## Transgressions

**A Journal of Urban Exploration**

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Reviews:

Guy Debord is Really Dead (book)
London Psychogeographical Association Newsletter and Manchester Area Psychogeographic (newsletters)
Inventory (magazine)
Stelarc and Rainer Linz (performance)
Oblivion and Days Between Stations (magazine and newsletter)
The Book of Sodom (book)
Vermeer II (exhibition)
Return to the Duplex Planet (film)
Here Comes Everybody (report)
Breakflow (magazine)
Man in a Suitcase (newsletter)
Landranger 168 (map)
Melancholic Troglodyte (magazine)
The Listening Voice (newsletter)

Abstracts

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Shopping for Principles: Writing about Stoke on Trent’s ‘Festival Park’
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In this paper I attempt to debunk certain understandings of the post-modern by writing about writing about a particular place: Stoke-on-Trent’s ‘Festival Park’. I assess the credibility of different accounts of Festival Park and use textual devices to stage a rather stilted ‘conversation’ between different stories. I conclude that the only way to judge these different stories is to clarify their intended consequences.

The Transgressive Geographies of Daily Life: Socialist Pathways Within Everyday Urban Spatial Creativity
by Alastair Bonnett
This article is about the transgression of everyday space. It asserts that cultural workers need to abandon the clapped-out mythologies of avant-gardism and become agents for the politicisation of everyday spatial creativity. Drawing on two detailed case-studies, it shows that spatial transgression is politically contradictory (and that its radical potential may, for example, be seen to be structured and enabled by conservative identities). The article concludes that the socialist imagination exists as a tendency within everyday spatial transgression but only becomes explicit through the politicisation of daily life.

Old Gotland, New babylon: Peoples and Places in the Work of Jorn and Constant
by Graham Birtwistle
Some twentieth-century artists have created not only new artefacts but theories, projects and movements. This article addresses two such figures, Asger Jorn and Constant (Nieuwenhuys). It focuses on the way both men sought to extend painterly concerns into the realm of architecture and planning and expanded the artist’s role to include the shaping of social and cultural attitudes and situations. People, places, environments — real or imagined, past present or future — are the ‘materials’ to which these two artists turned.
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Transgressions No. 1

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An Account of Some Experimental Dérives in Newcastle by James Burch
Fantasy Island by David Bell
Manchester’s Gay Village by Steve Quilley
The Trouble with Camp by Jon Binnie
The Transmaniacs: Reports from Italy’s Situationists by Roberto Bui and Riccardo Paccosi
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Urban Explorations: Mapping the Socialist Imagination

The so-called 'political life' of late capitalist societies is a blunted and sad affair.

New Continents; New Explorers

What I'm trying to say is that we need positive visions as well as critique. Visions that engage and support the latent socialist tendencies already at work within our societies. We need a political will that is able to leverage the compliant bureaucracies of new and unchartered psychological and social realms.

EDITORIAL

by Alastair Bonnett

1. Transgressions is a radical forum for the discussion of the subversion and liberation of urban society and space. Contributors should note that Transgressions seeks to publish work that is well written, intelligently composed and previously unpublished.

2. Contributions can be any length. Longer submissions will be refereed. Submissions may take the form of articles, debate pieces, reviews (of anything), or reports and should be sent to the editor.

3. Submissions (three copies) should be sent to the editor.

4. For articles an abstract (three copies of 162-206 words should also be supplied. Direct quotations should be put in single quotation marks. Long quotations should be enclosed within double quotation marks. It is expected that all contributions will be refereed. Exceptions to this policy may be made, but please contact the editor.

5. Endnotes are not used in this journal. They are summarised in a note at the end of the paper. Note that the following guidelines are in place for the submission of work:

a. Articles should be submitted in at least 12-point type. When submitted, four copies of each article should be supplied. Articles should be typed on one side of the sheet. If a typewriter or word processor is used, the text should be double spaced and typed on one side of the sheet.

b. Manuscripts should be submitted to the editor. All page numbers should be in Arabic numerals. 

c. Submissions should be sent to the editor at the following address:

Professor R.S. O'Dwyer
Department of Geography
Newcastle University
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU

d. All manuscripts should be submitted on paper that is white and of good quality. The paper should be free of dirt and smudges. The manuscript should be of a size and style that is readable. Manuscripts should be submitted in a clear and legible manner.

e. Manuscripts must be submitted in triplicate, with each copy sent separately. Four copies of each article should be supplied. Manuscripts should be submitted in a clear and legible manner.

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Alastair Bonnett
Transgressions
Department of Geography
University of Newcastle
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England

4. For articles abstract (three copies) of 100-200 words should also be supplied.

5. Submissions need to follow our house style in order to be considered for publication (exceptions to this policy can be made, but please contact the editor):

5i. References in the text should take the following form: (Apple, 1976, p.4)

5ii. Direct quotations should be in double quotation marks. Quotations within quotations should be in single quotation marks. Long quotations should be indented.

5iii. Footnotes should be placed at the end of the article and before the bibliography.

5iv. The style for the bibliography is as follows:


5v. Subtitles should be in lower case

6. All submitted material should be double spaced and typed on one side of the sheet. If a piece is accepted the authors will be requested to send a copy of their work on 3.5" disk.
And how do we do that? Well, I've jotted down (maybe that should read 'laboured all night over') four principles for the new urban adventurers, four tendencies that locate and encourage the socialist imagination in the belly of the metropolis:

1. **Uncharted zones**

A market-dominated society offers pre-formed commodities (in the form of things, identities, beliefs etc.) which map out our careers as consumers. It is the task of the new explorers to destabilise such fantasies and open up passages (literally and metaphorically) to unfamiliar pleasures and forms of community. Socialist adventurers are required to exhibit in themselves, and inflect in others, a strange yearning for what we may (if only for strategic reasons) choose to mythologise as the 'blank parts of the map', the 'uncharted zones'. Here we may expect to find new rituals of identity and rationality. But it is not the content of these regions that matters so much as the restless and revolutionary spirit that drives the dissatisfied off-spring of bureaucracy ever onwards.

The central irony of such voyaging is that these 'new' and 'uncharted' destinations already haunt the imagination of daily life. We must grasp the complexity of, and latent desires at work within, the apparently monotonous and work-a-day culture that surrounds us...

2. **Politicising daily life**

The city squirms with a kind of deranged hope... the principles, ideas and practices of socialist change already exist within both its past and present. The new explorers do not desire to impose the avant-garde fantasies of a few bo-ho geniuses, but to seek out and identify already existing non-authoritarian and properly democratic moments of urban living.

These moments may be brief, banal and tantalisingly ephemeral: the worn-out, dog-eared clichés of the street ('who ever you vote for the government always wins'); the line of trespass etched across the corporation's fields... or they may exist at the level of what we might call the 'cryptic imaginary', games played with and on the fantasies of the ruling class, pungent items nosed up from their strangest ceremonies and memories. Alternatively, of course, such moments may be substantial and self-conscious: workers co-ops, communes, so-called 'liberated zones'...

Each moment will be full of contradictions, open to different forms of political appropriation. It is not the task of the urban explorer to go all goofy and start celebrating every last instance of human kindness. Her or his ambition must be to identify contradictions whilst exposing and identifying existing communist dynamics. This process may be understood as an attempt to politicise everyday life. It is an active and creative process but it lays no claim to originality. In this sense, at least, the terrains we seek to map are neither empty nor uninhabited. They are already teeming with a billion socialist rebellions.

3. **Linkages**

Just drifting isn't enough anymore. It merely replicates the bored passivity of the ideal consumer. The new urban explorers aren't 'lefty flaneurs', twiddling their fancy canes at every moment of degenerate surprise. Instead they seek to make links and alliances between the different moments of socialist revolution they identify. This process entails drawing in disparate and initially mutually uncomprehending projects into an inter-linking democratic tendency. Enabling mutual recognition between, say, the sullen trespasser of everyday space and the high-minded priest in her hippy commune, would challenge and transform the orthodoxies of both. The latter becoming aware of, for example, the inadequacy of the politics of cloistered and snooty 'alterity' (with its attendant aesthetic of extremism) and the former of the socialist implications and connections that lie fallow in his or her moments of transgressive pleasure.

The practices of urban exploration and creative political linkages are designed to lead towards the conditions for the establishment of integrated (geographically and/or socio-economically) zones of socialist creation. These zones are necessarily hungry to grow and extend themselves through the entire capitalist world-system. They will meet a diverse set of resistances. Their survival and expansion depends on an ability to operate efficiently, effectively and without sentimentality. As this implies, although we at Transgressions have a passing, if faintly patronising, interest in hippy enclaves, along with their economically parasitical, drug or arts grant, based economics, our sea-sick brains aren't quite so pickled as to regard them as political role-models. They are merely another part of the urban milieu, pregnant with promise, full of the kind of potentials that we wish to channel into a wider process of socialist transformation.

4. **Against nationalism and inter-nationalism**

Why are you hanging around here? (I'm an internazi!)  
Bloody Estonian (I'm an internazi!)  
Want to be beaten up? (I'm an internazi!)  
Maybe you don't like the Soviet regime?  

Chorus from Internazi by JMKE, an Estonian Punk band

A curious and largely undiscovered nationalistic insularity permeates English and American radicalism. The resultant parochialism has encouraged the development of naive and myopic forms of socialist practice. For instance, ideas about the development of 'British' (the English left doesn't even comprehend its own nationalism!) or 'American' 'socialist initiatives' or, even, 'autonomous zones', that are oblivious to the international constitution of the capitalist nation state and economy. Socialism cannot be parochially nationalistic, but neither can it be 'international', for the two are intertwined, the latter being both sibling and aspiring heir to the former. The new explorers have to operate between the cracks; forging politically defined alliances with those who refuse to sustain capital's territorial fantasies.

There's a lot more to say on the implications, both practical and theoretical, of what I've been touting. Obvious questions to ask concern the role of the state and our analysis of the class system, racism and sexism. These are important issues, each of
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which deserves more space than I can afford here, and each will be addressed in various ways in future issues.

However, I'm not in an apologetic mood. I haven't been interested here in wheeling out some new mega-theory to slot up amongst all the others on the groaning shelves of college libraries. What I wanted to set out is something that appears absent from the self-consciously 'playful', but appallingly arid discourses of (what remains of) the existing left. As they retreat into a self-destructive and suffocating 'alternativeness' (whether in the guise of factional grouplets who've given up trying to talk to any body but themselves, or identity fetishists) they have severed all contact with the political life of the everyday, of the rebellious viscera of the city.

It is amongst the entrails of the urban that Transgressions seeks to find its home; amongst the ordinary acts of liberation that are waiting to be mapped, identified and linked together, amongst all that blood and guts, where a socialist society is already thrashing around.

Blurb on this issue
Welcome to Transgressions number two. We brought you this issue despite an onslaught by the IRA. Their bomb at Canary Wharf on London's Isle of Dogs managed to destroy the bank we are with as well as other items and papers in the review and production editor's flat contingent on our successful production. Evidently these malcontents feel that cancelling their subscription just doesn't go far enough.

Thankfully, truck loads of sentex weren't the only response to our first issue. We've had plenty of positive feedback and bemused interest. We are also pleased to congratulate James Burch, whose essay 'Situationist Poise, Space and Architecture', published in our last issue, forms the core of a dissertation that has since won the British Society of Art Historians Annual Dissertation Prize. Steve Quilley's piece on the production of gay space in Manchester has also won praise, and is being reprinted in a forthcoming edited volume of new queer writings (edited by gordon brent ingram).

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Vancouver

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Two Walking Days
by Jean MacRae

Day 1
"Nice day for crocheting" .... Why have I always assumed that everybody knows knitting when they see it? He was trying to be polite, acknowledge my presence, there, on the bridge. I feel too visible but then again, I am here to be seen. I am in the process of fabricating a map; selective and authored, a gendered and specific occupation. But, my hands are cold and I've left the house without money for coffee. That makes me nervous.

I keep moving and begin to think about how the act of travelling and arriving is constructed retrospectively. A narrative occurs as I walk down the bridge ramp heading toward a place to sit and drink. A narrative is occurring and places/destinations are being articulated through a reconstruction, a retracing. My map will really only exist in those places where memory and records coincide.

I arrive once again. I meet a friend and I am embarrassed to pull out my needles and cotton; my mapping instruments. I explain so he doesn't think me rude.

The water is on the other side of the fence directly in front of me. I wander along trying to find a break through which I might pass. It's uncomfortable because I've never been here before. Perhaps my sitting here for over an hour has forced me to sustain a dialogue with this emotional position. I notice every movement and sound because I'm suspicious; or perhaps it's me that is suspicious and out of place, in this place.

I leave the water and travel vertically to the plaza where I've been sitting. My lungs are distended with carbon monoxide fumes. I begin to think that the juxtaposition of my movement and the destinations might theoretically cancel each other out. Can site = movement?

The railroad tracks provide a kind of linearity to my direction. They disappear and reappear between the buildings as I make my way east. There is no official break until the viaduct. On the other side is a "green space" designated in the language of parks and recreation.

It's getting late, but only because I'm not familiar with this geography. I sit at the very edge of the lawn because it feels safer than the parking lot a few meters away. I'm really mapping a view not a site. Would I feel different over there?

The tracks disappear into a train yard. I decide not to trespass because I don't want to be alone. It's not part of the grid, there aren't lefts and rights to choose from, I speculate as to why I am so timid. Am I too deliberate in my choice of movement?
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DAY 2

I've started late because I thought it would rain. Railway street on the weekend. It's quiet, too quiet. I realize that I am not indifferent to questions, interaction, some kind of acknowledgement that what I am doing is conspicuous. I try to remember the last walk in terms of each site/destination. I don't remember them in sequence. They have lost one of the narratives. Yet I've restated them as fixities. Losing my way in any direction is not unconscious.

More fumes in front of this hidden little door. It's official. It has a sign with instructions. It too exists underneath somewhere. I work the needles quickly. So that I can get away fast. I worry about my health more than my person.

The eight ball. A new location, a destination. I am here because it's windy and it may still rain. I glance at the sky and decide that although it's clear one never knows. I need some food. I need to sit by choice not by time. Perhaps I'm a bit bored but don't want to admit that weakness. I already look back on this walk with nostalgia, see myself in a memory that relates to the personal rather than the event of walking. I see how I felt rather than where I was.

It's funny to be sitting across the water from a familiar place. I decide to image the immediate rather than the view. There is nowhere to sit and the stench of ammonia is overpowering. What do the people who park their cars and go to dinner think? There is something about this thought that strikes me as ironic.

It's now quite cool and as I make my way past the bridge, the pool appears as a refuge. It's an easy place for me to be. I stand in the bleachers and watch the swimmers clock distance. I am consciously staying here because I am tired of this walk. I want to quit but force myself to continue. After all it's only seventeen minutes away according to my rules.

I'm here. On a map, you are here. I can't decide what to image and then see the rock. I think about a title ... "ornamental rock". It is amusing. I want to get this over with so that I can decide where I want to go. I think about how strange it is that once I have made that decision, to make this the last site, I will, in effect, fall off my own map. So, how does a map, this map, act as a referent to anyone or any place. I determine a beginning and an end. The map will be de-sited, without emplacement within the social. I wonder whether this map can have a memory without the subject.

An Or Gallery Working Project (Vancouver)

RALPH RUMNEY’S REVENGE AND OTHER SCAMS

An account of the psychogeographical warfare conducted during the 1985 Venice Biennal Exhibition of Contemporary Arts

by Luther Blissett

0. WHY VENICE?

Venice is a ghost-town. There is no longer any moonlight to kill. From the 1950s the native population has been reduced by a half as the town has been standardised, commodified and placed at the disposal of the tourist industry, a process that has sentenced many Venetians to deportation to the inland. Those who have remained have become unpaid ‘walk-ons’ in a never ending show. Out of season, the calle (Venice’s characteristic narrow streets) are empty, the nights sad and desolate. There are also serious problems of pollution: the town runs the risk of gradually sinking into the sea due to the building of a methane pipe-line in the gulf.

The mayor, Massimo Cacciari, is a Heideggerian philosopher of the Left Democratic Party. He is one of those opinion-leaders who run with the hares and hunt with the hounds: on the one hand pretending to disagree with the conversion of Venice into a gigantic museum and seeking to ‘revivify’ its corpse by organising international conventions, exhibitions, trade-fairs and other spectacular mega-events; and, on the other, manufacturing a preservationist point of view when opposition movements demand a REAL, uncommodified revitalisation.

Politicians lament the decadence of the town only in order, firstly, to justify their perpetual scream ‘Owners of all lands, unite and invest money in Venice!’ and, secondly, sell municipal properties to the bosses of the multinationals. I quote from a release which the squatters of the centro sociale autogestito ‘Morion’ published in the European Counter Network on January 30th, 1995:

The junta of the Commune led by Cacciari has an idea of ‘town’ which is completely different from ours. The Stucky Mill, since 1955 one of the symbols of ‘Empty Venice’,
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belongs to the Calzagione brothers, well-known housing usurers. By mutual consent, the Commune and the Calzagiones have planned to invest 200 billion lire in building a luxury hotel, a residence, a big store, a congress hall and 200 new flats to sell at 5 million lire per square metre.

The Maliberan theatre, which was closed 15 years ago, was occupied during the 1993 Countercarnival by people who wanted to convert it into a theatrical and musical lab. The police vacated the squat a few days later, and 15 comrades from the C.S.A. Morion are now on trial for the occupation. The building belongs to the Commune, which invested hundreds of millions to repair the roof ... and now wants to use the place as the seat of the mainstream company Teatro La Fenice.

And there's more; another Casino in the Islgas area or at the Marittima, the empty Mainin barracks at the Gesuiti (assigned to the C.N.R.)... And the mayor has proposed the New York based Chase Manhattan Bank — which played a major role in starving the Indians of Chiapas — for the management of the next tourist terminals in Fusina, Tessera and Punta Sabbioni.

In the meantime, hordes of Japanese tourists crowd the berths of the gondolas and pay through the nose to listen to gondoliers singing false traditional songs in pidgin Neapolitan.

So there's no need to explain why Luther Blissett declared psychogeographical war on/in Venice. It seems that this town just cannot help providing ever more areas for radical criticism. Since Futurism (and Marinetti's statement "Let's kill the moonlight") Venice has been such a popular target for avant-garde assault that it has been compelled to recупerate criticism by admitting the 'Avant-garde' — including even the most truculent Performance Art — into the formerly traditional International Biennial of Contemporary Arts.

Every second year, since 1895, the town mingles with the Biennial. The centennial edition was titled 'Identity and Alterity'. It hosted a reactionary celebration of portraiture as well as the attempted re-establishment of representative art. The event's general manager, Jean Clair, even commemorated the invention of identity cards. How could Luther Blissett, a multiple name and an 'open context' challenging the bourgeois notion of identity, not embark upon psychogeographical warfare with 'Identity and Alterity'?

As it is impossible to tell the town from the exhibition, it is similarly impossible to clearly distinguish between psychogeography and anti-art agitation in the actions I am going to report. In the case of Loota 'the art monkey', anti-art even collides with the struggle for animal liberation.

1. EPIPROLOGUE

The article extracted below is taken from the national communist newspaper Il Manifesto (10th June, 1995):

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2. RALPH RUMNEY'S REVENGE

One night, during the first week of the Biennal, Luther covered the walls of the whole town (with the exception of the Isle of Giudecca) within hundreds of psychogeographical stickers. These stickers were red 30cm long strips with a white bi-directional arrow and the green inscription "LUTHER BLISSETT — PSYCHOGEOGRAPHICAL WAY — JUNE-SEPTEMBER 1995: A GREAT PERFORMANCE" (this was the only action which featured Blissett's name).

Venice is a pedestrian city, highly suitable for labyrinthine drifts. A bi-directional arrow does not lead to a destination but provokes cogitation on the notion of dérive. On the 7th and 8th of June, at dead of night, Blissett harangued the last drunk patrons in taverns and clubs and exhorted them to gather in parties and follow the arrows. This was the so-called 'Rendezvous with nobody'. 'How many hours must pass before I can meet another Luther strolling along the calli by aleatory detours? And where shall I meet them? And how shall I recognise them?'. As an answer to this last question, Luther handed out visiting cards decorated with Blissett's androgynous face and the caption "This ticket is valid for a seat on the front-row of the apocalypse". It was also a way of stating that the decline of the West must end where its rise began, that is in Venice, an ancient maritime republic which played a major role in the preliminary commodification of eastern societies and paved the way for their colonisation.

It should be mentioned at this point that these dérives owed their collective title ('Ralph Rumney's revenge') to the expulsion of the well-known English psychogeographer Ralph Rumney from the Situationist International in 1958, soon after he had undertaken a memorable drift in the calli. But, there again, it must be admitted that the only 'revenger' I personally met during my drift was a dead-drunk
belongs to the Calzagione brothers, well-known housing usurers. By mutual consent, the Comune and the Calzagiones have planned to invest 200 billion lire in building a luxury hotel, a residence, a big store, a congress hall and 200 new flats to sell at 5 million lire per square metre.

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And there’s more; another Casino in the Salgari area or at the Marittima, the empty Manin barracks at the Gesuiti assigned to the CNR!... And the mayor has proposed the New York based Chase Manhattan Bank — which played a major role in starving the Indians of Chiapas — for the management of the next tourist terminals in Fusina, Tessera and Punta Sabbioni.

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Have you visited Venice together with Luther Blissett, the tribe which gave up identity to adopt a pseudonym and put this signature on piratical actions and metropolitan legends? If you haven’t yet, this evening the meeting place is the Foresteria Valdese, in Calle Longa di S. Maria Formosa, where you will be able to admire the wonderful paintings by Loo, the art monkey. The official flyer has been delivered at the Giardini. You will see a likeable chimpanzee that holds brushes and makes amusing pictures. Go and find out whether this is true or false. Maybe you will forget for a while that president Scafiello and Lady Diana landed at the lagoon today. In the meantime, some let themselves wander in the narrow streets of the town “til daybreak. The drunk survivors of the last parties go drift in opposite directions showing tickets for “a seat on the front-row of the Apocalypse” (the only identification mark of those who are following Luther Blissett). Last night the police upset their plans by stopping the rehearsal of the Situationautic Theatre in front of the RAi building. The performance should have been ‘Two dickheads and a rubber duck’, but the cops cleared the square ... Finally, those who have not lost their curiosity about notions of ‘Body’ and ‘Face’ can gaze at the ‘Virtual Self-portraits’ installation by Blissett at the Englemaier Gallery. One can become Jim Morrison or, better still, Marlene Dietrich or even Luther.

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pregnant Scottish woman. It was 4am in the morning, we were both tired and I didn’t understand her grumbled English. I was at a loss for a moment and felt myself heavy with centuries of bourgeois civilisation.

