Situationist Poise, Space and Architecture

by James Burch

“Alas”, said the mouse, “the world is growing smaller every day. At the beginning it was so big that I was so afraid, I kept running and running, and I was glad when at last I saw walls far away to the right and left, but these long walls have narrowed so quickly that I am in the last chamber already, and there in the corner stands the trap I must run into.”

“You only need to change your direction”, said the cat, and ate it up. 1

In Kafka’s Little Fable the cornered mouse understands his own position in the world by defining himself with self-wished boundaries. These narrow, creating a single point perspective within which he may orientate himself. The mouse runs, following the direction he has set himself until he is trapped. He forgets that it is he himself who has formulated the boundaries that trap him.

The fable succinctly describes the concept of reification. Events created by human agency are misapprehended as an over-riding ‘given’ which goes on to define further human action. The situationists, the subjects of this article, understood society to be in a similar predicament to Kafka’s mouse. They offered critiques of, and resistance to, the sense of entrapment society’s restrictive socio-economic selfdefinitions have led to. They invited us to act on the cat’s taunt: You need only change your direction! For a situationist, the cat’s is a cruel irony, the self-formulated reifications of the mousetrap will fall away if the mouse world-view is disrupted, re-opened to fresh perspectives.

The situationists invent a new political position from which to launch their attacks on reified society and, with this cultural poise, they inform a new understanding of space. But theirs was always a shifting position - attempting to continually destabilise the behavioural procedures with which society restricts itself. ‘Situationist space’ was similarly transient - a contested social space continuously remaking itself to avoid the closure of perspective which Kafka’s fable threatens. Yet the situationists did not simply define this new urban space in reaction to the city extant but proposed a new urbanism and new architecture. Here, we concentrate on that paradox.
situationists related their critical poise and revolutionary space to architecture - itself an art of reification, which objectifies ideas as artefacts and, in Michel Foucault's words, fixes the "spatialisation of knowledge".2

POISE

The situationists developed a rationally argued framework to describe the process of alienation they saw as inherent in capitalist society. This they theorised as the Society of the Spectacle. Despite the totalising logic of this framework, the situationists also insisted on the primacy of a 'natural' radicalised subjective will which, paradoxically, was supposed to usurp a system within which it was powerless to operate. For Alastair Bonnett, this inherent contradiction in situationist thought renders its political force impotent. He argues that: "Situationism is both too romantic and too rational a philosophy to be politically plausible".3 The rational system of relations described by the concept of the Spectacle leads to the effacement of any natural romantic subject as a form of criticism.

Analysed within their separate frames of reference a revolution of radical subjectivity and the reified images of the Society of the Spectacle are antithetical propositions. However, if one understands the subjective and objective parts of situationist theory as operating together to change the world, this inherent contradiction becomes the point at which the theory provides most effective criticism. Situationist practice carries within it a libertarian urge to practically demonstrate the quality of un-reified lived experience. Situationist theory is simply an adjunct to this aim and should be understood as a tool, fashioned in order to manoeuvre oneself and create a position from which to act.

Georges Bataille's metaphor of the Pyramid and the Labyrinth may be used to illustrate the position from which the situationists did act. Denis Hollier, in his book on Bataille - La Prise de la Concorde (1974), uses these architectural metaphors to discuss Bataille's philosophical project. The labyrinth of experience encompasses all - including a being's comprehension of its relation to the labyrinth - in an unsurmountable ambiguity. A being cannot orientate itself inside the labyrinth because "one never is inside the labyrinth ... unable to leave it, unable to grasp it with a single glance, one never knows if one is inside".4 As the labyrinth is "not a referent ... neither the category of subjectivity nor the category of objectivity can exist in this space", though the labyrinth "has no replacement to offer".5

For Bataille, "[a]ll of existence, as far as men are concerned, is specifically bound up with language whose terms decide each individual's vision of it".6 Language stands within the labyrinth as the way being can substantiate its existence. But this substantiation of being always involves closure of possibilities as "a network of concentric sub-ordination's (grammatical, ontological, ideological, logical, social etc.)" are formulated to found the substantiation.7 Thus we construct a pyramidal structure of language or thought within which meanings become fixed, determinate. Although the pyramid is "only a product of the labyrinth itself and thoroughly belong[ing] to it"8, there is always a temptation to build it higher, to try and see beyond the confines of the labyrinth and guide us out of it. We forget that the pyramid is only another role in the labyrinth.

For Hollier, between them no escape is possible, only the productive havoc of the circulation of capital and its arrays of spectacle.

By using the metaphor of the pyramid to spectacularise on the process of reification, situationist subjectivity in the form of the Spectacle can be seen through the cultural and social economic framework of capital and its arrays of spectacle. By way of a different perspective, the system of relations is viewed from the perspective of the real, the way the situationists see it. This is an understanding of the situation as an understanding of the real, of the ways in which reification is the presence of the real, the presence of the real subjective ends.

As with their predecessors, the situationists too carried the same burden, one of which is that the sound are placed in their own hands and given the full potential of their authoritative voice and their new position as creators and producers of the real.

The mutual construction of different subjectivities and organisation of their base and super-structure.

What is salutary is that the situationists, in contrast to the construction of their own system, are not content to look for an actualism of presence which one is being. For Hollier, it is a question of "defining a relation between the two, one which is not a simple relationship back onto the thought of the other a discursive framework that is boundless, unsu
is only another route within (or without) the labyrinth.

For Hollier, both pyramid and labyrinth are necessary - being sits on the threshold between them nurtured by the creative force of the labyrinth, venturing into pyramidal structures in order to express itself:

the pyramid is, in effect, inevitable but impracticable (terminable),
whereas the labyrinth is elusive (non-sizeable) but impossible to circumvent. 9

By using the metaphor of the Pyramid and Labyrinth one can see that spectacularised capitalism constructs a system of relations which must alienate subjectivity in order to establish an internally coherent discourse. Within the perspective view of the pyramidal Spectacle, the linear conception of accumulation of capital and its accompanying ideology of ‘progress’ make labyrinthine nature appear an imprisonment. One realises that one will never follow the Ariadne’s thread of capital accumulation out of the labyrinth and from this pyramidal perspective one then views the labyrinth as a restriction on growth. But by viewing the totalising perspective of the Spectacle as a pyramidal construction within the labyrinth, the situationists see reification as a closure of existential possibilities and have no qualms over insisting on subjective un-alienced relations within the Spectacle. The situationists construct their pyramidal description of the Society of the Spectacle from an understanding of its position as part of the labyrinth - mindful of the inherent problems of closure and ‘terminability’ which a pyramidal construct carries. The Spectacle encloses the situationists, yet they continue to develop the theory of spectacular relations “nonetheless, to transgress the closure they build.” 10 Thus, their critique involves the rationally constructed theory of the Spectacle and an insistence on the presence of some ‘other’. The boundaries of the Spectacle are subverted toward subjective ends.

As with their theoretical construct, the situationists key strategy of détourment carries the same play between pyramid and labyrinth. Found images, objects, text or sound are placed in a different context. The juxtaposition creates a new meaning - the full potential of which relies upon a play of meanings between the original texts and their new position. Détourment resulted in:

The mutual interference of two worlds of feeling, or the bringing together of two independent expressions, supersed[ing] the original elements and produc[ing] a synthetic organisation of greater efficacy. 11

What is salutary in the situationist practice of détourment is the attitude it brings to the construction of meaning. Theirs is the liberating assertion that one is most alive - that one is being - when one positions oneself on the threshold of meaning. As Denis Hollier notes, it is in relating different elements, and its ability to attribute meaning to a relation between elements, that humanity creates language. It is in the act of creating these relationships that humanity substantiates its existence. The situationists step back onto the threshold of meaning, and, in refusing the restrictions of a single discursive framework of understanding, obtain the poise with which to explore the boundless, unsurmountable labyrinth of sensual experience. Within this labyrinth,
they rediscover the pyramidal structures that order our existential understanding (necessary to substantiate communication and therefore necessarily restrictive in interpretation). In acts of détournement these pyramids of meaning are explored, toyed with, disassembled, remade and broken. Through détournement, the juxtaposition of two discursive meaning-structures creates a new third meaning - a play between one’s received understandings of the original terms. This practice readjusts and enlivens the frames of reference that substantiate our existence. The situationists enable us, through our creative re-readings of détourned objects, to be more fully alive.

Here then is the poise from which the situationists launch their subversions. They invite us to work at the threshold between Labyrinth and Pyramid.

How then does this relate to the fabrication of objects or architecture systems where ideas are necessarily objectified? The situationist Asger Jorn analysed the problem of art as an objectification of the communication between two subjects - the ‘artist’ and the ‘observer’. He criticised the American Abstract Expressionists ‘action painting’ as a purely subjective expression - the canvas simply there to collect traces from the “pure creator who does nothing but fulfil himself through the materials for his own pleasure”.12 This he saw in opposition to the Classical conception of art which valorised the autonomy of the object as something to be appreciated free from reference. Jorn used détournement to “play between the dialectic of the[se] two opposites”.13 Buying anonymous kitsch artworks from markets (artefacts broken free from context - free from reference), Jorn painted over them in a détournement which he saw as a rejuvenation of the latent subjectivity in the object. These Modifications - as they were described for Jorn’s exhibition in 1959 - shifted the role of the artefact away from being either autonomous object of commodification or an objectified expression of the unique talent of the artist. Instead détourned paintings revitalised banal images into: “simultaneously ... object and inter-subjective communication”14.

Through détournement the autonomy of the artwork was subverted. New marks on a long-since finished canvas re-open the artwork towards the possibility of continuing modification - never to be an enclosed object again. Jorn’s choice of kitsch figurative pictures as subjects for détournement made the ‘artist-détourner’ recognise the object’s already extant language of figuration and forced him into dialogue with an already objectified world. Thus, un-alienated subjective will is forced to engage with the objective world through détournement - there is a play between a labyrinthine subjective expression and the pyramidal constructions of the Classical.

The détourned object must remain unstable, susceptible to recuperation, if it is to remain alive to subjective appropriation and inter-subjective communication. The détourned object must stand poised on the threshold between Pyramid and Labyrinth - liable to both recuperation as a newly fashioned reified image, and, to interiorised collapse into subjectivity.

The situationists aimed to throw public conception of the city into similar compromise. As Jorn had opened up the easel painting as a site of inter-subjective communication, the situationists wanted to undermine the reified spatio-temporal zone of the city. Through détournement - by intentional misreading of city space - the city would “be extricated from the horizons of the urban and transformed into a space through varied ambient referencing, which is not, however, amenable to the definition of a city-space, but to create a space of the ‘intendential’ city”, as Deleuze and Guattari (1957) charts this radical reorientation of Paris are re-linked: the user is re-directed. Modifications, Naked Citizens can construct their own making...
city would “be experienced not as a thing at all, but as possibilities”. The situationists encourage people to dérive, practising “a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances”. The aim here is not simply to stroll purposelessly through city-space, but to create spatial détournements, subverting the reified image of the city by the introduction of a subjective reading. Guy Debord’s détourned map Naked City (1957) charts this new conception of urban space. Nineteen cut-out sections of a map of Paris are re-linked by directional arrows - “psychogeographical turntables” where the user is redirected towards the exploration of new ambiances. As with Jorn’s Modifications, Naked City re-assembles the city as an open framework within which citizens can construct their own narrative readings, becoming a traveller in a labyrinth of their own making, revealed by their own wish to find it.17

**SPACE**

Returning again to Jorn’s Modifications, whereas the ‘artist’s’ détournement of kitsch figurative canvases suggests possibilities of transience, change and dialogue on the surface of the painting; it does not require such a depth of engagement from the ‘observer’. The observer remains a passive onlooker - the painting, a commodified object.

