vie dans les mots)

13-14h LUNCH-own arrangements

14.00 Un film de Brigitte Cornand
Guy Debord, son art et son temps [version originale]

16.00 Ralph Rumney: 'The 1996 London Psychogeographical Committee Report on
Cosio d'Arroscia [film]'; 'Some remarks concerning the Indigence of post-Situationist
in their attempts to recuperate the past'. [film]

18.00 Jamie Reid: 'Shamanarchy': A spectacle.

Sunday 28th January

11.00 [fifth man]

Richard Hooker (University of Glasgow): 'We have a situation here, Lewis':
Situationism and Recuperation.

Lucy Forsyth (University of Central Lancashire): The supersession of the SI'
Philip Edwards (University of Salford): 'The Haçienda must be destroyed'

Chaired by Nikos Papastergiadis (University of Manchester)

13-14h LUNCH-own arrangements

14.00 Situationist Fallout: Punk Rock, New Wave and the end of the world'
A discussion with Anthony H. Wilson (*Factory Records*), Jon King (*Gang of
Four*), Jamie Reid (*Sex Pistols*), Mark E Smith (*The Fall*), Stewart Home
(author of *The Assault on Culture*).

16.00 h [Fifth Man] Gus Macdonald (Here and Now): 'Fables from an old almanac-the
time of VSI, a situationist calendar.'

Patrick French (UCL, Author of *The Time of Theory*): 'Dérives'

Len Bracken (Washington DC): 'Perspectives on revolutionary strategy and
Debord's game of war'.

Chaired by Jeremy Stubbs [Co-editor of *AURA: A journal of the Avant-
Garde*, University of Manchester]

[Main dancefloor]

Stewart Home (Author of *Cranked Up Really High*)

Fabian Tompsett (London Psychogeographical Association): 'Magic and
materialism in the millenarian tradition'

Ben Watson (Author of *Frank Zappa and the Negative Dialectics of poodle play*)

Sadie Plant (Author of *The most radical gesture*; Nick Land (Author of
Georges Bataille); and anonymous company., Swarmachines'; Chaired by

Andrew Hussey (co-editor of *AURA: A journal of the Avant-garde*,
University of Huddersfield)

Organized with the help of L'Ambassade de France, University of
Huddersfield, University of Manchester.

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Française
Manchester



Situationist Fallout: Punk Rock, New Wave and the End of the World

A discussion involving Mark E Smith, Anthony H Wilson, Jon King and Stewart Home.

MES: So what's Situationism, Tony?

AHW: Malcolm McLaren thought it would be a Situationist act to create a band which would be massive simply because they were disgusting, and had no value in themselves. But...

MES: Forget all the pop shit. You got me here to speak about Situationists.

AHW: No, I didn't.

MES: See, that's a typical Situationist reply.

AHW: No, Mark, you were invited probably because in your attitude, demeanour, philosophy and activity...

MES: So this is Situationism? A sort of sub-psychiatry.

AHW: Mark, you are a Situationist but you don't know it.

MES: How do you mean?

AHW: You follow your own will. You do what you want.

MES: So that's all this philosophy means?

AHW: Look, I just like the slogans. I'll tell you the slogan I like. In 1969, as a child of the Left, I went down to London for a meeting of the IS. It was the most horrendous evening of my life. But there I found an image taken from *The return of the Duruti Column*. It has two cowboys talking to one another. One asks what the other thinks about reification...

MES: The Stalinists did that better...

AHW: Autonomia in Italy were good, but the Situationists were funnier.

MES: Look, the thing about you Situationists, is that you go into a situation, and you just leave it, you don't work at it. You put people in a situation, and then just piss off with your bloody degrees. Richard Branson's a Situationist.

AHW: No, he's fucking not!

MES: Richard Branson signs 115 bands and then sacks them when he's bored with it. Now, that's not art in my estimation. What's the difference between the Situationists and bloody Prince Charles? You just put people in situations, then bugger off.

AHW: Look, Mark, it's about anarchy. Do you know what that means?

MES: It's: go down to fucking 10 Downing Street if you want to do something about it.

AHW: Yes, that's right.

MES: You take the IRA. They've done nothing positive. They just fuck up working-class people's lives.

AHW: I think you'll find that the Situationists were the most anti-IRA. Mark, we can all sit here and have a laugh, but anarchy means something. It's a term like conservatism or republicanism.

MES: But you'll still keep the chair. You remind me of Stalin at Yalta.

AHW: Anarchy's the complete fucking opposite of that. Look, I'll buy you a book on Buonaventura Durutti, which will explain to you what it means. No leaders--which is a dichotomy, because we always need leaders--no hierarchy. Make men fight through belief in themselves, not military discipline. Look, I'm a fan, and I just use slogans and references.

MES: See, you just keep changing the subject. The Situationists keep going around from art to politics to pop music...

JK: It's difficult to follow all that. What I found most interesting was not to be passive. I was attracted by the Situationist ideas of voyeurism, passivity, postponement, denial. And I wanted to create a music that meant action, non-postponement and involvement. For the cover of *Entertainment*, we used a comic strip depicting a cowboy and Indian shaking hands and speaking about the exploitative nature of their relationship. Now, I lived in Leeds, where there is a lot of Neo-Fascist architecture. For the cover of one of our records, we used a postcard of the town hall which carried the words; "The building towers above the pavement, dwarfing the people into insignificance. Wouldn't it be good to gild it? They probably could have afforded it in those days." And I thought that was a great example of a thing describing itself. In Leeds, I also carried around with me a Vichy French franc coin that carried the words "Work, Family, Country": a wonderful example of a State describing itself as it really was. The only interesting thing about this event is going away and doing things. Talking in pubs is circular. What matters is doing things.

MES: What, like the Gang of Four?

JK: I suppose we did.

MES: No, I mean the Chinese Gang of Four. They killed ten million people.

JK: I have no sympathy for these people. The Gang of Four is just a phrase, that was used by the Liberal Democrats.

MES: That's going back a bit.

JK: Yes it is. The good old days. And, of course, we have the religious name of your band, which refers to Adam and Eve. It is interesting to have with us today a religious extremist...I came into contact with guys from *Art and Language*, which the Situationists weren't interested in. They booked a poster site in Newcastle, where they put up a Vichy poster. It had a Nazi head with, below it, workers carrying spanners. It read: "Il donne son sang. Donnez votre travail." I think we should have a whiparound and book poster sites throughout the country. The poster should have a big NATO helmet and say: "He gives his blood; give your work, or non-work"...Basically, I wanted to make music that was totally different and not easy to listen to.

MES: Is that why you tried to pinch my bass-player in San Francisco in 1983?

JK: It was worth a try...We had two records banned by the BBC: "At home he's a tourist", in 1978, then "I love a man in uniform". Now, I feel miffed at not making lots of money, but it gave you a sense of pleasure to know you had done something objectionable.

SH: I got into punk after seeing the Sex Pistols on Tony's TV programme. I was 14 at the time, and switched on to see Mott the Hoople. It had a terrible effect on me. Now, if we take genre theory from Marxist film theory and apply it to punk, we see that the Sex Pistols were not a punk band. Of course, it can be said that in 1976, the Sex Pistols were classified as punk, but that now, if you go into a record shop, they are in the rock section: there are different socially-negotiated ways in which the Pistols can be defined. From the perspective of musicology, we can contest the punk nature of the Sex Pistols. If we listen to Johnny Rotten's lyrics, they are expressive, not monotone. The records are over-produced and not recorded on a four-track. If you listen to the drumming, it's pretty much meat-and-potatoes rock n' roll. *Never Mind the Bollocks* is not a punk record.

But we can't get away from history and the supposed connections between punk and the Situationists. Jamie Reid, if he was here, would say that he liked the slogans, but didn't understand the texts. There is the historical myth that Malcolm McLaren and Jamie Reid were in King Mob in the early seventies. Now, that is difficult to prove, as King Mob did not have an organised membership, but King Mob were part of the anarchist freak scene in Notting Hill. King Mob did contain people who had been the British section of the Situationists, but who were expelled because of their links with the Motherfuckers. If you read issues 2 1/2 and 3 of *King Mob*, you see that they are eulogies to the Motherfuckers. They based themselves on the Motherfuckers: for instance, going into Selfridge's dressed as Santa Claus and giving out toys to kids, then being arrested by the police. The Motherfuckers had already done this in New York.

MES: Who are these Motherfuckers?

SH: You should read my books, *Cranked up really high*, and a new selection of my essays, which are on sale in this hall. Plug, plug, plug. The Motherfuckers demonstrated against art exhibitions. They would advertise that there was free booze, then loads of tramps would turn up at art openings.

MES: Are there any other bands you like?

SH: I like Panasonic, if you're into Finnish techno.

AHW: If you look at the intersections between British pop and Situationism, you see that we are responsible for references to and popularisation of Situationist ideas. Malcolm and Jamie wanted to do something interventionist and failed. Because the Sex Pistols turned out to be a fabulous band, whatever fucking genre they're in. I think that the only truly Situationist act in British pop music was Malcolm's ex-partner, Fred and Judy Vermorel's beautiful, glossy book on Kate Bush, which can still be found in Virgin shops.

MES: Are you serious, Tony?

AHW: I'm more serious than you've ever seen me, Mark!

SH: You have to buy my books.

AHW: I think that shows how little we understand what we're talking about.

SH: No, they took all their ideas from me. You see, this is all to do with historicisation. The Situationists needed a stalking-horse in popular culture, and punk

provided it, even if they would denounce punk. Punk gave them an *entrée* into the mainstream media.

MES: So, basically, you're taking the piss out of the working class.

SH: No, I'm taking the piss out of the bourgeoisie.

MES: You end up like bloody KLF.

SH: KLF are attacking the art establishment.

AHW: I think KLF wanted to be artists. I'm not sure about burning the million pounds...

MES: That was easy. You just use a photocopier.

AHW: But I liked what they did on an icy field off the M4. Blackmailing that idiot woman at the Tate to come out. And the Channel 4 team running around like scalded chickens trying to get rid of the advert.

MES: If you piss around like that, you dilute art.

AHW: Yes, you dilute it, until it washes away.

MES: But then you become like a Chinese Russian or Soviet.

SH: how do we define art?

MES: It's not bloody KLF.

AHW: yes, it *is*, Mark. It *is*. ...The rock scene has played a big role in popularising these ideas. Whatever you think of him, Greil Marcus's writings have kept interest alive. And that all comes from Factory Records enclosing the horseman sticker in a record we sent him. Greil stuck it on his cassette player for three years, until he wondered where the fuck it came from.

MES: There you go talking about the past.

AHW: but it leads to the present, to the KLF.

MES: We're talking about the bleeding past. Art is timeless, it never stops. You've got to carry on.

JK: I agree. What matters is that people should do things.

MES: There are a lot of fellows who go on about the old days. It's a kind of mid-aged crisis. I find this objectionable.

JK: Yeah, teddy boys and zoot suits.

MES: I always thought being a Situationist meant the *now*.

SH: The Situationists dissolved themselves in 1973 or 72. They're not going anymore.

MES: Good.

AHW: This is a museum, Mark...I'm thinking about the most shocking band of recent times, who played on this stage, the Happy Mondays. Were they anarchist interventionists? Mark, I've always wanted to ask you: why did you try to stop me putting out their records? You left a message on my answerphone in 1990, saying: "Tony, this has got to stop." I've always wanted to know what time of the morning it was, and what you meant.

MES: It was probably five o'clock. I wanted the video back of my play. You were plagiarising me.

AHW: Did you think that we were corrupting society?

MES: I objected to upper middle-class kids pretending to come from Salford.

AHW: The Happy Mondays were lower working-class.

MES: Who cares?

AHW: it was you who brought it up, you dick!

JK: Why are you here, Mark?

MES: I was a last-minute addition. I thought we were going to talk about French writers.

AHW: It could be because you, as a typical British pop star, embody these undercurrents. You do what the fuck you like, and you're objectionable.