3. LOOTA THE PAINTER

In another semblance, that of a handsome young man, Luther went to the Giardini di Castello and handed out folders to art critics and upper-class guests. The folders were printed on expensive coated board and flared the headline ‘LOOTA — THE ART MONKEY’. Two awful scribblings and the logo ‘LB — Liberty for the Beasts’ filled up the front-page. On the back there appeared the following text:

In 1985 the Animal Liberation Front broke into the University of Pennsylvania laboratory where Dr. Thomas Gennarelli had conducted, over the course of over 15 years, useless experiments on cercopithecuses and other primates, causing them cranial traumas ... The ALF stole the renowned ‘Gennarelli Tapes’ and showed them to the world. The experiments were finally stopped by the government because the scientists involved were unable to prove their usefulness. Some chimpanzees, including Loota, were bought by Ronald Cohn’s Gorilla Foundation. Loota revealed himself to have a IQ of 80 (approximately that of Forrest Gump) and was trained in painting. One year after his death, the Hans Ruesch Foundation (contact: Motta 51, Box 152, 6900 Massagno, Switzerland) proudly exhibits these paintings, making people understand how much cleverness and delicacy are annihilated everyday in the slaughterhouses of counterfeit scientists. Had Loota’s head been broken open, we would have been denied these little treasures.

Inside the folder a fabricated ‘Andreas Ruesch’ appeared as the author of a tangled, raving exegesis on Loota’s artworks. I quote some excerpts below:

Loota represents nature as an archetypal world which counterbalances the intrusive, painful memory of the experience to which humans constrained him. I like to think that those thin blue lines wandering on the canvas and changing tonality (picture no.16) are the outline of a mountain range. Perhaps that bloc is an island (but has Loota ever seen an island, or is the idea of ‘island’ part of the genetic heritage of his species?) on which there are memories of some shining pebbles. In spite of the fearful adventure lived by him, Loota’s is a strange secret alchemy arousing sympathy, faith and optimism towards and against everything ... And what can I say about the double purple marks repeated and staggered in dark red (picture no. 4) on the ochreous background resulted from the use of Loota’s downy nape as a brush? All this can recall the late Kandinsky!

The folder was also sent to many critics and faxed to the local and national newspapers. All its readers were invited to the inauguration, at 6pm, Saturday 10th July, at the Foresteria Valdese, Calle Longa di S. Maria Formosa, castello 5179, Venice.

So what was Luther up to? Luther Blisssett had linked true stories together into a canard. The ALF break-in, the Gennarelli experiments, the Gorilla Foundation and the anti-vivisectionist activity of the Hans Ruesch Foundation are all real things and events. But these facts were just the background against which the legend of Loota could be constructed. Loota did not exist. However, a few months before there had been international press coverage on some monkey paintings expensively retailed at an exhibition in Vienna. So many people would have heard of an ape painter and easily imagined Loota was the same artist. Actually, ‘Loota’ was just a corruption of ‘Luther’.

The local papers published notices of the exhibition. On the fixed day and hour, the visitors to the Foresteria found only a double-headed leaflet, on the front there was the photo of a banana whose Chiquita logo had been replaced by Luther’s face. On the back there was the following text:

HERE IS A PICTURE of the situation: the pharmaceuticals industry kills. They kill us while they are pretending to care us. The medicines they produce are almost always useless. Yet they test their products on people and animals, with their ‘consent’ and without. To confront this situation, it is inadequate and ridiculous to claim ‘animal rights’ (a phrase which belongs to liberal ideology). It is absurd to pose as animals’ pseudo-juridical tutors, or to anthropomorphise them. The dictatorship of medicine and medical culture has to be assaulted in other ways. When denouncing the scientific fallacies of animal experimenters, it is necessary to give up simplistic, back-to-nature, romanticism.

Anyone who is not in the hire of the stockbreeders can see that NO PHARMACOLOGICAL OR GENETIC TEST IS RELIABLE. Any illness artificially provoked by unnatural, intrusive means does not have the same effects as an illness ‘spontaneously’ arising from inside an organism or provoked by a polluted environment. IT’S FOR THIS REASON THAT WE CAN CHALLENGE THE VIVISECTIONISTS, NOT BY STRESSING THAT TO KILL A MACACO OR A MANDRILL IS TO DEPRIVE THE WORLD OF A POTENTIAL ARTIST! While an ape is rousing interest in her/his paintings, how many others are massacred in the labs? Do you give a fuck about them?

LOOTA IS JUST A PRODUCT OF MY IMAGINATION. THERE IS NO PAINTING HERE. HANS RUESCH IS IN THE DARK ABOUT THIS ACTION. I’VE JUST MADE USE OF HIS ADDRESS AS A DISGUISE, FOR HE’S A NOTORIOUS ANTI-VIVISECTIONIST AND ONE OF THE FEW YOU CAN TRUST. Now you can go away and fight vivisection and all the other abuses of medical power. You don’t need any ‘art monkey’ for that!

LUTHER BLISSSETT, the animal liberation anti-artist

Some journalists stood aghast, incapable of deciding what to write. A little child, whose parents had read the advert in some local newspaper, began to cry once he realised there was no monkey. As a matter of fact, the papers had not published a key detail of Loota’s story, his death. The father, who had taken his baby to the exhibition to see the monkey rather than to admire the paintings, spat out three or four unrepeatable epithets and took the child away. He didn’t give a damn about art or the Biennial. Maybe he was the only decent fellow in Venice.
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So what was Luther up to? Luther Bisisset had linked true stories together into a canard. The ALF break-in, the Gennarelli experiments, the Gorilla Foundation and the anti-vivisectionist activity of the Hans Ruesch Foundation are all real things and events. But these facts were just the background against which the legend of Loota could be constructed. Loota did not exist. However, a few months before there had been international press coverage on some monkey paintings expensively retailed at an exhibition in Vienna. So many people would have heard of an ape painter and easily imagined Loota was the same artist. Actually, ‘Loota’ was just a corruption of ‘Luther’.

The local papers published notices of the exhibition. On the fixed day and hour, the visitors to the Forasteria found only a double-headed leaflet, on the front there was the photo of a banana whose Chiquita logo had been replaced by Luther’s face. On the back there was the following text:

HERE IS A PICTURE of the situation: the pharmaceutics industry kills. They kill us while they are pretending to care us. The medicines they produce are almost always useless. Yet they test their products on people and animals, with their ‘consent’ and without. To confront this situation, it is inadequate and ridiculous to claim ‘animal rights’ (a phrase which belongs to liberal ideology). It is absurd to pose as animals’ pseudo-juridical tutors, or to anthropomorphise them. The dictatorship of medicine and medical culture has to be assailed in other ways. When denouncing the scientific fallacies of animal experimenters, it is necessary to give up simplistic, back-to-nature, romanticism.

Anyone who is not in the hire of the stockbreeders can see that NO PHARMACOLOGICAL OR GENETIC TEST IS RELIABLE. Any illness artificially provoked by unnatural, intrusive means does not have the same effect as an illness ‘spontaneously’ arising from inside an organism or provoked by a polluted environment.

IT’S FOR THIS REASON THAT WE CAN CHALLENGE THE VIVISECTIONISTS, NOT BY STRESSING THAT TO KILL A MACACO OR A MANDRILL IS TO DEPRIVE THE WORLD OF A POTENTIAL ARTIST! While an ape is rousing interest in her/his paintings, how many others are massacred in the labs? Do you give a fuck about them?

LOOTA IS JUST A PRODUCT OF MY IMAGINATION. THERE IS NO PAINTING HERE. HANS RUESCH IS IN THE DARK ABOUT THIS ACTION. I’VE JUST MADE USE OF HIS ADDRESS AS A DISGUISE, FOR HE’S A NOTORIOUS ANTI-VIVISECTIONIST AND ONE OF THE FEW YOU CAN TRUST. Now you can go away and fight vivisection and all the other abuses of medical power. You don’t need any ‘art monkey’ for that!

LUTHER BLISSETT, the animal liberation anti-artist

Some journalists stood aghast, incapable of deciding what to write. A little child, whose parents had read the advert in some local newspaper, began to cry once he realised there was no monkey. As a matter of fact, the papers had not published a key detail of Loota’s story, his death. The father, who had taken his baby to the exhibition to see the monkey rather than to admire the paintings, spat out three or four unrepeatable epithets and took the child away. He didn’t give a damn about art or the Biennial. Maybe he was the only decent fellow in Venice.
4. VIRTUAL SELF-PORTRAITS

Luther has the gift of ubiquity. While s/he was delivering the Loota flyer at the Giardini di Castello and at the Lido (Palagallo), s/he also spread invitation cards for the installation 'Virtual Self-portraits'. These cards represented the faces of several famous artists and bore the following text:

VIRTUAL SELF-PORTRAITS — Interactive video installation Inauguration: Friday 9th June at 6pm

Clairvoyants foresee the future in their polished crystal spheres. From remote times, the shamans of the Berber tribes have reached states of deep meditation simply by gazing at their own reflected image. According to many archaic cultures, a portrait imprisons part of the spirit of the represented person and, therefore it is forbidden, feared or held in utmost respect. The origins of self-portraits melt into mystery and myth (the propitiatory shapes of huntsmen in Altamira, Narcissus beloved of his own image, and so on). The process and the medium of human sensory perception are not only conditioned by natural laws but also by history. In literary fiction, it is the picture of Dorian Gray which decays with age instead of Gray himself. According to Duchamp, paintings die after a lapse of time in the same way as their authors. Then they are placed in cemeteries, i.e., in the history of art.

These Virtual Self-portraits suggest a surreal game of open contradictions — anonymous/universal, unique/manifest, ephemeral/persistent, immanent/transcendent, plagiarism/originality, artist/consumer etc. — set in the concrete space of an (un)usual figurative art which constantly escapes itself. If someone stares at a definite image for a couple of minutes, the retina will retain an imprint of its outline. Should those same eyes then be turned to focus on a white surface, a clear mental projection will appear. This installation uses after-images to provoke questions and anxieties about the contemporary subject.

VITTOR BARONI

Enpleinair Gallery, Venice — Calle Longa di S. Maria Formosa, Castello 5177 — June 9th—July 30th, 1995

The text alludes to virtual reality, but there is no explicit statement about what the show might consist of. When somebody asked me what the installation entailed, I described a sort of digital mirror controlled by a computer, in which one can look at oneself and see one’s own face turning into that of an artist chosen from those represented on the invitation card. The Enpleinair Gallery did not exist. The name means 'in the open air'. In fact, it was a normal court-yard. The installation was far better than a house of wax-works, better than television or holographs, better than any other reproduction of reality. Our doubles did move at our whim, and nothing could be so close to reality. In fact, the visitors were confronted with a mere mirror which reflected the artist — virtual self-portraits of Luther Blissett, i.e. of anyone who looked in it. When one moved away, the portrait vanished. Go ahead, cretin, there is room for

5. PROEPILOGUE

The performances by the Luther Blissett Situationaute (a Bologna-based formation founded by the transmaniac Riccardo Paccosi, which aims at amalgamating dérive, street theatre and body art) were eventually stopped by the cops. Another action did not succeed as planned: Luther was to pretend to be a fan of Lady Diana, make a foray into the hotel where she was lodging and give her attendants a bunch of flowers with a perfumed closed envelope. The envelope did not contain a greeting card, it contained treasonous material by the London Psychogeographical Association. Unfortunately, it was impossible to get near the attendants. There were too many policemen, too many barriers and picket lines. However, the psychogeographical warfare was successful. If it’s true that Venice is the 'city of the spectacle', then we must gear-up and short-circuit its reproduction. We must reflect back to the city its own awful image. The real wretchedness of everyday life in Venice forces radicals to be equal to this task. Other dérives will follow. Let’s flog the dead horse of moonlight!

Translated by Luther Blissett from Italian.

TRANSLATOR’S NOTES
1. The CNR is the National Council of Scientific Research, actually a lobby group which plots to bring back into use the atomic power plants dismantled after the 1986-87 anti-nuclear struggles.
2. Later in the evening, they phoned their editorial office and decided not to write anything. With the exception of Il Manifesto, there would be no press coverage of this prank until the liberal weekly magazine L’Espresso reported it in a piece on Luther Blissett and “cultural terrorism” ("Gia la maschera, Luther Blissett", L'Espresso, July 14th 1995).
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The Transgressive Geographies of Daily Life: 
Socialist Pathways within Everyday Urban Spatial Creativity
by Alastair Bonnett

Introduction
This article is about the transgression of everyday space. It started with me running across an inner-city motorway in Newcastle and nearly getting knocked down by a Nissan Bluebird. Not an uncommon thing of course, dashing between cars, squealing with fear. But, nonetheless, unsettling.

That trilling but traumatic incident is connected in my mind with beginning to think about the way everyday acts of geographical disobedience intersect with the city’s spatial conventions. In other words, I began to take more notice of how spatial transgressions are woven into the prosaic culture of urban life.

Previously, in some vague, unthought-out kind of way, I had tended to assign creative spatial behaviour to performance artists and other specialists in provocation. I guess I just assumed that they, somehow, owned ‘the subversive imagination’. Yet, once you start looking, and categorising, it quickly becomes apparent that ordinary urban behaviour fairly sizzles with errant activities: people tarrying; trespassing; hiding; fiddling about; using their fingernails to etch odd runes on public benches; dumbly skipping into traffic ...

All those manoeuvres. All those itchy, scratchy little initiatives. Yet this disparate energy has remained largely invisible to social theorists, most of whom appear mesmerised by the most spectacular aspects of modern urban dissidence, such as avant-garde adventures and riotous assemblies. These moments, so glistening, cinematic and exceptional, are certainly alluring but form only an unreliable and perversely narrow reflection of the quotidian life of the city.

I’m intending here to pace out a somewhat different terrain. I’m going to kick off with the avant-garde, and try to work out how and why the most savvy cultural workers are now abandoning street provocations and artistic incursions in favour of the study and politicisation of everyday creativity. Then I’m going to provide two examples of routine spatial transgression. Finally I shall sketch out, with the help of some pertinent scholarship, a socialist interpretation of ‘ordinary’ geographical subversion.

These are reasonably complex propositions, so maybe a more detailed summary might prove useful. As I’ve just indicated there are three steps to my article:

step one: I begin with the group that has traditionally monopolised discussion of creative interventions in the city: the avant-garde. I argue that the avant-garde’s colonisation of everyday space displays an interesting tension: that it represents both a critique of the conventions of art practice and an extension of its domain. I also note that some contemporary artists, particularly those associated with ‘new genre public art’, are starting to turn their backs on the ideologies of avant-gardism and beginning to see themselves as interpreters and politicos of everyday spatial imaginations.

step two: Here two instances of transgressive spatial routines are introduced. I go back to that damn motorway where I nearly lost my life and observe some louche behaviour from similar road-runners. A second example is found around a supermarket till in Essex. Spatial transgression, it is contended, is woven with, and constituted by, notions of social identity. It is, as my two examples show, a site of contestation that is both gendered, and age-specific. As this implies, routinised transgression is enabled by conservative identities but contains within itself the possibility of other, more creative, kinds of politics.

step three: Here I begin to map out the contours of the socialist imagination in everyday space. The socialist imagination is defined as that tendency towards libertarian, solidaristic, egalitarian and exploratory action that permeates everyday social conduct. Leaning on signposts and peering into blind alleys evident in other work I propose a politicised and politicos reading of, and engagement with, everyday transgression. To this end I discuss the notion of the flâneur, de Certeau’s work on walking in the city and Colin Ward’s book The Child in the City. I then return to the two case studies introduced in the previous section and draw out their constitution within and against socialist spatial creativity.

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and 'radical' undercurrent of, and antithesis to, alienated city environments (for example, Timms and Collier, 1988; Goldberg, 1988; Cohen, 1993). Thus the notion of 'transgression' is conceptualised as a synonym for avant-garde intervention. Yet, as we shall see, this elision is based on a misunderstanding of the social role of the avant-garde.

Why the avant-garde wanted to colonise everyday space

Myths of its own demise are central to the reproduction of the avant-garde (compare Bürger, 1984). Mirroring the economic dynamics of capitalist society, the content of avant-garde production must be perpetually challenged, overthrown, and superseded, in order to secure its structural survival. As this implies, announcements of the avant-garde's imminent death are as old as the institution itself (a similar point is made by Poggioli, 1968). Consideration of this process also exposes the ravenous, imperialistic nature of avant-garde production. For, again like the expansionist economic system that surrounds and enables it, avant-gardism demands and feeds upon dynamic growth, upon the extension of its range and ambitions. If for one moment it grows weary and lays its head in some museum cabinet, then new mutant breeds will instantly appear to denote the very idea of stasis and propose new explorations.

It is, at least in part, this extraordinary momentum that explains the avant-garde's attempts to colonise everyday space. The street, the market, the bus, and many other sites of routine geography, have been appropriated by the avant-garde in order to extend their praxis and gesture a rebellion against the specialised artistic spaces of art galleries and concert halls. The history of this complex ideological manoeuvre may be traced over the past 100 years or so. However, we can chart roughly its development by mentioning just three seminal avant-garde moments: Dada, surrealism and post-modern art.

Three moments in a colonial history: Dada, surrealism and post-modern Art

The desire to break away from the ghettoisation of creative activity to specialised artistic spaces was signalled by the Dadaists through a preference for clubs and public halls as venues. The Dadaists also used these arenas to expose and break apart another convention, that between audience and performer. Their favourite means of expression, the anarchic cabaret show, was expressly designed to subvert this traditional division (for discussion see Greenburg, 1985; 1988). Tristan Tzara (1989, p.236) notes how on one 'Dada Night', on July 14th 1916, "In the presence of a compact group ... we demand the right to piss in different colours", leading to "shouting and fighting in hall" and a "police interruption". However, another, less subversive, intent also guided and animated Tzara and his colleagues. For the Paris and Zurich Dadaists performed as agitators against convention but for art. Theirs was "a desperate appeal, on behalf of all forms of art" (Janco quoted by Erickson, 1984, p.116), or as Arp put it "the ground from which all art springs" (quoted by Richter, 1965, p.37).

The surrealists too voyaged into everyday life as missionaries for art. And they too staged 'provocations'. However, they also devised creative work that abandoned venues altogether. Thus, the surrealists enjoyed randomly wandering the streets and markets of Paris as a way of opening themselves up to unpredictable emotions and events. A more orchestrated event of this type was held in 1924 when Breton, along with three other surrealists (Aragon, Vitrac and Morise) picked out a town at random from a map of France (it was Blois) and walked out from it, as Chenieux-Grendon (1990, p.87) records, “progressing haphazardly, on foot”.

Since the 1960s various forms of artistic wandering have become a staple diet of avant-garde activity. A post-modern example, characteristically indifferent to its own political or social meaning, is offered by the French artist Sophie Calle (Calle and Baudrillard, 1988; see also Calle, 1989). For fourteen days in 1980 Calle, supposedly unobserved and in disguise, followed a man she called Henri B from Paris and to, and then around, Venice. Calle's choice of victim, who she had briefly met only once before, was random. In the sequence of photographs that Calle took of him he is seen only from behind; an anonymous person in the crowd, an ordinary person who the extraordinary artist has chanced upon and absorbed into her specialised realm of creative manufacture.

Throughout the twentieth century avant-garde artists have been making sporadic and unfocused attempts to highlight the geographical routines of everyday life. Within this history an important and serious attempt to challenge the conventions of creative specialisation, and relocate creativity from the galleries onto the streets, can be glimpsed. But only just. For every time the avant-garde has promised to transgress the institutionalisation of creativity it has immediately reneged; subverting its own radical potential with the moribund clichés of artistic individualism, genius, eccentricity and spontaneity. Twentieth century artistic production has become increasingly littered with such self-defeating incursions, they are strewn around wherever and whenever arts funding permits. Yet they lack both honesty and conviction. They dare not confront the fact that their subversion of the everyday is also an act of reactionary colonisation from a realm of specialised cultural production.

From the situationists to new genre public art

As I have implied, the most interesting forms of avant-garde spatial praxis are those that seriously and effectively call into question the status of the creative specialist. Two examples may be offered, situationist psychogeography and what the American artist and writer Suzanne Lacy (1995a) has recently termed 'new genre public arts'. Perhaps surprisingly, it is the latter that best exemplifies the potential within avant-gardism for the critique of the tradition of eliding 'creative transgression' with 'avant-garde intervention'. I'll be explaining that proposition in a moment. Firstly, though, I want to turn to the subject of Transgressions' very own cephalic complex, the situationists.

Readers of this journal will probably be familiar with the work of the situationists (and if not, see Home, 1996). And, hopefully, it will be equally clear that the drift (dérive) and other techniques of psychogeography blur distinctions of artist, event and audience. However, when the situationists shoved aside bourgeois conventions of
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creativity they tended to replace them with a closely related mythology of the bohemian political activist and extremist. It is pertinent to recall that over the last two centuries the two roles have grown up together. Indeed, the term ‘avant-garde’ was used in the nineteenth century for both political and artistic radicals, the latter meaning only incompletely supplanting the former at the beginning of the present century (Cuddon, 1992). The social bases (middle class) and characteristic clichés (original, angry, spontaneous) of both roles have long been interchangeable. Both are a product and reflection of the individualistic, restless, masculinist psyche of capitalist society’s managerial stratum.

As this implies, the so-called “most dangerous subversion there ever was” (Debord, 1989a, p.175), was organised around a set of very recognisable stereotypes: the individual genius; the glory of isolation; fierce ambition; the arrogance and pride of young men. These attributes may be seen to structure the Situationist International’s (SI) psychogeography, of each and every blokish left-hand bar-crawl dignified with the label dérive. One suitably raffish drift from 1953, the International Lettrist phase of Debord’s career, and which is recalled in his essay ‘Two accounts of the dérive’ (1989b), begins in an Algerian “dive” “in which [we] had spent the entire previous night” (p.136). As the White anarchists barge their way through multicultural Paris, the colonial incursions of the avant-garde into everyday space are mapped onto a more familiar colonial experience of European fear of, and desire for, non-Europeans. Accompanied by a nameless “quite beautiful West Indian woman” the evening is spent “speaking incessantly and very loudly in front of a silent audience in such a manner as to further aggravate the general unease” (p.137). The next day Debord and his pals totter off to yet another exotic bar equally determined to display their quixotic temperaments and capacity for intimidation: “Our arrival in the bar renders instantly silent about ten Yiddish-speaking men seated at two or three tables and all wearing hats” (p.137).

The International Lettrists and their situationist antecedents did not overturn the bourgeois myths of individual genius and spontaneity. They merely displaced their artistic expression to the realm of aristocratic bohemianism. Of course, the situationists developed a wide range of political and geographical ideas, some of which have an enduring potency. I am not interested here in generating a general condemnation, but in something more local and precise: a criticism of the relationship of the SI’s spatial praxis to the institution of the avant-garde. On this specific issue Debord and his comrades were naïve and unreflective. And it is with this particular relationship in mind that we can locate a more promising line of inquiry — one that draws selectively and critically from situationist ideas — in new genre public arts.