The subversions of détournement and dérive had limited effect when the system of reified relations within which these détourned objects were framed was left uncriticised, allowed to decompress and recuperate their subversive interventions. Any attempts to break down the separation between subject and object had to change the whole framework of relations within which these categories were subscribed. Instead of a framework which related notions of object and subject through terms of mutual exclusion, a framework was required which operated to unite object and subject in open unstable relations sympathetic to détournement and the creation of a radicalised inter-subjectivity.

For the situationists space offered such a set of relations where the objective world of pyramidal constructs and the subjective labyrinth of sensual experience could be combined. The situationists therefore concentrated on the quality of experience of the objective world, that is, on the social construction of space - in Lefebvre’s words - “l’espace vécu”. Lived space, to be realised through the construction of situations:

A moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organisation of a unitary ambience and a game of events.18

Analysis of revolutionary space as it briefly existed in Paris in 1871 will help illustrate a referential frame which relates object and subject in inter-subjectivity. For the situationists:

The Commune represents the only realisation of a revolutionary urbanism to date - attacking on the spot the petrified signs of the dominant organisation of life, understanding social space in political terms, refusing to accept the innocence of the monument.19
In the creation of the Commune and in its self defence its operation was fundamentally spatial. Changing the relations of production at a basic economic level was ignored, the Communards preferring to level monuments than seize the assets of the poorly defended French National Bank. Instead they developed a new conceptual attitude to space. In their construction of a freely organised city life, they resisted accepted patterns of movement and countered the separation of public and private realms. The construction of the barricades, quick, utilitarian, transient - a double détournement of everyday objects into obstacles, streets into dead-ends - was a rejection of the monumental city. Whereas isolate stable monuments gave a timeless structure to surrounding spatial uses, the barricades were tactical, disputative structures briefly contending the accepted function of the street as thoroughfare. Faced with barricades, troops were immobilised long enough for the Communards, concealed in surrounding houses, “to pelt them with ... anything that can be used as a projectile”.20 While the barricades jammed the public flow of space, the surrounding privatised space of housing was opened up in a practice of lateral piercing. As Communard’s guarded the ground floor others pulled up the staircases and on the upper levels broke through adjoining houses as far as possible.

The stratification of space engendered by the system of capitalist relations was broken down, practices of spatial reification chased away. Anti-heirarchisation was also pursued at a symbolic level. The Communards toppled the Vendôme Column - a monument appropriated by Napoleon to celebrate his military achievements.

The Communards’ resistance was not simply a negation of the reification of space. They did not simply react to, but positively created a new spatial character. Against stratified space where movement is confined to fixed paths and goals - where streets are conduits, fixing the pattern of movement, historically pre-set; the Communards posit a smooth space which is open-ended. The Vendôme Column’s privileging of verticality, and the creation around it of vertical systems of congregation, was undone. Lateral piercing created a space where one could rise up and travel from a multiplicity of points. In the Commune:

the mode of distribution is the nomos: arraying oneself in an open space (hold the street), as opposed to the logos of entrenching oneself in a closed space (hold the fort).21

Thus, Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptions of smooth and striated space capture the qualities the situationists valued in the Paris Commune:

Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity: nonmetric, acentred, rhizomatic multiplicities that occupy space without ‘counting’ it and can be explored only by legwork.22

The smooth space of the Commune creates a space to be directly experienced, without mediating images and offers opportunities for exploration without closure, for endless dérive.

Kristin Ross, in her essay, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune*, uses Rimbaud’s poem *Révé pour l’hiver* (1870) to touch on the spirit of the Commune. In the poem the pink railway carriage is the subject in close, estranged from the final stanza:

Then you cut yourself
A little

Where

And you

- And

- With...

In closing off, she herself to a smooth, close-to, un-mediation, clearly as a scratch from voir to faire...

Whereas striated direction, perspective, but insists that one is too close to it, to let...

Poised thus, the woman’s body, motion, a subject, landmarks, and lines, and temporal relations...

The spider/kiss follow in the exclusion...

‘Cherchez la femme’

This imperative of the spider/kiss in the Commune, its slant. Rather than describing and consequence of an attitude, strategy and in a smooth space of... is in changing the one created.

The Communards relations subscribed
Commune. In the poem a couple travel through a winter landscape enclosed in “a little pink railway carriage”. Refusing to allow in the sensation of travel through landscape, the subject in closing her eyes surrenders “the domination of the look”. She is estranged from the objective world and this enclosure heightens her imagination. In the final stanza:

Then you will feel your cheek scratched...
A little kiss, like a mad spider,
Will run about your neck...

And you’ll say to me ‘Find it!’ bending your head,
- And we’ll take a long time to find that creature
- Who travels far...

In closing off sight, the dominance of optical space is negated and the subject opens herself to a smooth space of haptic perception, experience is tactile, perceived to be close-to, un-mediated. Transformations in relations are immediately sensed as clearly as a scratched cheek: “The word égratignée [scratched] signals the movement from voir to faire...”

Whereas striated space relates objects via distanciation - concepts of separation, direction, perspective - smooth haptic space will not distance itself from experience but insists that one no longer needs to see the object - instead there is a will: “to be too close to it, to lose oneself without landmarks in smooth space”.

Poised thus, the “little spider/kiss” begins its dérive “along the microgeography of the woman’s body”. A different geography is formulated, the spider/kiss is in motion, a subject exploring a unitary spatio-temporal zone, its “orientations, landmarks, and linkages ... in continuous variation; it operates step by step”, spatial and temporal relations remade with each move.

The spider/kiss moves on formulating a psychogeography which we are invited to follow in the exclamation:

‘Cherche!’ [Find it!].

This imperative is less a directive to find, more an invitation to the reader to join the spider/kiss in its ceaseless nomadic search. Like the instant rapportage of the Commune, its slang and caricatures, the command “Cherche!” acts as a Slogan. Rather than describing a conceptualised precise rationale, logically presenting cause and consequence within a pyramidal structure of meanings, the Slogan carries attitude, strategy and forms of mobility. Its posture offers the possibility of remaking a smooth space of revolutionary urbanism. For, as the Communards demonstrated, it is in changing the physical structure of space that a revolutionary urbanism can be created.

The Communards’ revolutionary urbanism re-valorises space. Whereas capitalist relations subscribe experience within a binary opposition of subject-object, sensual-
cerebral, labyrinth-pyramid; the mad ‘spider/kiss’ inserts a third term, showing us that although space may be reified it will always afford the possibility of subjective activity - the chance of détournement.

Space (as a third term) offers both subject and object in an incomplete unstable statement. While space offers a field of subjective expression, it is always defined by an objective constituent, towards which a subject must respond. The Communards’ conception of space offers a paradoxical, incomplete unity of subject and object. The détourned plane of Jorn’s Modifications is opened into three-dimensions.

_Cherche!_ Rimbaud sets the reader into a revolutionary space. The smooth space of the situationists’ unitary urbanism is realised by a change in posture and attitude. From a linear conception of use where objects are conceived for, and specified by, the work they perform; a space is created for free action, where the relations between space, objects and events continuously vary. The mad spider/kiss practices a child-like haptic geography:

> Children’s cognition had revolutionary power because it was tactile, and hence tied to action, and because rather than accepting the given meaning of things, children got to know objects by laying hold of them and using them creatively, releasing from them new possibilities of meaning.  

Behaving thus, the spider/kiss simply and seriously plays.

Johan Huizinga, in his essay, _Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play Element in Culture_, argues that the significance of play is that it offers us a quality which stands outside of the rational constructs of man, a quality difficult to inscribe in language, and yet the existence of which man cannot deny. “[T]he fun of playing, resists all analysis, all logical interpretation. As a concept, it cannot be reduced to any other mental category”. Play “confirms the supra-logical nature of the human situation”.  

In its play the mad spider/kiss recovers a sensuous exploration of the Labyrinth.

**ARCHITECTURE**

The Communards’ détournement of the city leaves its spatial structure compromised and unstable. The timeless fixity of monuments is thrown into question - for, transitory barricades always threaten to reappear. This instability is similar to that which Jorn’s _Modifications_ create - the détournement of an existing autonomous object, the city, creating an open zone of inter-subjective communication.

In his _Formulary for a New Urbanism_ (1953) Ivan Scheglov outlined this permanently unstable urbanism where the city “would no longer be simply the locus of action but action itself”.  

The architecture of tomorrow will be a means of modifying present conceptions of time and space. It will be a means of knowledge and a means of action.

The situationists argued that the development of technology stimulated by the demands of capitalist accumulation carried the means for a release from alienated labour. Guy Debord’s “labyrinths” - continuous construction in New Babylon which could be extended and contract to more intimate spaces.

Constant Nieuwenhuys’ similar understanding of playful revolutionary space, which could liberate:

> Automation of production to be fixed, sedentary and static, moved to become flexible, mobile, and independent.

The automation and the _playground of the city_ which whatever he may want to call it, it is a new principle of urban production”.

Constant conceives a city by [the Newbabylonian] urbanism is by an ‘unfunctional’ network above “extensive dimensions” found”. The nomadism and stables of a continuous playful space with practically no limits, “returns to the origins and experiences of nomadism and stables”.

In New Babylon there is a constant return to their origins.

Space could be divided into small and bigger spaces that would be standardised mobile spaces of continuous, mobile abundance to release the city from its continuous playful space.

Here then is a new urbanism of “random and non-connection, which is created to release the playfulness and evenness of movement - as a new expression of what is possible to mimic the character of the street. Constant’s models of the work’s, and metal art.

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labour. Guy Debord recognised how technology could create “new forms of labyrinths” - continuously new environments for exploratory dérive. He cited the construction in New York, in 1955 of a “helicoidal” apartment house - the rooms of which could be augmented or diminished by moveable partitions which would expand and contract to model the desired psychogeographical ambience.34

Constant Nieuwenhuys developed his designs for New-Babylon (1962-3) from a similar understanding of the possibilities technology opened up for the creation of a playful revolutionary space.35 For Constant, technology offered a material abundance which could liberate mankind from the requirements of alienated production:

Automation of production means that man ceases to be a producer. He is no longer forced to be fixed, sedentary. His life can again become nomadic, as it was before Neolithic times. Independent of nature, he can create his entourage at will.36

The automation of production harbours the possibility of providing man with whatever he may want, wherever he may go. Technological development suggested a new principle of urbanisation “based on the socialisation of land and the means of production”.37 Thus, New Babylon was a provocation, opening the striated space of the existing city and offering in its place a model for a post-revolutionary urbanism “capable of developing a free environment”.38

Constant conceived this new urbanism as a “network represent[ing] the traces left by [the Newbabylonians’] passage across the surface of the earth”.39 This was to be an “unfunctional” network of “covered unities” called “sectors” raised above the earth above “extensive open green spaces where nobody lives and no buildings are to be found”.40 The nomadic Newbabylonians would create urbanised trails of pathways, links and stacked levels as they travelled between sectors. Technology would facilitate an intensity of space use and offer a “field of activity for each individual [with] practically no limits”. A smooth nomadic space of moments and turns in contrast to the origins and exclusions of the traditional city:

In New Babylon people would be constantly travelling. There would be no need for them to return to their point of departure as this in any case would be transformed.41

Space could be constructed and reconceived using a “quite chaotic arrangement of small and bigger spaces that are constantly mounted and dismounted by means of standardised mobile construction elements”.42 Technology would provide the material abundance to release man from labour and generate a spatial framework for his continuous playful dérive.