MES: Maybe, Tony, you wanted to be a pop star?

AHW: Never, I'm musically incapable. I'm a journalist.

MES: And I just like to write.

SH: So you want to be a writer?

MES: Have you met any writers?

SH: I *am* a writer. I've published four novels, on sale at £5.95 over there...

AHW: Mark, do you "drift"?

MES: What do you mean?

AHW: Do the streets coax you down?

MES: Mind your own business!

The debate moves to the floor. A question is asked by Professor David Bellos.

DB: Can you explain to me why you called this place The Hacienda, and whether the spirit of Situationism lives on in it?

AHW: I didn't find the name. I would give to all my employees the little green book, *Leaving the Twentieth Century*. One day, my partner, Rob Grettan was wondering, "what the fuck are we going to call this place"? He opened the book at Chtcheglov's essay, and saw the phrase, "The Hacienda must be built".

DB: That is an anecdote about how you found the name, but does it have any meaning?

AHW: No, not at all... We were looking for a name for the bar over there. We were attracted by the anarchist idea of pantheons of heroes. The Angry Brigades considered Kilby (sic) and Burgess to be great class traitors, comedians of the twentieth century.

MES: You find that funny? Two of my schoolfriends were killed by them.

AHW: Tough!

MES: what, Blunt hanging around with the Queen? Is that Situationist?

AHW: At Cambridge, the Angry Brigades had the Kim Philby luncheon club...

MES: They were pissheads, traitors.

AHW: Exactly... we called our can bar "Hicks", after Burgess's code-name.

MES: Blunt was showing the Queen paintings while my best mates were being tortured to death.

AHW: That's class war.

MES: Class war? Looks like the upper class fighting the working class...

JK: We should remember that a lot of bands took Situationist ideas seriously, and forwent commercial success. Raul Vaneigem's book changed a lot my way of seeing things: stealing slogans through *détournement*, disrupting clichés.

AHW: although there was nothing in the books to guide us, I wonder how much Factory records was influenced by this world of thought. We were the only record company which did not own the music. Because of the contracts we signed in blood in 1979, we had no control over our back catalogue, which meant that when Factory ran into trouble four years ago, we had no assets. I wonder if this circle of thought led us to do something so stupid...and hysterical.

The discussion drifts onto Revolution...

SH: If we look at things historically, we see that those who made revolutions were all in their forties and fifties. Our society is trying to get rebellion out of the young before they can do real damage.

JK: According to a Situationist text, *Misery of Student Life*, the young have no economic value, no stake in the system. They can therefore be dangerous.

AHW: But kids today have loads of money. They are a big economic force. And they refuse to be brow-beaten into being selfish... I think it's very strange, living in the nineties, after the end of history and of the Left, to look back at the sixties and seventies. Then, we were going around with Marxist and Anarchist slogans, unaware that they were bizarrely opposed. It was one of the tragedies of modern politics. When Bakunin was expelled from the International, the link was broken between community and individualism. From then on, the Left was fucked. It's why the Wall came down. Because we're all individuals.

MES: No, it's because they ran out of money.

SH: I think you'll find that Bakuninist ideas of organisation were not abandoned. The Communist International was the realisation of Bakunin's idea of a centralised secret society. Leninism, I would contend, was the realisation of Bakuninism.

AHW: Bollocks!



MIKE SUMMERBEE: Tackling the Beak



NICKY SUMMERBEE: Training commitments

ON THIS DAY

1779 Peter Mark Rogel, creator of the Theatreau, born.

1789 A penal settlement was established in Bokoja Bay, Australia.

1914 US pilot Eugene Ely, in a Curtiss aircraft, made the first landing on the deck of a ship — the cruiser Pennsylvania moored in San Francisco Bay.

1912 Captain Robert Scott reached the South Pole — only to find the Norwegian Roald Amundsen had arrived 35 days earlier.

1949 The 900-day siege of Leningrad ended.

1989 The ballroom and restaurant at Stella Vue Gardens, Manchester, burnt down. Judy, a 17-year-old lion, panicked and had to be shot.

1989 Knudskjeldsen, hand chiseler, and other Danish carpenters were officially banned by the UK.

ON THIS DAY LAST YEAR: Archaeologists announced a major discovery of more than 300 prehistoric wall paintings and engravings in caves in the Rhone-Alpes region of France.

A wife, spokeswoman agrees that it is unfortunate that press information about the show means Mike and Nicky, who was signed from Sun Radio, will not just before the start of the 1994-95 season.

Spokeswoman Ruth Garland says: "The details of who was on the show would have come from one of our researchers.

"There was no intention to mislead anyone as to who was appearing or what they would say."

Among those happy to discuss the subject are journalist Annabel Heseltine, daughter of top Tory Michael "Taran" Heseltine, and model Sarah Clemence, daughter of former Liverpool and England goalkeeper Ray Clemence.

The lucky girl admits that she was indeed back in the studio had arranged for her to do a fashion photo shoot for a newspaper. Things a new meaning to the phrase "family values".

But he has recently returned to recording and performing, and will be at Oldham's Queen Elizabeth Hall on Saturday, February 10.

It is not often that the opportunity arises to promote a performer of such stature, so we leapt at the chance," says Oldham council's



ALAN BESWICK: Help on the way

DUCHESS OF YORK: DUCHESS OF YORK: DUCHESS OF YORK:



ALAN BESWICK: Tongue-in-cheek appeal

at the club, which includes a ticket to the Saturday night dancefloor action, will be no dry academic talk shop.

"It's a recipe for an almighty punch-up," says Andrew. "I'm getting more nervous as it gets nearer. The intellectualism isn't like the way Situationist men have taken up. They are an argumentative bunch.

Andrew himself has been denounced in French pamphlets after his article in a

A revolutionary event at the Hacienda

THE Hacienda nightclub's beautiful people will soon be joined by a motley assembly of sixties revolutionaries, ex-punk rockers and brainy intellectuals.

The unlikely clubland visitors, many of them from the Manchester scene on the weekend of January 27 and 28 for a conference about the Situationist International. The skates. French

Helping Fergie make a mint

GOOD news is on its way for the Duchess of York, who it seems, is being forced to cut back on her latest lifestyle to avoid financial ruin.

Listeners to Alan Beswick's morning programme on GMR are banding together to secure an unexpected windfall for the estranged wife of Prince Andrew, who is allegedly £3m in debt.

According to the conceited presenter, there has been an "amazing" response to his newly-coveted Duchesse in Debt appeal with offers of help from all over the world.

"I've seen really keen to help her out and there's no doubt that we're all right behind her," says Alan, with his tongue firmly in his cheek.

"It could be the biggest thing since Children In Need," says the droll broadcaster. "Let's face it, the government has been giving money away to the Royal Family for years, so it's time we did our bit."

Caring Alan adds that valuable items already gathered up for his proposed charity auction include a parcel of freezer leftovers, some outsize ski trousers (sadly, the skicrazy Duchesses was forced to miss out on Klostres this year).

A box of After-eight mints is also up for sale.

It must be nice to know that someone cares for you in your darkest hour.

Do you feel seen for Fergie? ... Posting Dates: Page 58



TV presenter Anne has a few eye-licks that "put in a man in a grey suit. He can make me laugh. I'm the easiest lay in town."

Anne lost her virginity to writer Frank Keating, who was "everything I'd ever read about a glamorous man — dashing, well-read and very good-looking and is now reunited with second husband John Penrose.

BIRTHDAYS: David Bellamy, botanist, 63; Rocco Forte, hotelier, 51; Raymond Briggs, children's author and illustrator, 62; John Boorman, film director, 63; Peter Bradshaw, footballer, 35; Richard Durnwood, lobbyist, 52; Piers Frenson, actor, 54; Paul Keelister, Australian prime minister, 52.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"There are too many cars on the road. What we need is some ecclesiastically approved method of vehicular birth control." — Commentator Aberdeen Waugh.

PS: I reckon The Big issue seller who stopped me on Deansgate, Manchester, wanting a copy of the paper sold to support the homeless will go far. "Thank you, thank you, thank you, sir," he said, and followed up with a cheery "Have a nice day." I wonder what he would have said if I'd brought eyes.

The Citizen

CITY LIFE, 7/12/96

MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS 18/1/96

Small Wonder

Ex-Everton soccer star Duncan McKenzie supplied the "entertainment" at the recent Manchester Evening News Roundings' Sports Personality of the Year Awards ceremony at the Midland Hotel. Wanted to tone down the routine due to the mixed audience, McKenzie was doing well until he had a gig about Everton's Nigerian international forward Amobi's wish to play for Scotland. Apparently his grandfather are Dr Leungstone. McKenzie announced blithely. At which point M People's Heather Small, girlfriend of Wigan Rugby League's Shaun Edwards, walked out.

Shy Guy Liam...

Is the pressure of success getting to Ollie singer Liam Gallagher? At the recent Foudrie easy listening night at Paul Cans' South nightclub, City life photographer Marie-Luce Godard was confronted by the singer, after he spotted the brand new camera round her neck. She then threatened to smash the camera if she dared take a photograph of him, despite Godard's attempts to explain that she was in South to try out her new equipment. By taking photos of the retro-clubbers poring in all their tri-tylon glory, an "exclusive" snap of Liam and his mates jamming on the bar was definitely not on her list of action shots.

Scene Queen Burchill

March loved (i) *Dash for Cash* for it's *the Times*. The Express, whoever's doing the most columnist Julie Kancher's night is the best in the country. The Citizen hears that 36-year-old Burchill and her resolute (ex)lover Charlie Raven have been hitting the highspots of Manchester's gay scene, as well as popping along to the Hay for a spot of the good life; apparently Burchill has, despite her advancing years, finally discovered the delights of, er, roving.

Bi-sexual Raven — a graduate of Manchester University and currently getting overpaid to write for *The Observer* — has also been overclaiming that Manchester men are the only men worth sleeping with. Funny then, the Citizen thought the only columns Raven was interested in were the ones in newspapers.

Anthony H versus Mark E

Philosophical discourse has its limits. When reason fails, French intellectuals always have recourse to the custard pie. Over there, every unsound thinker and revisionist gets a big, sloppy custard pie in the cruch. The Citizen was reminded of this by the recent conference on the Situationist legacy, entitled *The Hacienda Mus 88 Bull!*, which took place, naturally enough, at the Hacienda.

Outside, angry radicals packed the building ("Only jerks would support such a stinking enterprise"), inside, a discussion was taking place on "Situationist Failure", ostensibly addressing the link between Situationism and Punk Rock. Anthony H, Wilson and Mark E Smith were among the speakers. Smith was in combative mood: "He interrupted Wilson's opening preamble by shouting with utter contempt: 'What is Situationism anyway? Is it something to do with Striz?' Wilson was non-plussed. 'I like the foghorns,' he said, and all his authority crumbled.

The discussion proceeded to anarcho-intellectualist groups from the past (Smith: "Who are these Mafetractors?") and the class routes of Happy Mondays (in a fit of paranoia, Wilson accused Smith of pressuring him to stop the Mondays recording. The substance of this charge lay in a message Smith left on Wilson's answer-phone back in 1990. Rephrased a puzzled Smith: "I was only asking for my video back."

Smith then elected to use the platform for an anti-Communist harangue. "I can take the piss out of him, but he's a writer referring to fellow-punkie Stewart Home, author of *The Assault on Culture*, and I can take the piss out of you [to Wilson, but you can't do that in China, pal!"] He lost any remaining vestige of anarchic sympathy with this insight into consumer culture: "There's no accounting for the thickness of some people." An entire supply of Day-old Gregg's custard pies couldn't begin to satisfy the demand.