New genre public art is a term used by Suzanne Lacy to describe those forms of activist creative practice that attempt to engage ‘communities’ on social issues that are of importance to them. The ‘artist’ Suzi Gablik, after describing various projects — ‘artists’ who video prisoners talking about themselves, ‘artists’ providing physical spaces for older women to discuss change in their communities, ‘artists’ who spend months compiling evidence on the working lives of sanitation workers — describes such work as part of a recent “sea change” amongst American cultural workers:

Much of the new art focuses on social creativity rather than self-expression and contradicts the myth of the isolated genius ... there is a distinct shift in the locus of creativity from autonomous, self-contained individual to a new kind of dialogical structure that frequently is not the product of a single individual but is the result of a collaborative and interdependent process. (Gablik, 1995, pp.76-77)

I would suggest that this kind of work shows signs on making good on the avant-garde’s historic promise to abolish art; to do away with the role of creative specialist and begin the task of deciphering the already existing creative realms of daily life.

One of the best known examples of new genre public art is Martha Rosler’s project ‘If You Lived Here’ (see Wallis, 1991). This project addressed the ‘production of homelessness’ in New York and progressed along a number of pathways, some of which are conventionally avant-garde in form and expression. However, ‘If You Lived Here’ also enabled the development of what might be termed an agitational sociology of everyday creativity. In other words, some participants sought to imaginatively engage, and otherwise involve themselves, with the existent transgressive struggles of New York’s homeless population. One example of this process is Lurie and Wodiczko’s (1991) ‘Homeless Vehicle Project’. The vehicle, a wheelable bullet shaped living space for the homeless, is explained by Lurie and Wodiczko in the following terms:

This vehicle is neither a temporary nor a permanent solution to the housing problem, nor is it intended for mass production. Its point of departure is a strategy of survival for urban nomads — evicts — in the existing economy ... The vehicle resembles a weapon. The movements of evicts/resettlers throughout the city are acts of resistance directed against a transformation of the city that excludes them and thousands of others. (p.217)

Despite the potential of such work, there are plenty of problems with new genre public art. Lacy et al still have the annoying and confusing habit of, every so often, defending art and its uplifting function in the community. This has, no doubt, something to do with the fact that all these ‘new genre’ people are employed as artists or art critics. They’ve got to hang on, if only by their finger nails, to a recognisable institution in order to eat.

However, as I’ve already indicated, the promise offered by the new “artist-analyst” and “artist-activist” (Lacy, 1995b, p.174), that she or he is prepared to effectively give up individual creative experimentation in favour of a politicising engagement with the everyday creative production of the ‘public’, provides a fitting end of the century finale for the avant-garde.

Transgressing Space, Reproducing Identities: Roadrunners and Till Talkers

I am going to describe a couple of prosaic examples of spatial transgression. The first I call ‘roadrunners’, the second ‘till talkers’. I shall introduce each through a thumbnail paragraph on their social and physical context.
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Transgressing Space, Reproducing Identities: Roadrunners and Till Talkers

I am going to describe a couple of prosaic examples of spatial transgression. The first I call ‘roadrunners’, the second ‘till talkers’. I shall introduce each through a thumbnail paragraph on their social and physical context.
Inner city Newcastle: one of the poorest and most provincial of Western Europe's large cities. A motorway — the A167(M) — and several other multi-laned roads thrust their fat tarmac tongues right inside the city. They squeal and curl around awhile before lolling off down south. These roads isolate the eastern part of Newcastle from the rest of town. They form a complex set of barriers that reinforce the already alienated and limited range of social interactions possible in the city. Of course, some people don't see it this way. The minority of Newcastle residents who have access to a car find this welter of autoroutes essential for avoiding contact with the rundown and squallid acreages that surround the metropolis's relatively affluent core. However, I'm not concerned here with this group, or indeed any other 'legitimate road user'. I'm interested in those folk that need to get out of the centre and travel a short distance east. These are the people that are forced to duck and weave amongst the traffic. And these are the people that have etched a complex system of illegal short-cuts across and alongside the A167(M) and its tributaries.

Thus, for example, to get to the city centre's multiplex cinema on foot a short cut has been forged alongside the south-bound carriage-way of the motorway. This muddy track trespasses behind various corporate properties. It passes by several abandoned wooden shacks before ending in a short sharp scramble to the cinema's huge car park. Wire-fencing of various kinds, designed to make the track impassable, is periodically erected, but is soon trampled down. This trackway forms a semi-permanent expression of everyday spatial transgression. However, there are many other forms of geographical refusal and play associated with Newcastle's road network. I shall return to the incident with which I opened this essay in order to introduce my principal example.

The Swan House roundabout — the place where I was so very nearly run down — is slap-bang in the centre of Newcastle. Swan House itself is a huge and largely empty off-white 1970s office block. It is surrounded on all sides by a busy multi-track roundabout. It's a grim place, made all the more unpleasant by the litter strewn mouths of pedestrian underpasses. These come gulping out of the pavement in several exceptionally windy spots, replete with illegible maps of a subterranean pedestrian system and blue direction arrows to non-existent destinations (such as the mysterious 'Australian Centre'). So people ignore these invitations, and fling themselves over the safety railings and onto the road, darting for the sanctuary of the sharply tilted, anti-pedestrian, cobbles beneath Swan House. And from here they have to take their chances again, slipping off that unfriendly incline into the murderous road.

I will be arguing in the next section that these manoeuvres are forms of transgression in and of alienated city space. They are forms of practical and creative critique, physical strategies that contain an immanent imagination of resistance. However, any desire to develop a politicised reading of everyday spatial usages cannot progress without an appreciation of their contradictory nature. We need to ask who is involved in these transgressions and who is excluded. We also need to question what social identities enable and structure these spatial activities.

I shall broach these topics by mentioning just one of the identities that appears to be implicated in the roadrunning described above: masculinity. To get a feel for the way gender may play a role I present below some observations on a group of three late teenage lads trying to get home.

One of them begins the process. He just darts out into the traffic from the Mosley Street side of the roundabout. The other two haven't joined him, but they watch and yell from the pavement. Their friend looks like he is going to pelt across the road, so the cars aren't slowing. But then he very artfully slows down, does a sort of shimmie, moves suddenly onto his back leg and pirouettes, mockingly, in front of a red hatchback. A panicked driver swerves his car, grinds to a near halt. Other cars behind are being detained. Someone honks their horn. The two fellas on the pavement are having a rare treat, one bawls a gleeful compliment, something like "you fucking twat!". At this point they run to join their friend whilst he scampers off to the cobbled slopes at the foot of Swan House. They are all yelling their heads off now, taking huge leaping strides, ignoring the traffic. They arrive, almost simultaneously, at the roundabout's centre, panting and laughing. I imagine this incident was all over in 15 seconds. But you can have a lot of fun in heavy traffic in a quarter of a minute.

The young men wander off, rolling their shoulders, affecting a certain tough nonchalence. At the corner of City Road, they act out daft, 'playful' slaps of each other's faces, and then disappear from sight. I'm rather pleased to see the back of them. For, as well as being transgressive, and kind of funny, their performance was a ritualised assertion of masculinity. In Newcastle, where men always seem to be yelling, pissing in the street and otherwise irritating me, these boys' activities must be judged as, at least, in part, both normal and naturalising. Their spatial transgression enacts the spatial logic of masculinism. Over acts of physical display and aggression are part of, or becoming, a man in Newcastle. So are acts of an anti-social nature that ritualistically insult the alienated city. The latter is spat and urinated on, graffitied, vandalised and mocked. The city is cast in the role of woman, of the feminine, to be harassed and seduced (that appalling shimmie of the hips...) by a combination of physical courage and grotesque sensuality.

In Newcastle there is a somewhat desperate tone to such street performances. It is as if the men there feel that the city is slipping from their grasp, that traditional gender roles are losing their potency and becoming merely symbolic (see also Lancaster, 1992). Hence, an ugly tinge of violent bitterness, of macho-nihilism, regularly creeps into such displays.

I am suggesting, then, that the activities of the roadrunners are structured as both a masculine and a transgressive performance. Moreover, these two processes are intertwined, the former enables and ideologically structures the latter. The avant-garde rarely understood the connection between conservative identities and transgressive praxis. But any socialist engagement clearly demands that this relationship is not merely acknowledged but integrated into the political interpretation of everyday spatial manoeuvres.

Of course, other identities, apart from gender, are also at work in the activities of the boy's performance: for example, race, class, sexuality and physical ability. In my
26 Transgressions No.2

Roadrunners: Newcastle’s Swan House roundabout

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Of course, other identities, apart from gender, are also at work in the activities of the boy’s performance: for example, race, class, sexuality and physical ability. In my
Talking at the Till: Epping Tesco's

I was born and raised in Epping, a dormitory town 15 miles east of London. It was where I first learnt to run over busy roads. So I know that every one in Epping sees the supermarket, Tesco, as one of the town’s central institutions. So central that other places in Epping are described as ‘near Tesco’s’, or ‘at the Tesco’s end of town’. Tesco’s, then, is an urban hub. But it’s an odd sort of centre. It has, after all, been, purpose built as an entirely commercial space. It has been scientifically designed to create the psychological and physical conditions for maximising sales. As with nearly all modern British supermarkets, one is channelled in at the left, and circulated clockwise through the building; past tempting breedy wafts from the bakery, meaty smells from the delicatessen, past strangely appealing mounds of neat and reasonably priced food, before being expelled, loaded down with far more purchases that you actually wanted, at one of the tills. The spatial experience of Tesco’s is obsessively controlled and narrowly directed. There is, or so it seems, only one spatial ideology at work in this place, the geography of consumerism.

The efficient alienation of the modern supermarket can make it both a compelling and lonely destination. It is an environment that encourages shoppers to take a certain bored pleasure in seeing themselves as consumer drones; to cast themselves as perfect shoppers, busy, focused and willing. However this predictable performance isn’t the only show on offer in Epping Tesco’s. There are other things occurring. Things that haven’t been legislated for by Tesco’s spatial scientists.

Over by two of the tills groups of older women are failing to circulate in the prescribed fashion. They are standing and chatting. Other shoppers, especially younger ones, are looking ‘held up’. They stare at the floor, glancing up occasionally. The blotchy, acned faces of single impeded teenagers express passive contempt; a virulent but immobile hatred. The objects of their derision make symbolic gestures of accommodation. The young shoppers are apologised to. The fact that they are “in a rush” is understood, allowances will soon be made; “go on, you go in front love”; “don’t mind us dear”; “we’re just enjoying ourselves, you go ahead”. So it is that the conformists are separated from the subversives, the former’s eyes tightened to avoid facial contact, to avoid contamination with this unwelcome and discordant sociability.

What particularly bothers and, it seems, disgusts, the two teenage boys queuing at till 5 is that, not only is there a group of 4 older women (aged 65+) in front of them, including the till operator, talking to each other and failing to move on, but that two of these women are actually eating. Eating! In here! And not only are they eating, they have actually brought *food in from outside the store*. To be more precise they have brought in what appears to be a selection of cakes in two Tupperware containers. Two people have come into Tesco’s, and not circulated round the store clockwise. They have gone straight to their friend at till 5, and begun sharing out food. And the teens, whose sphere of transgression is so different, so spatially and socially removed, are appalled and concerned.
next example, set at a shopping till in Epping, I show how transgressions that draw on gender categories may also be bound up with ideas and assumptions about age.

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The Transgressive Geographies of Daily Life

It's no coincidence that in moving from an example of male to female routine spatial transgression we have moved from street level to inside a building. Although far from being the preserve of men, street movement and performance appears permeated by an apparently confident and swaggering masculinism. As Gwenda Linda Blair (quoted by Ward, 1978, p.156) observes:

The street in this and most other societies, belongs to men ... women are allowed to use the street, but only by permission — men retain domination and the Damoclesian sword of repossession is always present. Being a man gives you a passkey; otherwise you're fair game for eviction.

One of the central ironies of routine transgression is that its agents tend to be the ones who feel they have power within — perhaps even dominate — their chosen geography of play and resistance. The lads running across the traffic and the elderly women in the supermarket are both disobeying on terrains in which they feel comfortable. As this implies, the transgression of everyday space is only partially experimental in nature; it draws on traditions and knowledges of 'what has gone before', of what 'we are allowed to do'. The refusal of Tesco's spatial discipline is carried out by these women both as something spontaneous and challenging and as something that accepts and accommodates itself to the limitations placed on women's spatial activities.

Or it was. Perhaps, since I first witnessed these events some 5 years ago, the store manager has changed. Anyway, someone 'in charge' seems to have disbanded these gatherings. Certainly, the last time I went to Epping Tesco's all the people on the tills were of the young and blotchy variety. And there was no hanging around, no idle chat, no scone crumbs needing to be brushed from the glass screen of the bar-code reader.

Perhaps that last image is a bit too touching. There's a danger of whimsy creeping into depictions of ordinary forms of subversion, particularly those concerning unconventional agents (like older people and women). I feel justified in a certain nostalgia for these till parties, but I don't want to diminish their radicality through sentimentality. After all, resistance to consumerism is, in certain ways, a far more far-reaching and provocative activity than the kinds of motorway chicken-runs depicted in Newcastle. It involves the creation of a sustainable and solidaristic inclined group of people; people who have come together to share conversation and food and engage themselves with the wider community. Placing such an alternative institution at the heart of an enterprise like Tesco — a commercial operation designed to destroy non-market based values and ties — provides both a latent and actual creative challenge to consumer capitalism.

Signposts and Blind Alleys: Mapping and Enabling the Socialist Imagination within Everyday Space

So far, I have talked about the structural inability of the avant-garde to engage with everyday creativity and introduced, through two examples, the contradictory nature of prosaic, non-specialist, transgression. Now I wish to develop a political, and politicising, analysis of these phenomena. To this end I will be drawing on a variety
of writings that have attempted to say something about the way we can think about peoples’ errant urban manoeuvres. More specifically, I shall engage with three texts: Keith Tester’s *The Flâneur* (1994) and, more generally, theories of the flâneur and the impoverishment of urban movement; an essay on walking in Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) and, finally, Colin Wards’ (1978) *The Child in the City*. The first two occupy a recognised position in the literature on everyday space, but are treated here with some scepticism. The third and last, which has failed to find a place in the debate, offers, I believe, more politically adroit interpretations. I shall move through these expositions, drawing on each, before I finally arrive at a socialist representation of everyday urban creation.

Everyday space, and people’s movement within it, seems to be a topic that a lot of people have recently become intrigued by. Indeed, the categories and intellectual traditions through which the subject is currently being explored have a decidedly hasty and ‘of the shelf’ feel to them. It’s as if people are anxious to talk about everyday space but don’t yet quite know how. The spate of writings on the flâneur is, I would submit, an instance of this trend. Reading Tester’s edited collection *The Flâneur* I am struck by how many times the inadequacy of its central category is alluded to or admitted to. The contributors appear to want to write about people’s changing physical incorporation into the modern and post-modern city. But they are constantly having to view this process through what is, as Tester’s introduction makes clear, an anachronism. The flâneur was an urban idler who roamed early-to-mid-nineteenth century Paris. He was a dandy in search of the hidden pleasures of a city that had not yet been subjected to the bureaucratisation and spatial authoritarianism of modern urban development. “Any such pinning down”, Tester notes (p.14), “makes flânerie impossible since it establishes the meaning and order of things in advance.” Benjamin (1983, p.47) reminds us that the late nineteenth century poet Baudelaire, often considered the epitome of the decadent French pop, “roved about in the city which had long since ceased to be home for the flâneur”.

As this implies, the praxis of the flâneur is not an appropriate model to explain, or judge, late twentieth century urban culture. The interpretative errors such a misapplication produces are particularly apparent in the essay by Zigmund Bauman in Tester’s collection. For Bauman post-modern metropolitans are uncreative, automatized flâneurs. The post-modern city encourages endless play — “Game has no end” is Bauman’s pithy comment (p.153) — but it is mindless, uncreative and enforced: “the freedom of the flâneur to set, playfully, the aims and meanings of his nomadic adventures, the original attraction of his lonely places, has been appropriated” (p.154). This depressing vision of urban life is enabled by the nostalgic, and otherwise confused, imposition of an anachronism as the measure of contemporary geographical play. It is no surprise that the forms of adventure and experimentation achieved within early nineteenth Paris are not available today, but that can not be taken to mean that real, as opposed to simulated, spatial creativity is now dead. [This point is further exemplified by the resolutely and, I would suggest, properly historical focus of studies that addresses the invisibility and/or impossibility of the female flâneur; for example, Wolff, 1989; 1994]

A similar critique may be proposed in relation to Richard Sennett’s (1994, pp.374-375) thesis that the contemporary city “has ended in passivity … suspending the body in an ever more passive relation to the environment”. Here we find yet another urban theorist insisting that creativity has fled the metropolis, the streets and roads of which are now filled with people whom Sennett at least seems to find less than fully human. And here again, this conclusion is in part derived from a conflation of the very idea of spatial creativity with the social and geographical praxis of pre-automotive, pre-consumerist (and in Sennett’s case, pre-Enlightenment) societies.

To deal in anachronisms is to peddle sentimentality and blind oneself to the mutable and contingent nature of everyday geographical creativity. It is at this point that de Certeau’s writings may be usefully introduced. De Certeau’s chapter ‘Walking in the city’ in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, resolutely refuses romantic backward glances at lost urban utopias. Indeed, he takes a clear delight in depicting the inevitability of the “contradictory movements that counter-balance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power” (p.95). Far from being vacant zombies, the users of urban space are necessarily and constantly creative. De Certeau explains that,

> if it is true that a spatial order organises an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualises some of these possibilities. … But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements … the walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else. And if on the one hand he actualises only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he goes only here and not there), on the other he increases the number of possibilities (for example, by creating shortcuts and detours) and prohibitions (for example, he forbids himself to take paths generally considered accessible or even obligatory). (p.96)

Although it is, admittedly, not always clear how literal de Certeau’s references to ‘walkers’ are meant to be (one could, after all, do all the above in a car), his analysis provides a useful counter-point to the more historically attuned but ridiculously cloistered pronouncements of so many other urban theorists.

As the passage cited above implies, de Certeau is proposing a linguistic model for the analysis of spatial movements. Thus, he talks of the “rhetoric of walking” of “composing a path” (p.100) and of how the “long poem of walking manipulates spatial organisations, no matter how panoptic they may be” (p.101). Indeed, almost everything he has to say about walking is rooted in structuralist theory. As I’ve indicated this procedure may provide some helpful insights but it also contains a series of dangers and problems. More specifically, de Certeau’s analysis depoliticises everyday life, spatial actions are construed in a social vacuum; their ability to make sense confined to the terrain of locutionary principle.

This problem in de Certeau’s work is closely related to a second, that his walker in the city is presented as a generic type. Indeed, de Certeau conveys little sense that gender, age, or class even exist, never mind that they might structure people’s urban manoeuvres. Revealingly, his book is dedicated “To the ordinary man. To a common
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and “anonymous hero”. Such a figure is a necessary fiction for de Certeau’s apolitical structuralism. But it is ultimately incapable of providing us with a coherent, let alone socialist, interpretation of how urban space is creatively transgressed.

Two pointers have emerged so far from the literature under discussion. Firstly, that the historically informed studies of recent urban theorists have tended to erase contemporary forms of creativity, and, by implication, that changing socio-spatial conventions enable new forms of transgression. Secondly, that textual metaphors of urban usage, such as those employed by de Certeau, whilst exemplifying a certain inventiveness, by-pass the political constitution of daily life. Both these lessons need to be incorporated into a socialist theory of urban usage. To help us on our way, I will call, somewhat more sympathetically, on one last scholarly authority: the humanist anarchist Colin Ward.

Colin Ward’s The Child in the City (1978) is a deceptively simple book, full of photographs of children playing in the city in a myriad of different ways. I’m particularly fond of a series of five, which start with a toddler walking along the pavement with a cardboard box on his head, then falling over, sitting on and squashing his box and finally booting it into the gutter. This event is labelled ‘Using Found Objects’ (p.82). Through both images and text Ward presents a portrait of the diverse ways children colonise hidden and ‘unused’ corners of the city. He looks at the way children, as children, have specific experiences of city life but intercuts this analysis with depictions of the role and impact of other social identities: for example, the apparent invisibility of girls in street-play. As this implies Ward finds the city populated neither by post-modern cretins (unlike Bauman and Sennett) nor generic sign-manipulators (unlike de Certeau) but rather by specific groups with specific identities and with imaginative and politically fertile sets of spatial practices. Indeed Ward stresses in and again that the city is full of child explorers:

For the [child] explorer, apart from the excitement of change and the new experience it brings, the personal satisfactions to be won from an environment include the extent to which it can be used and manipulated, and the extent to which it contains usable rubbish, the detritus of packaging-cases, crates, bits of rope and old timber, off-cuts and old wheels. (p.40)

Ward provides numerous anecdotes of children’s ability to re-imagine everyday space, to ignite its possibilities and provocations. He also indicates that this process has wider political ramifications, that children’s play can be a creative and subversive of the possibility of a socialist community or solidaristic and empathetic or, indeed, a complex mixture of both of these two tendencies. Ward implies that children’s spatial transgressions contain within them forms of practical political critique. He intimates that to create and enact “erotic encounters, forbidden games, and ... destructive passions” (p.41) is both to engage in, and say something about, the existing structure of urban life and its possible transformation. It is true that Ward fails to move any theoretical distance beyond the vaguest allusions to this process. Nevertheless, he provides us with a clear taste of the kind of analysis of everyday creativity that I have been advocating in this article.

So where, then, does this get us? What must we do? We must begin to re-imagine everyday spatial manoeuvres. We must begin to see them as contradictory projects that contain immanent radical and conservative tendencies. Such a procedure is a necessary strategy if we are to conceptualise revolutionary desires, not as vanguardist impositions, but as already actively at work in daily life. Moreover, for this analysis to have any coherence as a political project it cannot be construed as an academic pastime. We must seek to actively politicise everyday space, engaging and activating radical understandings of ‘ordinary’ forms of transgression; enabling, in other words, the socialist imagination.

From two very prosaic examples, we have witnessed the dialectical movement of conservative identities and the socialist imagination. We may interpret the roadrunners and till talkers as creatively engaged in the struggle between a socialist culture and the politics of authority and reaction. For those with an appreciation of the historical development of socialist consciousness, the fact that these groups’ radicalism is, to a greater or lesser extent, structured and enabled by conservative social identities will come as no surprise. Nor will the suggestion that acts of everyday spatial transgression cannot be understood as politically equivalent. For although both the activities of the roadrunners and the till talkers share a contradictory character, this quality is exhibited in different ways and with different political implications. The roadrunners find themselves in a dangerous and car dominated environment, an environment structured for the benefit of capital. Their resistance to this process represents a practical critique and refusal of the alienating rationality of contemporary planning. Their physical movement across the roundabout articulates the need of people to have environments that are created with the needs of human sociality, rather than profit and exclusivity, in mind.

Interestingly the process of politicising these lads’ activities has already begun. At the same roundabout a series of small posters advertises the monthly meeting of ‘People Not Cars’ rallies, events where people are encouraged to walk, or bicycle, at a slow pace along Newcastle’s roads, thereby holding up the traffic and demonstrating against the dominance of the car in the city. The boys took no notice of the posters. Yet, they represent an increasingly powerful grass-roots movement against capitalist car culture. And it is precisely through such activism, concerted and sustained over time, that the boys’ own transgressions may come to have a political edge. In other words, through the dissemination of politicised interpretations, activities such as roadrunning may start to have meanings that drivers, or roadrunners themselves, comprehend as a challenge and a refusal. And it is at precisely such a point that the socialist imaginary stops being an immanent tendency and starts becoming an explicit politics. It is also at this point that the conservative social identities that stimulated and structured the boys’ transgression can be made more visible, and either be drawn on in more reflexive ways or abandoned.