Here then is a megastructural conception of revolutionary space. There is a “random and non-hierarchical slotting of all functions” into a neutral framework which is created to provide the structural properties of “continuity, modular growth, and evenness of texture”.43 This framework is created to facilitate the spatial expression of whatever acts or desires mankind can imagine. In using a megastructure to mimic the character of revolutionary space the objective world is suppressed. Constant’s models of New Babylon - their transparent perspex strata, wire lattice-work’s, and metal folds - offer an arena for microgeographical exploration. A three-
dimensional Naked City is constructed, the radicalised subject flies through various ambient zones, deflected by “psychogeographical turntables” and itself deflecting, the surrounding constructions. The image is provocative, Constant’s constructions act as Slogans opening one’s perception to a different urban space - an indeterminate space of perpetual motion. However, the construction of similar ‘neutral’ megastructures in real space carries with it questions; of building control - the power structures which will inevitably inform this megastructural ‘free-space’ zone; and the quality of intersubjectivity a neutral objective realm offers its users.

A year after exhibition of Constant’s New Babylon, Joan Littlewood announced proposals for a Palace of Fun (1964) as part of a new Lea Valley Regional Park.44 Similarly this promised to be a laboratory of pleasure, providing room for many kinds of action,45 to be used by some as “a university of the street”, by others as “a latter-day Vauxhall Gardens where one might meet one’s Nell Gwynne”.46 The Fun Palace was conceived as the “First Giant Space Mobile in the World”,47 its architect Cedric Price - designing a framework which housed “ramps, moving walkways, catwalks and radial escalators”, and allowed “multi-directional movement and random pedestrian grouping, yet was capable of being programmed”.48 As with New Babylon, advanced technologies were to create a new architectural idyll. “ Charged static vapour zones, optical barriers, warm air curtains and fog dispersal plant... together with vertical and horizontal lightweight blinds”,49 went together to create an ephemeral architecture, scheduled to last only ten years. The technologies would liberate the user - Price and Littlewood encouraging:

no need to look for an entrance - just walk in anywhere. No doors, foyers, queues or commissionaires: its up to you how you use it... - try starting a riot or beginning a painting - or just lie back and stare at the sky.50

The Fun Palace offered a prototype of the post-revolutionary space the situationists dreamt about, and the situationist Alexander Trocchi adopted the Fun Palace as the model for his experimental situationist university.51

However, the concrete practicalities in Cedric Price’s design point up the power relations built into the Palace. The ship-yard sized steel gantry assembly of demountable spaces would be serviced by a great slab-basement which provided staff circulation, piped services and escape routes. In operation, a privileged leisure class would stroll amongst the pleasurable diversions of the Palace while a great force of technical assistants worked behind the scenes rearranging spaces for the users’ subjective preference (a similar leisure framework was subject to contemporary research in the designs for Disneyland). The inviting image of a technology which might facilitate whatever spatial requirements a subject may imagine and desire was called into question by the technology itself. Constant stressed that his New Babylon project was a provocative model for a post-revolutionary space - noting that “[t]he true builders of New Babylon will be the Newbabylonians themselves”.52 However as a project founded on the liberating possibilities of technology, the structures which were to design and administer this newly created libertarian space remained a separate power centre. The Fun Palace illustrates that homo ludens would remain served, or controlled, by homo faber.

This question of control (Pompidou (1971) architects to the public) of technologies in Baudrillard’s (1988) plan informed the Fun Palace’s “bureaucracy of the free”. The project is illustrated by Beaubourg is not the only example.

It is clear where the public to aspire to; the use of technologies in Baudrillard’s plan the organisation to be a facilitator increased the neutral technology remains central.

The Centre Pompidou - 50 metre deep and Halles - an area of radicalised situationists in 1971 and an area as an already perpetuate constant offered a rich figure of the neutral technology as a radicalised subject, a stimulus for interaction.

Technology an as part of the public realm. A similar precociousness in the Archigram’s groups structures that would themes of flexibility cut loose from needs (1968) and Living Architecture in which which illustrates the common dream:

The latest technoscientific cosmic reality travelled through glass and vegetation to the outer earth and return to the

Constant’s conclusion is that create a shared dream.
This question of control is illustrated by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers’ Centre Pompidou (1971-75). A megastructural fragment built in Paris and dedicated by the architects to the same values of flexibility and libertarian use of space-use which informed the Fun Palace. Here, a flexible free-space architecture was built by the bureaucracy of the Third Republic. The bureaucratic attitude which informed this project is illustrated by the project administrator:

Beaubourg is the meeting of the tastes and preoccupations of a president and the 
aspirations, still latent, of the French people.\footnote{53}

It is clear who will decide what the technologies of Beaubourg will engineer the public to aspire to. As with the great service plenum designed for the Fun Palace the technologies in Beaubourg require the invention of a new stratum of administration to plan the organisation of the building’s flexible envelope. This neutral technological facilitator increases bureaucracy - the reification of lived experience through technology remains.

The Centre Pompidou also illustrates the problem of technical neutrality. The great 50 metre deep decks of Beaubourg replaced part of the mediaeval quarter of Les Halles - an area which had already come under psychogeographical scrutiny by the situationists in 1958.\footnote{54} In his research situationist Abdelhafid Khatib had identified the area as an already extant labyrinth of changing landscapes which could stimulate and perpetuate constructed situations.\footnote{55} Whereas the small spaces of mediaeval Paris offered a rich figurative canvas prepared for the détournements of a subjective user, the neutral technological space of Beaubourg is a plain abstract canvas on which the radicalised subject may leave traces but which will not provide a shared historical stimulus for inter-subjective communication.\footnote{56}

Technology and automation thus facilitate the radicalised subject’s retreat from the public realm. A development which reaches its apotheosis in Archigram’s work. Similarly preoccupied with technology as a facilitator for permissive free expression, the Archigram group also applied megastructural solutions attempting to create city structures that would yield to any individual desire. The group further pursued the themes of flexibility, adaptability, mobility and non-monumentality - their architecture cut loose from megastructural support systems. Thus, in David Green’s Suitalloon (1968) and Living Pod (1966) projects, the architecture becomes an all-enveloping garment in which the user could travel and live in autonomous isolation. An image which illustrates the dangers of technological alienation inherent in Shcheglov’s dream:

The latest technological developments would make possible the individual’s contact with cosmic reality while eliminating its disagreeable aspects. stars and rain can be seen through glass ceilings. The mobile house turns with the sun. Its sliding walls enable vegetation to invade life. Mounted on tracks, it can go down to the sea in the morning and return to the forest in the evening.\footnote{57}

Constant’s conceptualisation of post-revolutionary space - offering technological release for the radicalised subject - while facilitating individual desires, does not create a shared objective world in which inter-subjective communication can take
place. Instead human experience becomes further reified by technology; further coerced by a new stratum of technocracy.

The alternative is a situationist urbanism operating within the existing structure of the city as an urban provocateur, appropriating space towards subjective ends. For Anthony Vidler, this suggests an architecture:

no longer ... constructed out of the mental response of citizens subjected to the behavioural experiments of the architect, but now out of objects that themselves are occupied in continuous dérive.^[58]

Vidler argues that John Hejduk offers just such a situationist architecture. Hejduk has created a band of architectural characters which he adapts or simply transposes from project to project and city to city in which he works:

The cast presents itself to a city and its inhabitants. Some of the objects are built and remain in the city; some are dismantled and disappear; some are built, dismantled, and move on to another city where they are reconstructed^[59]

Into the stable reified environment of the modern city he releases a set of “sociological-political”^[60] types which pose the city certain, often uncomfortable, themes and memories. As with situationist détournement the architecture’s role “derive[s] from the confrontation of a fixed content with an unfixed roving subject”.^[61]

In a series of “Masques” Hejduk proposes to change the behaviour of citizens with structures they are invited to use and inhabit. He argues that the modern city requires situations which question its fabric of assumptions:

as it was necessary for the highly rational-pragmatic city of fifteenth century Venice to create masques, masks, masses for its time in order to function, it would appear that we of our time must create masques (programmes???) for our times.[^62]

Hejduk’s characters threaten, as they roll into the city, by offering programmes which may subvert the conception and production of city space privileged by society. For Vidler, this is a “vagabond architecture” that transforms the city “once more into an auto-critical artefact”.^[63]

In the production of his independence, the vagabond defies the social order, he rejects labour claiming a “right to laziness” and embraces a “radical mobility”, bragging: “I have lived everywhere!” While the worker labours to overcome the means of his subjection, the vagabond is effortlessly mobile, operating only upon himself and under his own terms:

Laziness, the refusal to make use of the body or turn it into a tool, is here linked to a kind of radical mobility. I have lived everywhere. I have lived many lives ... This is the impossible liberty of having exempted oneself from the organisation of work in a society that expropriates the very body of the worker.^[64]

Similarly Hejduk’s buildings claim their ‘right to laziness’. They are content to repeat precise, almost regimental programmes, but always under their own terms - regardless of the vagabond, his way of life, his violation of social order.

Successful as these programmes may be in situations which they carry little weight, they also develop around a new ideology of spatial resistance, a primordial style based around the pre-capitalist freedom of the State, travel, and the vagabond. Their lifestyle coined by the term “Plant the traveller”.

The traveller: exchange, anarchy, legislative concept, and the conventional.

Despite the Spectacle the xxth century is characterised by a new criticality of the world.

Through their cultural, social, and political criticism which Hejduk refers to vagabonds - the anarchistic revolutionary project of the objectification of the work.

Architecture as organisation

Architecture can and should continue to argue in its own special way: it is rhetoric”.^[65] It should “demystify and criticise, as it is therefore restricted within the structure of the place.

Under Tschumi’s criteria for a new architecture the travellers ‘right to laziness’ - arguments is necessary that are more than mere reconstructions. Hejduk’s architecture is useless because the revolution succeeded.
regardless of the context in which they operate. Here then lies the threat of the vagabond, his way of life sits outside the mores of society and threatens an eventual violation of society’s norms.

Successful as Hejduk’s vagabonds appear on paper - constructing theoretical situations which détourne urban discourse towards poetic and subjective concerns - they carry little of the “potentiality of misdeed” which Kristin Ross values in vagabondage.65 In comparison, the New Age vagabond culture of ‘travelling’ that has developed around Britain during the 1980s seems a much more politically potent form of spatial resistance. Rejecting the State, travellers have developed a countering lifestyle based around Summer Festivals. Less antithetical than ambivalent to the values of the State, travellers have suffered persistent harassment, and in Spring 1993, saw their lifestyle criminalised under amendments to the Public Order Act.66 For Sadie Plant the travellers’ nomadic lifestyle is a truly “radical gesture”:

The travellers’ contempt for property rights, their autonomous forms of organisation and exchange, and their imaginative refusals of work, acceptable social identities, moral and legislative codes, constitute a threat which is magnified by their refusal of all tidy and conventional forms of social criticism.67

Despite the State’s search to circumscribe their way of life within the terms of the Spectacle the travellers’ political stance remains elusive while providing positive criticism of the values held by British society in the late twentieth century.68

Through their nomadism in real space the travellers provide a potency of social criticism which Hejduk’s paper vagabonds cannot match. A comparison of these two vagabonds - the human and the architectural illustrates the limits of architecture as a revolutionary project. While human action is immediate, the architectural is always an objectification of social ideas. For Bernard Tschumi:

Architecture is the adaptation of space to the existing social structures. No spatial organisation ever changes the socio-economic structure of a reactionary society.69

Architecture can use techniques of rhetorical action and counterdesign to express and catalyse the environmental crisis developing under late capitalism and Tschumi continues to argue that the “only possible architectural action of a revolutionary nature is rhetorical”.70 Hejduk’s is a form of counterdesign - using provocateurs to “demystify and discredit the architectural daydream under its own terms”71 - and is therefore restricted to countering the discipline of architecture, itself lying inactive within the structure of society.