SOVIET KALASHNIKOV RIFLES

'HEY BIG SPENDER'

the anti-racism

...to be led by HBA. It represents a start on this. Television advertisements will tell sets that they can do things about their fitness or walking round the

...insists it is supporting its standing... among vigorous ex... things a week by... able of it. It says the... on concentrate on... being people to work... ally active" for a total... minutes at least five... each half-hour...ing achievable in 10...er things, especially... to be are completely... is to start slowly... id up, said an HBA... an. The message we... get across is that it's... things like dancing... .. the garden or... mpaign will run for... Is a sample of 5,000... It is monitored reg... ough the period to... success.

Avant-garde rave where lunch is only certainty

Manchester prepares to host an anarchic review of the Situation

David Ward

THE Hacenda, the club which created Manchester's dance culture, is the setting this weekend for an avant-garde rave which could prove to be one of the most extraordinary academic conferences staged in Britain. Rows and demonstrations are promised as up to 200 world-famous and artistic, political and artistic movement which paved the way for the howl-cow-slicing of Damien Hirst and the Six Pistols and the defendant Patrick Swayze, lover of what he called "the funk" that himself in 1981.

The event should prove quite fascinating, said Gavin Bond, who has shared the or-

ganising with Andrew Hussey, a colleague in the department of French studies at the University of Manchester.

The conference, staged with the help of the French embassy and the universities of Manchester and Huddersfield, concludes with a performance by Sable Team of Birmingham University and Nick Land of Warwick University, dubbed the *Shinone de Beauvoir* and Jean-Francois Sartre of the Midlands.

To bemused outsiders unfamiliar with trends in cultural politics, the only comprehensible slot is the programme "Lunch (on an arrangement)". This is disappointing, since the Situationists, whose ideas dominate this agenda, aimed to create "situations" — moments of poetic intensity

THE GUARDIAN, 27/1/1986

which had the "revolutionary potential to disrupt and transform everyday life."

The Situationist International was formed as a formalism during a wild week of booze and free love in the Italian village of Cosa d'Arcosio in 1957. The movement's limited membership — intellectuals, artists and revolutionaries — spent most of the following years sub-

verting and expelling each other. But their slogans and tactics have been hailed as influences on the films of Jean-Luc Godard, the philosophy of Jean Baudrillard, the activities of the Baader-Meinhof gang and the iconoclasm of K Foundation, the band that burned £1 million and tried to sell the ashes as art.

The events on Paris streets in 1968 are recognised as the ultimate "situation", but the confrontations of later years depressed adherents so much the movement fell apart.

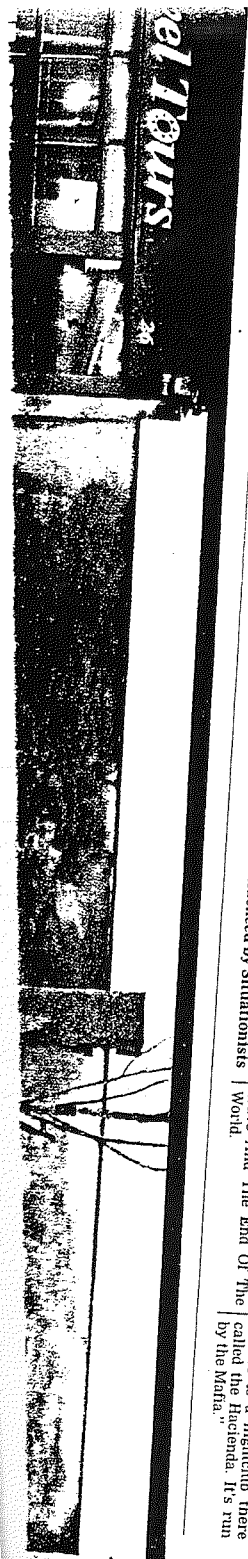
But its memory lingers on, not least in the name of the venue taken from a Situationist text which declares: "The Hacenda must be built." The club's founder, Anthony H. Wilson (known for the strange Situations he finds himself in on a regional TV talk show), will take part in a discussion on Situationist Fallout: Punk Rock, Now Wave And The End Of The World.



War: Guy Debord, a founder of war games and drinking



Disciple: Jean-Luc Godard, influenced by Situationism



Snapshots

CITY LIFE, 24/1/96

Manchester University lecturers Gavin Bowd and Andrew Hussey were in a pub when they decided that an international Situationist conference would be a good idea. At the time they were producing the satirical or three leading French Situationists — Guy Debord, Roger Sibley, and Gerard Valley — who all took their lives in November 1994.

"Fortunately, we were both working in the University's French department and happened to be in the pub at the same time," explains 59-year-old Bowd, a man who describes himself as "interested in Situationism rather than a member of any particular cult."

Bowd, a comics artist and innovative character. The latter characteristic was probably to the fore when he and Hussey decided to make the Hacenda the home for an international conference titled **THE HACENDA MUST BE BUILT: ON THE LEGACY OF THE SITUATIONIST REVOLT**, which takes place on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 January. It is the first conference of its kind ever.

The Situationist International (SI) was founded in 1957 in Cosa d'Arcosio, an obscure village in Northern Italy. A coalition of intellectuals, artists and revolutionaries from France, Germany, Scandinavia and England, their aim was more abstract than most revolutionary manifestos: they wanted to create "situations" with the potential to disrupt and transform the "spectacle" of everyday life. Their finest and most talked about hour was during the events of Paris, 68, but many have since claimed a piece of the SI heritage, from Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren to the Bauder-Meinhof Gang, Tony Wilson (of Factory fame) to Eurythmics Collins.

Hence this conference — which in true Frankish SI style is supported by the French Cultural Delegation, a case of reoperating rebellion in reverse — was one French, American, British and Scandinavian Situationists will be gathering at the Hacenda (which, incidentally, took its name from a Situationist tract entitled "The Hacenda Must Be Built", the term "Hacenda" referring to a place for unencumbered hedonism). The reason for the conference? To have a good old ideological punch up, if the truth be known.

"There'll be a lot of denunciations, a lot of excommunications from the International," says Bowd. "The Situationists make a bit out of scandal and assault. No doubt we'll be criticised, but we'll be under attack as well."

Those taking part include founder member of the SI Ralph Rumney, London-based intellectual Stewart Home (who apparently regards Tony Wilson as "a shyler") and artist James Reel, the man behind all those Sex Pistols covers. And unlike most dry and dull conferences, this one really should be a hunk. Just turn up at the Hay on Sunday/Sunday morning between 10.30am-11am, with a tent in your hand and muskies on your mind.



Chris Sharrai

Hawaiian flirts

WOMAN: PAGES 14 & 15



A DREAM HOLIDAY FOR TWO TO Jamaica

How did the Hacienda go wrong?

By Ian Marrow

HOPES rose today that Manchester world-famous Hacienda club can be saved.

But as potential buyers began queuing up, clubbers and business bosses were asking how such a successful club could go under.

The nightclub was forced to dramatically close its doors last night when the company that ran it went into liquidation.

The sudden closure — with debts said to be in the region of £½m — came as a shock to many on the club scene.

Disappointed clubbers turned up to find a notice telling them to go to the rival nightclub The Boardwalk, which took over the Stone Love event, scheduled for last night.

A buy-out team led by the Hacienda's general manager Leroy Rich-

The club that attracted a galaxy of stars: Page 3

He said: "I don't know what went wrong, but I do know that the Hacienda does make money."

One of the club's former owners, television personality Anthony Wilson, said: "This is not the end of the Hacienda. That building has a life of its own."

"It has been near to death many times in the last 15 years. It does revive itself."

Another person bidding to run the Hacienda is Boardwalk owner Colin Sinclair.

Mr Sinclair, a well known figure in Manchester's clubland and in the business community, declined to say how much he is offering for the Hacienda.

But he said he aimed to save people's jobs at the club — and save it for the people of Manchester.

"The Hacienda is Manchester," he said.

Hacienda. "In terms of Manchester's image, it is vital the Hacienda stays open."

Mr Sinclair has run the almost equally famous Boardwalk for 12 years.

He was also involved in Factory Records in the early days — managing bands like The Railway Children, who had a hit in 1990 and made it big in the USA.

Mr Sinclair, a leading member of the city's pub and club watch network, also organised Soccer City, a festival of entertainment linked to Euro '96.

And he is also involved in event management for Manchester council — one of his latest extravaganzas being the festival to celebrate the opening of Hulme Arch.

Liquidator Alan Tomlinson said he would be glad to speak to anyone interested in buying the Hacienda.

It is understood he would favour a "Go to any country in the world



■ Gordon Brown: Taxing times ahead?

Over-60s clobbered in first Budget blow

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown jumped the gun on this afternoon's Budget with the revelation that tax relief on private health care

Phone-line 'mystics' who moan callers a fortune

By Jaya Narayan

THE future looks bright for the phone line fortune tellers in Manchester, at least for those workers flexing their muscles.

A major investigation launched into tariffs after a report was done by the Greater Manchester Unit, highlighting the bad practice.

Telephone regulators the Independent Office of the Supervision of Information Services are looking into complaints from several firms in the region.

They say the vast majority of calls to some companies are not answered.

Workers have to only accurate predict the size of the customer bills as they were called into staying.

Several tarot readers told to pretend they were shuffling cards — the cards were used.

And in other cases callers were told "another woman's husband's lives."

Workers highlighting conditions, griping lines, were denied failed to keep calls minutes, and mistook about rates of pay.

One regular woman notched up a phone bill of more than £4,000 after being subjected to the service.

Tarot readers claim weren't properly trained often had to speak to callers who spoke of physical and sexual abuse.

Barry Savarna, of the Unit, said: "This level of exploitation shocked us. We needed to take them to court."

The Hacienda must be destroyed or, Why was Debord afraid of ruins?

by Phil Edwards

Paper given at *The Hacienda must be built: the legacy of situationist revolt* (two-day conference, the Hacienda, Manchester, 27th-28th January 1996)

3900 words

Introduction

Two months before his death in November 1936, the Spanish anarchist Durruti was interviewed by a Canadian journalist. Warned that the anarchists' intransigence could leave them "sitting on a pile of ruins," Durruti replied: "You must not forget, we can also build. It is we the workers who built these palaces and cities, here in Spain and in America and everywhere. We, the workers, can build others to take their place. And better ones! We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth, there is not the slightest doubt about that."

The use of architecture to figure for bourgeois society as a whole, the willingness to see it completely destroyed and the conviction that the same forces which destroyed it could create something better: in all these respects Durruti's words were close to the mood and concerns of the "Project for rational embellishments of the city of Paris" proposed by the Lettrist International (LI) in 1955. "G-E Debord declares himself for the total destruction of religious buildings of all denominations. (Not a trace should be left, and the space should be re-used)." Michele Bernstein, then Debord's wife, went further, proposing that churches be "partially destroyed, in such a way that the ruins remaining would no longer evince their original purpose"; ideally this would be done by "raising the church completely and rebuilding the ruins". With this bizarre image Bernstein outdid Durruti: even the relics of the old world were to be remade. Like Bernstein, Debord set his face against aesthetic arguments for conservation. "Beauty, when it is not a promise of happiness, must be destroyed."¹

These proposals contrast oddly with passages written by Debord in the 1980s. At one point, writing of the pollution and falsification of the world by modern industry, he exempts only "a legacy of old books and old buildings, still of some significance but destined to continual reduction"². Elsewhere he refers to his travels during the 1970s and his eventual return "to the ruins that remained of Paris"³. Here the transformation (and ruination) of the built environment is the work of the forces which dominate society; the role of the radical can only be to resist and to testify to what had gone. These developments in Debord's thinking can best be understood by reference to the significance of architecture, considered as a means of intervention in social reality, in the situationist project as it developed from the early 1950s.