Obviously this chain of causation may or may not happen in the case of these boys or roadrunners in general. I am not interested here in futurology but in explaining the possibility of the politicisation of everyday space. The same thing needs to be stressed in relation to the till talkers. This group inserted sociability into the anti-social sphere of the supermarket. They brought solidarity, pleasure and non-consumerist values
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right to the store’s centre of operations. Within these women’s activities we see a more complex and nuanced set of socialist tendencies than are apparent in my previous example. The boys showed a refusal of alienating planning, but the older women demonstrated both a rejection of the commercial principles at the heart of capitalism and a primitive practical exemplification of a different form of social and economic relationship. The politicisation of their activities — with its concomitant making visible of their reliance on an acceptance of female spatial servitude — would necessarily involve forms of activism concerned with the nature of contemporary shopping. It is pertinent to note, in this regard, that questions such as ‘whose space is this?’, ‘what psychological and social impact do these stores have on us?’, and ‘are there alternative ways for people to acquire food and durable goods, other than commercially?’ are increasingly being asked by a variety of different groups. For example, the non-money based exchange networks called, in the UK, LETS schemes, ask such questions. So do various community groups concerned with the ‘mallization’ of their towns. As with the roadrunners, there are already forces in existence that may enable the politicisation of the activities of the till talkers.

I hope, of course, that these different politicising forces will grow, strengthen and begin to merge. The potential within the socialist imagination is for the politicisation, not merely of distinct bits of everyday space, but for its entirety. For the transformation, that is, of daily life into a terrain of socialist exploration.

And it is here that we may reintroduce and find a role for the detritus of the avant-garde, particularly those who have followed though on the promises of that institution and abandoned art production in favour of a social engagement with everyday creativity. These people may be — and no doubt many already are — involved in politicising specific aspects of everyday space. However, their particular intellectual heritage and occupational location gives them an incentive, as well as other kinds of resources, to challenge the limitations of ‘issue politics’ and see the wider potential for politicisation across all the different realms of everyday experience. If they want to make themselves useful, they should make it their mission — their specialism even — to draw out and make visible the connections between different areas of spatial struggle, to highlight areas that are being neglected and identities that are being marginalised. They should help ignite the realm of the everyday with socialist interpretations and activisms.

End

For some people real politics takes place somewhere higher, somewhere above, everyday life. Real politics is conducted by politicians, organised around highly traditional issues and has nothing to do with how and why people run across roads or hang around at shopping tills. In social science, one of the more influential ways this position is defended, and quotidian struggle is denigrated, is by ‘recognising’ the politics of everyday life as merely symbolic. It is claimed that the bigger, important, social system reproduces itself by allowing anger and resistance to be enacted through petty and moronic rituals of deviance. ‘The supreme ruse of power’ Georges Balandier (quoted by Stallybrass and White, 1986, p.14) confidently opines, ‘is to allow itself to be contested ritually in order to consolidate itself more effectively’ (see also Cohen and Taylor, 1992; Hall and Jefferson, 1976). The suffocating sociological elegance of this formulation derives from its functionalism. Of course, sometimes it is useful and legitimate to examine the ‘mereness’ of everyday life; its barren and pitiable echoing of wider socio-economic contradictions and conflicts. Yet, when set in isolation, this approach acts to obscure and pacify the creative and political constitution and potential of daily life. Indeed, I’m tempted to suggest that this interpretation has itself become ritualised, the bog-standard ‘critique’ of the ‘little rebellions’ or ‘escape attempts’ of the street and supermarket.

This article has attempted to evoke the possibility of a different kind of interpretation of everyday life. I have tried to write about daily life’s imaginative and contradictory qualities, its thrashing motions and potential. I guess, though, it will be obvious to many that one of the contradictions within my own attempts to interpret this topic is that, although I wish to enable the socialist imagination, my brain has been colonised by the language of academia. Again, I’m sure that to a certain extent the latter enables the former, conservative identities enabling radical praxis. That realisation should, of course, provoke me into making myself a little clearer. And it’s in that spirit that I end this essay, not with a load more ideas, but with five bullet points, each one banging home an aspect of my argument.

* The challenge that confronts cultural workers is to abandon the mythologies of avant-gardism and to become agents for the politicisation of everyday spatial creativity.
* Look around you, the streets and shops are alive with creatively errant geographical manoeuvres.
* Spatial transgression is politically contradictory. Its radical potential may, for example, be seen to be structured and enabled by conservative social identities.
* The socialist imagination exists as a tendency within everyday spatial transgression.
* The socialist imagination becomes explicit through the politicisation of daily life.

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right to the store's centre of operations. Within these women's activities we see a more complex and nuanced set of socialist tendencies than are apparent in my previous example. The boys showed a refusal of alienating planning, but the older women demonstrated both a rejection of the commercial principles at the heart of capitalism and a primitive practical exemplification of a different form of social and economic relationship. The politicisation of their activities — with its concomitant making visible of their reliance on an acceptance of female spatial servitude — would necessarily involve forms of activism concerned with the nature of contemporary shopping. It is pertinent to note, in this regard, that questions such as 'whose space is this?', 'what psychological and social impact do these stores have on us?', and 'are there alternative ways for people to acquire food and durable goods, other than commercially?' are increasingly being asked by a variety of different groups. For example, the non-money based exchange networks called, in the UK, LETS schemes, ask such questions. So do various community groups concerned with the 'mallisation' of their towns. As with the roadrunners, there are already forces in existence that may enable the politicisation of the activities of the till talkers.

I hope, of course, that these different politicising forces will grow, strengthen and begin to merge. The potential within the socialist imagination is for the politicisation, not merely of distinct bits of everyday space, but for its entirety. For the transformation, that is, of daily life into a terrain of socialist exploration.

And it is here that we may reintroduce and find a role for the detritus of the avant-garde, particularly those who have followed though on the promises of that institution and abandoned art production in favour of a social engagement with everyday creativity. These people may be — and no doubt many already are — involved in politicising specific aspects of everyday space. However, their particular intellectual heritage and occupational location gives them an incentive, as well as other kinds of resources, to challenge the limitations of 'issue politics' and see the wider potential for politicisation across all the different realms of everyday experience. If they want to make themselves useful, they should make it their mission — their specialism even — to draw out and make visible the connections between different areas of spatial struggle, to highlight areas that are being neglected and identities that are being marginalised. They should help ignite the realm of the everyday with socialist interpretations and activisms.

End

For some people real politics takes place somewhere higher, somewhere above, everyday life. Real politics is conducted by politicians, organised around highly traditional issues and has nothing to do with how and why people run across roads or hang around at shopping tills. In social science, one of the more influential ways this position is defended, and quotidian struggle is denigrated, is by 'recognising' the politics of everyday life as merely symbolic. It is claimed that the bigger, important, social system reproduces itself by allowing anger and resistance to be enacted through petty and moronic rituals of deviance. "The supreme ruse of power" Georges Balandier (quoted by Stallybrass and White, 1986, p.14) confidently opines, "is to allow itself to be contested ritually in order to consolidate itself more effectively" (see also Cohen and Taylor, 1992; Hall and Jefferson, 1976). The suffocating sociological elegance of this formulation derives from its functionalism. Of course, sometimes it is useful and legitimate to examine the 'mereness' of everyday life; its barren and pitiable echoing of wider socio-economic contradictions and conflicts. Yet, when set in isolation, this approach acts to obscure and pacify the creative and political constitution and potential of daily life. Indeed, I'm tempted to suggest that this interpretation has itself become ritualised, the bog-standard 'critique' of the 'little rebellions' or 'escape attempts' of the street and supermarket.

This article has attempted to evoke the possibility of a different kind of interpretation of everyday life. I have tried to write about daily life's imaginative and contradictory qualities, its thrashing motions and potential. I guess, though, it will be obvious to many that one of the contradictions within my own attempts to interpret this topic is that, although I wish to enable the socialist imagination, my brain has been colonised by the language of academia. Again, I'm sure that to a certain extent the latter enables the former, conservative identities enabling radical praxis. That realisation should, of course, provoke me into making myself a little clearer. And it's in that spirit that I end this essay, not with a load more ideas, but with five bullet points, each one banging home an aspect of my argument.

* The challenge that confronts cultural workers is to abandon the mythologies of avant-gardism and to become agents for the politicisation of everyday spatial creativity.
* Look around you, the streets and shops are alive with creatively errant geographical manoeuvres.
* Spatial transgression is politically contradictory. Its radical potential may, for example, be seen to be structured and enabled by conservative social identities.
* The socialist imagination exists as a tendency within everyday spatial transgression.
* The socialist imagination becomes explicit through the politicisation of daily life.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following for their help with this piece: David Pinder and Peter Suchin (who refereed it) and Rachel Holland and Neill Ward (who wrote comments on it). Thanks also to those people in the International Cultural Change seminar group at Newcastle University who chewed this article over with me one Wednesday afternoon. An early version was presented to the Annual Conference of the Association of American Geographers in San Francisco in 1994.
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Shopping for Principles:
Writing about Stoke-on-Trent's 'Festival Park'

by Martin Parker

A Context and Some Theory
One of the platitudes of contemporary cultural, spatial and social theory is that the kaleidoscopic collision of signs, the failure of grand narratives and the spiral of consumption augurs the era of post-modernity and/or the end of certainty. Whether this is a libertarian release, or the final victory of consumer culture, seems to depend on the optimism or pessimism of the theorist concerned. This paper is intended to be a response to some of the issues raised in those writings. It has its origins in an exhibition, several pieces of serious journalism and unserious academic writing. It also has something to do with the need to get things in print to further my academic career. It does not report the results of a research project, though it is based on documentary analysis and a few interviews, but rather it evolves out of personal and academic interests which I have been 'working' on for some time. It is personal in two senses, firstly because it is about the city that I live in and, secondly, because it is about the way that I might legitimate my writing about that area. This is clearly a strategy that recognises that the plausibility of my analysis depends almost entirely upon whether other readers recognise my practices and feelings and/or are convinced by my rhetoric. I offer no apologies here because those apologies are a central theme of the paper itself.

In textual terms I recount two stories. One is the story of how a government thought it might gain itself some votes by planting flowers in areas of Britain that no longer seemed needed. The other is the story of a Sociologist and a Photographer who wanted to get famous by saying something clever about the world. Both of these tales are told in order to offer some reflections on recent academic accounts of social change and representation. After a meandering and mannered 'argument' I end up suggesting that the ethical or political intention of particular kinds of story telling seem to be the only grounds on which different descriptions of the world can be assessed.

The previous paragraph was under-referenced and not nearly academic enough. I apologise. Let me rephrase it. In contemporary theoretical terms this paper focuses on a particular space which seems to signify massive social, spatial, cultural and economic changes and asks two questions. Firstly, can these changes be described as an indicator of a move to post-modernity — a new time, a development away from the modernist arrangements of capitalism or industrialism? This is essentially an ontological question, one that asks whether a particular constellation of social facts is best described as this or that (Lash and Urry, 1987; Crook et al, 1992). The second question is how can we represent (new) forms of social space — with a modernist self-righteous certainty or a post-modern irony that celebrates an unending plurality of narratives? This is an epistemological question about the aims and claims of social science, whether it is possible to tell some kind of truth or admit that everything is some kind of story (Lytard, 1986; Kroeker and Cook, 1988). Both questions are linked — an ontology presumes an epistemology but analytically separable (Bauman, 1992; Smart, 1993; Calhoun, 1993). One of the more common permutations of answers to these questions is to argue that the post-modern is a move within the modern, an epistemological mood that is caused by a particular set of social conditions (Harvey, 1989; Giddens, 1990; Lash, 1990; Jameson, 1991). Whilst this is, in many ways, convincing, it is an ontology supported by modernist truth claims and hence does little to address the deeper epistemological issues. I do not wish to address the 'causes' of post-modernism but to think about the consequences of using post-modern discourses. In this paper I'm going to suggest that a post-modern epistemology is also ultimately unhelpful because it seems only to lead to endless restatements of relativism or lapses into mass cultural elitism. After demonstrating the inadequacy of ontological and epistemological versions of post-modernism I conclude that the ethical/political interests of any account are the only basis for discrimination or evaluation.

Is that better?

The Sociologist, The Photographer and Stoke
Some context is necessary for anyone who does not live in my city. Half way between Manchester and Birmingham is the sprawl that makes up the potteries — the six towns of the city of Stoke-on-Trent plus the older borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme. The conurbation has a population of nearly half a million and grew from the industrial revolution — coal, steel and ceramics creating an urban landscape that gained it a reputation as the most polluted in Britain. It is said that the German Luftwaffe didn't bomb Stoke because they thought someone else already had. In literary terms the potteries is best known as Arnold Bennett's 'five towns', an area he was born in, wrote about constantly but rarely returned to. A typical high culture opinion was Pevsner's (1974, p.252), who termed Stoke-on-Trent "an urban tragedy" — a line of small towns that resist their big city status. But times have changed since those grim industrial days — slag heaps are now parks and the smog is only seen on sepia postcards. Perhaps the culmination of these efforts at reconstruction was the 1986 National Garden Festival, a government inspired attempt to provoke large scale redevelopment on the site of a derelict steelworks and Wedgwood's original factory. After the tourists had gone, rising from the newly laid turf came 'Festival Park' which was to be, in the speculative words of its developers:
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A landmark for Stoke-on-Trent, offers a superb blend of business and leisure opportunities where companies can put down roots and grow. It integrates retail, business and commercial, hotel and leisure facilities. Designed to make business a pleasure and leisure a business.  

(St. Modwen Publicity, 1988)

In 1988, just after those words were written, the Sociologist got a job in Stoke. He had previously lived in Oxford and Brighton and was not impressed with the Potteries. Like Arnold Bennett he saw “hard solid people with little time for art or culture”, a city “mean and forbidding of aspect — sombre, hard featured, uncouth; and the vaporous poison of their ovens and chimneys has soiled and shrivelled the surrounding countryside” (1970, p.19). His friend, the Photographer, visited him and they both wandered around the then derelict Garden Festival site. Some construction was beginning to occur around the fringes of the newly titled Festival Park but the rest of the site was almost as it had been two years before. Acres of landscaped and slightly overgrown walks with industrial views like Lowry paintings over the city in all directions. The area was dotted with sculptures, ice-cream kiosks, a station for the scenic railway, the tower that supported the cable car, lakes, exhibition stands, signs, bridges and a mock cemetery illustrating the work of local monumental masons. Remarkably little vandalism had occurred, mainly since the site was fenced and patrolled by security guards. Like children in a closed down funfair they dodged the guards, took photos and wondered at the point of spending all that time and money on something so transient.

In an entrepreneurial way they decided to use the Festival park site to say something meaningful about the multiple ironies of our post-something society. They made words and photographs and attempted to sell them and watched the buildings take shape. The first incarnation was an exhibition of dour black and white photographs in a white gallery with ironic quotations attached to the photos. Abandoned sculptures with the industrial city as backdrop. Faceless consumers pushing trolleys around windswept carparks. Neither the Photographer nor the Sociologist knew exactly what they were saying but a sense of critique and irony was quite enough to be going on with (Grivell and Parker, 1989). The second incarnations were articles in a sensible left-wing magazine and a local monthly which were savagely cut and read like a hack who had partially digested Baudrillard and a press release (Parker and Grivell, 1990; Parker, 1990; 1992). Some time later they published a more substantial article in a cultural studies magazine (Parker and Grivell, 1992). This piece was far ‘cleverer’ but, again, severe red-pencilling meant that it hinted at transgression rather than engaging in it. So, sixth time lucky — this is what the Sociologist wants to say this time around.

The Garden of Earthly Delights

Let’s visit Festival Park. No need for the (re)production of spurious academic references here. You know where it is, you have been there. Festival, carnival, wonderland — and you can Park your car. Now, several years after the Sociologist’s first visit, many of the buildings are up. Not all, because this place will always change. There will always be vacant lots. The American Diner has already been Mexican (and then empty), Larry Lobster’s (and then empty). Yet, unlike the rest of the city, everything here is new. Even Wedgwood’s old house is new. There is no graffiti, no dereliction, no terraced houses and chimney stacks. Instead there are offices for accountants, architects, financial services, a housing association and a hotel for their clients. Further down the road is a selection of new industrial units — a shopfitting company, an advanced electronics manufacturer, a printers, a computer software company. Around the corner sits squat grey retail space with bright plastic facings looking like a series of aircraft hangars made from children’s blocks. Inside, the machinery of the building is painted grey and half hidden behind suspended lighting. Factories have exposed machinery as well — take away the carpet and the consumer durables and these buildings don’t look very different. This is design and build architecture that could be found in Belfast, Edinburgh or Cardiff (Los Angeles, Tokyo) — it is placeless. Because so many of the buildings look the same illuminated signs and flapping flags are at a premium in order that you can tell them apart. A regime of signs, a multiplex cinema, a bowling alley, waterworld, ski slope, drive thru McDonalds, Pizza Hut and video arcade. Pick your pleasure technology. This is now the most popular visitor attraction between Manchester and Birmingham — millions of people can’t be wrong. Who are YOU to judge?

Most of those visits were made by car because the park is not designed for the pedestrian. On busy nights the cinema car park overflows to the retail car park. There used to be no footpaths between the two and easier cinema-goers were forced to risk walking across the dual carriageway and trampling through the newly planted bushes in order to get to their film on time. A footbridge has been built now but few people seem to use it unless they are elderly, disabled or have children. The pre-christmas shopping frenzy always causes massive traffic jams. A lot of petrol gets burnt and a lot of credit cards are waved around. Fictional money/power/knowledge moves along endless, fractal, spiralling circuits of commodity exchange. The road system one mile away has had to be re-designed to cope with potential gridlock. There is no room for abstinence here — this is consumption red in tooth and claw. By being here you are implicated — there is no Archimedian point, no Hegelian synthesis, no categorical imperative — if you stand still you will be run down. WHO are you to judge? Even on the day of rest the activity continues. Sunday McLunch is eaten between visits to the shops, just a short drive across the car park away. Out on the ski-slope brightly coloured jackets are concentrating hard on playing going up and down. Across the way stands the rolling mill that remains from the original steelworks. During the week the huge grey sheds occasionally exhale a roar of metal crushing metal. The developers believe that it will have gone in ten years and the re-generation will spread across the canal. Rhizomes spread. In the pub next to the marina that was made for the Festival the Sociologist sits amongst office workers and eats a ploughman’s lunch. An authentic English speciality, as hyper-real as the canal ‘feature’ outside the double glazing.

In the superstore the row of checkout stretches away in front of a tobacco kiosk that is intended to look like something from old England — wood and copperplate writing. “Back to the olden days” the manager explained when the Sociologist interviewed him whilst pretending to be a Journalist (pretending to be a Sociologist). There are pretend fishmongers and butchers and bakers with little hanging signs and simulated half timbering. Food from everywhere — pesto sauce, curry in a tin,
40 Transgressions No.2

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bananas, croissants, steak and kidney pies, Staffordshire oatcakes, houmous, microwave ready-made burger in a bun with tasty relish. The kitchen department has dried flowers and light woods. The children's area has primary colours, the 'sounds' section has neon and the delicatessen has dark wood. In the cafe, next to the wrapped sandwiches a plastic lobster adds a conventionally surreal touch. All the time the muzak plays and busy young men in suits and clipboards stride past older women in polyester sitting at checkouts. Out in the car park there are no errant shopping trolleys because you have to use a pound deposit to release them from their neighbours. Behind the scenes the lorries bring the goods and the Securicor vans take away the money. The city stretches away around its new centre.

The Sociologist thinks that this must be emergent post-modernity. He feels it, he senses the mood. The primary and secondary sector giving way to the service sector, the decentering of the city. Geographic and cultural difference are collapsed into easily consumable simulations with a fake ski-slope next to a tropical water paradise surrounded by car parks. No rules only choices. What more could a (theoretically sophisticated, culturally sensitive) Sociologist want? Who is HE to judge? A hyperreal stage set for mass consumption in the middle of a decaying industrial city. Mere Ology (Eulogy) cannot exhaust the meanings of this place, cannot follow the traces, predict the paths of the shopping trolleys. Panic consumption means history is being re-landscaped. The masses are imploding and shopping can never be mean the same again. He is bathing in irony in a strange land, an outsider, an anthropologist. His staccato cleverness burns like acid, grows like fungus, slips like a banana skin and sticks in his head like advertising jingles. The majority are silent and he is the intellectual terrorist. His task is to sever the sutures of the everyday, to refuse the seductions of totalisation. Celebrating the depth of the surface, turning the inside out. Disneyland is in Stoke-on-Trent, not California. Where can I go from here?

The Country and the City

I will begin, like a good Hegelian, at the beginning. One of the characteristic features of post-modernity is supposed to be the 'death of history', the end of teleology. But Festival Park did not just spring into being for a Sociologist or a shopper. For a long time it has been somewhere and this particular incarnation was produced by some people for particular reasons. (Let me tell you a story.) A dig into the archive (legitimating references now required) reveals that it sits on history, a history of capitalist enterprise that reaches back into the mists of the industrial revolution. In the early 1760s Josiah Wedgwood wanted to expand his existing production facilities and selected this site as a good location. A local historian speculates on the sight that would have met the young Josiah as he strode down the hill from his factory in Burslem.

Winter — some time ... countless ages ago. Thick fog covers the area between that which, in 1760, was Hanley Green and Newcastle. What manner of land lies beneath this deep grey mass? Through these dark and impenetrable mists of time, of which there can be no full dispersal, a little can be glimpsed as occasionally the fog swirls, eddies and lifts.

(Warrilow, 1952, p.12)

Here he built a new 'model factory', a small village of workers houses close by (to ensure that they turned up for work on time), and a large mansion for himself and his family. The factory was organised on the principles of Reason. Architecture, the division of labour, cost accounting, production technology and forms of moral discipline were deployed to maximise the utility of all operations. The surrounding area was repackaged as 'natural' parkland with advice from Capability Brown. The site was well placed in a valley between the developing industrial diaspora of the Potteries and the mediaeval town of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Against 'not in my back yard' opposition from the inhabitants of Newcastle he invested in and improved a substantial number of roads and partially financed the Trent and Mersey Canal, which was to run directly past his factory. The canal allowed the products of Wedgwood (and Doulton, Minton, Spode and others) to be conveyed to prestigious showrooms in Greek Street, London or on to the furthest parts of the empire. For this place he coined the name Etruria, still the official name for the area of the city that Festival Park occupies. It is said that when his friend Erasmus Darwin, father of Charles, told him that the Etruscans made great pots he decided that this would nicely reflect the then current vogue for antiquity. Flaxman's engravings had just popularised styles loosely based on the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum and the marketing opportunities were exploited by the entrepreneurial Josiah. The opening day of the factory in 1769 was marked by Wedgwood personally throwing six black basalt vases, each inscribed Aries Etruriae Renascuntur — the arts of Etruria are reborn. This was now somewhere, a somewhere celebrated in museums and on mantlepieces across the globe.