Under Tschumi’s analysis the traveller’s way of life can be seen as rhetorical action - in that it acts as an expression and catalysis of the environmental crisis. However, the travellers ‘right to laziness’ precludes the rhetorical dimension which Tschumi argues is necessary for politically active architecture. Citing the “guerrilla architecture” tactics of the Beaux Arts Atelier UP6, Tschumi argues that their seizure and reconstruction of a barn as shelter for immigrant workers in 1971 was socially useless because the students acted for the people not with the people. However their action succeeded politically when they renamed the barn La Maison du Peuple and the
French press were alerted to squalor in which these immigrant workers had been living. The space created by UP6 was neutral - it was only in its specific signification as a “house of the people” that the building attained political meaning and raised the political issue of housing rights.

Although some factions of the travelling community have made rhetorical transgressions of space, travellers more usually protect their ‘self-sufficient’ independence from mainstream society. Whether travellers refrain from action and individual society’s recuperations - a radical gesture avoiding State decompression of their resistance into terms circumscribed under the terms of the Spectacle - or if they have simply ‘dropped out’; their ‘right to laziness’ precludes participation in inter-subjective communication. Although the travellers détourn social space, questioning society’s presumptions about its social use, they are not interested in the results their détournement has on society as a whole - nor in whether it opens up a shared realm for inter-subjective communication. However, their criticism-by-example remains potent. Hejduk’s architectural provocateurs occupy a ‘paper-space’ and it is in their architect’s insistence on the value of paper architecture that he claims his ‘right to laziness’ and concomitantly lessens the value of his criticism in the real space of society. The Travellers occupy real space and time, creating an independent society in parallel with conventional society, a much more powerful provocation.

CONCLUSION

The city is an “inscription of man in space”\(^{75}\); both a discursive language of monuments and architectures and a framework within which we formulate our own particular meanings, memories, dreams and understandings. Through the practice of psychogeography and the dérive the situationists attempted to détourn the city’s generalised discursive framework of understanding. Psychogeography catalogues the movements and images with which people particularise space - externalising these private transgressions into the public realm. The situationist attributed Slogan: Under the cobble-stones, lies the beach...\(^{76}\) demonstrates this attitude suggesting; that inches away, to be obtained by the smallest of deflections, we may uncover a rich primeval landscape; and; in May 1968, that the action of tearing up cobblestones to use as projectiles, in itself, affirms the presence of the leisure-beach beneath.

In the revolutionary space created in the Paris Commune (1871) and in Les événements (May 1968), the situationists valued brief periods when the creative poise of détournement momentarily gained ascendency and society’s space-use was radically transformed. The image of Rimbaud’s ‘mad spider/kiss’ illustrates the new nomadic microgeography which re-value the city-space of Paris. Conceptual reifications - of separation, direction, perspective - which striate our understanding of space, fall away. Instead, the mad spider/kiss moves in a haptic zone - its reference points and spatial relations continually re-made and re-assessed with each movement and spatial discovery. The spider/kiss is in continuous motion through the sensual Labyrinth and must ceaselessly reformulate meanings and relations between itself and the environment. Thus, in its continuous search and re-creation of existential possibility, it carries this attitude...

Men can see nothing of themselves. They never identify.

Here then is the provocation; a creative point of view, our conception of space is incomplete and unspecific; is always defined by us and it is we who respond. With a single momentary act of inspecting and détournement responses to enliven space.

How then does one...

The projects we have presented so far, either, in Constant’s revolutionary nomad, the roaming dérivative, or even the liberated as they form, not carry a concomitant discipline. They only become a powerful force when inscribed within history. There is no space to occur. We have explored the potential of the free-space while creating spans.

Instead of paraphrasing, we would attempt to offer a re-reading and creatively stray. Rather than follow or trace its pathway, we should treat it as a critical poise their own space.

Cherche! Spider, haptic derelium. The jump.

Instead of seeking to understand, this could be an architrip, creatively re-reads it, each space and project constructs their own
of existential possibilities the spider/kiss is fully alive. situationist psychogeography carries this attitude to space, a will to Cherche! For the psychogeographer:

Men can see nothing around them that is not their own image; everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is alive.  

Here then is the poise from which the Situationist International attempt to inform our conception of space. Space offers a medium of experience which is never fully objective or subjective but which always contests both and offers both, in an incomplete and unstable statement. Space offers a field for subjective expression and is always defined by an objective constituent towards which the subjective will must respond. With a situationist poise we may creatively explore labyrinthine space, inspecting and détourning architectures, discovering and privileging subjective responses to enliven the existential meaning of our environment.

How then does one apply this situationist poise to the architectural pyramid?

The projects we have discussed have attempted to create a dérivist architecture either, in Constant’s Neo-Babylon, by seeking to trace out the path of the post-revolutionary nomad or, with Hejduk, by making the architectural object itself the roving dérivist. Each acts as an architectural reification. The architectures are liberated as they formulate situationist spatial relations, but this ludic architecture does not carry a concomitant freedom for the inhabitant. Hejduk’s self-absorbed buildings only become a potent critique of city-space if a body obeys the narrative scenario inscribed within his masques. As these remain paper projects this seems unlikely to occur. We have explored the technocratic power structures which entangle the nearest built approximation to Neo-Babylon - Centre Pompidou offering a rhetorical image of free-space while crushing the fine-grained labyrinthine reality beneath its 50 metre spans.

Instead of paraphrasing situationist strategies in plays of forms, architecture should attempt to offer a representational framework through which people themselves may creatively stray. Rather than attempting to fix the architectonics of the mad spider/kiss or trace its pathways, architects should follow the New Age Travellers and make its critical poise their own.

Cherche! Spider/kiss architectures would live lithé - travelling across the city in haptic delirium. Theirs would be an architecture based on a close-to creative looking. Instead of seeking technocratic solutions or creating individual reactions to the city this could be an architecture that is engaged with the existing material culture. Which creatively re-reads and re-valorises the environment, affirming the particularities of each space and providing a representational framework within which people may construct their own situations.
24 Transgressions No. 1

Notes

5 Ibid., p. 58.
7 Hollier, Ibid, p. 69.
8 Ibid., p. 73.
9 Ibid., p. 71. One might understand the relationship as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labyrinth</th>
<th>'threshold of language'</th>
<th>Pyramid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>non-substantive</td>
<td>'to be'</td>
<td>substantive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Denis Hollier notes Michel Foucault's observation that 'the verb is the indispensable condition of all discourse,' and that 'the entire verbal species can be reduced to the single one that signifies: to be.' Hollier understands the verb 'to be' as having no meaning but only a function - 'to allow meaning to be produced by an interplay of attribution, by relating words to each other'. It is in the relation of elements that language is substantiated. Thus being stands on the threshold between incoherence and substantiation - between Labyrinth and Pyramid. It is at this threshold of meaning that the situationists discovered a position from which to criticise the Spectacle. See Hollier, Op cit, p. 66.
10 Ibid., p. 61.
13 Ibid., p. 142.
22 Deleuze and Guattari, Ibid. p. 371, (The emphasis is mine).
23 Ross, Ibid, p. 35.
25 Ross, Op cit, p. 35.
26 Deleuze and Guattari, Op cit, p. 493.
27 Consider the centre forward Eric Cantona at work on that most serious of ludic zones, the professional football field. Proud of his Romany origins, with Rimbaud as guide, Cantona lays claim to the smooth space of vagabond-
football. Misunderstood in his own country, the 'Superbrot' of French football travels first to Leeds and, restless, on to Manchester United. A 'tricky-user', his is a football of one-touch détournements - back-flicks and angled runs which deflect the flow of the leaden, utilitarian English game towards a more sensual continental style. The knocks, lobs, taps and curves open up chances and therefore both the possibility of success and failure. But in a game currently stricken by percentage passing and 'the long-ball' the joy for supporters of MUFC is that Cantona always creates possibilities.


30 ibid., p. 22.


33 Scheglov, Op cit, p. 2.


35 Constant resigned from the Situationist International in 1960 when its programme shifted to exclusively political activities. However his New Babylon project continued to develop around the ideas of Unitary Urbanism which had developed during his connections with the SI.


37 ibid.

38 ibid.

39 ibid.


41 ibid.

42 ibid.


49 ibid.


51 The Experimental University would offer an 'experimental situation as a kind of shadow reality of the future existing side by side with the present 'establishment'. See Alexander Trocchi, INVISIBLE INSURRECTION of a Million Minds, and SIGMA a Tactical Blueprint, Architectural Association Journal, (June 1964), p. 28.

52 Constant Nieuwenhuys, Auto-Dialect on New Babylon, Op cit, p. 80.


54 Abdelatif Khatib, Essai de description psychogéographique des Halles IS #2, (December 1958), pp. 13-17.


56 Beaubourg thus shut down the possibilities the situationists predicted for Les Halles as a revolutionary stronghold. It is therefore ironic that it was in Beaubourg on the razed site of their labyrinthine Les Halles, that the situationists saw an exhibition of their recuperated work in the Spring of 1989. See G. Maragliano, The Invisible Insurrection, Flash Art 147, (1989), pp. 87-90.

57 Scheglov, Op cit, p. 2.

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Aims:
The aim was to give participants a sense of "becoming" from city-space, feeling the effects of the surrounding environment, and the systems people use.

Method:
A small group of participants was invited, and arrived at the venue by a diagram of movement, encouraged by a ‘tool’, aiding their understanding and participation. At the venue, a member of the team steering a member of the group, who would then take use of the group's knowledge.
An Account of Some Experimental Dérive in Newcastle-upon-Tyne

by James Burch

The aim of this exercise was to ascertain how difficult it might be to get lost in a city. A game is played to explore city-space and discover where its physical and social limits lie. Eighteen people mostly architecture students volunteered to drift around Newcastle following some rules which circumscribed their movement and goals.

aims:
The aim was to discover what qualities a psychogeographical analysis could extract from city-space, and also to see how difficult it is for people to lose themselves in their surrounding environment. To this ends, an attempt was made to détourné the mapping systems people use to order their movement through the city.

method:
A small group of people are asked to walk around Newcastle orientating themselves by a diagram of the Berlin metro-system. The choice of map is arbitrary, it operates as a ‘tool’, aiding the dérivist to reconceive the city - it is simply one of the rules in this game.

programme:
invitations were distributed to rendezvous at specified places and specified times in Newcastle.
at the rendezvous, volunteers are asked to undertake the experiment with an attitude of ‘serious play’ - to enjoy it but take it seriously.
two people choose a destination at random from a list of Berlin U-Bahn stations. The group decide they are already at one of these stations.
a member of the group volunteers to lead. This first ‘dérivist’ [drifter] is given a Berlin U-Bahn map and asked to take us between to the destinations the group have randomly chosen. The group follow, with no knowledge of where the dérivist will take them.
use of the map: The map user is instructed that the map is to any scale (s)he
wishes to designate and that it may map whatever qualities in the surrounding environment the user may think is relevant. His/Her interpretation of the map does not have to remain constant either. It is explained that the map is simply an aid in the spatial re-conception of the city.

the group follow the dérivist until (s)he decides that they have arrived at their destination.

the dérivist stands at the destination and completes a questionnaire.

the ‘following group’ are drawn to one side and asked to find a word they feel is appropriate to this new surroundings. They are asked to retain this word in their memory.

through discussion the following group develop a phrase or an image to describe the place.

the dérivist, having completed the questionnaire, makes a mark/graffiti on an actual map of Newcastle. The ‘following group’ shout out their individual word-images of the place - the random association of these words sparks the rhetorical détournement of the map.

A new destination in Berlin is chosen, a new dérivist leads the group towards his/her subjective U-Bahn stop ...

construction of the questionnaire:

The questionnaire was as follows:

Standing still, look up & around and then answer the following questions.