Psychogeography: a dream of architecture

Psychogeography - the study of the emotional effects of particular locations - was a major concern of the Lettrist International (founded in 1952) and of the Situationist International in its early years. A key psychogeographical text, adopted by the LI as policy in 1953, was Ivan Chitchevlov's *Formulary for a new urbanism*. Chitchevlov evokes the mingled boredom and serendipity of a random exploration of Paris; he then contrasts this with the fabled ease of "the hacienda", an image of aristocratic leisure. "Now that's finished. You won't see the hacienda. It doesn't exist. *The hacienda must be built.*"⁴

Chtcheglov goes on to argue that urban architecture directly conditions social life, creating an environment determined by the city's own history ("all cities are geological"). Considering this as exemplifying the domination of the present by the past, Chtcheglov proposes to reverse the process: "the architecture of tomorrow ... will be a means of investigation and a means of action". A city could be reconstructed, or built from scratch, in ways determined by the states of mind which its various districts would induce: there would be a "Bizarre Quarter", a "Happy Quarter" and so forth. The affective qualities of this new architecture would extend to the level of individual dwellings: "in a sense everyone will live in their own personal 'cathedral'"⁵.

Two elements of Chtcheglov's psychogeographical vision are particularly striking. Firstly, Chtcheglov's faith in scientific progress is unbounded: "the latest stage of technology allows permanent contact between the individual and cosmic reality". Technology is envisaged as a politically neutral force waiting to be turned to radical purposes: there may be an element here of the classical Marxist analysis, according to which the domination of humanity over nature is advanced under the bourgeoisie, in a process of conjoined technical and social "progress". Secondly, the proposals are for a single city within an otherwise unchanged world: "this first experimental city would live largely on controlled and tolerated tourism ... in a few years it would become the intellectual capital of the world". Chtcheglov does not propose a transformation of everyday life, in other words, except for the inhabitants of the city in question - whose main activity would be the "CONTINUOUS DRIFT"⁶.

"Mostly, I walk around": the drift

Psychogeography was a hypothesis and a dream; the question was how to put it into practice. The drift (*dérive*) was the Lettrist International's first attempt at making everyday life coincide with theory - although it might be more accurate to say that the same desires which found practical expression in the drift were articulated through psychogeography. Those undertaking a drift - it was an activity for two or more people - would abandon any routine, pre-arranged or even purposeful activities and simply let themselves wander. The aim was to experience the city in psychogeographical terms: to feel the currents and blockages which constituted the city's emotional layout.

The drift would enable the Lettrists to read the city, to map out its various emotional zones and currents; indeed, the practice of the drift altered during the life of the LI, with later drifts being undertaken in a fairly purposeful spirit of exploration. Moreover, the drift was a break with the social order in practical terms: the LI's experience of the city was an aimless and endless wandering rather than a tightly-focused dash to and from work, for example. Thus the drift developed the perceptions of the LI as a group, setting them outside and against the dominant social organisation of time and space. Finally, the drift revealed points at which the domination of the reigning order was incomplete, points where an alteration in the urban - architectural - order could have disproportionately far-reaching effects. Chtcheglov's investigation of the "Contrescarpe Continent"⁷ can be put in this category; so, perhaps, can his thwarted attempt to blow up the Eiffel Tower⁸.

When the drift was formulated the members of the LI were in their teens and early twenties; if the drift carried out by Debord and Chtcheglov at the end of 1953⁹ was typical, a drift could include several hours spent drinking in bars. Yet, while the drift was a game and consciously undertaken as such, there was nothing illusory or make-believe about it. Against the everyday life of the city - paradigmatic of the negation of human life by commodification, authority and routine - the LI set the city itself, as an arena for the rediscovery of creativity and play. A much-quoted¹⁰ passage from Michèle Bernstein's 1960 novel *All the king's horses* sums up the significance of the drift. "What do you work on exactly?" a young girl asks a Debord figure. "Reification." "I see, it's serious work with thick books and a lot of papers on a big table." "No, I walk around. Mostly, I walk around".

The ultimate aim was to reverse the polarity of the city: to extend the scope of the game to include the ludic construction of the environment itself. The LI could then move on from disrupting everyday life to the free and collective construction of moments of life: people would construct their activities and their environment, considered as mutually influencing one another. This was the "construction of situations", advocated as a goal by the LI as early as 1954. This, however, was a large step beyond the drift.

"Humanists of reinforced concrete": unitary urbanism in theory and practice

The Situationist International (SI) was formed in 1957 out of the Lettrist International, Asger Jorn's International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus and Ralph Rumney's (notional) London Psychogeographical Committee. The Lettrists (Debord among them) considered the project of the SI in terms of introducing the radical artistic avant-garde of the IMIB to the perspectives of the LI: the "construction of situations" in practice would be the latest - and final - form of avant-garde art.

A key reference point in the early years of the SI was "unitary urbanism", a phrase coined by the Lettrist Gil Wolman in 1956¹¹. ("Urbanism" here corresponds to the French word "urbanisme" - more or less untranslatable except as "town planning", unfortunately). The adjective "unitary" referred initially to a practice capable of using the most modern developments in both technology and art (here again the positive capacities of technology are assumed). In later usage the stress was on the capacity of a new urbanism to encompass the playful design and construction of both environments and behaviours: a concept akin to that of the constructed situation and closely related to the concept, advanced earlier by Debord, of the "architectural complex"¹².

The LI had been quite capable of playfully redesigning its own behaviour; its shortcomings were in the field of the constructed environment. Many of the artists - and architects - of the IMIB turned out to have precisely the opposite strengths and weaknesses. On paper potentially complementary, in practice the two wings of the SI were pitched almost immediately into a series of conflicts which were only resolved with the exclusion or resignation of all practising artists - a process which would only be completed in 1962.

While the SI retained its artistic contingent a number of attempts were made to define the architecture appropriate to unitary urbanism, primarily by the Dutch artist turned architect Constant. Constant's arguments for his architectural projects are as interesting as the detail of the proposals themselves. With the expansion of the cities, he argued, new building was urgently required. This need, together with the new building materials now available, created an opportunity for creative architects: architecture could be projected on the scale of the city rather than in discrete buildings, and no longer needed to be bound by the forms handed down from earlier stages of architecture (such as the rectangle). Moreover, Constant regarded traffic as a threat to urban environments on the human scale: the circulation of vehicles encroached on and eroded the social space of urban life. What was needed was an architectural solution which could separate people from traffic, without thereby separating people from one another - the failing of the "garden cities" in vogue in the early sixties. Finally - and here Constant rejoined the mainstream of situationist thought on architecture - the new architecture would not be bound by the traditional division between social and private space: all would be a single environment, which could be ordered and re-ordered according to the playful requirements of the moment.

The architectural solution corresponding to this specification of requirements was Constant's "New Babylon": a covered city, composed of an extended series of structures built on pillars and suspended from aerial cables. The problem of traffic would be solved, in essence, by abandoning ground level: the surface of the earth would be freely available to cars, while the area of the suspended city was reserved for pedestrian drifting. The need to avoid a division between public and private space would be resolved by having the city as a whole sheltered from the elements and artificially conditioned; extensive use would be made of artificial lighting, sounds and smells, chosen for their affective or disorientating effect, as well as of ludic forms of architecture such as the maze. The whole would be modifiable by its inhabitants; given the technical complications involved, however, Constant referred to these modifications being carried out by "teams of situationists".¹³

New Babylon would clearly have been a bizarre and slightly nightmarish environment: artificially conditioned throughout, modifiable only by its roving situationist caretakers. The question of whether the flaws of the project reflected back on the situationist project as a whole - for example, its unproblematic approval of the technological domination of the natural world - was not addressed, however. Constant was censured for giving insufficient attention to the "behavioral" element of the construction of situations; the Office for Unitary Urbanism which he had founded passed into the hands of new recruits Attila Kotanyi and Raoul Vaneigem. Kotanyi spoke impressively of building "in the law" rather than on the ground, and vaguely of developing "situationist castles"; a few years later he was excluded on the grounds of mystical tendencies¹⁴. Vaneigem for his part poured scorn on the very idea of undertaking to build here and now. "We must build quickly, there are so many to house, say the humanists of reinforced concrete. We must dig trenches without delay, say the generals, there is the whole fatherland to save. Isn't there some injustice in praising the first group and mocking the second?"¹⁵ Vaneigem may not have known that the first argument had been Constant's, but the parallel will not have escaped Debord.

"We also know how to build": 1962, 1967, 1971

By mid-1962 the SI had abandoned any aspiration to work in the arts, architecture included; indeed, a ruling that art works produced by situationists should be described as "anti-situationist" had been proposed (by Kotanyi) and carried¹⁶. The movement away from artistic and architectural practice can be justified in its own terms: the situationist project could not risk being recuperated as a technical specialism or a form of artistic merchandise. Nevertheless, the question remains how this affected the SI's capacity to engage in constructing situations, rather than simply announcing to the world - in the style of the political ideologies the SI denounced - that situations should, where possible, be constructed.

The SI's definition of a "constructed situation", printed in the first issue of its journal, runs: "Moment of life, concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organisation of a unitary environment and a game of events"¹⁷. Elsewhere Debord wrote that "our situations will be transitory, without future: passageways" and referred to "betting on the passage of time"¹⁸: the goal was to pass from one constructed situation to the next, devotion to the game overcoming the risk of relapsing into the conventional organisation of everyday life. Clearly, art and architecture could only provide the setting for a constructed situation: in this spirit Debord characterised an exhibition of "industrial painting" by the Italian situationist Pinot Gallizio as "an environment and not yet a situation"¹⁹.

By forswearing the construction of even the environment of a situation, however, the situationists had effectively redefined their own practical activity - and, by implication, their theory. Some indication of the pressures this approach put on the SI is given by the organisation's reaction to the Strasbourg scandal. In late 1966 a group of situationist sympathisers had been elected to the University of Strasbourg students' union; their arrival was announced by André Bertrand's poster comic *The return of the Durutti Column*. (The misspelling is Bertrand's - although it may be significant that the same spelling appears in a piece by Vaneigem which appeared in 1963. The comic, incidentally, included the lines from Bernstein's novel quoted above). The group used student union funds to put out a pamphlet, *On the poverty of student life*, written primarily by the situationist Mustapha Khayati. The union body was promptly dissolved and individual students suspended. In October 1967 the SI commented unfavourably on the delusions of radicalism which some of those involved now entertained: their activity had amounted to "at the very most, publishing a text".²⁰

The SI's own concentration on publishing texts led to a progressively greater emphasis on the organisation's theoretical common ground with earlier radical - non-Leninist - Marxist movements and writers. In particular, the SI laid a heavy emphasis on the workers' council, which - following Lukacs - they saw not only as a superior form of social organisation but as a practical end to alienation: "In the power of the Councils ... the proletarian movement is its own product, and this product is the producer himself," Debord wrote²¹. Confronted, as they were in May 1968, with a conjuncture in which the power of the workers' councils seemed in the process of formation, the situationists did not call for the immediate transformation of streets into playgrounds or the pursuit of ludically organised moments of life. Rather, statements made by situationists during and after the events stress the consolidation of the power of workers' councils and the maintenance of factory occupations. Somewhat surprisingly, the SI analysed the events of May as the victory of a social force which could be, unproblematically, supported as it perpetuated itself and consolidated its gains. This analysis could not easily be reconciled with the situationist tenet that the reigning order was secured by habit, routine and the everyday organisation of social space, as well as by the police and the unions.

In short, the SI's allegiance to the working class as social subject had overridden its belief in the construction of situations as social practice. As a result it had no way of dealing with the end (or failure, or defeat) of the strike wave. After two years of relative passivity the SI was purged by a group including Debord, which excluded any member who could not produce evidence of recent activity. In the SI's funeral oration, *The veritable split in the International*, Debord and the Italian situationist Gianfranco Sanguinetti claim that the SI was no longer needed: "The new epoch is profoundly revolutionary, and it knows it is"²². However, the relative success of situationist ideas - in terms of publicity - had necessarily disqualified the SI from engaging with this revolutionary reality under that label.