Classicism invoked, the modern began to take shape. The nineteenth and early twentieth century brought much more industrial development of the once wooded Etruria Vale. The British Gaslight Company set up across the road in 1824, and in the following decades several coal mines and the Earl of Granville's iron foundries encroached on Josiah's kingdom. Just as this urbanisation joined the other small towns of the Potteries so did Etruria become a name for the area between Basford and Hanley in the new city of Stoke-on-Trent. Stoke was a typical industrial city with appalling living and working conditions for most of its working class. Its mortality rate was the highest in Victorian England, with five year old children working in the potbanks and lung diseases from coal and clay dust maiming and claiming lives (Clouston, 1986). In the 1930's the Wedgwood company quit the crowded and polluted site for the green fields on the southern edge of the city. A modern, and aesthetically modernist, factory and village were built in parkland with more than an echo of a return to rural paternalism. Etruria was then largely left to a rambling steelworks, the Shelton Bar. This employed up to three thousand people and the glow of the furnaces lit the city sky by night. Production continued until 1978 when, despite a prolonged battle to save the jobs of 'the lads at the fire' (Cheeseman, 1977, p.1), most of the works was closed — a closure which echoed on in British academic life as an introductory Open University case study. This 'restructuring' and severe constrictions in the potteries and pits led to the area having one of the highest unemployment rates in Britain. Etruria, and Stoke more generally, had a lot of history but did not seem to have much of a future.
The Sociologist thinks that this must be emergent post-modernity. He feels it, he senses the mood. The primary and secondary sector giving way to the service sector, the decentraling of the city. Geographic and cultural difference are collapsed into easily consumable simulations with a fake ski-slope next to a tropical water paradise surrounded by car parks. No rules only choices. What more could a (theoretically sophisticated, culturally sensitive) Sociologist want? Who is HE to judge? A hyperreal stage set for mass consumption in the middle of a decaying industrial city. Mere Ology (Eulogy) cannot exhaust the meanings of this place, cannot follow the traces, predict the paths of the shopping trolleys. Panic consumption means history is being re-landscaped. The masses are imploding and shopping can never be the same again. He is bathing in irony in a strange land, an outsider, an anthropologist. His staccato cleverness burns like acid, grows like fungus, slips like a banana skin and sticks in his head like advertising jingles. The majority are silent and he is the intellectual terrorist. His task is to sever the sutures of the everyday, to refuse the seductions of totalisation. Celebrating the depth of the surface, turning the inside out. Disneyland is in Stoke-on-Trent, not California. Where can I go from here?

The Country and the City

I will begin, like a good Hegelian, at the beginning. One of the characteristic features of post-modernity is supposed to be the ‘death of history’, the end of teleology. But Festival Park did not just spring into being for a Sociologist or a shopper. For a long time it has been somewhere and this particular incarnation was produced by some people for particular reasons. *Let me tell you a story.* A dig into the archive (legitimating references now required) reveals that it sits on history, a history of capitalist enterprise that reaches back into the mists of the industrial revolution. In the early 1760s Josiah Wedgwood wanted to expand his existing production facilities and selected this site as a good location. A local historian speculates on the sight on that would have met the young Josiah as he strode down the hill from his factory in Burslem.

Winter — some time ... countless ages ago. Thick fog covers the area between that which, in 1760, was Hanley Green and Newcastle. What manner of land lies beneath this deep grey mass? Through these dark and impenetrable mists of time, of which there can be no full dispersal, a little can be glimpsed as occasionally the fog swirled, eddies and lifts.

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In 1980 a Conservative government discussion paper proposed the Garden Festival scheme as a response to problems of 'under-investment' in the industrial north. They were modelled on West Germany's *Bundesgartenschau*, held every two years since the 1950s and originally intended to aid post-war reconstruction and establish permanent new city parks. In 1981 the government minister Michael Heseltine made a much publicised bus trip around Liverpool with private sector financiers in an attempt to find a solution to the riots that had broken out in Toxteth and other inner cities in the early 1980s (Roberts, 1988). A radical solution needed to be proposed and the Garden Festival idea was promoted by the Department of the Environment with an abandoned storage depot on the Mersey hosting the first festival, known as 'Heseltine's allotment' (Clouston, 1984). The brief said that it must be delivered by May 1984 — the last date for the next General Election (Beaumont, 1992). Two years after that, 25 million pounds of public money had been spent on Stoke. One hundred and eighty acres of industrial dereliction were (re)landscaped and for one summer Etruria became a tourist attraction. Capability Brown had returned with a new vision of Britain. As the publicity put it, "More than a vast garden, more than a park, more than a landscape, more than entertainment. An unforgettable experience for all the family' (Festival Guidebook, 1986). Two hundred and fifty thousand trees, one and a half thousand temporary jobs, millions of plants, shrubs and flowers. Industrial heritage, morris dancers, pop groups and interior design exhibitions. Nature jostled with artificial and ice cream stands to woo the public. Chipboard and plastic moulding contrived to re-present region, nation and globe. Pagodas and mud huts sat snugly beside monumental sculptures celebrating coal, steel and pottery. People bought a lot of flowers.

In fact, the festival was not a resounding success — bad weather being blamed for the fact that only 2.2m people turned up, compared with Liverpool's 3.4m. Employment was generated for a short period but in December 1986 the site was fenced off. The council's long term development brief said no retail development (Stoke-on-Trent City Council & Staffordshire County Council, 1984). However, no doubt the spectre of Liverpool's failure to capitalise on their garden festival site, despite the best efforts of "Transworld Leisure PLC", spurred the city council to revise their hopes and in 1988 St. Modwen, a Birmingham based property company, announced plans to build a gigantic retail and leisure complex. A hundred million pounds was to be invested in a multiscreen cinema, waterworld, dry ski slope and retail park. City Councillors who had campaigned against the closure of the steel works effused about the bright new future. Wedgwood's old house, and later the office of the Shelton Iron, Steel and Coal Company, was to be turned into the four star 150 bed Etruria Hall Hotel. High-tech industry was to find a home in units in 'The Glades' or 'Lakeside' and corporate office blocks were sketched on press releases. Toys R Us, accountancy firms and ten pin bowling were to take the place of pottery, coal and steel at the heart of the city.

And so, that way, we arrived at the End Of History. We traced the paths of the archives until they brought us back to where this text started. But where can I go from here? What message is hidden in this meticulous catalogue of facts? Is this more convincing than writing in italics? (A despairing cry. The Shout of a paranoid who thinks that something is lurking behind what he sees. The Shout of a readerwriter who wants a neater ending.)

**Politics and the Possible**

Victorian anthropologists would find an 'underdeveloped' odd tribe and bring back evidence of their barbarity. Descriptions of cannibalism and mud huts illustrated with photos of the witch doctor. Look at what the funny natives are doing, just as well we're not like them. Fascinating because repulsive. Shortly after their black and white exhibition the Photographer and the Sociologist did a seminar with a group of students and were seen through in a flash. The students said, "Would you rather it was still an abandoned steelworks?" "Don't you like ten pin bowling?" "Do you think it would be better if people were still unemployed?". The Photographer and the Sociologist smiled in a knowing way and talked of preserving a space for critical reflection. The Sociologist can't speak for the Photographer but tells me he has never been happy with the answers he gave. He does like ten pin bowling and has spent a bob or two in the shops himself but he only gets self-conscious about it when he remembers that he is a Sociologist. We've tried an ironic celebration, we've tried writing a story from the archive, let's try Policy. *(The neutral, rational, machine technology of practice.)*

Irony and history are easy, policy and decision making are much more difficult. *(This hurts me more than it hurts you.*) Festival Park looks better than the wasteland that preceded it. That sad part of Stoke's history has been covered in turf and a lot of new jobs have been produced. "Cashiers, wages clerks, bar staff, pizza cooks, waiters/waitresses, security officers, booking clerks, receptionists, ski-slope attendants, kitchen assistants, switchboard operators, maintenance fitters, plant technicians, lifeguards, ski instructors, amusement/cinema staff, supervisors — a whole new world of full and part-time employment right here" (Rank Leisure Personnel, 1989). That being said, store managers were a little shy about telling the Sociologist exactly how many of their jobs were part-time or temporary — though one suggested two thirds in his store and another "over half". There’s not much unionisation either. New employees are not necessarily informed about unions when they began work and part-time or temporary staff are likely to be reluctant about getting involved with unions in the first place. It seems a long way from the shopfloor on these particular shop floors.

Yet, to hammer a point, there is money in these buildings. What did you want an increasingly powerless city council to do? Claim the moral high ground and refuse to sup with the devil St. Modwen? Instead of dirty jobs in coal mines, potteries and steelworks the population has been offered jobs in retail and leisure. Now this is certainly better than no jobs at all but the dislocation was well expressed by a retired...
The sound of steel billets hitting the stop at the end of the rollers, and the screech of the saw cutting through solid steel, no longer echo down Forge Lane and into the homes of people who lived within shouting distance of the works. Curtains are no longer soiled by the fallout from the blast furnaces. Silver cutlery in sideboard drawers no longer turns blue, if you were rich enough to have any! No more songs from Etruria Inn. All the pubs and houses have been erased by someone with the button of change at his fingertips. We, who are the last Etruscans, look backward... and forward. (Bryan and Fisher, 1986, p.1)

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miner who used to guide people around the fake workings at the 'Chatterley-Whitfield Experience', a mining museum north of the city. He was proud to have worked at another colliery in the city for thirty something years and, as he guided tourists around in their 'real' helmets with lights on, told them of the danger and the flit. "You'd suck a piece of coal and spit to stop the dust getting on to your lungs...". Yet within a year of the colliery chimneys coming down a new Asda superstore stood on the site. The Sociologist buys very good vegetarian pizzas there now, but irony is easy because someone makes and sells them, and someone else makes a profit. All the pits are closed or privatised now and even their monument, the museum, is in liquidation. 'All that is solid melts into air' may be a po-mo catchphrase but Marx said it first.

There is resistance of course. Boy racers and joy riders snarl around the car parks at dusk. People throw pizza boxes and beer cans into the withered shrubbery. Others don't turn up for work, sneak into films underage, vandalise, buy things with stolen credit cards, shout at each other in public spaces, shoplift, dive in the shallow end, drive the wrong way around the one way, think about planting bombs, join trade unions... For others who don't even go there Festival Park represents a,

characterless 'mini-America'... I resent the majority of the development and I hope that when the novelty of this American style rubbish has worn off, there is enough of the old to renovate and go back to. I am proud of my British heritage, and am fed up with having the United States perpetually rammed down my throat.

(Letter to Evening Sentinel, 2nd November, 1989)

Yet, for those in Wedgwood's pottery industry, "lead glazing induced epileptic convulsions, blindness, paralysis, anaemia, vomiting, and, if they were lucky, death. Sixty percent of clayhands died of silicosis (potters rot)" (Clouston, 1986, p,9). Surely there is no point in this nostalgia, in a sickness of memory for "the close-knit life... its danger, its dust and its poisonous fumes" (Bryan and Fisher, 1986, p.48). Surely, we must look forward, to the new, to the possible. Outside the City Museum there is a statue of a steel worker commemorating the fight to prevent the closure of the steelworks. The inscription reads:

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Festival Park is realising this demand but it is unlikely that the wages of consumption will be any the better than those of production — though both are better than unemployment. Moving from the primary and secondary sectors to the service sector does not guarantee a better job or more money. Particularly for everywoman.

So, despite Thatcherite neo-liberal rhetoric, state intervention has worked and Stoke is beginning to change course towards the service economy. So too are other spaces. Further Festivals were held in 1988 in Glasgow — "now the UK's most successful post-industrial city" (Scottish Development Agency Festival Publicity, 1986), Gateshead (1990) and the last in Ebbw Vale, South Wales (1992). Each Festival moved further away from flowers and more towards fun rides, commercial pavilions and, in Ebbw Vale, a temporary McDonalds (Goody, 1992; Beaumont, 1992). The Gateshead event sold Festival T-shirts, pullovers, trousers, sweatshirts, polo shirts, ties, watches, four kinds of key rings, teaspoons, brooches, umbrellas, pencil cases, tea towels, model cars, teddy bears, desk tidy's, mugs, oven gloves, badges, pendants, rulers, erasers, pencil sharpeners, thimbles and car stickers. As the programme says — "if you thought that Garden Festivals were just about gardens, you couldn't be more wrong!". Combined with this spirit of enterprise, Ebbw Vale also used the emergent language of green politics and the patronage of Prince Charles to demonstrate a "positive commitment to the future of the planet" by sponsoring "environmentally-friendly products and services" (Festival publicity, 1991, printed on recycled paper). One example was Hoover's vacuum cleaner pavilion — a technology which will provide a cleaner world.

All the Festivals were intended to stimulate development and signal some kind of transformation. Industrial Britain may have a future in the disunited quidem after all, particularly since the southern boom ended some time ago. But slowly, policy is about possibility not utopia. There may be a huge growth in brown tourist signs but Stoke is never going to be Venice. Not many people want to take photos of their holiday companions in front of the half-demolished gas holders. The vision of the green and pleasant land (Roberts, 1989, 1990) that the Festival brought may not solve the city's problems but it has left people with somewhere to go. Like previous Festivals, the Great Exhibition and the Festival of Britain, there is a sense of transformation in cultural and material terms (Rojek, 1989; Frayn, 1964). Unlike those events, the message is not about celebration of the industrial state but of regional sponsorship, industrial partnership and the greening of capitalism. Unless we want to go back to the steelworks, and who does? (The 'lads at the fire' might — how could you know with your balance, due consideration, the evidence suggests, in conclusion...) Festival Park has its good and bad points and ... (TIMES UP — your answer please. If you were King For A Day what would you do?). I don't know. I don't want to be King. I don't want the responsibility for policy. Where do WE go from here?

Martin Parker Comes Clean

In this text, I? You? get to the point where the author, Martin Parker, makes choices. I'm not dead, I've just been hiding. I've been pretending I was 'the Sociologist' who can tell stories about post-modernity, about the lessons of history, about policy and cities when I am actually trying to write a closed text, one that knew the end when it began, one with an answer to the questions it asked at the beginning. The first question then, is Festival Park post-modern?

No. The post-modern periodisation (ontology) is an invention that slices apart history to stitch together academic reputations. Why bother? It makes little historical sense to suggest that consumption did not happen then, that the service sector was not important then, that leisure did not matter then, that things did not change then. Of course Festival Park looks different and new, but a Victorian office block in Wolverhampton, Eastbourne, Belfast, (New York, Paris) looked different and new a century ago. The movements of capital, buildings, people, tastes have resulted in Festival Park (and the Newcastle Metro Centre, Meadowhall in Sheffield, Liverpool's Albert Dock, West Edmunton Mall, Disneyland and so on). From that it does not
miner who used to guide people around the fake workings at the 'Chatterley-Whitfield Experience', a mining museum north of the city. He was proud to have worked at another colliery in the city for thirty something years and, as he guided tourists around in their 'real' helmets with lights on, told them of the danger and the filth. ‘You’d suck a piece of coal and spit to stop the dust getting on to your lungs...’ Yet within a year of the colliery chimneys coming down, a new Asda superstore stood on the site. The Sociologist buys very good vegetarian pizzas there now, but irony is easy because someone makes them and sells them, and someone else makes a profit. All the pits are closed or privatised now and even their monument, the museum, is in liquidation. ‘All that is solid melts into air’ may be a po-mo catchphrase but Marx said it first.

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All the Festivals were intended to stimulate development and signal some kind of transformation. Industrial Britain may have a future in the disunited quenandom after all, particularly since the southern boom ended some time ago. But slowly, policy is about possibility not utopia. There may be a huge growth in brown tourist signs but Stoke is never going to be Venice. Not many people want to take photos of their holiday companions in front of the half-demolished gas holders. The vision of the green and pleasant land (Roberts, 1989, 1990) that the Festival brought may not solve the city’s problems but it has left people with somewhere to go. Like previous Festivals, the Great Exhibition and the Festival of Britain, there is a sense of transformation in cultural and material terms (Rojek, 1989; Frayn, 1964). Unlike those events, the message is not about celebration of the industrial state but of regional sponsorship, industrial partnership and the greening of capitalism. Unless we want to go back to the steelworks, and who does? (The ‘lads at the fire’ might — how could you know with your balance, due consideration, the evidence suggests, in conclusion...) Festival Park has its good and bad points and... (TIMES UP — your answer please. If you were King For A Day what would you do?). I don’t know. I don’t want to be King. I don’t want the responsibility for policy. Where do WE go from here?

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In this text, (I? You?) get to the point where the author, Martin Parker, makes choices. I’m not dead, I’ve just been hiding. I’ve been pretending I was ‘the Sociologist’ who can tell stories about post-modernity, about the lessons of history, about politics and cities when I am actually trying to write a closed text, one that knew the end when it began, one with an answer to the questions it asked at the beginning. The first question then. Is Festival Park post-modern?

No. The post-modern periodisation (ontology) is an invention that slices apart history to stitch together academic reputations. Why bother? It makes little historical sense to suggest that consumption did not happen then, that the service sector was not important then, that leisure did not matter then, that things did not change then. Of course Festival Park looks different and new, but a Victorian office block in Wolverhampton, Eastbourne, Belfast, (New York, Paris) looked different and new a century ago. The movements of capital, buildings, people, taste have resulted in Festival Park (and the Newcastle Metro Centre, Meadowhall in Sheffield, Liverpool’s Albert Dock, West Edmonton Mall, Disneyland and so on). From that it does not
follow that Festival Parks are the fulcrum upon which an account of social change must now rest (Chaney, 1989; Urry, 1990; Shields, 1992; Warren, 1993; de Cauter, 1993). For a long time people in Stoke have made cups, saucers, profits and ideas yet industrial societies, economies, cultures, polities continually change (Calhoun, 1993). Continuity and discontinuity exist in tandem. Underneath Festival Park are substantial quantities of industrial waste, capped pit shafts, tar lagoons, slurry ponds — all safe now of course (Lewis, 1985). On the surface it may look more like the vale that Wedgwood found but this does not mean that the 1990s can be understood by assuming that an industrial capitalist age is buried in the past. Even in the Bonaventure hotel you need to employ someone to clean the toilets, a point Jameson (1991) really should have mentioned.

Developers don't spend millions unless they hope that they can make more millions back. This is the theme that runs through 1980s urban regeneration, the assumption that the pump priming of governments will enable private enterprise to generate wealth and that this wealth will 'trickle down' to those dislocated by the collapse of the inner cities and the industrial base (Roberts, 1988). Hence 'City Action Teams', 'Urban development Programmes' and so on stressed partnership, not state or local government patronage (Mulgan, 1989; Jacobs, 1992). This means that corporate profitability was the key to the bulldozers moving in. The regional manager for St. Modwen believed that they could hardly fail to be successful since Stoke, like some small Third World nation, was 'underdeveloped'. To translate, that meant that other members of his band of hostile brothers had not realised the opportunities for profit. The 2000 plus jobs that St. Modwen have created are hence, in part, a result of the entrepreneurial vision that built the city in the first place. The same company have further developments planned and in progress, including one that further extends Festival Park itself. As John Hall, the developer of the Gateshead Metrocentres ('Europe's largest out of town shopping and leisure city') said at its opening:

We started the Industrial Revolution and now we start the retail revolution in Gateshead. It's a proud day for me. (Side Gallery, 1989)

For me, post-modernism, in the epochal sense, is no more analytically convincing than dividing time into seconds or distance into miles. In Stoke, a putative post-capitalist leisure society seems easier to understand as capitalism with coloured plastic signage. Even the weaker suggestion that post-modernism is the culture or mood of late or high capitalism seems to simply confuse the issue. Occam's razor cuts only at the point where a cut is suggested and I see no gap, no divide, no moment into which the Ologists razor should plunge.

But this is too easy. They say post-modern, I say modern — let's call the whole thing off. They say cut here, I say sew it back again. Both cutters and stitchers rely on a modernist epistemology. They say that the world was like that, and it is now like this. I say 'that' and 'this' aren't really that different. I (we) claim to describe because I (we) understand. This is because post-modernism, in its ontological periodising sense, is modernist, is totalising, is precisely what Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard et al warn against. A binary is constructed in order that it can be played with. The high analytical ground is built by King Canute in order to stop his feet getting wet but he doesn't realise that he is already underwater. And so to the really big question. Who am I to judge? Who am I to say that capitalism is the right word? Who says I (Ologist) have THE method — the survivalexperiementalobservationaire that gives ME a hotline to the world? Who am I to legislate that the world is like this? That this word will do but this one will not? That this world does not do but this one would? (Why do you always want reasons? Things happen, the world doesn't speak. There is no grail. Just float, enjoy, play — don't make me say it all again.)

My answer, Martin Parker's answer, is that I can't do anything else. I agree with post-modernists (substitute whatever relativist term you feel happier with) that there are no foundations, no absolutes, no transcendental signifiers, no end, no beginning, no reliable map of time and space, no things that do not beg questions about other things, no place from which to see everything, no rule book, no technologies that guarantee truth, no one who could list everything. The shopping trolleys have no meaning, their paths are not mapped out in some hidden dialectical clockwork. THE WORLD DOES NOT SPEAK TO ME. Yes, yes, yes ... AND NOW? Starting from there, why do I write (about Festival Park)? I can think of two reasons. The first is simply instrumental, I want to get lines on my CV to get status/money/power. (Parker, 1990, 1992; Parker and Grivell, 1990, 1992; Grivell and Parker, 1989, blah blah blah) The more references the better, publish or perish, it doesn't matter what you say as long as you say it loudly and people notice. This is a valid enough reason but one that can not support its own claims. Why should your words command any interest if they are merely attempts at self-promotion? The style is the sales pitch, the goal is maximising exchange-value but the substance is irrelevant. The second reason is that I write because I believe I have something to say. There are two kinds of things that I might say. One is to continue chipping away at the foundations, relativising the absolutes, celebrating the fractural geometries of the shopping trolleys ... I might continue saying this until everyone agreed that there was nothing to agree on, until the last certainty had been demolished, until there was no more sewing or cutting of the seamless web ... AND THEN?

And so to the second kind of thing I might say — that I think the world is like X and that it would be better if Y did not happen and that Z would be a desirable state of affairs. (And so the alphabet is complete, how tidy do you want things.) I do know that some things make me think, some things make me happy, some things make me angry. That (existentialist?) description of my human condition seems the only place I can start from. (Cogito ergo-something. Reductio ad defensum. Another 'first' philosophy.) There are lots of things to buy on Festival Park but I do not want to buy them all. I could ski, swim, bowl, watch a film, eat ... but I will choose and will try to account for my choice. Living in my body means I feel that I am making decisions and telling others why I made them. If I want to write I will have my reasons and I choose to assert that good reasons should be concerned, engaged, ethical, political, debatable. Representation should have a point beyond the fetishism if being done (how clever that man is!) or the fetishism of its impossibility (clever!). Yet many people have written about Festival Parks as if they don't want to buy (into) anything themselves but can explain why the poor anthropological dupes who use them find such mindless pleasure rubbing themselves against consumer durables. In cultural terms this often adds up to Frankfurt School morality or the latest version of the mass culture thesis.
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The language of hyper-reality and simulacra adds a contemporary resonance to this form of social distinction but it is distinction all the same — Leavis in leathers or Adorno in drag. Of course this becomes a kind of epistemologically lapsed postmodernism since talking about 'the masses' solidifies the liquidity of language into a morality play with them as bad and me as good. I know and they don't.