Please give a preferred name for yourself

(1) Describe where you are:
I am
I feel
I want to

(2) Describe who you see:
They are
They feel
I want them to

(3) What do you believe of this place:

(S)He/It is
(please delete as necessary)

(4) Quiet is

The questionnaire asked two sets of questions which required one to make statements about being (I am, they are...), feeling (I/they feel...), and will to act (I want [them] to...). The first questions asked about one’s sense of one’s self within the environment, the second set, about one’s sense of a relation to others. The third question asked one to state if one has heard of the environment, its gender and character and the fourth, whether the surrounding environment is quiet or not.

(1) Self-to-self
(2) Self-to-other
(3) Self-to-Other
(4) Quality:

Account

The following is a description of the experiments.

**DRIFT 1**

3 p.m. 29th Oct

Initially the Alexanderplatz and dérivist were drawn to a pre-determined location, the Alexanderplatz, at the end of a day. Dérivists with explicitly pre-arranged drifts over three years, were to meet at the train station and return home respectively. When the dérivist needed time, de-monumentalisation, was the process of a road junction.

Rocinante’s map: the first set of “breadth and ‘speaking weight’ of increased ‘R’ character.

**DRIFT 2**

3 p.m. 29, Oct

Random choice of a destination on a map technique.

The agenda with the dérivist is to walk to Alexanderplatz, across a locked door base. We thus met a situationist political act.

We experienced...
to state if one had a sense of an Other-worldly spirit in the space and asked one to state its gender and character. A fourth question asks the dérivative to react to the quality of Quiet the surrounding environment may or may not have.

(1) Self-to-self: I am... I feel... I want to...
(2) Self-to-other: They are... They feel... I want them to...
(3) Self-to-Other: (S)He/It is...
(4) Quality: Quiet is...

Account of the Dérives:
The following is a brief account of some of the points of interest in each of the experiments.

**DRIFT 1**

*3 p.m. 28, October 1993. Rendezvous: Zone Gallery, Westgate Road.*

Initially the Alexanderplatz junction of the map, central on the page, had been circled and dérivers were asked to point to anywhere on the map and orientate themselves back to ‘A’. This had the effect of centring the dérive around known monuments. Dérivers with extensive knowledge of Newcastle tended to gravitate towards centres of explicitly public meaning. Thus, Matthew and Collis, residents of Newcastle for over three years, headed for Grey’s Monument - a civic square, and the Bigg market, respectively. While Rocinante, a newcomer, already ‘lost’ in the city, found his, this time, de-monumentalised Alexanderplatz in the entrance of a disused shop by a busy road junction.

Rocinante’s mapping technique was of interest. He controlled his route by gauging the breadth and ‘speed’ of the diagrammatic U-Bahn lines, and transposed this sense of weight and rhythm into his route choice. Thus as the number of lines surrounding ‘A’ increased ‘R’ chose wider and busier highways.

**DRIFT 2**

*3 p.m. 29, October 1993. Rendezvous: Newcastle Law Courts, The Quayside.*

Random choice of stations is introduced to counteract the monumentalisation of the map technique. This, and the area of Newcastle explored - the Quayside - a less well known area of dereliction, make for a successful dérive.

The agenda which one carries to this exercise becomes apparent. J.O.H. takes us to her Alexanderplatz. The map orientated her towards the interior of the Law Courts but a locked door barred her path - although it was obvious the courts were still working. We thus met a concretised social barrier. However, if J.O.H. had been aware of the Situationist political narratives carried within psychogeography, would she have tried harder to get into the Courthouse?

We experienced a transgressive ‘frisson’ as Anon. took us behind some abandoned
workshops into her Lichtenrade - a gluesniffing den.

**DRIFT 3**

3 p.m. 1, November 1993. Rendezvous: the Gateshead side of the Swing Bridge.

Only one person appears at the rendezvous point, it is -1 degrees C., the dérive is abandoned.

**DRIFT 4**

3 p.m. 4 November 1993. Rendezvous: Central Station Entrance Portico.

At the suggestion of Alastair we begin to assign crypto-Situationist names to the zonal ambiances of our destinations. During this dérive we therefore pass through the ‘Zone of Misery and Death’, into the ‘Calm before the Storm’, through a treacherous ‘Slippery Zone’, into a ‘Zone of Mental Dementia’, ending at the ‘Zone of Cryogenia’.

Sancho took the mapping détournement in a new direction, taking the image of the U-Bahn stop Königs Westerhausen (not actually the randomly chosen U-Bahn stop designated as his goal - a little internal détournement on his part) as his destination. He then searches Gateshead for a spatial geography to match his mental image - a space he imagined as a broad flat plain with little detail. After a mile and a half walk we finds his imagined Königs Westerhausen, at a roundabout.

Alastair, equipped with psychogeographical political agendas, takes us on a more transgressive turn. Asking whether anyone has yet entered a building, he immediately enters a church hall. There is an uncomfortable feeling as we walk silently through a social club for elderly mentally ill. He finds Rathaus Steglitz inside Gateshead Tesco’s.

**DRIFT 5**

3 p.m. 6, November 1993. Copthorne Hotel, The Close on Newcastle quay.

The random play of arbitrary destinations in Berlin and different subject’s dérive allows us to get lost in the same place. Successive dérivists lead us around different routes to within one hundred yards of each other.

**Conclusion**

These experiments have set up the rules of a simple urban game. It might last one or forty-eight hours, hard and fast, or slow and leisurely, with whatever agendas one might wish to take to it. Try it out and contact Transgressions with your own findings.

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Everyday journeys, the roundabout, the trip, the referent and the de-referent. The everyday journey, the roundabout. The roundabout, the trip, the referent and the de-referent.

My everyday journey, the roundabout. The roundabout, the trip, the referent and the de-referent. The trip, the referent and the de-referent. My everyday journey, the roundabout. The roundabout, the trip, the referent and the de-referent.

Like water running around a stone.

The subway. The subway. A line. The end: pleasant carriages, signs, posters for sale of piss and puke, and wine that has been made sharpened by holidaymakers glancing in the camera; their reflections in the empty keep-neat posters of nonsense of harmless posters for small.

---
We present here some texts sent over by some comrades in Italy. Their activism and theoretical perspectives stem from a reassessment of modern urbanism in the context of political analysis rooted in Workers' Autonomy and Bordiguism. These texts have been translated from the Italian by Riccardo Paccosi and edited by Alastair Bonnett. Editorial deletions are marked by a [...]. Transgressions takes full responsibility for the final translation (aside from quotations by cited authors).

Transmaniacs can be contacted by writing to:
Transmaniacs, c/o Gugliemei, CP 744, Bologna Centrale, Italy

The architectural, economic, semiotic and political transformations of the European city have changed our everyday lives, imposing new behaviours and perceptions, enforcing a new conformism disguised as eccentricity and new strategies for subduing our corporeality. In Italy, above all, this unceasing production of novelties is designed to maintain the same old capitalist power. But couldn't we take advantage of this situation? Couldn't we get a revolutionary theory from the exposure of our bodies to the violent lacerations of the territory? Couldn't we play with, and on, this new psychogeographic level? That is the Transmaniac project.

It takes its name from the title of a novel by John Shirley. It is a multimedia, subversive project founded in 1992 by a shameless gang of post-anarchists, ex-militants of Autonomia Operaia (Workers' Autonomy), libertarian communists and underground voyagers of doubtful origin. Our project has gradually dilated and linked alternative radio networks, telematic nets (European Counter Network, Cybernet) and amateurish BBs, squats, 'Techno & Western’ combos, theatrical companies, concerts, and anti-art exhibitions, street riots, unappreciated film-makers (like Agapito di Pilla) and very ugly magazines and publications.

Transmaniacs have surpassed their situationist ascendencies (the latter are now mere archaeology) to find a new revolutionary theory. They refuse the feigned choice between post-modern deconstructivism and purulent left-wing pseudo-rationalism. They take the writings of Tony Negri, Deleuze and Guattari, Paul Virilio, and Amadeo Bordiga just to let them collide with each other; as theory must be the result of praxis, and originality has never been important.

So let us now bathe in transmaniac language: a sudden attack with sonic parachutes and nose-diving neologisms (very difficult to translate!).

Let's cut the cackle! Let the following texts and reports disguised as essays, accounts of situationautic actions, walks and performances speak for themselves.

Bologna, Italy June 1994
It is capital itself which upsets and dismembers the state and its administrative connections. For the state is unfit to impose the new tyranny of speed (i.e. the omnipotence and omnipresence of Real Time).

We have gone beyond the welfare state and the nation-state only to find ourselves in a new post-national city-state, one of the links of a supranational confederation whose neurovegetative system is the Videodrome (i.e. the unidirectional and pseudo-interactive media).

The new tyranny of speed, or Real Time, changes politics and society [...] bodies are subject to annihilating accelerations; hi-speed trains imitate the teleport transport of science fiction movies, the utopia of transmitting bodies; the megapolis, deranged with immigration and housing problems, dies in a stinking swamp of blood and shit; the experiences of the passer-by are crushed to smithereens under bombardments of contradictory information and cut’n’confused signs; urban territory loses any recognisability and becomes unintelligible and incomprehensible.

The old city is dead and the territory implodes along with the society contained by the city itself. The new megapolis is a poisoned microcosm of a whole continent, the interzone of interzones, the exhibition site for conflicts over a territory that doesn’t exist anymore, for the spectacle of a new tribalism fed with the fear of an ‘uprooting’ that has already taken place [...] The paladins of identity mistake the epilogues for the prologues. Some call this Europolis.

The chiefs of Europolis are owners of bodies, goods, services, spectacles and weapons. The transpolitical rackets of the smaller and peripheral towns are afraid of being struck off the list, of playing a minor part in the new communications circuits, in the production of technological innovations, in the exploitation of the General Intellect. [...] Every local opinion-leader asks ‘not to remain outside of Europe’ so that his territory is assured access to information and ‘hi-tech’ like the big Europolis. This is the crowning of the new democratic revolution: “the next Europe will be founded on telecasting and hi-speed vectors, and will abolish the real spaces of the continent in favour of the Real Time of immediate action, which grants a new power to any urban pole, such a power that the mayor becomes a feudal figure, a local bigwig, as in the old hierarchies” (Virilio).

The old form of the nation-state supersedes itself and is relocated on two different levels. It can become a member of a supranational economic and political system (the European Community), or it can disrupt and reorganise itself (the USSR became the

In little more than a generation, through a world of unending proliferation of humble, found objects, the distance between a bird’s eye and the human eye, a wave through visible and invisible layers of urban tissue passed through millions of miles, shuffling along the asphalt and the snow, the snow and the asphalt. But it is the atmosphere that counts, the atmosphere of the snow (but which atmosphere? as a war as their essence the snow always pickled [...] I embrace, I clasp the corner of the snow as nothing new has happened.

The telepresence in the telepresence is indeterminate, it is the indeterminate, the local power of the megapolis, the synthesis between the two.

City planning is a basically “a basically ‘understanding’ of geographical conditions by reducing them to social narcissistic processes.”

Science-fiction becomes part of reality, behaviour, and media notorious...
Two remarks:

A The authoritarianism of post-modern architecture is possible because cities are planned against their inhabitants. The history of urbanisation is a sequence of attempts at moulding society (Gesellschaft) to prevent community (Gemeinwesen) and to divide and control the working class. The planning of territory entails the invention of forms and places for ‘sociability’ and ‘aggregation’, because “systematic integration must take possession of isolated individuals as being isolated together” (Debord).

So the ‘social sphere’ became the ground of both integration and conflict, of command and resistance. Thus capital made sure that the work-force would be reproduced in the very places and moments where the proletarians used to organise (Trade Union Offices, clubs of the Workers’ Parties). In the Taylorist-Fordist city, the ‘social sphere’ became the realm of a dialectic between workers’ struggles and capitalist development.

B The authoritarianism of post-modern architecture is necessary because fordism is over. The cities are ‘post-industrialised’ and have muddled up the old class composition. [...] The social sphere has been lacerated by destructuralisations. The Videodrome has taken its place. But it is precisely this unprecedented atomisation, and this inclusive deprivation, which gives everyone a reason to refuse the enforced discipline and to want to rise against it.