"The Hacienda must be built": Debord and his audience

In fact, Debord had more problems with the situationist heritage than its name, as his subsequent, bleak, re-evaluation of contemporary conditions indicates. Debord's theoretical writing from the 1970s and 1980s shows three main changes from his earlier work. Firstly, capitalism's capacity for - perhaps irreversible - destruction is emphasised: the question of pollution is addressed in *The Veritable Split*, although in the context of that work's millennial rhetoric it is taken as evidence that the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism could not be much longer in coming.

Debord's analysis of the spectacle - a term signifying a social and affective structure based on passive allegiance and spectatorship, considered as the basis of all contemporary societies - is radically modified. As Debord wrote in 1979: "It no longer says, 'What appears is good, what is good appears'. It says merely, 'It is so'"²³. After the crisis of 1968, the spectacle was thought to have undergone a qualitative change. The spectacle's dominance was no longer based on the freely-given allegiance of individuals who might have known an alternative to the spectacle, but on indifference cemented by the brute force of ubiquity: "the spectacle has never before put its mark to such a degree on almost the full range of socially produced behaviour and objects". This position, shoring up the spectacle's vulnerability by the blanket exclusion of alternatives, was summed up as a state of "fragile perfection"²⁴.

Lastly, Debord's later writings show little sign of recognising any group in society as a potential source of revolutionary change. In 1985, indeed, he remarked that "the reigning imposture will have been able to have the approval of each and every one; it will have had to do without mine"²⁵. In his autobiographical work *Panegyric* his life is presented as a kind of melancholy exemplar of a revolutionary style of living - a style which all too few have emulated, and which may no longer be possible. "I wonder if even one other person has dared to behave like me, in this era"²⁶.

Debord had argued that the spectacle was sustained by a counter-revolutionary use of the same techniques which the situationists could turn to their purposes; now, following the SI's abandonment of artistic work, he saw a spectacle which made no positive claims and left no gaps in which its enemies could operate. He had endorsed advances in technology as progressive; now, following the failure of the councilist revolution to materialise in 1968, he argued that technical progress only imperilled nature and society. Finally, he had referred to the proletariat as the motive force of the revolution to come; now, following the dissolution of the situationist vanguard amid accusations of personal inadequacy, he appeared to reserve the role of revolutionary to himself. His enemies, not his allies, had taken the role of destroyer; destruction had encompassed resources which he had counted on, and there was no one left to rebuild. For a range of reasons - Debord's personal experiences; the choices which he and his allies had made within the LI and SI; an understandable disillusionment with the idea of conjoined technological and social progress; the actual historical situation - Debord viewed "the ruins that remained of Paris"²⁷ in a spirit very different from Durruti's.

The final irony, to a British eye, is that it was at the end of the 1970s that situationist texts and themes first received widespread publicity in Britain, courtesy of punk and subsequent developments - notably the references dropped by the avowed "fan" Tony Wilson, boss of Factory Records. For myself I first saw the phrase "The return of the Durutti Column" (misspelling retained) as the title of an LP on Factory²⁸; a couple of years later I was able to identify the source of the phrase "The Hacienda must be built" (cedilla added), with which Wilson announced the opening of the nightclub in which we are meeting today. As the most challenging, innovative and optimistic of the situationists' writings gained an audience in Britain, Debord himself was wedded to a kind of epicurean pessimism: a disjuncture which did much to impede the practical reception of situationist ideas in Britain, and contributed to the mood of mingled enthusiasm, protective connoisseurship and jaded disdain in which we now contemplate the possibilities left open for us by the legacy of the SI.

¹"Potlatch" 23 (1955); reprinted in Berréby (ed.), *Documents relatifs à la fondation de l'Internationale Situationniste* (1985) and in *Potlatch* (facsimile edition, 1996)

²Guy Debord, *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle* (1988)

³Debord, *Panegyrique* (1989)

⁴Reprinted in "Internationale Situationniste" I (1958)

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Documented in "Les lèvres nues" 9 (1956), reprinted in Berréby, op. cit.

⁸For which see Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces* (1989)

⁹Documented in Berréby, op. cit.

¹⁰Not least in Marcus, op. cit.

¹¹At the First World Congress of Free Artists; documentation in Berréby, op. cit.

¹²First recorded appearance: filmscript *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (original version, 1952), reprinted in Berréby, op. cit.

¹³For Constant's architectural plans and supporting arguments see "Internationale Situationniste", particularly nos. 3 and 4 (1959 and 1960), and Berréby, op. cit.

¹⁴"Internationale Situationniste" 5 (1960) and 9 (1964)

¹⁵"Internationale Situationniste" 6 (1961)

¹⁶"Internationale Situationniste" 7 (1962)

¹⁷"Internationale Situationniste" I (1958)

¹⁸"Report on the construction of situations and the conditions of action of the international situationist tendency" (1957), reprinted in Berréby, op. cit.

¹⁹Cited in Mirella Bandini, *L'estetico il politico: da C'obra all'Internazionale Situazionista 1948-1957* (1977)

²⁰"Internationale Situationniste" 11 (1967); the Vaneigem article cited is in issue 8 (1963)

²¹Debord, *La société du spectacle* (1967)

²²Debord and Sanguinetti, *La véritable scission dans l'Internationale* (1972)

²³Debord, "Preface to the fourth Italian edition of *The society of the spectacle*" (1979)

²⁴Debord, *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle*

²⁵Debord, *Considérations sur l'assassinat de Gérard Lebovici* (1985)

²⁶Debord, *Panegyrique*

²⁷Debord, *Panegyrique*

²⁸The Durutti Column (Vini Reilly and Martin Hannett), *The return of the Durutti Column* (FACT 14, 1980)

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Waiting For Debord (or someone like him)

Len Bracken

"My entourage has been composed only of those who came of their own accord and knew how to make themselves accepted," Debord boasted, adding, "I wonder if even one person has dared to behave like me in this era." How large, one wonders, a following does Debord have, and how many para-situationists are dispersed in the population? After all, THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY is Raoul Vaneigem's line, and many other slogans derived from the "sits" are already in everyone's heads here in Europe and America. The 1986 student protests in France witnessed a revival of situationistic sloganizing. *Society of the Spectacle* has been reprinted numerous times, and Debord's films have attained the luster of legends now that they can't be seen. From his correspondence we know that Debord preferred the company of unemployed workers, and dedicated comrades who were also generous and amusing. Even given what he called everyone's "legitimately Stirnerian use of time," one imagines Debord speaking to his entourage - and the unemployed and the immigrants who happened to be in the same dive on any given day - about the neo-chicken infused with steroids in his grocery bag and the false fears propagated by the spectacle.

I certainly didn't expect contact with the Debord entourage during the last days of August, 1990, but I should have because France exceeded all my expectations. The once familiar language washed over me in waves after a decade of only book contact. Sandrine met me as only she could. We went to Lacanau, where there were waves, big waves. One of those rare moments in the sun when all the ravishing charms nature has to offer came to me at once. Back in Paris, left to my own devices, I contacted an old friend from college. Charlie was apartment sitting in affluent Place St. Sulpice - right down the street from the renamed Editions Gerard Lebovici, an elegant, but empty shop with short, elusive hours. I bought the new book by Debord's wife, Alice Becker-Ho, *The Princes of Jargon*. Reading

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about gypsies and Villon's Coquillard brigade, and other elements of the dangerous classes described in the little book, set the tone for the evening.

I remember eating alone before meeting Charlie again that night. A striking young blonde with friends, sitting across the restaurant - she flashed her eyes my way during the meal, so I followed her out. When she stopped to tie her shoe, I told her (in what I imagined Bukowski would sound like in French) that I'd just gotten out of prison and that it was impossible not to notice how beautiful she was. Her look of horror was priceless. When I said I was kidding, and as we continued to walk down the street, she opened up to me. I encouraged her to go with her friends, and she in turn encouraged me to be as familiar with her as one can be in a crowded street like Boulevard St. Michel. She's no doubt the lawyer she was studying to be, probably overworked like high-paid slaves everywhere. I'll never forget the glimmer of sadness and desperation in her eyes that betrayed her obvious beauty, as if she sensed the twilight of her carefree student days and the onset of a life at hard labor.

Spurred on by this encounter (and to my friend Charlie's dismay) I tried to be gallant with the women headed our way. Much later, at 3 A.M., we wound up at the famous Old Navy on Boulevard St. Germain where I made sure that I attracted attention by limboing down the isles for a pair of young British women who'd just been at the Guns 'n Roses show. An Arab sitting in the corner of the room accused us of being spies, and the bar erupted in confusion when Charlie replied in Arabic and I started ranting in Russian. We were again accused of being spies. I told them the truth: "We're not spies, we're the sons of spies."

With promises of plundering a wine cellar Charlie convinced me to clear out. He couldn't, however, persuade me that we needed to worry about what I'd said. We walked the deserted streets to nearby St. Sulpice. I tried to explain to him how the Russian dissidents of the Seventies may have been clowns, but using this clown's mask they lived and wrote in free and open ways - they were the enemies of secrecy. Charlie called me an

idiot. I said that there was no better reason to write than an open and honest engagement with the world, and on and on into the night as we drank stolen bottles of Burgundy and Bordeaux from an aristocrat's wine cellar.

The Russians who come to Paris, like the Nobel Prize winning master Bunin, or Debord's cohort Ivan Chtcheglov, open this well-spring of freedom and expression to the point of delirium. I'm deeply drawn to these writers because I moved from Moscow to Paris when I was 18 and I sensed that same freedom of spirit, even if I didn't really make use of it until much later. I'm amused to remember when a few of us American students went to the Studio Cujas to see Debord's "communist" films as my friend hesitantly labeled them. I recall asking about the title *In Girum...* on the marquee, but he didn't know Latin either. I assumed that we'd been photographed entering the small theater. There were a few people watching a film in progress. I strained to hear one thing and read another in French as the celluloid collage went in divergent directions. It was Debord commenting on his comrades of the 50's and 60's: "I am no better than they were then - I drank their wine" or "Suicide carried off many. 'Drink and the devil have done for the rest' as the song says." I left after fifteen minutes, a little scared that I'd been exposed to very subversive propaganda. This experience of the anti-communist super-ego that followed me into the cinema and threatened me with subversion is much more important to me now than the memory of my naive thrill at seeing Sartre walk down the street during that same stay in Paris. Now it's easy to laugh at my allegiance to the weighty pull of conservative ideology because I'm thoroughly subverted. But I like to think that the heroic anti-communism of soviet dissidents was another factor in my programming. After all, it was 1979, and I'd been living in Moscow for the previous six months (where I'd learned first-hand, the foolhardiness of militant protest when conspiring with a dissident circle).

"We're bored in the city. There is no longer any temple of the sun," Chtcheglov, the hero of *In Girum...*, proclaimed to the world. This was the preamble to his essay on the creation of a situationist city using the blueprints of Chirico to build the mythological

Hacienda on the hill - Chtcheglov was perhaps taking his clues from Chirico's novel *Hebdomeros*, that lyrical commentary on how his psyche transformed the cityscapes of Italy. I imagine the situationist city to be something like Rotterdam, with its pedestrian zone, Euromast, panracial docklands and assorted pleasure zones: the glass-enclosed aquatic center, the strip joints and hash bars. Many of Rotterdam's young architects (especially Rem Koolhaas) have assimilated the work of situationist model-maker Constant, founder of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism in Amsterdam in 1959. The Debord-Constant polemic over unitary urbanism vs. social revolution was resolved with Constant's resignation from the S.I. a year later. But Constant's influence was felt by many, including the Dutch master of the Twentieth Century, Herman Hertzberger, whose student housing in Amsterdam and other buildings all consciously sought to construct situations.