The very existence of this latter form of post-( )-modernism seems to underline my argument. There is always a reason for writing, for representing Others, for claiming a position. Whether the epistemologically pure post-modernist likes it or not they live in a world in which they (if they are a human like me) feel that they often make choices — about what to buy, who to vote for, whether to write, when to say I (DON'T) LIKE THAT. Criticising the grounds on which the choices are made or noting that the choices are constrained simply shifts your answer to the question to a later date. Every day you have to choose. To go shopping or stay at home? To write or remain silent? There are no non-choices, there is no position from which this description of what human beings feel they do can be denied since denial is a choice too. (Principled anger — how quaint!) You cannot just shrug your theoretically principlsed indifference back at me. To disagree with me is to affirm that I have said something that is worth disagreeing with. To call it serious play, just gaming, does not solve the problem. (Jesters don't tell the King what to do.) Being alive, reading this journal, means you have to play rather than not play. We are, as existentialists insisted, condemned to freedom even if it isn't always apparent to us.

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Without cars and credit cards, that entrepreneurial consumer capitalism is not the end of history, that academics should not assume that relativist theory protects them from political and authorial responsibility. It seems to me that too much irony in writing about cultural, spatial and social change can prevent any anger or passion and encourage a kind of fatalism (Hedige, 1989, 1990; contra Travers, 1989; 1993). A postmodern epistemology can insulate us against trying to intervene because we assume that we are somehow outside the game. In practice it often also lapses into a disguised elitism. Festival Park is not simply a post-modern theme park of simulacra populated by obsessive consumers. Neither is it the beginning of a golden age of leisure for Stoke-on-Trent. I suggest instead, rather dully, that it is a site that presents both the problems and the opportunities of service sector capitalism (Campbell, 1989).

I suggest, rather more defensively, that anyone who writes about Festival Parks — or anywhere else — has a responsibility to be clear about their ethical-political motivations. I also suggest (with my bronze head turned to face the wind, a red flag fluttering in my outstretched hand and my feet planted firmly on a glorious proletarian tank) that THE WORLD DOES NOT HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS, so why not imagine a different one? The best should not lack all convictions whilst the worst are full of passionate intensity.

So, Festival Park does represent change, but not as much as I would like. In 1951 the aforementioned E.J.D. Warillow concluded A History of Etruria with the following musings on the future of his beloved landscape.

Eventually one visualises a sports pavilion, and during the hot Saturday summer afternoons and evenings the Etruscans will be able to reline on the new greensward watching a typically British village cricket match, with the mighty forge at rest; a perfect industrial background complete with the hall. This will be a scene of which Josiah Wedgwood himself might well have been proud. (1952, p.373)

Josiah might not recognise Festival Park but any entrepreneurial capitalist would have been proud.

(And you think I'll go away now?)

NOTES

1. Thanks to Paul Grivell, the photographer referred to above. This version of our work would not have been possible without our earlier collaborations. Thanks also to Alan Sillitoe, David Bell, participants in seminars at Staffordshire and Keele Universities for comments and Marcus Doel for giving me something to disagree with.

2. Barry Taylor provided this suggestive couplet...

3. And Hugh Willmott this metaphor.

4. Apologies to W B Yeats.

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without cars and credit cards, that entrepreneurial consumer capitalism is not the end of history, that academics should not assume that relativist theory protects them from political and authorial responsibility. It seems to me that too much irony in writing about cultural, spatial and social change can prevent any anger or passion and encourage a kind of fatalism (Hedegids, 1989, 1990; contra Travers, 1989; 1993). A postmodern epistemology can insulate us against trying to intervene because we assume that we are somehow outside the game. In practice it often also lapses into a disguised elitism. Festival Park is not simply a post-modern theme park of simulacra populated by obsessive consumers. Neither is it the beginning of a golden age of leisure for Stoke-on-Trent. I suggest instead, rather dully, that it is a site that presents both the problems and the opportunities of service sector capitalism (Campbell, 1989). I suggest, rather more defensively, that anyone who writes about Festival Parks — or anywhere else — has a responsibility to be clear about their ethical-political motivations. I also suggest (with my bronze head turned to face the wind, a red flag fluttering in my outstretched hand and my feet planted firmly on a glorious proletarian tank) that THE WORLD DOES NOT HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS, so why not imagine a different one? The best should not lack all convictions whilst the worst are full of passionate intensity.

So, Festival Park does represent change, but not as much as I would like. In 1951 the aforementioned E.J.D. Warrillow concluded A History of Etruria with the following musings on the future of his beloved landscape.

Eventually one visualises a sports pavilion, and during the hot Saturday summer afternoons and evenings the Etruscans will be able to recline on the new greensward watching a typically British village cricket match, with the mighty forge at rest; a perfect industrial background complete with the hall. This will be a scene of which Josiah Wedgwood himself might well have been proud. (1952, p.373)

Josiah might not recognise Festival Park but any entrepreneurial capitalist would have been proud.

(And you think I'll go away now?)

NOTES
1. Thanks to Paul Grivell, the photographer referred to above. This version of our work would not have been possible without our earlier collaborations. Thanks also to Alan Sillitoe, David Bell, participants in seminars at Staffordshire and Keele Universities for comments and Marcus Doel for giving me something to disagree with.
2. Barry Taylor provided this suggestive couplet...
3. ... and Hugh Willmott this metaphor.
4. Apologies to W B Yeats.

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Old Gotland, New Babylon

Peoples and places in the work of Jorn and Constant

by Graham Birtwistle

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Some twentieth-century artists have created not only artefacts but theories, projects and movements. Asger Jorn and Constant (Nieuwenhuyse) belong to that breed. In assessing their careers we have to take note of the way they have extended painterly concerns into the realm of architecture and planning and expanded the artist's role to include the shaping of social and cultural attitudes and situations. Peoples, places, environments — real or imagined, past, present or future — are in that sense 'materials' to which these two artists have turned.

The names of Jorn and Constant frequently crop up together in art historical accounts. They co-operated closely in a series of movements from CoBrA (1948-1951) to the Internationale Situationniste, which they helped to found in 1957. And their co-operation even survived the kind of domestic entanglement that can put an end to the best of friendships. But for all the links and similarities between Jorn and Constant there were also differences, particularly with regard to the peoples and places that fired their respective imaginations. By the sixties a geographical contrast in their work had become quite striking. But differences were discernible earlier, even at the time of CoBrA.

The forties: national or international art

"Probably a wartime phenomenon, an attempt on the part of intellectually imprisoned persons to seek beyond time and place". That remark was made in Denmark in 1945 at the closing down of Helhesten, the art journal published by Jorn and his circle through most of the years of German occupation of their land. Perhaps the remark contained a grain of truth, but it did not tell the whole story. Helhesten had pointed beyond the immediate circumstances of the war, but if it had offered an imaginative escape it had also provided a programme of cultural resistance. It had advocated the
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kind of modern and 'primitive' art that the Nazis regarded as decadent, and by fusing world-wide ethnography with Scandinavian archaeology it had countered Nazi ideas of Nordic purity. Moreover, the language of Helhesten was that of international socialism and its message was freedom — both for society and for art. For Jorn those were not simply wartime issues which lost their relevance when the Nazis were defeated.

"Today, fortunately, we have liberated ourselves from Teutonism", Jorn wrote in 1946. But he went on to add a warning: "let us therefore not fetter ourselves to a Romanism or classicist mentality". Writing as a Dane to Danes, Jorn urged the development of a new artistic language, the result of "allowing our natural, environmentally determined character to liberate itself from the classical cultural dictatorship which has been a nightmare to us down the centuries". "We shan't see Danish art through Parisian eyes any more", he asserted; "On the contrary, we shall see and study Paris, yes and the art of the whole world, through Danish eyes".

There was a curious mixture of international awareness and national feeling in Jorn's words. His nationalism had to do, of course, with a post-war euphoria of liberation. But it also bore the traces of a nineteenth-century movement that had sought to diminish classical influences in Danish education and accentuate instead the local traditions of Denmark and Scandinavia. What was evident in Jorn's words was an essentially Romantic sense of a divide between Scandinavia and a cultural world to the south that had followed the leadership of Greece and Rome — and Paris. But Jorn was also well aware that Denmark, as the southermost of the northern lands, was in the frontline position in this meeting of cultures. His northern identity was therefore something complex and it did not amount to any simplistic notion of belonging to a pure Nordic race and culture. So, Jorn wrote in 1946, the "hey-day of Nordic art" in the early medieval period was not to be explained in the dubious terms of a "mystical independent Aryan creativity" but rather as the product of cultural interaction: "As long as we were free with regard to Graeco-Roman art we could let ourselves be inspired by it". Here, clearly, Jorn was establishing an historical precedent for his current situation. With the ending of the war he looked southwards to Paris, where in the thirties he had already experienced a tension between the 'classical' and 'rationalistic' character of Léger and Le Corbusier and his own northern, less rational approach to art. Now he needed the stimulus of that difference and that interaction again. Paris was the "contemporary centre of world art" and the place, moreover, where a great artist like Picasso could affirm his national character in an international context. That interested Jorn.

Paris, world art, Danish eyes: Jorn's words of 1946 turned out to have practical consequence as well as a certain bravura. During the following two years he travelled as far north as Swedish Lapland and as far south as the Tunisian island of Djerba, with many stops — including Paris — in between. It was in Paris in 1946 that Jorn met Constant, who was also looking for international contacts and stimuli. The meeting was strategic for the history of Cobra. A long lasting friendship began and through further contacts — for example with the Belgian writer Dotremont — plans for a new international art journal finally crystallised into the founding of a movement. Cobra began in 1948 in Paris, but as its deliberately geographical name (Copenhagen-Amsterdam) suggests, the intention was to point away from Paris, to the north. The attraction of the 'Co' of Cobra was initially strong, and in the first year of the movement Dutchmen, Belgians and even Parisians were making the journey northwards, enthused by Jorn to see art as it were through Danish eyes.

However, the geography of Cobra turned out to be a more complicated matter than its name suggested, and its leading trio — Jorn, Constant, Dotremont — brought three different responses to the question of what Cobra's internationalism meant. Dotremont, as editor of the Cobra publications, proclaimed the movement's internationalism in terms of a meeting of named nationalities and places. His formulations ranged from a kind of surreal geography — "Il est scandaleux que Bruxelles et Copenhague, par exemple, ne soient pas la banlieue l'une de l'autre" — to a theory based on organic metaphor — "L'art doit avoir des racines nationales et une vie internationale". And though he had become enchanted by Scandinavian culture, by late 1949 he was looking beyond the 'dane-belge-hollandaise' link and bombastically announcing the possibility of coming Swedish, Anglo-American and Czechoslovakian numbers of Cobra, or even a Hindu one! What did come in 1950, remarkably enough, was a German number (Cobra 5).

Jorn's position was more enigmatic. Since 1946 he had been working on a theory of art and society, aspects of which he published in (mainly Scandinavian) architectural journals. On the face of it Jorn's themes were those of international art and politics. He sought to improve on the 'écriture automatique' of surrealism and find a more materialistic, free and unprogrammed expression of life in painting. And he wanted to correct Bauhaus 'functionalism' and Le Corbusier's influential theories by postulating an approach to the man-made environment that was less rationalistic, less repressive of the natural life of man: a 'living form' of the kind he saw exemplified in folk-arts around the world and in medieval Western arts (fig.1). These artistic and architectural themes were embedded in a militant, though unorthodox, Marxist critique of society and culture, in which rationalism, the classical tradition and class-society formed the great historical conjunction which had tried to suppress
kind of modern and 'primitive' art that the Nazis regarded as decadent, and by fusing world-wide ethnography with Scandinavian archaeology it had countered Nazi ideas of Nordic purity. Moreover, the language of Helhesten was that of international socialism and its message was freedom — both for society and for art. For Jorn those were not simply wartime issues which lost their relevance when the Nazis were defeated.

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Fig. 1 Comparison of the medieval town-plan of Mechelen (Mabnes) and a cross-section of the human Sartorius-muscle.

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a truly spontaneous folk-art. But Jorn's view of these international issues remained affected by his sense of being geographically and historically a foreigner to classical tradition and an emancipator with regard to its 'cultural dictatorship'. Behind his role in the 'Internationale' of Cobra he was firmly attached to regional concepts of art, and behind his call for artistic and political change he was feverishly delving into the archaeology of his own cultural roots. This lent a certain ambivalence to Jorn's attitude. In Cobra 1 he could vehemently defend internationalism and condemn chauvinistic approaches to folk-art, while in his own country he had just been researching the origins of specifically Danish folk-art in the early Middle Ages — a period when, as Jorn later wryly admitted, Denmark did not exist as a nation. By 1950 he was telling Cobra readers that international and national aspects of folk-art do not cancel each other out. In the shortest of short articles on 'L'art sans frontières' his motto was: "L'art national est jamais valable, l'art valable est toujours national" — an example of Jorn's predilection for paradox. The article was indeed paradoxical. Jorn fused internationalism with nationalism and returned pointedly to Picasso's demonstration that "un artiste peut bien vivre en exil sans perdre son caractère national". That told a great deal about Jorn himself. There was a certain attraction of opposites: both the Spanish and the Nordic were geographically, in Jorn's eyes, non-classical. And like Picasso, Jorn used an international sounding-board to let his national character resonate. In fact, Jorn was a restless Dane at home but a committed Dane in exile. His travels and international orientation helped him affirm his roots.

Constant, as the younger man, was initially influenced by Jorn. His 'Manifesto' of 1948 and the other theoretical articles he wrote for Reflex and Cobra agreed closely with Jorn's ideas in rejecting a bourgeois classical tradition and proposing the experiment of a free and spontaneous new art. But Constant did not share Jorn's Scandinavian awareness, nor did he replace it with any discernible nationalism of his own. Just as he and other Dutch artists, like Appel and Corneille, had responded positively to the vitality of Danish painting, but not to its Scandinavian mystique, Constant responded selectively to the theories of Jorn. It was the international socialist ideal for art that Constant embraced. If he referred to Mondrian, for example, or to the exhibition of child art in the Stedelijk Museum of Amsterdam, if was not because he wanted to draw attention to specifically Dutch developments. And if he drew up a statement on behalf of the Dutch Experimental Group for Cobra, it was not in order to air national issues: Dotremont, not Constant, was the one who pointed to the 'sens hollandais' of notions he expressed. Of the leading theorists of Cobra, Constant was the odd man out. His own nationality was completely absorbed in his identity as an international artist and a critical member of Western society. The distinctions that mattered to Constant were not those of nationality but those of artistic attitude and ideology. What counted to him was not where the individual came from, but where society was going to. Not roots, but change.

The fifties: (dis)orientations
The 'northern' orientation of Cobra was shortlived. It is salutary to remember that before the movement ended in 1951 most of its founder-members — including Jorn and Constant — had been drawn back to work in Paris, as if by a magnet. In Paris in 1950-1951, Jorn and Constant seemed to have left the exuberant, hopeful images of Cobra behind. Both of them painted themes of war, aggression and threat at a time, in fact, when their domestic lives had been thoroughly shaken up (Constant's wife had left him for Jorn in 1949). Cobra was collapsing, and the Cold War had begun to dominate international politics.

Jorn's situation in Paris was aggravated by extreme poverty and an attack of tuberculosis. In April 1951 he was invalided back to Denmark to be treated at the sanatorium in his home town of Silkeborg, where he painted Return to the detested town with its images of aggression that symbolised his frustration. What had been a national-international ambivalence in Jorn's attitude became, through his forced return, more of a love-hate relationship with the place he came from. During his long recovery Jorn responded to his misfortune in several ways. Philosophically, his experience of near-fatal illness gave his theory of spontaneity in life and art a new existential edge: Risk and Chance, the book he wrote while at the sanatorium in 1952, dealt with aesthetics as "the reaction of the known to the unknown". Practically, he turned to a new medium, ceramics, and in his painting he worked on some large-scale cycles, treating themes like 'The wheel of life' (which related to his personal life-and-death awareness as well as his researches into medieval art) and 'The silent myth' (in which, as Jorn put it, the painterly relation with Nordic myth was "silent, not illustrative"). And geographically, when he was fit enough to do so Jorn put a great deal of distance between himself and his native country. In 1953-1954 he lived briefly in Switzerland, in 1954 he moved to the North Italian town of Albissola, and by 1955 he also had a studio in Paris again. Resuming the life of an exile, he made new contacts in Italy and France and was instrumental in organising new movements: Le Mouvement International pour un Bauhaus Imaginiste (MBI) was founded in 1954, and in 1957 it combined with the Internationale Lettriste to form the Internationale Situationniste (IS). The movements and circumstances of the fifties were new, but Jorn once again involved his old colleague, Constant.

Constant, too, had been turning negative factors and experiences into basis for a new orientation. His memorable war-paintings of 1950-1951 had dealt with the destruction of people and the places and — through his 'scorched earth' theme and animal-metaphors — the destruction of life itself. The theme of destruction gradually turned into that of construction. By 1952 Constant's war-images were more abstract and by 1953 he was painting geometrical colour-shapes and presenting, together with the architect Aldo van Eyck, a new concept of 'spatial colourism' that recalled the integration of painting and architecture projected in the 1920s in the circles of De Stijl. Not only theory, but experience played its part in Constant's new orientation. In his uprooted circumstances he had lived mostly in Paris from 1950 to 1952, and he spent the winter of 1952-1953 in London. To judge from his letters at the time, he was very taken up with analysing the cities in which he found himself. His comments could reflect an awareness of structure and planning, but most of all they relayed Constant's subjective experience of the places and peoples he encountered. London, for example, he hated. This, the largest city of the world, actually consisted of a small metropolitan
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Not only theory, but experience played its part in Constant's new orientation. In his uprooted circumstances he had lived mostly in Paris from 1950 to 1952, and he spent the winter of 1952-1953 in London. To judge from his letters at the time, he was very taken up with analysing the cities in which he found himself. His comments could reflect an awareness of structure and planning, but most of all they relayed Constant's subjective experience of the places and peoples he encountered. London, for example, he hated. This, the largest city of the world, actually consisted of a small metropolitan
centre with a "sickening great village" around it, Piccadilly Circus was not half as exciting as the Rembrandt Plein, there was no life after eleven o'clock in the evening, and Constant had just experienced the worst London fog in two years, which had deprived him of daylight for three days. Moreover, he had grown so irritated by the "real 'British' characteristics" of phlegmatism and politeness that he listened to Radio Paris with nostalgia and "even felt sentimental about Holland." The self-mocking tone of that last remark showed that national feeling was not Constant's main preoccupation. But what did concern him increasingly in the mid-fifties was the concept of the city and the subjective experience of the man-made environment.

In that respect, the anti-functionalist congress organised by MIBI (chiefly Jorn and Pinot Gallizio) at Alba in 1956 constituted a turning-point for Constant. There Constant was introduced to Parisian Lettrists as well as artists from MIBI, and found himself among congenial spirits. While Constant had been shifting his emphasis from painting to the creation of spaces and environments, the Lettrists had been developing a Dada-like disorientation of literature and the printed page into a revolutionary approach to urban life. As a new subjective impulse within Marxism, Lettrism looked for a practical fulfilment of Marx's non-alienated man by disorienting the structured environment of capitalism and tradition. Unprogrammed poetry gave rise to a liberated sense of geography, and already by 1953 there was a Lettrist concept of a new kind of 'living' city that could respond flexibly to human needs and whims. After Alba, Constant quickly developed intensive contacts with the leading Lettrist theorist, Guy-Ernest Debord, and it was Constant and Debord, more than Jorn, who shaped the theoretical basis for the new Internationale Situationniste in 1957. And it was after Alba, where Gallizio had brought him into contact with gypsies, that Constant made his pioneering construction Design for a gypsy encampment (1956) as an imagined environment for people who were living examples of the international and the geographically unattached (fig. 2).

Constant embraced the policy of integrated arts and the 'unitary urbanism' and 'psychogeography' of the IS, officially leaving painting behind to concentrate increasingly on a project that consisted of the designs, plans and models for an imagined, liberated society of the future and its technological infrastructure. By 1960 Constant was calling his project 'New Babylon', a name suggested by Debord and probably derived from a Russian film of that name in the twenties. It was to preoccupy him throughout the sixties. Jorn, on the other hand, continued to paint. Though contributing to Situationist 'detournement' by his modifications of old paintings (fig. 3), and though co-operating with Debord in making books like Fin de
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Curiously, in view of their respective attitudes, Constant left the IS before Jorn did. Constant quit suddenly in 1960, disappointed that a 'dynamic labyrinth' project intended for Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum had been replaced by an exhibition of Gallizio's work. Individualism, it seemed, had won and the IS had failed. Jorn left the increasingly political movement in 1961, never having been a believer in unitary urbanism but never having lost his good relations with De bord. And Jorn did continue to keep in close contact with Situationist splinter groups like those of his brother, Jorgen Nash in Sweden and Jacqueline de Jong in Holland.

What surfaced again in Jorn's career in the sixties was his old interest in regional cultural difference and, especially, the uniqueness of Scandinavian art and thought. His researches showed remarkable erudition and considerable eccentricity. Fascinated by the principle of complementarity in physics, he looked to Bohr's 'Copenhagen Interpretation' as a challenge to Einstein and even went on to offer his own 'Silkeborg Interpretation'. He attempted a characterisation of Nordic philosophy in distinction to Greek and modern European philosophies, finally concluding that Nordic thought was not 'philosophy' in the classical sense but more akin to the gnostic tradition of India. And in the history of art Jorn's interests were mainly typological: he discerned three main traditions — Latin, Byzantine and Nordic — and concentrated as he had done in the forties on a contrast between the Nordic and the Latin (classical and French). Nordic art and the Nordic mind put the image before the word, releasing a 'fantastic dramaturgy' and running the risk of madness, while the Latin approach sought the rational safety of anchoring images in words and concepts. In spite of the diversity of his interests and themes one gains the distinct impression that Jorn was basically providing a geographical location and a historical background for the anarhich, psychic sense of form and meaning which marked his paintings, his writings, and the 'wild architecture' he created at his house and gardens in Albisola (fig 4). In a Europe increasingly tending towards unification he found it important to stress that Nordic art — his art — was at root shamanistic rather than designed to please the senses. Danish eyes saw differently than French eyes. If there was talk of Denmark joining the European Common Market then Jorn opposed such artificial unity, much as he had opposed Nazi-occupation during the war, by means of a kind of cultural resistance in which art and its history was one of his chief weapons. He founded the ironic-serious Scandinavian Institute for Comparative Vandalism in 1961 — 'vandalism' was the provocative term he used to denote the unruly character of Scandinavian art down the ages — and financed the photography of a great deal of medieval Scandinavian art with the promised 10,000 Years of Nordic Folk Art. The series was to be Jorn's 'dignified and kindly answer' to French cultural power — "The Euromaniacs shall have Scandinavia as a counterbalance", he said in 1964 — but the project founded after disagreements between Jorn and the scholars and sponsors he had engaged. But he did continue to publish on Nordic art and his last major project, centred on the Swedish island of Gotland, did come to fruition, albeit posthumously. In the late sixties and early seventies Jorn visited Gotland several times. It was a place where he confessed to being enchanted — with the islands itself and with the enigmatic reliefs in the Gröttingbo Church, which offered him an opportunity to study how "an image oriented mentality transforms factual history into a world of fantasy". The factual history was that of Theoderic the Goth and the fantasy-world concerned the Nordic legend of Didrek, and it was a postulated link between the two that stimulated Jorn's imagination (fig 5).