[...]

5 In an essay on Prague (‘The City as an Unfinished project’, 1993) Jacques Derrida writes:

Nowadays the incompleteness, the non-saturation of the urban space should be the supreme rule of any repair project or renewal of the city. This non-saturation will not consist in leaving some spaces to wilderness or “virginity”, but in building in accordance with such structures so that new functional and aesthetic possibilities can enrich the city innumerable times even though it is preserved; it is a question of founding while protecting, preserving the existing patrimony without turning the city into a museum or a monumental sepulchre, all things contained in the city which can never be the city. A city should be left open and free to be unaware of its own next mutations. We must enter the respect of the “unawareness” in science and in architectural and urban competencies. Otherwise, we could not do anything but administer plans, generalise, glut and asphyxiate.

It appears, at first, to be a weak proposal. Yet it is profoundly subversive. Totalitarian planning is founded on, and ratified by, the spectacular and mercantile economy’s Horror of a Vacuum. This totalitarianism is contracted around antinomies: to keep intact or to destroy; human beehive or abscond.

In order to be able to defend, the city can either uncouple and go on its way (this is the idea of ‘de-coupling’) or prevent their development, their use in tourism and commerce. As ‘life support system’ of the city’s social life, the city destroys any possibility of community, speeding up rapid urban decay.

The spectator is the one emerging from this ‘black hole’, so that the city ‘turns its back’ (Debord).

6 Derrida writes:

De-re-construction requires that we not leave the city as a whole, you and me and the other, with the same certain knowledge.

That ‘way’ will not be the everyday life as we know it; it is adrift - can only be.“The horizon of incompleteness is not supervised into Coagula, in the sense of the spectacle divided into two parts, towards incompleteness or towards incompleteness with no lamentation. “Accept its death but not its completion.”

The Coagula of the capitalist communities. This is what will be the ‘different’, for they keep themselves as the impossible identities or never give up.

2 The point is
to keep intact or to demolish; to protect or to assail; to build a museum or to build a human beehive ...

In order to remove urban form from its residents’ desires and reinventions, power can either unchain the speculators or freeze space, making it motionless and petrified (this is the ideology of preservation, turning town centres into show-cases not to prevent their commercialisation, but to sell them to store-keepers, managers and tourism and construction concerns). Either way the result is a compulsory reduction of the city’s social complexity, the enforcement of a “monoculture” (Cacciari) that destroys any previous variety of functions and experiences. It is fictitious unity speeding up real separation:

The spectacle builds its own unity upon laceration, but the contradiction emerging in the spectacle is in turn contradicted by a reversal of its sense, so that the division shown is unitary and the unity shown is divided.
(Debord)

Derrida writes on behalf of Prague. He implores:

De-re-construct me! You are on a threshold, increase me, multiply me, do not leave me intact, risk my deconstruction. If you leave me intact and whole, you will lose me. You must preserve me and force me open, protect me and transfigure me, change me to save me, love me and rape me in a certain way, not in others.

That ‘way’ will never be found by the elective aldermen of the new city-states; that way can only be found by those people who take delight in a practical criticism of everyday life; only the ‘incomplete’ ones - those who refuse reterritorialisation and are adrift - can realise and carry out the ‘incompleteness’ and the capacity to redevise spaces. And only the situationauts are really ‘incomplete’. And the affirmative outlet of incompleteness is transmaniacalcity. The situationauts have to organise themselves into Coagula, they must found post-territorial counter-power, connect what the spectacle divides and divide what the spectacle connects. They must oblige the city towards incompleteness and impose a self-managed reinvention of urban territory, with no lamenting the disappearance of the old social sphere, quite the contrary: “Accept its death as a positive thing!” (Paccosi).

The Coagula will be the other cities, the other ‘urban repairs’, the post-social communities. They will be tele-organised on a transnational and trunk-call scale, and they will be the ‘workers’ councils’ of our age. They will be unrepresentable as ‘different’, for they will be at the crossing of many differences, differences that will keep themselves nomadic and renegotiable, and will not be fossilised into rigid identities or new tribal customs.

The point is that all the antisystem forces must go outside themselves. It is not a question of a new grouping. Just as transmaniacs are not, and cannot be, a ‘group’,
the Coagulum is neither a ‘committee’, nor a little parliament, nor an appendix of Administrations (i.e. one of their bridge-heads to the land of ‘people’s participation’ or ‘direct democracy’). The Coagulum does not draw miseries together nor ‘muster the remaining forces’. In the same way, and in our nomadic community, we will prepare subversive behaviours; we will [...] try to prevent the city turning into a falsely harmonious unity.

What I am thinking of is a diffused and polycentric laboratory in which to forge new weapons. In order to contest multi-media territory planning we must, once again, take over the communication circuits. This does not only mean building various media (radio stations, telematics, videos, publications, graffiti: an explosion of the arts). It also entails recognising our own perceptions, recognising our own bodies; revolting against medicine, psychiatry and politics. Since, the ‘environmental’ compulsion of class domination is the supreme condensation of all other compulsions, once the ‘discriminatory measures’ are defined (an extreme example: we will keep the nazi-fascists out), the Coagulum for Urban Incompleteness, will move in every direction. Some will take delight in enquiring into the registers of landed properties or in investigating road building ... others will feel like changing the use-value of a square or the intended purpose of a building by means of performances and sabotages ... some will organise squatting in houses or vacant edifices, other will interfere with urban repairs ... Alice will request that a garbage dump be turned into a public park or garden, Tom will challenge ‘culture’, Robyn will prefer to sabotage the militarisation and video control of the streets, or perhaps he will investigate accidents at work, or the total institution, and so on.

The question of ‘discriminatory measures’ entails another question: how can we found the Coagula in towns where local powers co-opt the movements and rapidly reabsorb them? To be exact, I am talking about political micro-agreements between the deprived and the depriver, manifest or hidden alliances, cross-class alliances, interpenetration and gradual rapprochement between oppositional movements and local powers.

Above all, we have to understand how this co-option has operated, operates and will operate. We then have to understand that, until now, the question of political ‘discriminations’ has been tackled in a demented way, often being considered as a moral contradiction (‘They’re corrupt!’; ‘They like the mayor’s shoes!’) or as a betrayal of revolutionary identity (‘Substantially, you ain’t a comrade anymore!’, ‘You’re a traitor!’). Thanks to these attitudes power has been able to define its own strategy of co-option and reabsorption. Every militant racket, every lobby, every group or little party, thought itself to be the unique keeper of the True Revolutionary Identity. So every T.R.I. bune, or charming leader, appointed himself as representative of the ‘genuine’ claims of the movement. The result was the most short-sighted trench warfare and an incapacity to play the new game and foresee the moves of the spectacle. Thus, when the restructurisations started crawling, comrades found themselves in emplacements which were already unnecessary, and the Institutions could make a series of ‘separate peaces’, arrange for the ‘filtering’ of subcultures and the handing out of jobs.

Once such ‘in the zone behaviour’, disenchanted, paranoia of the ‘corruption’ of one. Therefore, let us focus on the question, a productive question that will be.

I ideological problem is to articulate: to articulate with what? This cannot be, firstly, where almost everyone agrees; secondly, because almost everyone freeze in the collective traditions.

Self-management is the most able to keep itself in the form against the ‘on’: the movement against them to keep its form.

And who is this movement? Its leader Ernst Toller. Nowadays it is an expression of disgust of the old mechanistic of socialisation.

We must grow our own container. We are the landscape.

In the squat we have to limit ourselves for those who have, for those who have two reasons:
Once such ‘appeasements’ had been imposed, a lot of those who kept on fighting in the zone behind the front (the ‘Iron Column’) had to plunge into a wretched life and disenchantment. Some strove to make both ends meet, others slipped into the typical paranoia of the betrayed, others camouflaged and searched for new weapons. Therefore, let us try to understand that it is not a moral question. It is a strategic question, a problem of ineffectualness and inelasticity (and it is just to settle this question that we have to build the Coagula).

I ideological ‘discriminations’ are useless. Their only result is the incapacity to communicate with each other. ‘Discriminations’ must have a stratico-tactical reason. This cannot be achieved if we draw indelible lines, first of all because ‘in a world where almost everyone is deprived, almost everyone is potentially revolutionary’, and, secondly, because if we oppose boundaries with boundaries, our experiences would freeze in the cold storehouse of the memory, and become both chains and impractical traditions.

Hold on, I’m coming

by Roberto Bui

November 1993

Self-management ... let us undeceive ourselves about this ‘self-administered’ condition. What we are distributing, at ‘reasonable’ prices, is misery. It is still the quantity of life instead of its quality; it is still politics, not yet life ...

Self-management may be compared to Buchenwald. The bosses have selected the most able prisoners and created unofficial hierarchies (i.e. the political prisoners against the ‘ordinary’ ones, with some ‘communists’ on duty as warders). It enables them to keep effective control with minimum effort.

And who are today’s most able ‘self-managers’? In Buchenwald the stalinist leader Ernst Thaelmann used to receive the newcomers and measure their thoraxxes. Nowadays it is the various pushers of politics who categorize and control the total disgust of the deprived. [...] That is what the Thaelmanns of today measure: the level of socialisation.

We must get out of this prison camp. We must stop looking upon space as a mere container. We must change our itineraries!

In the squats, we cannot just offer ‘infotainment’ and dance catechism. We do not have to limit ourselves to environmental revalorisation and act merely as substitutes for those who kept the spaces empty (i.e. local councils, states, Capital). This is for two reasons:
A These spaces are never really ‘empty’. They are sites of ownership and purposeful commercial vacancy. Therefore, we can call them full, full of commercial laws, full of contracts and purposes, full of speculations, full of urbanism … In plain words, spaces are full of ‘intangible’ goods = accumulated material work = signs of capitalist domination. So it is a matter of devalorisation. We must keep these environments away from the law and - as much as possible - from commodification. We must fight to tear aside the veil of capital.

B The crossing of the Thermopylae of an ‘alternative’ and ‘self-managed’ social-democracy will not let us destroy the local powers. It is no use struggling with the old Institutions for the representation of the ‘public matter’ [Res Publica]. Quite the reverse. It is necessary to define the matter in a new public sphere.

The situationnautic performance (18th May, 1993) at the ‘Pellerossa’ social centre of Bologna - a squat destroyed and vacated by the cops three months later - had the following aim: to replan the edifice by means of raves and parties; to enable the movement of one’s own body in those rooms as on a map drawn from life. At the entrance some people distributed one of several possible ‘imaginary guides’ (a cut up of islands, continents and disfigured planimetreries furrowed by whirls and arrows that showed the way through the different actions). The text read:

We need to jump forward and keep the research open. The squatting and self-management of a building shouldn’t attempt to restore the supremacy of use-value over exchange-value, but to ignite capital’s territory and open a breach in the city: to open out new ways to free our everyday lives. It won’t be a ‘revalorisation’ but the abandonment of the previous sense of a single environment and, at the same time, an adjustment to a new, significant and inclusive space; space which can give to environments a value incommensurable with ‘commoditown’. The squat has to become unusable as capital.

All the ground-floor was subdivided in rooms with plastic and chipboard walls - rooms where strange things were happening (auctions, financial advice and so on). Meanwhile, on stage, the Tribade Tecnical was playing. In the dungeons (‘Pellerossa’ was a fourteenth century building) we had planned a controlled environmental destruction. Each newcomer received a mallet to rage with against sheet iron scarvings and strange scaffolding. In addition, there were wandering theatrical acts, an exhibition of radiographs (“The body of a revolutionary saxophonist: a contradiction in terms”) and alterable sound rooms. And all of it in the name of environmental self determination.