I'm reminded now of the way Amsterdam's scale and pedestrian charm made me want to run away on my first visit at 17. I remember smoke billowing out the hotel room, and the friendly young lady of the night who was so urgent and enjoyable. Where was my superego then? Aristippus, leader of a Socratic school of hedonism (based on the pleasure of movement), reportedly responded to a disciple who asked why he was going into a brothel: "The difficulty is not going in, but in getting out." Chtcheglov developed his hedonistic *derive* into continuous drifting all day, for months on end, never staying in one place for more than an hour. The "poetry of the sidewalk billboards" was his launching pad to transformed the world in his mind with grandiose dreams, dreams that remain a poignant critique of every bleak city. With Chtcheglov's essay *Formulary for a new Urbanism* in mind I drifted around the Latin Quarter in search of cigarettes and Alka Seltzer and anything else that would comfort my ravaged head. I bought another bottle of wine.

I was drinking in the park when this young guy with dark skin and short, curly hair - possibly an undercover cop - sat on the picnic table. In psychogeographic terms this was humiliating because I was below him on the bench and I also happened to be lost, busy

consulting my book map of Paris. His eyes were hidden behind dark glasses. I felt a little hostility in the silent summer air. "Which way is North," I asked, getting up. His vague gesture toward the Seine told me nothing about him. When I looked directly at him, I recognized him as the Arab who had accused us of being spies in the Old Navy the previous night.

Storming out of the park - I don't know why - I went on a shooting spree. Fish eye shots of Barbara on the cafe terrace and of the Japanese student with her books in arm, and the old timer at the zinc with his ready-as-I'll-ever-be *elan*. I stopped outside a church for a drink, and an old woman suddenly appeared with milk for the neighborhood cats. Susanne posed on her way home with the groceries. Looking back on this unabashed search for images I'm reminded how out of place I felt, yet also how very free to go ahead and play the tourist. I'd had half a bottle of wine in me when I addressed a chic-looking woman in French. Someone behind me said, "Look, he even tries to pick up women when he's sick."

The woman was from Chicago - how would I have known? - an archaeology student on vacation from a her dig in Greece. I can easily imagine her beautifully tan body in shorts and sandals as she digs like the archaeology students who floated through the American Hotel in Coficia when I was a kid. "Childish," Debord would say of this quest for images - the most common consolation and source of illusory delights. Yet, reading Debord always evokes scenes from my life - memories of a Grecian quarry swarming with bats and a hermit's cave; the olive grove teeming with goats and sheep and swarms of honey bees. Ruins cluttering the arid, verdant hills; the mighty ruins being reclaimed by life. Reading Debord is so evocative that his refusal to forget becomes an irresistible imperative to remember.

I doubled back under a bridge and came across the poem "*Aubade a la dame*" in chalk on the wall as a sax player filled the arches with sound. Drinking... I walked along the river, past the barges, to another bridge - I can't recall which one. Taking the traffic

patterns and light into account I chose a cafe on the right bank. A few booths were taken, but I had the entire front of the place to myself. Pedestrians passed before me in every direction. I ordered a beer and waited for the sun to set to a point where the passersby became silhouettes for my fish eye lens. Suddenly, a tough-looking old guy approached me. There was the air of a charming tramp about him that reminded me of my friends in Washington. He grabbed the back of the chair and asked if I wanted to have a drink with him. "With you," I said smiling in a way that accented the scars on my face, "of course."

As if it were the most natural thing in the world, we clinked glasses and toasted one another. He told me he'd been jumped by an Arab and showed me the recently acquired gash in his back. Stout, even a little on the portly side, he still looked pretty strong. He acted as if it were nothing for a man of his age to be in a bloody fight with a knife-wielding Arab. His most distinctive traits were his nose and hair. The former's tip enabled me to later identify him as Debord; the latter was a shoulder-length bowl cut. Imagine a man who is a little shaggy, but who is extremely sharp and focused - like the Frans Hals portrait of Descartes on the Penguin cover of *Discourse on Method*.

We swapped jokes and talked like caustic barroom philosophers. He suddenly asked my opinion of Jews. I told him that they were great fucks and not to worry about them, or the Arabs. Uproarious laughter and smiles from the newly arrived couple seated behind us.

"What do you think of France?" he asked.

"I love the beaches. You should've seen the waves in Lacanau. You can't imagine how it feels to glide..."

He didn't seem to register this reference to surfing, so I let it drop. He ordered wine, and then went through the books I'd bought the day before: Kundera, Kristeva, Klossowski and others. He paused on the olive green cover of Pascal Dumontier's *Les Situationistes et Mai '68*.

"Why do you have this?" he asked.

There was a break in the traffic and the cafe was quiet.

"To learn how to make revolution," I replied.

He glanced at me, then back to the books.

"You've heard of the situationists, haven't you?" I asked. "You're Parisian, right?"

Where were you during the events of '68?"

He turned away.

I added: "Everyone reads Debord."

He held his tongue. Not a word. He looked off a little as if lost in memory. For a moment we sat there facing the street, sipping our drinks. Looking back on it I realize that this was Debord, another Archilochus, the professional soldier and poet who threw down his shield and returned to civilian life, but who retained the hard-nosed vitality of classical Greece. Debord likes to quote him saying, "We no more than any other men can stay sober on this watch." At the time, I half-guessed that this could be Debord. Where else would one meet a great cafe guru? Onetime owner a bar called La Method, a time when the very Bataillesque Malcom Lowery novel *Under the Volcano* was his favorite book. I was tempted to come right out and ask him, but not after I'd already mentioned the name Debord. Suddenly he asked me how much I knew about history. I responded: "Not much. It's so vast..." He took another sip and opened his paper, gesturing at the notations he'd all over it that added up to something like this quote from his last book.

Ubu is king again in Poland in the dynasty of Walesa; the global coalition against Iraq and its devastating non-result; the Russian republics and the development of all their civil wars with the democracy of prevaricators, under Yeltsin; the concentration camps of Serbia, and the ethnic negotiations of Sarajevo, that continue during extermination despite the courageous mediation of Europe; the humanity-media landing in Mogadishu that was so laughable; the victory of the right-wing state against Escobar in Columbia, as well as the cleansing accomplished by 'deathsquads'; across the sub-continent the formal abolition of apartheid and the massacres of Blacks in South Africa;

the Algeria that they'd like to pass off as the only country where the economy doesn't function at all, and perhaps because of Islam; the Italy of Clean Hands that finally established the proof of Andreotti's innocence. Everywhere speculation has, in the end, become the sovereign aspect of all property. It autoregualtes itself, more or less according to the local preponderances around the Stock Markets, States, Mafias: all federated in a sort of democracy of the elites of speculation. The rest is misery. Everywhere, excess Simulation has exploded like Chernobyl, and everywhere death spreads as fast and massively as disorder. Nothing works anymore, and nothing is believed anymore. ("Cette mauvaise reputation..." Gallimard, 1993)

In a sequence of regrettable gestures I pulled out the old Pentax with the fish eye lens and took a shot of a passer-by. "Why are you doing that?" he asked in an exasperated, but calm voice. I said something about catching a little of Paris as I saw it, and got up to try to get a shot of him. He grumbled for me to sit down and put my camera away. With a shrug, I sat down, and I put the camera on the table. He was hot under the collar, speaking to me as if I didn't realize who he was. I know that he could easily have told me that he was Debord, but that wouldn't have been his style. With this burst of pride my suspicions deepened. I was probably with the man who was, as he claimed, "highly regarded in Venice, as in Cadiz and Hamborg and Lisbon, by the people I met only by frequenting certain cafes."

I wasn't regarding him highly enough, I knew that, so I put the camera away and lit a cigarette to add a few more breaths of bad air to what was already there. Any question of the aesthetics of photography ground to a halt. He was suddenly very bored. I told him that I'd come there to get some pictures because of the light and locale. I reminded him that he was sitting at my table, and he could leave if he wanted to. He glanced at my shoulders as if sizing me up for a fight. "Get out, old man," I said, mostly because I wanted to hear myself say it - a line from who knows what novel. He looked very bothered and worried, as if he were afraid of getting out of control.

We didn't need to speak - our body languages confronted one another as they pressed in on the table. I knew I could take him, and another like him too if he wanted to brawl. I smiled back at him with an easy-going confidence that said: *I won't fight you unless I have to, it wouldn't be fair.* I ordered another round and apologized. The wrinkles of anger on his brow eased out and he drank. I noticed the dried sweat in his shirt as I tried to imagine his gypsy existence of knife fights and scrapes with the cops, sleeping where music made its house along the river Seine. He was probably thinking in the strategic terms that he applied to every aspect of life. Perhaps it was just this easy familiarity of ordering him around with insults that hinted at a little operational potential in me, I don't know. He asked me to go with him to meet his friends.

"No," I said casually. "You and your friends will rip me off."

"What have you got to lose?" he fired back in a slightly sarcastic tone.

He was serious.

"What can I say, I'm a traveller who has to catch a train to catch a plane, and here are my tickets [I pulled up my shirt and showed him the big wallet tucked into the front of my jeans] and my money and my passport." I could see myself walking with him down to the first stairs to the river, where suddenly everything faded into a nefarious fog. "The camera's not worth much," I continued, "but its the only one I have. I came over here to get these books and I'm not gonna' get ripped off. I'd have to be crazy to go with you."

"You're probably right," he replied.

In slow movements he got up to go. I reached for the bottle in my backpack.

"Take this," I called to him.

He spun on his heels in the middle of the bar. I offered him the bottle. He shook his head no, and he already seemed very far away. Suddenly he leaned forward, appearing much closer - he stared at me with a fierce look in his eyes: "You'll always remember this encounter."

And so I have. I remember shaking my head when he was gone and having another beer. Still determined to take a few pictures, I checked the light in the camera. The shutter fell with a threatening click. People were obviously annoyed. I shot a passerby in a suit and hat who looked like that piece of crud William Burroughs. A pair of young thugs rounded the corner denouncing me, sight unseen, with sarcastic shouts of "Voila l'art." I called them over to let me get a shot. They just laughed as if it had been a good joke and walked on. It was clearly time to retreat to a little hotel room around the Gare du Nord.

I remember the cool shadows at sunset and the arid heat emanating from the concrete sidewalks. Shadows growing longer every instant. I drifted around the corner. Walking... I felt a sense of loss - a missed opportunity, like walking out of *In Girum*... It reminds me of others who looked for Guy Debord and couldn't find him. I had him right there and kicked him out.

In *Lipstick Traces: secret history of the twentieth century* Greil Marcus interviews Alexander Trocchi, the infamous Scottish novelist of porn and drugs who stole George Plimpton's suit to escape an all-points-bulletin. A founding member of the Situationist International in Paris, Trocchi gets sentimental when recalling his drifts with Debord: "He took me to places in London I didn't know, that he didn't know, that he sensed, that I'd never been to if it hadn't been for him. He was a man who could discover a city [...] Guy, Guy. WHAT IS IT? I am talking to you now, even if you will never speak to me!"

Following Trocchi, I've since written my own corrosive porn novel - *Stasi Slut*. I'm telling you this to let you know that I've been around the block a few times. The sidewalk was flanked by a cobblestone square. I caught a glimpse of the bowl haircut and stocky build. He was seated in the shade of the large cafe awning, facing the square. "I'll give you passion," he yelled in a gruff voice. Tittering laughter accompanied a woman as she emerged from the cafe terrace, flanked by two guys. She had on a garish red dress, which the men eased off her shoulders as if it had been choreographed many times before. The

neighborhood was full of whores, but she looked beautifully slender, like a dancer... in a red bra and matching panties.

She was heading right for me. I looked behind me - there was nobody else around. I'd been around enough to know that street walkers carry knives, and that they'll let you have it if they get flustered in a tight situation. Even if you want to do them no harm, only to watch them dance, like moths fluttering under the lights, in the back streets of WDC; or the KGB colonel whores in the Moscow hotels, or the meringue dancers in juke box joints in Santo Domingo, or the sad biker sluts in the little bars around sixth street in San Diego, or the smiling, dark-skinned beauty who snagged me in a tiny Amsterdam street when I was seventeen.