Jorn died in 1973 and his ashes were taken to Gotland. A year later a major exhibition opened in The Hague presenting the plans, texts, drawings and maquettes of New Babylon, the project on which Constant had worked for some fifteen years. Old Gotland, New Babylon: the contrast, it seems, could hardly have been greater. Gotland represented Jorn's fascination with the past, New Babylon represented...
Copenhagen and Mémoires — examples of geographical disorientation on the printed page — Jorn represented a dissident element in the IS since he refused to concede that the traditional, individual arts had had their day. It was Constant who called Jorn to task in the pages of Internationale Situationniste: Jorn’s ideas and his continued activity as a painter did not rhyme with unitary urbanism, Constant wrote, and Jorn’s attitude to industrialisation was naive. And Jorn had too high an estimation of the Romantics (like Paul Klee) in the early Bauhaus. By the late fifties the divergence between Jorn and Constant was becoming more marked.

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It would be easy, of course, to suggest that the contrast between Jorn and Constant has to do with well-known national characteristics: the Northern Romantic versus the Dutch creator of his own environment. Perhaps there is something in that, but what is more to the point, it seems to me, is that Constant’s New Babylon was essentially a modernist project, envisaging the triumph of Enlightenment and progress over old situations and old identities. Destruction and construction went hand in hand in New Babylon. Jorn did not seek to obliterate history and roots. For much of his career he was an outspoken critic of conventional concepts of modernism and complexities in Jorn’s attitude have, in fact, aroused comparisons with what in more recent years has been termed post-modernism. It was only after New Babylon closed, in the mid-seventies, that Constant embarked on his own ‘post-modern’ voyage into art history.

Constant’s concern with the future. Gotland was somewhere, New Babylon stood in the utopian tradition of the nowhere. The place and the relics of Gotland drew out the archaeologist in Jorn, the imagined structures of New Babylon were raised above the face of the earth, breaking with history and sprawling across the map in contradiction to familiar geography. Jorn’s interest was in a real people, the Goths, who many centuries ago had immigrated and interacted with others. Constant conceived of the
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as a distinct phase in the dialectical shifts of his career. But then, such labels as modernism and post-modernism can distract us from factors which are ultimately quite personal. In that respect, Jorn and Constant present us with a paradox. Jorn, despite his strong sense of nationality and origins, travelled incessantly between the various homes and ambitions he created across Europe, while for much of the sixties Constant stayed put in his daily routine in his native Amsterdam. It was Jorn, more than Constant, who lived the life of the New Babylonian. Wonders never cease.

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3 Ibidem, 68.
5 Cf. letter C. Dotremont to G. Jespersen, April 1966, published (in Danish) in Craa (1989) 55, 69-71: “I invented the name COBRA in Brussels in mid-November 1948 just after it was founded. In part I was inspired by LE SERPENT DE MER and by Breton’s masterpiece NADIA, but the most important thing is that I looked for and found, a name that was geographical”. My translation from the Danish.
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17 Constant en A. van Eyck, ‘Voor een spazioal colorisme’, Amsterdam, 1953. Cf. A. van Eyck and others, Niet om het even ... wel evenwaardig. Amsterdam, (1967), 38-41
18 Unpublished letter Constant to Martin and Mia Visser, from London, 10 November 1952. Collection of the author. My translation from the Dutch. Constant’s reaction to Paris and the Parisian was not always positive, either; see passage from a letter to Aido van Eyck in A. van Eyck and others, op. cit. (note 17), 40
19 Gilles Ivan, ‘Formulare pour un urbanisme nouveau’, Internationale Situationniste (1958) 1, 15-20, was written as early as 1953.
22 Constant, ‘Sur nos moyens et nos perspectives’, Internationale Situationniste (1958) 2, 23
24 In the sixties Nath published the magazine Drakabygget (The Dragon’s Lair) and De Jong published The Situationist Times, both of which printed Jorn’s articles.
26 A. Jorn, Nordicke Teoretiske Aestetik, Copenhagen, Borgens Forlag, 1967, 208
28 See P. Hofman Hansen, op. cit. (note 10), 32
29 A. Jorn, ‘Art and orders, on treason, the mass action of reproduction, and the great artistic mass effect’, The Situationist Times (1964) 5, 9
30 As quoted by P. Hofman Hansen, op. cit. (note 10), 32
31 The project led to two volumes: A. Tilmse, J Sonne, N. Lukman, A. Jorn, Gotlands Didrek; A. Jorn, Folkekunstens Didrek, Copenhagen, Pernild & Rosengreen, 1978.
32 A. Jorn, Gotlands Didrek, op. cit. (note 32), 174
33 See exh. cat. New Babylon, op. cit. (note 21).
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12 Constant, ‘Manifest», Reflex (1948)1, (unpaginated), Constant, ‘Cultur en contra-cultur’, Reflex (1949) 2, (unpaginated), Constant. ‘C'est notre désir qui fait la révolution’, Cobra (1949) 4, 3-4
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Debate 1:

A Response From Race Traitor

The following was written in response both to the review of Race Traitor magazine published in the last issue of Transgressions and to a letter from Naoko Shibusawa calling on Race Traitor to adopt a "less binary" view of anti-racist struggle. It is reprinted from issue 6 of Race Traitor.

From the first number of Race Traitor, in which we wrote that the only alternative to the white race is the human race, critics have said we oversimplify the race problem. The U.S., they have pointed out, is not constructed on a bipolar model but is multiracial.

In spite of the critics, we hold to our original view. We are aware that there are people in America who partake of some of the privileges of the white skin while experiencing some of the social restrictions imposed on black people. But we think that those who argue that these people constitute intermediate 'races' misunderstand how race operates.

From the start it is necessary to distinguish between race and ethnicity. They do not occupy the same analytic space and do not exist on a continuum. Ethnicity deals, at least symbolically, with culture; race is an assigned status. The distinction can perhaps be best illustrated by pointing out that black people and traditional southern 'whites' share a common speech, religion, music, cuisine, and even ancestry, and probably resemble each other culturally more than any other two groups in the country; ethnically they are one, yet they are divided along 'race' lines. At the same time two of the most distinctive ethnic groups in the country are the Hasidic Jews of New York and the Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania; yet in neither case has their insistence on maintaining their unique cultures prevented them from enjoying all the rights and immunities of 'whites'.

The U.S. is a capitalist society. As in any capitalist society the population consists largely of two classes, the masters and the slaves. In this country, unfortunately, many of the slaves think they are masters because they enjoy the privileges of the white skin.

The privileges of whiteness extend to the lowest members of the white race, who enjoy a status higher, in certain respects, than that of the most exalted persons excluded from it. Not long ago there was an incident in Boston in which a well-dressed black man hailed a taxi and directed the driver to take him to his home in Roxbury, a black district. The cab driver, a white woman, refused, and when the man insisted she take him or call someone who would, as the law provided, she called her boyfriend, also a cabdriver, who showed up, dragged the man out of the cab and called him a 'nigger'. The black man turned out to be a city councilman. The case was unusual only in that it made the papers. Either America is a very democratic country, where cabdrivers beat up city councilmen with impunity, or the privileges of whiteness reach far down into the ranks of the labouring class.

The white-skin privilege system does not require that all whites be treated the same; everyone knows that ethnic groups vary in wealth and status. It demands only that enough people identify their interests with those of the 'white race' to prevent effective proletarian class solidarity. It thus polarizes the country into two 'races': those who enjoy the privileges of whiteness, and those who do not. Just as a 'mixed' neighbourhood has traditionally meant the interval between the first black person moving in and the last white moving out, so the intermediate position of various groups reflects a moment when their racial status is being determined.

In the history of this country, racial status has proven quite flexible: before the Civil War, the 'white' population consisted largely of those of Protestant English descent; with the arrival of large numbers of Scandinavians, Germans, and Catholic Irish, the 'white race' was broadened to include all those of northern European stock; later on, immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were incorporated into it, making 'white' roughly synonymous with European. For most of U.S. history, people from Asia, Africa, the islands of the sea, and countries in the western hemisphere south of the Rio Grande were the victims of what looked very much like racial oppression, treated as inferiors in a caste system that gave meaning to the term 'people of color'.

A lot of this has changed. Children of Chinese, Ethiopian, and Haitian immigrants now grow up in America with the same advice Irish, Polish, and Italian parents gave their children in past generations: the way to succeed in the new country is to keep away from the black Americans. (The children don't always listen, but that is another story.) The 'white race' is being recomposed, just as in the nineteenth century, and just as at that time boundaries are not always clear and there are regional variations.

Various programs facilitate the recomposition. E.S.L. programs, one of the chief vehicles for allowing immigrants to leap over black Americans, are not restricted to Europeans. Other mechanisms function through the 'private' sector. The New York Times of March 11, 1996 carries an op-ed piece by Roger Waldinger detailing some of the ways immigrants win out over black Americans in the job search. It identifies personal reference networks, which bypass the open market, as the key. The result, for example, is that less than three percent of all workers in New York City's garment industry are black Americans.

In this country, existing social relations are compatible with democratic forms only so long as the privileges of race embrace most of the population. Without majority support, the regime would rest predominantly on naked force — like South Africa under apartheid or the South before the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the mid-1960's — a precarious situation for those who govern. The periodic transformation of people from racially oppressed to ethnics is vital to the recomposition of a 'white'
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In spite of the critics, we hold to our original view. We are aware that there are people in America who partake of some of the privileges of the white skin while experiencing some of the social restrictions imposed on black people. But we think that those who argue that these people constitute intermediate 'races' misunderstand how race operates.

From the start it is necessary to distinguish between race and ethnicity. They do not occupy the same analytic space and do not exist on a continuum. Ethnicity deals, at least symbolically, with culture; race is an assigned status. The distinction can perhaps be best illustrated by pointing out that black people and traditional southern 'whites' share a common speech, religion, music, cuisine, and even ancestry, and probably resemble each other culturally more than any other two groups in the country; ethnically they are one, yet they are divided along 'race' lines. At the same time two of the most distinctive ethnic groups in the country are the Hasidic Jews of New York and the Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania; yet in neither case has their insistence on maintaining their unique cultures prevented them from enjoying all the rights and immunities of 'whites'.

The U.S. is a capitalist society. As in any capitalist society the population consists largely of two classes, the masters and the slaves. In this country, unfortunately, many of the slaves think they are masters because they enjoy the privileges of the white skin.

The privileges of whiteness extend to the lowest members of the white race, who enjoy a status higher, in certain respects, than that of the most exalted persons excluded from it. Not long ago there was an incident in Boston in which a well-dressed black man hailed a taxi and directed the driver to take him to his home in Roxbury, a black district. The cab driver, a white woman, refused, and when the man insisted she take him or call someone who would, as the law provided, she called her boyfriend, also a cabdriver, who showed up, dragged the man out of the cab and called him a 'nigger'. The black man turned out to be a city councilman. The case was unusual only in that it made the papers. Either America is a very democratic country, where cabdrivers beat up city councilmen with impunity, or the privileges of whiteness reach far down into the ranks of the labouring class.

The white-skin privilege system does not require that all whites be treated the same; everyone knows that ethnic groups vary in wealth and status. It demands only that enough people identify their interests with those of the 'white race' to prevent effective proletarian class solidarity. It thus polarizes the country into two 'races': those who enjoy the privileges of whiteness, and those who do not. Just as a 'mixed' neighbourhood has traditionally meant the interval between the first black person moving in and the last white moving out, so the intermediate position of various groups reflects a moment when their racial status is being determined.

In the history of this country, racial status has proven quite flexible: before the Civil War, the 'white' population consisted largely of those of Protestant English descent; with the arrival of large numbers of Scandinavians, Germans, and Catholic Irish, the 'white race' was broadened to include all those of northern European stock; later on, immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were incorporated into it, making 'white' roughly synonymous with European. For most of U.S. history, people from Asia, Africa, the islands of the sea, and countries in the western hemisphere south of the Rio Grande were the victims of what looked very much like racial oppression, treated as inferiors in a caste system that gave meaning to the term 'people of color'.

A lot of this has changed. Children of Chinese, Ethiopian, and Haitian immigrants now grow up in America with the same advice Irish, Polish, and Italian parents gave their children in past generations: the way to succeed in the new country is to keep away from the black Americans. (The children don't always listen, but that is another story.) The 'white race' is being recomposed, just as in the nineteenth century, and just as at that time boundaries are not always clear and there are regional variations.

Various programs facilitate the recomposition. E.S.L. programs, one of the chief vehicles for allowing immigrants to leap over black Americans, are not restricted to Europeans. Other mechanisms function through the 'private' sector. The New York Times of March 11, 1996 carries an op-ed piece by Roger Waldinger detailing some of the ways immigrants win out over black Americans in the job search. It identifies personal reference networks, which bypass the open market, as the key. The result, for example, is that less than three percent of all workers in New York City's garment industry are black Americans.

In this country, existing social relations are compatible with democratic forms only so long as the privileges of race embrace most of the population. Without majority support, the regime would rest predominantly on naked force — like South Africa under apartheid or the South before the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the mid-1960's — a precarious situation for those who govern. The periodic transformation of people from racially oppressed to ethnics is vital to the recomposition of a 'white'
majority. For years people have been predicting, some with glees, others with alarm, that by such-and-such year California (or some other state) will have a 'non-white' majority. Both the proponents and opponents of this future can relax: the day California has a non-white majority is the day the present basis of rule collapses, because the Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992 will become general and sustained.

A great deal of the quarrel about 'intermediate' or 'other' races has to do with determining who will be socially white in the twenty-first century. Of course there are problems with the term 'white': many of the new immigrants, while demanding the rights traditionally reserved for whites, do not want the term applied to them; they are 'Latin' or 'Asian', and proud of it. So the language of racial oppression needs to be modified in order to preserve its content. Confusion on this point leads some to describe our project as abolishing the concept of whiteness. Perhaps they think they are helping us by 'clarifying' what we mean, but their description is wrong: we want to abolish the white race, whatever name it goes under. For similar reasons, we are not interested in the 'deconstruction' of whiteness; outside of the academy, the opposite of 'construct' is not 'deconstruct' but destroy.

The situation is still in flux, and it is not yet clear which groups will be admitted to the privileges of the favoured race and which will be excluded; the greatest actual beneficiaries of the new ethnic upsurge may be those who have traditionally enjoyed the privileges of whiteness. Italian-Americans are a protected group for purposes of affirmative action at the City University of New York, and we have had exchanges with Irish-Americans who reject the 'white' label while claiming that Irish are under-represented in universities and calling for minimum Irish admissions quotas. They seek to change the name to play the game. (How will they determine who is Irish? Will they count Shaquille O'Neal?) As Jimmy Durante used to say, 'Everybody wants to get into the act'.

Part of the outcome depends on the attitude adopted by members of each group: if they do not learn to act as whites, they will not be treated as whites. And no one should forget that the process is reversible: if Tom Metzger or someone like him came to power, it is likely that the new immigrants would find themselves the victims of classical American racial oppression, or worse.

Nothing we have said should suggest that the new immigrants are all 'middle class' (whatever that means). There are plenty of Chinese proletarians in garment factories. We cannot make the point too often: race privilege is for those who have nothing else; its function is not to exempt people from exploitation but to reconcile them to it.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, during the height of anti-Chinese hysteria, one of the finest of all revolutionary organisations in U.S. history, the Industrial Workers of the World, stood at the dock in San Francisco greeting incoming Chinese workers with a huge banner. The banner read, in English and Chinese, "Chinese workers, welcome. Join the One Big Union of the Working Class." We stand in that tradition, and call upon all proletarians who pass through these doors to reject the poison bait of race privilege held out by the master class that despises them. As they say in Harlan County, there are no neutrals there: you'll either be a union man or a thug for J.H. Blair.

NOTES
1. We are not suggesting that it is the result of a ruling-class conspiracy. The recomposition is happening for a number of reasons, having to do with labour needs and global geopolitical considerations.
2. We have said nothing about the 'red' indigenous people of America. They are, of course, not immigrants. They also, along with people from Africa, served as the first point of reference against which the 'white race' was defined; but their situation, too, is changing. Our aim is not to demonstrate our expertise on the system of racial oppression, but to overturn it.
3. The large number of Salvadoreans who took part in the Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992 were not acting as whites. Neither were the large number of European Americans.

Race Traitor and
The Myth of the 'Mulatto'
a response by Fabian Tompsett

When I first heard of Race Traitor, I wanted to know more because its very name declared a reversal of populist racism. However, having seen an issue and now having read their response to Naoko Shibusawa and Alastair Bonnett's reviews (Transgressions 1) I have come to feel that this reversal fails to move beyond the logic of populist racism. RT's declaration that their aim "is not to demonstrate our expertise on the system of racial oppression, but to overturn it" smacks of Know-nothingism, a populist movement which flourished in the nineteenth century. This ignorance is strategic, however. Their silence about Amerindians is necessary if they are to maintain their bi-polar, Black-White, depiction of race relations.

RT's response stresses the transitory position of intermediate 'groups', as if this transitory nature made them non-existent. In effect they recycle the myth of the 'Mulatto'. The introduction of the term 'mulatto' reflected popular and scientific prejudices about people of mixed African and European parentage. The word is derived from 'mule', which, as the offspring of a horse and donkey, is sterile. Thus the term 'mulatto' lent credence to the idea that the European and African were separate species. But, further to this, it was supposed that the 'mulatto' too is sterile, and that the enforcement of strict regulations on inter-racial sex would be necessary to prevent the birth of such an oddity, half 'human' and half 'sub-human'. The sterile 'mulatto' would then die out.

RT talk about the recomposition of the 'White race', but one of the features of racism is that, however much it draws on traditionalist roots, race is always a goal to be achieved, a continuous project of social breeding. Race is always a process of becoming, a process of recomposition. In a bi-polar racial organisation there will always be intermediate groups. To the extent that Black and White constitute stable entities, their stability relies precisely on the instability of intermediate groups. To refuse the reality of these groups, to portray them as politically sterile, is to fail to understand their strategic importance within the racial order.

RT dismiss the "quarrel about 'intermediate' or 'other' races" as being centred around "who will be socially White in the twenty-first century". Their participation in
majority. For years people have been predicting, some with glee, others with alarm, that by such-and-such year California (or some other state) will have a 'non-white' majority. Both the proponents and opponents of this future can relax: the day California has a non-white majority is the day the present basis of rule collapses, because the Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992 will become general and sustained.

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RT dismiss the “quarrel about ‘intermediate’ or ‘other’ races” as being centred around “who will be socially White in the twenty-first century”. Their participation in
the struggle for 'civil rights' is reduced to 'demanding the rights traditionally reserved for whites'. When used in conjunction with phrases about programmes which allow 'immigrants to leap over black Americans', RT reveals how little it has moved beyond its roots in American nativism. Thus their 'critique' of ESL programmes abandons all pretence of radicality, and prepares the ground for an 'anti-racist' apologetics for anti-immigrationism.

In dealing with ethnicity, RT also seems to be on very shaky ground. I would challenge their claim that 'black people and traditional southern 'whites' share a common speech, religion, music, cuisine, and even ancestry, and probably resemble each other culturally more than any other two groups in the country'. Undoubtedly, there is a body of shared heritage between these two groups, but there has also been a long tradition linking the Black cultures of the West Indies with those of American Blacks. They too share a common heritage. Behind the phrase 'black people' there is first an assumption of native American nationality. Black people are reduced to a stereotype which is then compared to the stereotype of 'traditional white southerners'. Do they share the language? What about the French speaking communities around New Orleans? Do they share the same religion? How many Black people dress up in sheets and burn crosses? Is the Nation of Islam the same as the Baptist church? Do all Black people eat pork?

In the 1970s in South Africa, the state endeavoured to shore up social stability by promoting ethnicity, by separating different 'African' groups by language, and isolating 'Cape Coloureds', 'Asians', etc. This fuelled the revolt by school students in 1976 when offered education in Afrikaans and a 'native' language. Scarman also used ethnicity as a major tool in the divide and rule tactics he promoted following the Brixton Uprising of 1981. It then became enshrined in the British race relations industry, with minor opposition. By championing identities based on being Bengali, African-Caribbean, Indian, Irish etc., the state organised the most traditional and reactionary element within each cultural grouping to create a network of subsidised 'community groups' competing for diminishing resources.

And it is at this point that we confront the central weakness of all campaigns for civil rights, for they represent a struggle to enter civil society, that 'battlefield where everyone's individual private interest wars against everyone else's'. Quite naturally when faced with proletarian intransigence amongst the Black community the state secretes a segment dedicated to offering civil rights, or even human rights. This segment manifests itself both as a bureaucracy within the state (the race relations industry) and a network of social and political networks within civil society. This social machinery functions to reinforce the state by seeking to find solutions through the state, for example, passing legislation running in tandem with psychologised forms of struggle.

When a Black person takes it upon themselves to understand the history of their 'race', they must inevitably confront the phenomenon of lynching. Such study may involve, not merely reading about how lynching functioned as a regulatory factor in race relations, but also gazing at a photograph of a burning body. Such a gaze can instil a parade of memories, each slight and humiliation endured, a ladder of terror which escalates from the racist joke to the racist jibe, from there to open racist abuse,
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Each rung on this ladder of terror carries with it the threat of escalation. Each slight is designed to reinforce the subordinate position of the Black person. Resistance provokes the possibility of escalation, and escalation culminates in that apex of western civilisation, the lynching. The image of a burning human body is evoked every step of the way. Why, I even knew one Black woman who had just such a picture stuck on her bedroom door. I guess it helped her to sleep more easily at night.

I presume that one of the ‘advantages’ of being White is that when one seeks to satisfy one’s curiosity about one’s ‘own race’, one is not confronted by such an image. Or, to be more precise, such an image is not located at the summit of a ladder of terror which is rooted in one’s own day-to-day experience.

In James Weldon Johnson’s The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man (1912), it is precisely the experience of a lynching which provokes the hero, a light-skinned African-American, to abandon his history and pass through the race barrier to become White:

I argued that to forsake one’s race to better one’s condition was no less worthy than to forsake one’s country for the same purpose. I finally made up my mind that I would neither disdain the black race nor claim the white race; but that I would change my name, raise a mustache, and let the world take me for what it would; that it was not necessary for me to go about with a label of inferiority pasted across my forehead. All the while I understood that it was not discouragement or fear or search for a larger field of action and opportunity that was driving me out of the Negro race. I knew that it was shame, the unbearable shame. Shame at being identified with a people that could with impunity be treated worse than animals, for certainly the law would restrain and punish the malicious burning alive of animals.