Unfortunately, before all the performances could quite evolve, a crowd of debauchees (including the promoters themselves) turned everything upside down in the dungeons, pulled the pipes out of the walls and inundated the assembled subterraneans. The result? The next day the water supply was gone from the entire block, the squatters quarreled with one another and new metropolitan legends started spreading.

However, this breakdown cannot erase the importance of that evening. The space of self-management should be the first example of unitary urbanism, a microcosm of the city we want, political or cultural, to be, not the destruction and rebuilding of its own empty core.

For too long has the public sphere been胑looded by the spectacle, public as well as private, as an expression of the public sphere. The public sphere is the realm of struggle, whereas the sphere of the spectacle is the realm of relations and duties. Status, function and role: they are the categories in which we reassert ourselves as part of the society in which we are. Which functions, and over which we are moulded and in which we are moulded, as the society which functions to mould us. And the spectacle is the sphere of domination, and we are moulded into that.

This quota of public sphere is composed of public works, megaconcerts and festivals. Do not destroy the public sphere in the name of music, while they are public festivals.

The amoeba is swimming in a bath of public sphere, with rapacious and capricious activities. Each one of us is produced within the amoeba’s body, as a necessary cohesion to the necessity of the amoeba. The amoeba is public, Tangentopolis is public, the public sphere is public.

Everything is influenced by the movements of the public sphere, the discussion of the ‘alternative’ is the discussion of what is happening to us.

A) On a plane, the olives, the neo-Nazi, the ‘alternative’ and the hybridisation of the ‘alternative’ and the city, are the public sphere. The spectacle is the sphere of domination, and we are moulded into that.
the city we would like to plan. A place that is alive and alterable. Not merely a political or cultural ‘container’ of initiatives but the initiative itself, forever breaking down its own walls and growing beyond itself.

For too long squatters have been mired in their own reassuring customs. It is time to stop the adjustment of initiatives to the environment, and start adjusting environments to the initiative. We must start to deconstruct urbanism.

1. *Tribade Tecnica* = "Technical Lesbian", but it can sound like "Technical Tribe" — is a situationnaut and plagiarist techno-combo which materialises unforeseen in clubs, squats, squares and public gardens. *Tribade Tecnica* is linked with *Cavalla Cavalla* (a techno’n’roll band) and *Pneumatica* (a theatrical company).

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**Dawn**

**By Riccardo Paceosi**

**April 1993**

What are envelopes? They took the place of simulacra. Simulacra were spectacles - virtuality in which we used to instil a sort of meaning - whereas envelopes are pure and vacant, although they perform the same duties. Simulacra were places where the instances of social conflict were reassumed and directed, and where so-called ‘mass psychology’ used to be moulded. Envelopes no longer have such a reference: they are events which feed solely upon their own immanence. Apart from this immanence, they are absorbed and forgotten.

This quotation, from an interview by Jean Baudrillard, invokes images of megacorverts for peace, benefits against racism and famine and TV anti-mafia festivals. Do these events ever leave a meaningful residue? [...] No they do not. Do the people present give a damn about racism? Do they really care about the mafia while they are on their torchlight processions?

The amoeboid agglutinations that once we called ‘the masses’ grasp at these events with rapacious greed, hungry for meaning. These envelopes, therefore, have to be produced without interruption so that a shadow of common ideology survives, a necessary cohesion for the putrefied corpse of the old social sphere. Di Pietro, Tangentopoli and the ‘Clean Hands’ Inquiry exist only to perform these virtual duties.

Everything seems to start from the post-ideological age, from the ‘crisis of all ideals’, the dissolution of the social body. Every social subject endeavours to face what is happening:

A) On a planetary scale, traditionalism - as much Islamic as nationalistic, as much neo-Nazi as communist - is reacting with worldwide integration and hybridisation as well as with its own dissolving legacies. Traditionalism operates at a residual level, an imitation of itself. Yet it also functions at a spectacular level. [...] Above all it serves to canalise and reabsorb the class war.
B) A more diffuse and polymorphous phenomenology corresponds to these epiphenomena, we may call it ‘identitary differentialism’ (see Balibar). It involves all social subjects, even oppositional and revolutionary subjects. The greed for Truth, the need to stop complex mutations, the will to keep customs and certainties, the urge for ‘a few simple and clear ideas’ to ‘be proof against chaos and conformity’ ...

All we want to do is annihilate this need for certainty and simplification. We will not open ourselves to the dialectical chaos on which capital prospers. Rather, we want to start from chaos: to laugh at those who seek the most true Truth [...] We will assert our autonomy in the creation of representations as the moment that allows us to jump from passive nihilism to ‘active nihilism’ and beyond.

The situationnautic and transmaniac subversives create representations that work to a completely phenomenal plan. What they say is only a phonation from their mouths, what they do is only a playful physical moment that assails and diverts the use-value of the urban environment. The ‘content’ and the sym-bology are killed by the gushing out of the dia-bology (just as in the theatre of Carmelo Bene). They are responding to the need to develop representations that exist outside of the spectacle. Representations that can drill into the post-industrial ecosystem and function as unruled agents in the middle of a maze. [...] We situationnauts picture ourselves as grotesque clowns. Clowns - laughing, crying, whatever - who wander in ever-widening circles amid the steaming ruins of the simulacra.

Strategic Proclamation No.3
by Riccardo Paecosi
April 1993

Three Premises

1 Capitalism has turned itself into a sort of biosphere, a whole ecosystem. Urban territory is the hinge of osmotic synergies between the immaterialisation of labour and financial and commercial transactions, between police control and the production of spectacle and information. The city is the code, the sewer of all the codes in which bodies are attacked by the swarming current of spectacles and are scanned by the controlling cameras. The compulsion is in the environments themselves, in the spectacular and military density of city-planning and in the inevitability of the values it imposes upon our bodies. The rotten flesh of the social body covers this skeleton.

2 The dissolution caused by the code is dialectically counterpointed by ‘identitary differentialism’. Infinite proclamations of identity beat a myriad of tracks for the infinite nihilism of the Code. Politics (i.e. the attempts at membership and common identity) is the centre of this spectacular gravity, the actors are subjected to a script that is not only ideology, but also the castling claim of identity. Identity as simulacrum, as environmental contrast ...

3 Dissolution of the virtual technologies, dissolution of the process that anti-nihilism can upset. To make of the hits very anamorphic (the hits very anamorphic by the home)...
simulacrum, ‘content’, ‘discourse’, i.e. a pseudo-logos divided from bodily and environmental action, a discourse ready to pour new filthy liquids in the sewer.

3 Dissolution and nihilism are connected and played together by the ambient technologies and by the process of ‘cocooning’ typical of the Videodrome, a process that aims to introduce bridling and gelatination to the domestic and personal ambit. To make myself understood, the spectacle is not legitimised by ‘televised’ anymore (the phase of ideological mass-suggestion) but directly by the ‘television set’, by the home ambiance. This is more and more manifest even in cyberspace.

Three Promises

4 A new class war project must be hinged upon this: reconquering the foundations of the ecosystematic compulsion (i.e. upon environmental corporality). Nowadays class consciousness is not defined by ‘ideas’ or ‘ideology’ (i.e. by contents), but by physical and bodily reappropriation of the city environments (i.e. by forms, phenomenologically). The recomposition and self-organisation of the subordinate class — that’s environmental autonomy.

5 Through refuting identities and rigid memberships, the class war without politics may start. Transmaniacs don’t ask you to comply with a further spectacle, that of the ‘Movement’ (like the extreme-left wing, Workers’ Autonomy etc.) or that of ‘Individual revolt’ (like some of the old anarchists). For us it is not a question of ‘persuading’ but a question of ‘pervading’, perceiving sensitively and physically living a space free from imposed values. This self-insurrection denies the spectacle and prevents the relapse into identitarianism.

6 So we must accept the death of the social sphere as a positive thing and move onto the threshold that enables the dissolution of the new capitalist ecopsystem’s dialectical rules.

Three Points

7 Transmaniacality, as uncontrollable and acephalous instigation of riots, has an unmistakable insurrectional connotation. Therefore, it is not ‘alternative’, but ‘subversive’; it is a polluting attack upon the capitalist ecosystems. It’s not a question of invading well-off spaces in the hertzian ocean or in cyberspace, but a question of invading and plundering and looting and doing violence to the official values of the city environments.

8 Transmaniacality, as a refusal of the corpse-like cults of identity (the militant commemorations), evacuates preordained symbolic meanings and exploits the expressive materiality of a free floating signifier. It is a pure mediation which doesn’t refer to a distant meaning and denies the spectacle.

9 Transmaniacality, as a refusal of the spectacle, doesn’t herald the existence of a most true Truth. There is no revelation returning to identitary differentialism, but simply representational autonomy. ‘Representation’ refers here to [...] a process that can upset all the symbologies and disturb the frigid copulation of sign and content.
Therefore,

the most dense city places — condensations of bodies, spectacles, data, police control and social contradictions — shall be chosen. Agents of this agitation shall be representations without spectacle, i.e. forms of theatrical communication (even if it's clear we are not talking about theatre) in which the situationnauts — individually or gathered in knots — shall provoke various events while everyone'll be trying to extend the playground over the asphalt: vocal and physical events, without pre-ordained symbolic references but a tangible spatial identity. There will be soundtracks and other choreographed elements. The passer-by won't be told of any moral or content: they'll bump into the performing machines at work, and they'll be involved. The choice is unavoidable: join in the disgrigated choir, or run away. It's up to transmaniacs, as soon as the passers-by are involved, to raise the panic rapture to paroxysm (i.e. throwing of things and people, massive pogoing without music), foreseeing the possible complete loss of control. At this point the likely intervention of the cops (or of some talent-scouts) will bring us to a crucial moment: channeling the entropic energies that have crumbled the urban spectacle towards an insurrection of bodies.

Carmelo Bene.

This letter is written in Viterbo by a writer who is refracted onto an anthropological "Transmaniacal" "Social Theatre"/

Our research is that [...] break contradictions and representations.

Our research is that [...] break contradictions and representations.

The performing accordance, of [...] through this ontological of absences between genius and shrine.

The heinous reality of bodies — the chronological insurrection of bodies — the bodies...
The situationists don’t act only in the big cities, but in the country too. Viterbo is a town not far from Rome in North Latium, with 60,000 inhabitants.

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE SITUATIONNAUTS OF VITERBO TO CARMELO BENE¹, March 1994.

Carmelo Bene,

This letter is written because of an implacable need. I am talking about the things done in Viterbo by a group of musicians and performers. In the ancient town where thou acted in summer ‘89 (I was there, unloading the amps in the Teatro Romano) something is happening. Such a situation doth not take place anywhere else.

We’re penetrating the public institutions of culture, but at the same time our work is refracted onto extralegal milieux which aim at an inclusive social subversion, i.e. at an anthropologic subversion. That’s precisely why we contribute to the Bologna “Transmaniacon Project”.

Our research entails the negation of the spectacle through the emersion of events that [...] break the dialectical connection between meaning and signifier, leaving contradictions unsolved. [...] [Our work aims to enable] a breach in the dialectics of representations, in the use-value of the everyday spaces and times, i.e. a breach in History: a semiological emptying instead of the putrescent Logos-Code domination.

The performing machines (which is what we want to be) sing the song of their absence, of [...] the transvaluation of the Code. Our severity of forms and behaviours emerges from our conscious approptive play between sincerity and untruthfulness, between genius and charlatanism.

The heinous resemblance between our poetics and projects and your theatrical ontology of absence will not change even should you be indifferent to us. And now the chronological description.