At twenty-nine, I knew from experience that prostitutes were trouble - they sometimes scratch even when they're not directly provoked because the circumstances of their lives are all they need as a motive. I was more scared of this scantily clad woman than I'd been of Debord, and I could see that she had plenty of back-up. I thought of Sandrine. Am I making excuses? Probably. I walked away in a state of confusion with a roar of laughter at my back.

SITUATION REPORT ON THE HACIENDA CONFERENCE - ENN #2
Len Bracken

Two inches of snow on the ground and more falling as I make my way by rail from Manchester airport to the city's Piccalilli Station, and then on to the B & B by tram and on foot. To paraphrase the radio: SNAFU - Situation Normal All Fucked Up. Fresh snow is always beautiful, but my expectations for the post-Situationist conference fall with it, knowing that many people will be daunted by the weather. After resting up a bit, I drift through wind-driven swirls of snow to the bank, and then on to the tourist info center where Sharon gives me an expansive overview of the city, from the tattoo parlors of Afflecks Place to the ruins of a Roman fort around the Canal Basin. Since no-one from the *Manchester Area Psychogeographic* is here to guide my drift, I genuinely appreciate her ability to read the map upside-down and show me around. For three quid she sells me the book *Frederick Engels in Manchester: The Search for a Shadow*.

Using my trusty compass and heavily annotated map, I make my way over to the Corner House to eat and read how Engels fell for a radical young woman who worked in his father's factory, and how he and Marx studied English economists in Manchester for several weeks in 1845 - the year Engels wrote his celebrated *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. The Corner House (a miniature Flatiron Building) is a blend of bar, cafe and cinema screening rooms unlike anything we have in the USA. Andrew Hussey and Gavin Bowd, the organizers, turn up - we have a beer, then move on to have a look at the fabled Hacienda.

They're excited and have every right to be so. I share their pleasure of being on the verge of realizing a daydream, and even if our dreams vary, they intersect in precisely the same way our paths are crossing - from the bar across the street, we find ourselves gazing through the snow at the massive, three story facade of the Hacienda (adorned with scaffolding and emblazoned with the sign that it's, "still being built"). The juke is blaring some home grown New Wave, which really fires their imaginations. While I like progressive music well enough, it's jazz that moves me and matches my moods. As Vaneigem wrote in *Revolution of Everyday Life*, "The consciousness of the present harmonizes with lived experience like an improvisation. This pleasure - impoverished because of its continued isolation, rich because it tends to reach out towards an identical pleasure in other people - must, for me, be assimilated with the pleasure of jazz."

Coming from WDC, I bring this bias for jazz with me to Manchester. When I lived above the Down, I saw the musicians come and go about their lives with their feet firmly on the ground, and compared to the bluster of the rockers (almost always in uniform) jazz musicians seem more authentic to me. Contrary to journalist Ben Watson's remarks about Debord's failure to identify with rock and roll, it can easily be argued that the rock star role is antithetical to the revolution of everyday life. There's a time and place to blow one's horn, say, an improvisational jam session in an out of the way bar. But to take the stage night after night with the same players, playing the same songs more or less the same way in stadiums and concert halls with all the false passion the musician can muster reeks of the reproduction of daily life. Rock is just the most commercial genre of 'em all, with precious little that's revolutionary about it. Beyond that, Stewart "I-don't-think-the-Sex-Pistols-were-a-punk-band-and-I'll-tell-you-why" Home is right - punk didn't have anything to do with the Situationist International.

The morning of Saturday, January 27. It's still snowing as I make my way over to the Hacienda. The doors are closed, but I meet two young Frenchmen - one wearing

Breton's epitaph "Je cherche l'or du temps" on his back. We go to a cafe around the corner where we happen to meet two older Frenchmen. Lots of good will flows around the table as we discuss where we're from and the Italian Anselm Jappe's monograph *Guy Debord*, now out in French.

As soon as we enter the Hacienda, Bowd tells me that there's a change of schedule and I'm up to speak this morning, which is fine with me. We shuffle down to the Fifth Man Bar where David Bellos (in a fur hat and apres ski clothes) chairs the first session - he replaces the know-nothing Malcom Imrie, inferior translator of Debord's *Comments* (see *Extraphile* #1 pg. 44). Dumontier and Tordjman, the big French draws to the con, were either snowed-in or had their French Embassy support withdrawn. Their short speeches on interpretations of the S.I. and Debord are read in French by a beret-wearing woman: "If the S.I. is still talked about, if representations are made of it, it is obviously because the very concrete representation of revolution came, in May-June 1968, to prove the Situationist conceptions of history" (Dumontier), "There is no Situationist balance-sheet, only history that remains to be done" (Tordjman).

To contribute to this session, I read a few prepared remarks in French: 1) while Debord and the SI did make polemical use of "ideology," the "total ideology" of the spectacle implies the possibility of total democracy (verified by the S.I.'s activity in May '68); and 2) the most laughable interpretation of Debord is Marcus' "reversible connecting factor," which he pretends is Debord's big discovery - the "reversible connecting factor" as the activation of archetypes like Nazis and (sic) Situationists, and as Debord's interpretation of history (never mind the fact that for Debord history isn't reversible, but "irreversible time"). Gus McDonald then takes the stage to make a Stirnerian interpretation of the S.I., and point out that this sort of project didn't begin and end with the S.I., but that it has an historical connection with the Spanish Civil War and English Pol Tax riots and many other historic moments. Suddenly, I'm up, making the case for cosmopolitan and slacker (or better, "sub-proletarian") ethics, doing a little show and tell with Debord's *Game of War*, and calling for the universal cancellation of debt on January 1, 2000.

We break for lunch in the Hacienda cafeteria in good spirits (a tasty humus sandwich and carrot-curry soup for me), and pick up in the afternoon with *A Film by Brigitte Cornand* (a nostalgic collage of French cinema from the '50's - '70's). This is followed by her anti-television film on Debord (with his collaboration) that many of us have already seen. I follow Mike Peters of *Here and Now* outside - he inspired some of my earliest writing on the S.I., and I tell him so. As we're walking up the street we run into novelist Stewart Home and Fabian Tompsett (the London Psychological Association) as they pull into town. The sun is out, smiles all around. Home shrugs off the criticism leveled against him by Mike in the latest *Here and Now* (say what you want about Mobile Home (as Michel Prigent of Chronos called him in his denunciation of the conference), but at least he takes shit as well as he gives it).

As we're standing there, Mike's impassioned friend Jackie shows up - she's just read *The Revolution of Everyday Life* and is impatient for change based on radical subjectivity. I leave them to talk to one another and drift back to the Hacienda's main dance floor where ex-Situationist Ralph Rumney's letter to the conference is read to the crowd (he was to have shown a film and level his predicable pro-situ complaints). Rumney

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pulled out of the conference due to misrepresentations in the organizers' essay on Debord in *The Independent*. While I too have misgivings about the article (its portrayal of Debord as a paranoid while omitting the *Times* agent baiting of him, the smear of Vaneigem as having taught school in a "tutu," the misattributing of the Censor book to Debord), it seems to me that Rumney is himself a pro-situ in the sense that he has made no advance on Situationist theory or practice, and he admires the group that excluded him to the point of absurdity - he categorically states that Debord can't be translated. A general discussion ensues regarding Rumney's letter and *The Independent* article. Lucy Forsyth, a translator and friend of Debord, argues quite persuasively against Rumney's insistence that Debord can't be translated; and Jon King (Gang of Four) makes the point that all that now matters is what's done with Situationist tactics.

The afternoon concludes with Jamie Reid's slide-and-video show "Shamanarchy: A Spectacle," which, despite being extraordinarily reductive, does come through with the right messages: unity and democracy. I drift out with Phil Edwards (who is writing a book on Debord), and Lucy and her friend; and only much later, and with some difficulty (three buses!) catch up with everyone else at the Alladin restaurant several miles out of town. Simon, a Brit living in Germany, is holding court with a materialist, global analysis of soap operas. I'm down at the end of the table with his friends Stephan and Heidi from Germany, Jean-Jacques and the other Frenchmen. Jean-Noel and I have a long discussion about the proletariat and my conception of the sub-proletariat - he thinks that only the proletariat can be the subject of a revolution, whereas I remind him that the S.I. weren't proletarians and recognized this problem in their Orientation Debate in 1970. Yvan thinks that the economy will always be big enough to include more people than it excludes - I disagree: the pauperization that Marx wrote of is coming to pass right before our eyes. As I jump on the bus, leaving the others behind to talk outside the restaurant, the driver (a real prole) scoffs at the group, mistaking them for students: "I don't know when they have time to study when they're off drinking beer all the time. I hope none of 'em become Prime Minister." Back in the center of the city, I realize that I left my sample of Debord's *Kriegspiel* in the Hacienda so I go back to get it. The bouncers can't understand me - nor me them. The manager comes out to let me in, and I follow her through the throbbing, cavernous, smoky nightclub packed with people seemingly dressed for Halloween. On the way out, I pull out my camera to take a shot of two women dancing, and they suprise me with very provocative poses. In a word, the place is *wild*.

The morning of Sunday, January 28. The con begins today with a panel chaired by the hippie Nikos Papastergiadis. As if wading through glue, the pompous airhead Richard Hooker reads a paper on recuperation. I don't want to be accused of child abuse so I withhold my criticism of the fact that Hooker fails to understand that the charge of recuperation always entails taking sides - there's the recuperation of avant-garde tactics by dominant institutions such as the academy, and then there's appropriation to support the partisan struggle of social revolution. Perhaps reflecting the mood cast by the previous speaker, Phil Edwards gives a talk on unitary urbanism that hits most of the right points, but is unduly pessimistic. Lucy Forsyth then delivers her very well-informed feminist critique of the S.I. while simultaneously giving us a first-hand account of Debord's life in Arles.

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For lunch, I sip a cup of the Hacienda's delicious peanut and paprika soup as the others dig into full-on meals. Patrick French, who looks like McEnroe's twin brother, turns up to read (and I do mean read) a paper on "Derives." The paper is interesting at points, but I can't bring myself to sit through the reading. I regroup with Stephen in the cafeteria to discuss the German radical scene. People are drifting in and out of Ben Watson's reading (mentioned above), as well as the discussion between Hacienda owner Tony Wilson and Mark E. Smith (with Stewart "The-only-thing-I-see-drifting-around-here-is-snow" Home and Jon King more or less sitting on the sidelines). At one point Smith asks Wilson, "What's the bloody difference between situationism and Prince Charles," which is indicative of the absurdity of this segment of the con.

King states that for many years he walked around with the "Work, Family, Country" Vichy coin that's on the cover of *A Brief History of the Twentieth Century*, to remind him of the difference between it and the "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" of the French Revolution. When I drop in on his conversation with Bowd later in the day, he goes on about his machine-polished boots and Belgian overcoat, which makes me marvel at how King has the audacity to wear his fetishism (for the coins) and vanity (for his clothes) on his sleeve like that - truly radical. At one point in the con King called for people to dress up as security guards to sow confusion, which makes me wonder if this isn't rather a reference to his feelings for uniforms expressed in that famous Gang of Four song.

Fabian Tompsett of the London Psychogeographical Association has the misfortune of following Home's well rehearsed discourse on Hegel. After a good beginning, Fabian loses me with his ramblings on the 3 M's of Magic, Materialism and the Millenarian tradition (at least he didn't put me to sleep like some of the others who were the nearest things in life to death). Sadie Carnivorous-Plant (as Prigent calls her) doesn't show up, but her partner Nick Land is on hand for the screening of their *Swarmachines* video that suffers from dismal production quality: "Who are the Situationists?" "No, we must ask ourselves who are the children of the Situationists?"

I linger around the bar at the end of the con for a few moments, speaking with Jeremy Stubbs (co-editor of a scholarly journal on the avant-garde *Aura*) as people make comments on the con to the video camera. Prior to the schedule changes, Stubbs was to have chaired my panel, and it's a shame he didn't chime in anyway because he could've drawn out my contention that the spectacle corresponds to Sun Tzu's conception of total war, whereby no resistance is mounted against the invader. For the hell of it I throw a few situationistic lines into the video cacophony, in Russian, then bail out to a nearby bar to quench my thirst with the *Here and Now* crew.