At the end of 1991 some militant anarchists (of which I, the undersigned, was one) were bored to death with politics and with its boorish spectacle, i.e. the continuous statement of Identity and too much fucking nostalgia. So we theorised an “entropic communication”, and strange writings appeared on the walls, like “BAVA BECCARIS ASSASSIN”² “DOWN WITH POPE PIUS IX!”³, “BOYCOTT THE TAX ON FLOUR”³, “THERE ALMONDS ARE SOMEWHAT STAUTE”. We made aimless petitions, conferences on the pros and cons of concentrated yoghurt and antispectacular theatrical acts in the streets, for example:

A) The TOTEMISATION OF THE TOILET: a toilet is placed at the centre of a circle of bodies — someone sits down on it, wearing sunglasses, a tail-coat and a cravat — the bodies start uttering a progressive, all-surrounding phonation — the passers-
by join the circle — the phonation becomes an emerging scream — at the top of
paroxysm, the circle loosens — all the performers get away, none of the passers-by
has the heart to approach the toilet — finally, after thirty minutes someone goes near
— the toilet becomes a totem erected on the degeneration of the symbologies — the
diabolical has got the upper hand, and the square is not the same place anymore.

B) The TRIPE ACT: someone falls into a fit of convulsions — a splatter effect of self-
dismemberment — the guts (tripe and tomato sauce) are thrown down on the ground — the performer crouches down and eats the tripe, following the example of a black bitch that was wondering about — the sole onlookers art four agents of the
DIGOS [the General Department of Investigations and Special Operations, that is the
political police]. The devouring was not foreseen, it arose from the style
necessity of the performing machine.

After we walked under the caudine forks of that dadaistic period, a more constructive
and assertive phase began in 1993. Our sphere of activity started extending.

Manifold performances (poetry readings, Renaissance music, theatrock)
proliferated to such an extent that the Local Tourist Organization (unlike the
Municipality) began to sponsor and finance (just a little) some theatre festivals. There
were also theatrical initiatives in the streets, a tumultuous Feast of Springtime which
changed into an insurrection against the cops and the wealthy local merchants. The
result was the Digos unconditional prohibition of ‘theatrical communication’. However, some similar events took place every night near the thirteenth-century
Palazzo de’ Papi. Other things happened in a peasant house where hundreds of bodies
wandered amidst psychedelic concerts, rave parties, theatrical acts on death, rooms
where some people listened to the lascivious notes of a lute and open spaces where
others played neapolitan stornelli: all this happened in a few square meters.

A few days later the local newspaper wrote of orgies and satanic rites occuring
in the house... This turned out to be a piece slander by the father of a girl who had
left home to follow one of us. There was a rumour that the Minister of Justice and the
Chief Policeman Vincenzo Parisi were involved in this trick.

On the crest of that wave, in July, we squatted in a deserted gasometer and turned
it into a self-managed social centre. We put on various happenings there, and in
November we showed your films. After the showing of “Omelette for Hamlet”, we led
a discussion on “The performing machine and revolutionary becoming”.

Naturally, the agents of all those events were nearly always the same, and also the
scripts, which were dilated or synthetized according to the context. In fact, in the
course of 1992, we had joined the Bologna “Transmaniacon Project”, and devastating
performances took place in the social centres of Modena, Bologna, Ostia... The
results:

1. The spectators lobotomize themselves and stand still for three hours without
   escaping nor applauding (Bologna);

2. Everybody runs away after five minutes, so just one onlooker - unknown and never
   seen before - stays for two hours and applauds at the end (Modena);

3. Listening to a Bach’s toccata, the onlookers take some clubs and destroy everything:
   the wires are snatched out of the walls, the pipes are cleaved, the floor is flooded so
   the wet

4. While it is happening, and try to do something, the police and the street
   But let’s get back to Bologna. Well, we had an actors’ meeting, and the
halo encircled the performers and an onlooker was to say: “Not difficult, we who’ve seen ‘the
walls, upon the performances that the group had fought and, if the experimental social centre, shone
frequently happened to come to the meeting with my regards

The Translator:

1) Carmelo Bene – Author of films, plays, and books.

Since the beginning of our activities, a provocative exhibition of many Critics and
pictures in the public spaces and the police stopped and arrested
works of Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Wilde (In the Salotto and other play-rooms
machine’) at the heart of the performances have
considered the actors from the Ministry of Tourism and related to the projects with various

2. Fiorenzo Bava 1808 - 1898 he ordered to leave Tuscany, the anarchist
Tuscan, the anarchist

3. The Tax on Flour was introduced in 1869. It was collected on all food
led to riots and insur-

4. This is a quotation from a play, his uncle, the "murder, which should
actor, who is going
the wet wires crackle (Bologna);

4. While it's stricking midnight of New Year's Eve, the audience stops the "Tripe act" and try to lynch us, but our sharp reasoning persuades them, and we are entreated to go on (Ostia).

But let's get back to Viterbo: what was happened, in fact, in the springtime of 1993? Well, we had complete control of the collective imagination of the town. A flaring halo encircled the bodies and the spaces the populace used to stir in, [...] You might say: "Not difficult, in a little town of only 60,000 inhabitants!". But those people who've seen Viterbo know the petrification — a petrification that closes in upon the walls, upon the peperino edifices, upon the 'etruscan' features of the inhabitants. We had fought and defeated that petrification, but then we channelled our energies into the social centre, so many things and projects got shut in a restricted place, in a rut. As so frequently happens, even our coarse grip on power led to many cultural contradictions coming to the surface. ("Tzk! Tzk! Tz He poisons him!"4).

with my regards

RICCARDO PACCOSI.

The Translator's Notes:

1) Carmelo Bene was born in 1937. He is the most important exponent of Italian avant garde theatre. Since the beginning in 1958, his style of acting has been extreme and deformed, and his liking for provocative exhibitionism and his 'unseemly' behaviour (on top of his disturbing deconstruction of many Classics and his anti-realistic sound-scores) have drawn the attention of the censors. In 1963 the police stopped and forbade the performance Cristo '63. In 1970s Bene altered and transfigured many works of Shakespeare (He staged Romeo and Juliet eliminating the character of Romeo!), Marlowe, Wilde (In the Salomi, Jesus try to crucify himself, but he cannot nail both hands...), Laforgue, Cervantes and other playwrights, dismembering the scripts and placing the actor (turned into a 'performing machine') at the cathalysing centre of a spectacle, being destroyed from the inside. In fact his performances have challenged the mimetic aesthetics of the bourgeois theatrical tradition, which considers the actor as a passive intermediary of the script. (A few years ago, Bene broke into the Ministry of Tourism and Spectacle waving a gun around!) He's had violent rows about his radical projects with various public managers of the spectacle.

2. Fiorenzo Bava Beccaris (1831-1924) was the general in command of the Army-corps of Milan. In 1898 he ordered troops to fire on a socialist demonstration: dozens of people died. Three years later, in Tuscany, the anarchist Gaetano Bresci murdered the king Umberto I with a knife, to avenge these victims.

3. The Tax on Flour was levied, after much hard dispute in parliament, by the Italian Government in 1869. It was collected at the time of grinding, and caused general famine and discontent. This in turn led to riots and insurrection, which the Royal Army repressed. The tax was annulled in 1880.

4. This is a quotation from Carmelo Bene's "Omelette for Hamlet": [...] While Hamlet is rehearsing the play, his uncle, the King of Denmark comes in and starts prompting the actors. At the moment of the murder, which should implicate him with the death of his brother, the previous King, he reproaches an actor, who is going to stab the victim, and says: "Tzk! Tzk! He poisons him!".
Narrow Casting in Fibre Space

Counter Intelligence

exhibition of self-published and entirely autonomous print creations
including 'zines, comics, flyers, pamphlets and books

121 Centre, 121 Railton Road, Vale of Effra, London SE24
October 1st-31st 1994

by Mark Pawson and Jason Skeet

Commentators and critics often resort to simplistic binary codes to explain their fatuous theories. Like that old cultural conundrum of the mainstream versus the underground or alternative media, mumbles about which can still be heard in MA dissertations across the land. Sunday paper colour magazines, the glossy pages of ID, as well as other highly esteemed sources of analysis of what's happening. In this paradigm, the various variations on a theme suggest that the alternative media always has invisible links to the mainstream medias, a place for those wacky types to work through their apprenticeships before they make their valuable contributions to society, and/or that the underground media is where important developments are made which eventually trickle up into the other world. It is assumed that there is a mutual relationship between these worlds, that they both need each other.

This thesis has been applied on countless occasions, from Punk Rock to trendy writers, from the multitudes of avant-garde causes to non-stop night clubbers. Ultimately, the alternative media is just made into one more choice in the market place of ideas, a bit like the home-made bread you can buy in a supermarket, smug with the notion that only a hundred other people are able to taste it. The underground is a fiction, a myth, and like the rest of the prefabricated visions of the dominant media, one which always conveniently ignores social antagonisms and class divisions.

Well, as it happens, these soothsayers and two-bit theorists are missing out on something — activities and energies that are situated beneath their funky 'underground' and beneath anything that the mainstream can deal with. Things that don't need the irrelevant ramblings of a cultural studies lecturer to understand, made by people who don't dream of one day entering that mainstream world and hitting the big time. Stuff, in other words, that will always
be too weird and wonderful, always a million miles away from the work ethic, the financial reward and the social status that dominates in both the mainstream and the alternative medias; projects and pursuits that, to coin a phrase, exist in little worlds of their own.

To look at it in another way, society is far too complex for these binary ways of thinking to explain things and why people do them. Self publishers show how the notion of mainstream versus underground doesn't always work. Quantities and qualities of autonomous print creations have grown vigorously alongside the development of affordable desk-top publishing facilities and cheap photocopy machines. They may also represent an antidote to the social fragmentation and alienation of capitalism. Networks of people are making their 'zines, flyers, comics, pamphlets and books not in order to work in the ideological market place but to play somewhere else, not outside the mainstream, but in another dimension altogether, on a terrain they can build themselves. Crazy fucked up noises that just do it. An invisible college of a million minds.

The Counter Intelligence exhibition has been an attempt to explore some of these worlds, and to find out where they are coming from, where they cross and interlink, to get dizzy with the diversity of stuff being produced. Hopefully, the show demonstrates why it is necessary to move beyond the binary opposition of alternative/mainstream to realise the possibility of culture becoming everyone's property to copy, paste and layout as we wish.

The exhibition roughly divided material into broad categories, including free information, mail art, comics, art objects, music, political, obsessions, queer, technology, and the unclassifiable. These divisions were not intended to be definitive, and as the written pieces in the catalogue accompanying each section suggest, there are loads of ways that the publications interlink and cross-fertilise. Most histories of the self publishing impulse usually trace the origins of today's 'zine phenomenon to sci-fi fanzines of the thirties, and whilst this is an important precedent in terms of attitude, this exhibition reveals how lines of influence can be traced all over the place — from Dada to Punk, from lazy Sunday afternoons to cutting edge cultural theory.

The organisers have intended that the punters absorb an essential concept — that of narrowcasting in fibrespace. The notion of 'narrowcasting' is intended to counter the term broadcasting, the idea that the aim of all media production is to reach as large an audience as possible. The print creations in the Counter Intelligence show pose the possibilities of being site specific, stuff made for particular audiences who must participate in their play of meaning. The term 'fibrespace' denotes the multiple possibilities for communication that exist, from the fibres that constitute paper to the fibrespace of fibre-optic cables that enable the digital transmission of electronic messages. Whilst computer nerds are still predicting 'Total Computer Revolution', what we are in fact seeing is, as in the past, the overlapping and intermingling of technologies, so that new possibilities are created by people finding their own uses for things. This exhibition throws open lines of thought for celebrating why, alongside explorations of the InterNet and e-mail correspondence, we will continue to make our print creations and autonomous self-published 'zines, flyers, comics, pamphlets and books.

The Counter Intelligence Catalogue is available for £2 (p&p inclusive) from BM Jed, London WC1X 3XX, UK.