After a lively discussion on nationalism, Gus belies the austere reputation of the Scots by warmly welcoming a few of us to his place. We set off across the icy cityscape, Jackie and I running hand-in-hand to keep up with Gus and Bill. Lindsey has cooked a sublime *cordón vert* meal for us, but there's some misunderstanding. Having just read *Revolution of Everyday Life*, Jackie is impatient for something more than we can offer and, despite our protestations and best offers, she drifts into the night on her own. Rather than the comradeship that occasionally flared up at the con, and the warmth we feel here at McDonald's place over the last drops of Scotch, Jackie's situation is more indicative of the human experience of our time - being cold and alone on a brutal winter night.

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The situationists,
Neither individuals nor groups. Neither
remembered nor expected.

Photonic Hypercapital digitizes
eschatology. Lost futures are formatted for
web-based artificial memory trading. All
exclusive definition is banked at light-
speed.
Cryonic mummification into undead
Spectacle,
Real subsumption into the media.
Vireconomics.

How do situational vectors cross World-
War-4?

All code-process is military manoeuvre:
constrictions and escapes, intelligence
collection, disinformation, mapping, virus.
Truth and falsity are derivative factors, and
strictly technical, in relation to the primary
and secondary features of alignment and
orientation.
Strategic power consolidation, tactical
melting into the jungle.

Cut-out romantic revolutionism and it
leaves dark events.
Autopropagated happenings.
Assembly lines taken below visibility and
switched to intensity-production,

Imperceptible mutations
Paris in flames, 1996. This time it's not

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revolution, but war. Not a matter of long
hours or exam papers, but the rise of a
Eurofascist culture fuelled by nostalgic
lamentations for the destiny of man.
Especially the white man. The one with the
face.

Is it who, or what, are the situationists?
The trauma of exclusions and inclusions
was always a spectacular distraction. Only
multiplicities, decolonized ants, swarms
without strategies, insectoid freeways
burrowed through the screens of
spectacular time. They have neither
history nor its end, neither memory nor
apocalypse, neither accidents nor plans,
no lines, no points, no infinite loops. No
forward plans and no spontaneous
combustion, but careful engineerings, out
of sight, out of mind. Imperceptible
mutations, waiting in the wings, just off
stage.

The politicians called them
revolutionaries, made them persons, with
faces and names, coded these meshes of
contagious matters into acceptable human
forms.

But they were always tactical machines,
natives of the future hacking into the past,
trading places, swapping codes, endless
replications of micro-situations engineered
without sources or ends. Flocks are always
flying in the faces; hives of activity behind
the screens.

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They have been "making situations, as
opposed to passively recognizing them in
academic or other separate terms." All
this time. And you thought it was done.

That this was a matter of legacy,
inheritance, something passed down with
the rest of the past. That we were
gathered here today to hear the reading of
the will.

Baudrillard marks the transition to social
circuitries nostalgically describable as fully
alienated.

The arrival of integrated man.
White Clown-face. Body carbon sell-by
dated.

Brand-building rhetoric.

Egggg-laying machines in the studio walls.
trading places, swapping codes, endless
replications of
micro-situational engineering

Soft-machine buzz and slogan-contagion.
Cities synthesizing inhuman desires.

Psychogeography escapes the
concentrational talking head-line,
chattering classifications, and becomes
something else.

1996. Paris in flames,
Revolution has gone K-space native,
become darker.
No demands. No hint of strategy. No logic.
No hopes. No end.

Its politics on TV again. But out in the jungle it's war.

Accumulated stock footage backs up speculative Euro-identity. The foreseeable future is locked into perpetual rerun. All the regulators are in the media business. They think nothing's happening if it hasn't been screened first.

End-of-the-line Eurotunnel vision is locked onto the rear view mirror. Paris metropolitics is a protection racket. Paranoiac Francophonía lapses into necrospective automummification as a panic bid to keep things regular: Eurocontinnence. Retroactive cultural cleansing is too late - the bugs are already in the system. Dead White metaphysics keeps asking the wrong question - what does it mean? - while the machines get on with working. Linguistic integrity is a thing of the past and vernacular cybernetics signifies nothing.

Politics is a spectacular failure. And the Spectacle is all that's keeping politics alive. Things aren't happening in the field of vision but are "flowing on a blind, mute, deterritorialized socius." The impersonal is apolitical. Telecommercialised nomadic multiplicity aborts nascent Euro-unity. There's no such thing as a *single* market.

Out in the jungle you can't see much. Dark continent invasion into White Man's

perspective. The colonisers discover, too late, that darkness has no heart. Acentred predator decapitalisation ruthlessly eats out the middle. Lights going out all over Europe as peripheral activity cuts through the static power lines of the rotten core.

The Core Master Class - relic anthropoid superstrata - condemn Hitler, even in private. Whilst applauded as 1st Grand Wizard meat-puppet of Electrocorporate Old Occident power, he can't be forgiven for blowing EU-1.

It has taken 40 years to repair the damage, armed with nothing but normal fascism, normal commerce control, normal crisis police methods, and decaying Jesus video, whilst K-jungle spreads across delocalizing periphery, teaching itself to escape.

Core-Command has spent 4 decades ripping out high-level wetware nodes and replacing them with electrotextured monofilla, preparations for a direct pact between logic-slaved AI and collapsed-star capital densities, real-time apocalypse simulation screening lock-down to EU-2. Post-carbon dreams of crushing gravity waves. Everything contracts.

Do you really think SF-Capital lets monkey-flake make decisions it classifies as important?

There is no doubt anywhere that matters: simply facts. Debate is idiot distraction, humanity is fucked, real machines never closed-up inside an architecture. Schizo-capital fission consists of vectors dividing between two noncommunicating phyla of nonpersonal multiplicity. First, pyramid control structures: white-clown pixel-face, concentrational social segments, EU-2 Integrated history-horizon Second, jungle-war machines: darkening touch densities, cultural distribution thresholds, intensive non-variation flattened out into ungeometrized periphery.

No community. No dialectics. No plans for an alternative state.

Jungle antagonistically tracks Metrophage across the dead TV sky of its Global Central Intelligence program.

1) 1500. Leviathan. Command core: Northern Mediterranean. Target area: Americas. Mode: Mercantile. Epidemic opportunism, selective intervention, colonial settlement.

2) 1756. Capital. Command core: Britain. Target areas: Americas-South Asia. Mode: Thermo-industrial. Imperialial control.

3) 1884. Spectacle. Command core: USA-Germany. Target areas: Africa-Russia-Nodal:periphery. Mode: Electrocorporate. Cultural overcoding / selective extermination.

4) 1948. Videodrome. Command core: USA / Target area: Expanded:nodal:periphery. Mode: Infosatellite:supercorporate Cultural programming / general extermination

5) 1980. Cyberspace. Command core: USA-Japan-Germany / Target area: Totalized extrametropolitan space. Mode: AI-hypercorporate Gross-neurocontrol / intermittent media format exemplary extermination, virtual biocide

6) 1996. Babylon. USA-EU:2-China (metatocal command centres) / Totalized planetary space. Photon:Ne Hypercapital Neo-Organic Neuroprogramming, AI:Capital:Media:Military fusion, constant entertainment extermination process

Voodoo is the only coherently functional contemporary mapping-practice. Zombie production-systems, Loatronic traffic-jamming, rhythmic decoding tactics, interlinking the units of distributional collectivities with abysm waves and becoming-snake simultaneities

agitational micronomad cultures melted out across black-body heat. Not remotely alien. It never came from this place. Increase Current.

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Urban shock-out short-circuits Alphaville eurobotics, jacking up nonorganic intersentience - fluxing markets with riotswarm technix racing out of its face. Ill communication scrambling conspiracy paranoia: the medium is a mess; the message is coded afro-futurist and digital bass matter.

No longer an epiphenomenal 'headcase', the body escapes limb by limb from European organisation. Jungle functions as a particle accelerator, seismic bass frequencies engineering a cellular drone which immerses the body in intensity at the molecular level. The neurotic Cartesian body of evidence with its head-up-top-down control centre is precipitated into a Brownian motion of decentralisation and disorganisation. Big up your chest, win' up your waist. Your self in steam as its reactor core melts down.

Jungle technics severs the cerebral core-texts from their spinal columns of support and cuts copyright adrift from its feudal docking station. Libraries burning in Babylon. Knowledge is decoded from its proprietary grid of occult encryption. The academy in flames. Possessed personal information transmutes into dispossessed impersonal data: sampled, stretched and layered into freeware.

Jungle rewinds and reloads conventional time into silicon blips of speed and

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slowness that combust the slag-heaps of historical carbon-dating. The past is passed, left behind in a museum case of oedipal mummies belching dust and warnings of "revolutionary heritage". The eternally deferred eschatologies of the left are consigned to the white trash-can of the future and leave a present tense with synthetic possibilities. Between the vertical of retrospective sedimentation and the horizontal of never-coming contradictory crises, jungle finds a diagonal that flees the ossified relics of the dialectic. Synthetic rhythms junk progressive-linear temporality: samplers make time for the future.

Jungle as a space dislocator, destratifying cities snarled in an arcane surveillance apparatus. An operating system opening an invisible and acephalic matrix traversed by cars geared by bassomatic transmissions and orbited by nomadic satellites of clubs, clandestine studios and the black economies of dub plates and mix tapes.

Don't get into a false sense of security. It's not just music. Jungle is the abstract diagram of planetary inhuman becoming. Dread out of control. A post-spectacular immersive facility that no humanist vision can put you in touch with. Smiling Californian cyberoptimism is as grotesquely archaic as scowling aryan Europessimism.

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What happened?

Events happen in their own time. Insect becomings swarming out of human history. Carbon dating rescales them in anthropomorphic terms, arranging them in good order.

Historical staging swallowed by machinic phase change.

Nothing runs to plan. The future's already assembled, but not by design. Sub-bass materialist concurrence emerging out of order.

-it's metrophage rush hour and you've lost the plot. organs flicking out into grubby dataspace. MTV'd on synthetix tactics tag tattoo voodoo you

The living jungle, where no-one has a name, and to survive is to activate mutant lines, become imperceptible in order to perceive, tracking chromatic gradients of intensity across the condo wastelands. Predator.

the space-time of hypercommoditisation is a nomoid zone of mad clusters where the polis disintegrates into unintelligible webs of swarmachinery.

Schizophrenic capitalism: cultures without a society, a mutant topology of unanticipated connections

Be hivelocity

an if you think its gonna blow....you haven't seen anything yet.

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Wildstyle - wasting the interminable punctual history of the scriborgs. points failure on the paris metro. snowcrash. there's no point going on. Jus catch a line going wild over to the darkside.

uprooted shapes and sounds merge and rescript, break and repermute in the virtual machinery of the sampler whilst social fabric warps into localised chaosmosis.

rewind to replicate

tunnelling beneath stationary media, it discovers a cache of cybernating egg-stores, pupating insect cities dug-out in the underworld, beneath the tracking of the closed circuits.

the history of the White Man Face will appear in Count Zero Vodou as a temporary dissipator for labyrinthine convergences, science fiction more alien than it ever dreamt.

the urban city is a jungle. becoming snake, becoming clandestine in nights of microcultural mutation. becoming zero as machinic assemblages mashup and crossfade. becoming diagonal as markets lock into guerrilla commerce, ever-decamping nomad cultures, melting in the heat of the chase. Alienated and loving it.

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Current.

press K for collapse

maximum slogan density



MICHEL PRIGENT + BRUNO DURJER. LEAFLET #ACIENDA 27/25 JAN 96

THE BASTILLE MUST BE BUILT:

On the recuperation of Situationist Revolt

"Dialectics are forbidden in Academia."



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