NOTES

1. See G.W.F Hegel, Hegel’s Philosophy of Right (translated by T.M.Knox), Oxford 1952, p.70. But I’ve used the slightly different English translation that appears in Marx’s Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State, in Marx Early Writings (translated by Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton) London 1975.
Introduction

Popular representations of Detroit tend to focus on the twin poles of business and crime. On the one hand, it is Motor City, home of automobile production, or Motown, home of soul music. On the other hand, it is the pollsters’ choice for most dangerous city on Earth, the location of urban corruption in Elmore Leonard’s crime fiction and the site of techno-fascist law enforcement in the _Robocop_ movie series.

But there is another, radical side to Detroit that situates itself in opposition to the dominant culture of business and criminal enterprise. This alternative Detroit includes a history of labour militancy; the 1967 black inner-city riots; a record of Black Panther activity; John Sinclair, the White Panthers and the revolutionary politics of the rock band MC5; and a vibrant anti-authoritarian/countercultural scene. As a result, Detroit can be regarded as an exemplary site of contestation between the hegemonic social order and oppositional culture, of complex intersections between popular and counterculture and, hence, as a laboratory for the generation of alternative socio-cultural praxes.

The Fifth Estate and the Development of Primitivism

During the last thirty years one of the major sources of radical praxis in Detroit - and worldwide - has been the _Fifth Estate_ newspaper. Founded in 1965, this ‘underground’ publication has acted as a focus for the anti-authoritarian/countercultural Detroit scene and in particular the bohemian/student/working class area of Cass Corridor. Lorraine Perlman, a participant in the _Fifth Estate_ project, recalls moving to this area in 1969:

> The inner-city Cass Corridor area where most of the dissidents lived was the center of Detroit’s bohemian community. A permissive atmosphere prevailed in this part of midtown Detroit. Restrictive conditions were associated with the distant suburbs, while people committed to counter-cultural activities found mutual support among the residents of this area – students, drop-outs, artists, dissidents. The claim to ‘community’ may have been exaggerated, but in this racially integrated neighborhood, there was tolerance for misfits, respect for those who preferred poverty to jobs, the recognition of a common bond that linked people who met, whether they were there by choice or necessity. (Perlman, 1989, pp.86-87)

It was in this context that the socio-political radicalism of the _Fifth Estate_ evolved, from the late 1970s onward, into the praxis that has come to be called primitivism. But before examining primitivism in detail, it is worth noting the social context within which it developed and which it reacted against. Critiquing the U.S. Greens’ 1992 ‘Detroit Summer’ project for urban renewal, _Fifth Estate_ participant E.B. Maple wrote of Detroit:

> The once prosperous city has changed dramatically. Large parcels of land formerly occupied by homes have reverted to a pre-industrial ‘non-developed’ setting leaving miles of open fields, and many of the city’s residents have entered a post-capitalist existence, living without wage work or commodity consumption. This process of ‘deurbanization’ and ‘depopulation’, instead of being seen as negative could signal a direction for a project based on a radical critique of urban industrial capitalism rather than Detroit Summer’s current Peace-Corps mentality. However, a vision of radical deconstruction and green renewal would necessitate an explicitly anti-capitalist perspective prepared to build urban, self-sustaining communities and resist assaults on the environment such as the Detroit incinerator and other urban polluters. (Maple, 1992, p.6)

This passage retrospectively encapsulates the origin of primitivism, locating it precisely in the lived experience of Detroit’s inner-city dwellers. Industrial capitalist withdrawal and collapse opens a ‘post-capitalist’ space in the urban terrain where “autonomous, self-sustaining communities” could develop. With all other genuine communities and communal ties destroyed by capitalist social relations, the reconstituted communities can only be communities of resisters, who develop life-ways that emphasise new forms of politics, activism, and resistance. As Fredy Perlman (1983, p.258), pre-eminent primitivist theorist and _Fifth Estate_ participant, writes: “The resistance is not primarily a clash of arms … The resistance is in the drums, not in the spears; it is in the music, in the rhythms lived by communities whose myths and ways continue to nurture and sustain them”.

Thus primitivism - also known as radical primitivism or anarcho-primitivism - developed as a response to living in and resisting the archetypal late capitalist city of Detroit. But it also emerged as a response to the perceived failure of existing oppositional ideologies to develop a comprehensive account of the complex control structures that order life in such an urban environment.

The intention to go beyond the limited analyses of Marxism, feminism and classical anarchism is signaled in a text by an anonymous contributor to the June 1979 issue of _Fifth Estate_, who states:

> The appearance on the planet of the political state as well as social classes, private property, the patriarchal and the like are the apparatuses of domination, but the larger framework in which they all appear, the reigning code of Civilization itself, is usually taken for granted and only recently has come under critical scrutiny. (Anon, 1976, p.5)

The major paradigm shift achieved by the _Fifth Estate_ circle comprised a broadening of perspectives that brought into focus “the reigning code of Civilization itself”. By refusing piecemeal explanations of control, by refusing to take the notion of progress
DEBATE 2: City Primeval: Fredy Perlman, Primitivism, and Detroit

by John Moore

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It was in this context that the socio-political radicalism of the Fifth Estate evolved, from the late 1970s onward, into the praxis that has come to be called primitivism. But before examining primitivism in detail, it is worth noting the social context within which it developed and which it reacted against. Critiquing the U.S. Greens' 1992 'Detroit Summer' project for urban renewal, Fifth Estate participant E.B. Maple wrote of Detroit:

The once prosperous city has changed dramatically. Large parcels of land formerly occupied by homes have reverted to a pre-industrial 'non-developed' setting leaving miles of open fields, and many of the city's residents have entered a post-capitalist existence, living without wage work or commodity consumption. This process of 'deurbanization' and 'depopulation', instead of being seen as negative could signal a direction for a project based on a radical critique of urban industrial capitalism rather than Detroit Summer's current Peace-Corps mentality. However, a vision of radical deconstruction and green renewal would necessitate an explicitly anti-capitalist perspective prepared to build urban, self-sustaining communities and resist assaults on the environment such as the Detroit incinerator and other urban pollutants. (Maple, 1992, p.6)

This passage retrospectively encapsulates the origin of primitivism, locating it precisely in the lived experience of Detroit's inner-city dwellers. Industrial capitalist withdrawal and collapse opens a 'post-capitalist' space in the urban terrain where 'autonomous, self-sustaining communities' could develop. With all other genuine communities and communal ties destroyed by capitalist social relations, the reconstituted communities can only be communities of resisters, who develop lifeways that emphasize new forms of politics, activism, and resistance. As Fredy Perlman (1983, p.258), pre-eminent primitivist theorist and Fifth Estate participant, writes: "The resistance is not primarily a clash of arms ... The resistance is in the drums, not in the spears; it is in the music, in the rhythms lived by communities whose myths and ways continue to nurture and sustain them".

Thus primitivism - also known as radical primitivism or anarcho-primitivism - developed as a response to living in and resisting the archetypal late capitalist city of Detroit. But it also emerged as a response to the perceived failure of existing oppositional ideologies to develop a comprehensive account of the complex control structures that order life in such an urban environment.

The intention to go beyond the limited analyses of Marxism, feminism and classical anarchism is signaled in a text by an anonymous contributor to the June 1979 issue of Fifth Estate, who states:

The appearance on the planet of the political state as well as social classes, private property, the patriarchy and the like are the apparatuses of domination, but the larger framework in which they all appear, the reigning code of Civilization itself, is usually taken for granted and only recently has come under critical scrutiny. (Anonymous, 1976, p.6)

The major paradigm shift achieved by the Fifth Estate circle comprised a broadening of perspectives that brought into focus "the reigning code of Civilization itself". By refusing piece meal explanations of control, by refusing to take the notion of progress...
for granted, participants in the Fifth Estate were able to develop a critique that is comprehensive because it challenges the entire project of civilization.

In a 1986 position paper entitled ‘Renew the earthly paradise’, the Fifth Estate circle outline their subsequent ideational trajectory:

The evolution of the FE has been characterized by a willingness to re-examine all the assumptions of radical criticism, which has led away from its early libertarian communist perspective toward a more critical analysis of the technological structure of western civilization (.) combined with a reappraisal of indigenous and the character of primitive and original communities. In this sense we are primitivists.

(Anon, 1986, p.10)

The complement to a critique of civilization as a project of control remains a reappraisal of the primitive as a source of renewal and anti-authoritarian inspiration. But the primitivism that emerges from this process is not a naïve atavism. The reappraisal of the primitive takes place from an anarchist perspective, a perspective alert to issues of power. Pointing to “an emerging synthesis of post-modern anarchy and the primitive (in the sense of original), Earth-based ecstatic vision”, the Fifth Estate circle indicate:

We are not anarchists per se, but pro-anarchy, which is for us a living, integral experience, incommensurate with Power and refusing all ideology ... Our work on the FE as a project explores possibilities for our own participation in this movement, but also works to rediscover the primitive roots of anarchy as well as to document its present expression. Simultaneously, we examine the evolution of Power in our midst in order to suggest new terrains for contestation and critique in order to undermine the present tyranny of the modern totalitarian discourse-that hyper-reality that destroys human meaning, and hence solidarity, by simulating it with technology. Underlying all struggles for freedom is this central necessity: to regain a truly human discourse grounded in autonomous, intersubjective mutuality and closely associated with the natural world.

(Anon, 1986, p.10)

A synthesis of primitive and contemporary anarchy, mutually enlightening each other’s blind spots, becomes the aim, a synthesis that defines and engages “new terrains for contestations”.

Of all the terrains opened by primitivism the most contentious has proven to be that of technology. Indeed, a somewhat reductive shorthand term for primitivism is the anti-tech movement. Critics hostile to primitivism have consistently misrepresents it as afflicted by an unthinking technophobia, despite the fact that the Fifth Estate’s position on technology has been spelled out as clearly as the paper’s participants think necessary and advisable in pre-revolutionary conditions.

Differentiating between “small-scale technics and a global network of technology”, T. Fulano points out in the November 1981 issue of Fifth Estate that:

Technology is not a simple tool which can be used in any way we like. It is a form of social organization, a set of social relations. It has its own laws. If we are to engage in its use, we must accept its authority. The enormous size, complex interconnections and stratification of tasks which make up modern technological systems make authoritarian

Aside from environmental concerns, the scale of technology - with the interlocking industries needed to produce, operate and maintain it - demands authoritarian control structures that are inimical to anarchy. Furthermore, the technological society propels individuals into lives of alienation, simulation and spectacularization. Dividing people from one another and alienating them from themselves, it also alienates them from the natural world. Rather than living in harmony and equilibrium with nature, it promotes an ideology of domination, domestication and ultimately eradication of the natural. But a reappraisal of the primitive, with its limited use of technics, does not entail a sentimental return to nature. As an anonymous Fifth Estate contributor indicates in 1979:

Let us anticipate the critics who would accuse us of wanting to go ‘back to the caves’ or of mere posturing on our part - i.e., enjoying the comforts of civilization all the while being its harshest critics. We are not posing the Stone Age as a model for our Utopia nor are we suggesting a return to gathering and hunting as a means for our livelihood. Rather, our investigation into pre-civilized modes combats the notion that humans have always lived with alarm clocks and factories. It assails the prevalent annexe which the species exhibits as to its origins and the varieties of social association which existed for tens of thousands of years before the rise of the state. It announces that work has not always been the touchstone of human existence and that cities and factories did not always blight the terrain. It asserts that there was a time when people lived in harmony with each other and with their natural surroundings, both of which they knew intimately ... Reduced to its most basic elements, discussions about the future sensibly should be predicated on what we desire socially and from that determine what technology is possible. All of us desire central heating, flush toilets, and electric lighting, but not at the expense of our humanity. Maybe they are all possible together, but maybe not.

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Fredy Perlman
One of the main catalysts in the development of primitivist ideas was Fredy Perlman. Although refusing to ideologically label himself in any way, Perlman - in conjunction with other Fifth Estate staff - laid the groundwork for primitivism in a number of theoretical and fictional texts before his untimely death in 1985.

A starting point was Theodore Roszak’s Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Postindustrial Society (1972). Referring to ‘The flight from the primitive’, Roszak (p.6) characterizes progress as “the manifest destiny of humankind”, the ideology that underpins the development of an oppressive artificial environment by “the industrial Leviathan” or “urban-industrial society” (p.67). But he also discerns the contemporary development of “a strange, new radicalism” which he associates with the “communitarian politics” of anarchism. Recommending a simultaneous withdrawal from and confrontation with power, he suggests: “The tribes and the bands, the clans and the free communes are forming again, even in the belly of the monster” (p.430).
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These, and other Roszakian emphases, were to become familiar strands in primitivist thought. But Perlman, a great ideational synthesiser, looked beyond Roszak to assemble a primitivist world-view from diverse sources, including anarchist anti-authoritarianism, situationism, feminism, ecological thought, zero-work advocates, technological critics such as Lewis Mumford and Jacques Ellul, and rogue anthropologists and cultural historians such as Pierre Clastres, Stanley Diamond, and Frederick Turner.

Perlman’s most important work is probably Against His-story, Against Leviathan! (1983). Written as poetic rather than historical discourse, the text constitutes a chronicle of human life on Earth, but resolutely acts as an anti-history. For Perlman (1983, p.7), primitives live in “the state of nature”, which he defines as “a community of freedoms” or “a community of self-determined human beings” (p.26). In harmony with nature, primitives inhabit a mythic cyclical time. But at a certain time, and in response to specific ecological conditions of scarcity, impersonal institutions and their attendant social relations begin to emerge. As these institutions solidify, an unprecedented order comes into existence, characterized by the imposition of system, abstraction, the artificial, the synthetic, the machine, the automaton. Gradually this abstract set of institutional relations acquires its own dynamic, its own momentum, an artificial life powered by the human beings trapped inside it. This monster of power and domination Perlman terms Leviathan. The term derives from Hobbes’s designation for the State. But the State, capital, the ruling class, patriarchy, and technology are only attributes of Leviathan. Abstract power relations constitute its core.

Leviaths have a specific effect on free communities of individuals: the latter are converted into forced labourers, slaves to the machine. In other words, they are wrenched out of mythic or cyclical time into the linearity of history, or His (i.e., Leviathan’s) story. But this process is not accepted passively. The human side of History remains a tale of endless revolt, of repeated attempts to destroy or abandon Leviathan in order to reconstitute or return to primal anarchy. Such attempts have only been temporarily successful, however, and the imperial Leviathan has continued its search for global domination. Now, though, an historical terminus has been reached. Instead of competing Leviaths, the world is currently spanned by a single dominant behemoth, the mega-machine of Western civilization. Hence the intense necessity of contemporary resistance: the struggle has become a straight fight between Leviathan and the Biosphere. One or the other must die.

Perlman provides a primitivist theoretical agenda, but issues of appropriate and adequate forms of resistance remain problematic. The Fifth Estate circle, including Perlman, draw upon the work of French post-Marxist, anti-civilization theorist Jacques Camatte, who recommends “a simultaneous refusal of all obsolete forms of struggle”:

It is now becoming generally accepted that demonstrations, marches, spectacles and shows don’t lead anywhere. Waving banners, putting up posters, handing out leaflets, attacking the police are all activities which perpetuate a certain ritual - a ritual wherein the police are always cast in the role of invincible subjugators. The methods of struggle therefore must be put through a thorough analysis because they present an obstacle to the creation of new modes of action. And for this to be effective, there has to be a refusal of the old terrain of struggle - both in the workplace and in the streets. As long as revolutionary struggle is conducted not on its own ground but on the terrain of capital, there can be no significant breakthrough, no qualitative revolutionary leap ... If we are to successfully abandon the old centres of struggle, it will require a simultaneous movement towards the creation of new modes of life ... The bourgeoisie triumphed because it staged the battle on its own terrain, which is the cities ... Today humanity can launch its battle against capital not in the city, nor in the countryside, but outside of both. (Camatte, 1981, pp.15-16)

Camatte’s emphases on the creation of new modes of life and action, defining the terrain of struggle and situating struggle upon it, and on deconstructing urban-rural binary oppositions as a basis for interventions, are all crucial to the Fifth Estate endeavour.

404: Primitivist Action in the City

Primitivists remain aware that there are no easy answers, but are involved in a number of projects to encourage resistance among the dispossessed and marginalized. Apart from writing and producing the paper and running its bookstore and mail-order service, the Fifth Estate circle have actively engaged in local projects (such as the campaign to prevent the building of a massive incinerator in Detroit) as well as national campaigns (for example, anti-militarist actions at the time of the Gulf War). But, perhaps, most significantly, Fifth Estate participants have been involved in projects such as 404, described in a paper by Sunfrog in 1992 as “a collectively-run community center and autonomous zone ... The bourgeoisie triumphed because it staged the battle on its own terrain, which is the cities ... Today humanity can launch its battle against capital not in the city, nor in the countryside, but outside of both.” (Sunfrog, 1994, p.4), this project was clearly an attempt to put primitivist - and Camatian - principles into action. As Sunfrog commented in 1992:

404 is a place where we translate critique into action and explore prospects for real freedom through non-alienated daily interaction ... At 404 we reject the ideology which places its emphasis on waiting until 'after the revolution' to create non-authoritarian community and relationships. We want free everything and we want it now. We are moving from the site of our own oppression to create the situation, the unhindered playscape, the precursor to any uprising and social upheaval. (p.3, p.6)

At the time of writing, 404 has recently closed. The project foundered through a combination of adverse factors, both internal - for example, inconsistent participation and consequent burn-out of individuals, gender conflict, the emergence of informal hierarchies - and external:
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### 404: Primitivist Action in the City

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At the time of writing, 404 has recently closed. The project foundered through a combination of adverse factors, both internal - for example, inconsistent participation and consequent burn-out of individuals, gender conflict, the emergence of informal hierarchies - and external:
Dominant social relations in the capitalist urban space constitute a genuine obstacle to the instigation of the primitivist project. But as Sunfrog (1994, p.16) comments, although "social factors beyond the sway of our insurrectionary intent always seemed to creep back into the fold" and "none of us expected the collective's self-conscious ranting and social defiance to usher in the revolution of a new social reality, we actually felt the potential of anarchy infect the fabric of our lives". Such interventions may not be an adequate response to the profound social, cultural and ecological crisis currently experienced globally, but they contain a potential for anarchy and in present circumstances may remain all that is possible.

Certainly, participants in 404 are discouraged, but undeterred, and a new, more ambitious project has taken place in the defunct centre. The focus has now shifted to the Trumbull Theater, located in the Woodbridge neighborhood adjacent to Cass Corridor. This site is regarded as more viable in the long-term due to the fact that the project’s primary function is a tenant-owned living space for collective members. Although open to non-residents for use as a project space, decisions lie in the hands of those who share in daily collective life. This is regarded as providing a more stable and committed focus to the endeavour. As Sunfrog recently remarked in Fifth Estate:

The 'community center' movement is a viable seed for a long-lasting revolutionary social network. Projects such as the distribution of free vegetarian food, child-care and free-schools, info-centers and reading rooms, anti-racist action, feminism and queer liberation, continue to set the tone for transforming the terrain of our lives. (1994, p.16)

Through the creation of such socio-cultural networks, the syncretic ideology of primitivism aims to become a powerful alternative for disempowered social groups surviving in the declining capitalist city. By fostering such communities of resistance, primitivists hope to form the affinities and life-ways that will finally destroy Leviathan and create a world of freedom, harmony and diversity.

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ANON. (1986) 'New the earthly paradise' Fifth Estate 322 pp.10-11
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From Socialisme ou Barbarie to Communism or Civilisation
a response by Luther Blissett

In response to John Moore, I must admit that I have an advantage in that two relevant texts have been published since he submitted his article. The first is 'The History of the Fifth Estate, Part 1' by Peter Werbe in the latest issue of Fifth Estate (No. 347). After describing the paper's first ten years as "a forum for the new and rebellious ideas that characterized the era" he moves on to the crisis of 1975 when the 'Eat the Rich Gang' effectively staged a coup:

Soon numerous internal contradictions began to crash in on the paper, and by 1975 it was almost terminal, deeply in debt to printers and suppliers, almost devoid of staff following several serious personality clashes, and dependent upon commercial advertising including X-rated movies and cigarette ads for revenue and salaries. The remnant of the staff printed a notice in the paper that they would soon close up shop unless they received an influx of new participants.

A number of us, including several other former staffers and friends, who were influenced by the writings of Fredy Perlman, Jacques Camatte, Jean Baudrillard, council and left communists, and the Situationists, answered the call. Eleven of us had constituted ourselves as the Eat the Rich Gang and undertook a number of projects in 1974-75, including publishing Wildcat! and The Irrational in Politics at the Detroit Print Co-op, producing a number of Fifth Estate inserts, setting up study groups, as well as some sabotage activity and radical pranks.

When our group arrived at the Fifth Estate office, the three remaining staffers were less than enthusiastic about us rejoicing the paper. But by an 11-3 vote, we (the new staff) decided to become a monthly, to no longer accept ads (they were the voice of capital, we said), and to stop paying salaries. The three holdovers were horrific and left after a few issues. (pp.6-9)

I am going to argue that it was the presence of an industrial working class centred around Detroit's motor industry which nurtured this radical group, and the eclipse of that industry, with the ensuing de-industrialisation, which fostered their critique of technology. Moore makes a passing remark about "Black Panther activity" yet this was minimal in Detroit. The Black community was much more influenced by workplace militancy than the Panther's street-based appeal to the lumpenproletariat. In the forties, two radical Detroit auto-workers, Charles Denby and James Boggs...
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In response to John Moore, I must admit that I have an advantage in that two relevant texts have been published since he submitted his article. The first is 'The History of the Fifth Estate, Part 1' by Peter Werbe in the latest issue of *Fifth Estate* (No. 347). After describing the paper's first ten years as "a forum for the new and rebellious ideas that characterized the era" he moves on to the crisis of 1975 when the 'Eat the Rich Gang' effectively staged a coup:

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A number of us, including several other former staffers and friends, who were influenced by the writings of Fredy Perlman, Jacques Camatte, Jean Baudrillard, council and left communists, and the Situationists, answered the call. Eleven of us had constituted ourselves as the Eat the Rich Gang and undertook a number of projects in 1974-75, including publishing _Wildcat_ and _The Irrational in Politics_ at the Detroit Print Co-op, producing a number of Fifth Estate inserts, setting up study groups, as well as some sabotage activity and radical pranks.

When our group arrived at the Fifth Estate office, the three remaining staffers were less than enthusiastic about us rejoicing the paper. But by an 11-3 vote, we (the new staff) decided to become a monthly, to no longer accept ads (they were the voice of capital, we said), and to stop paying salaries. The three holdovers were horrified and left after a few issues. (pp.6-9)

I am going to argue that it was the presence of an industrial working class centred around Detroit's motor industry which nurtured this radical group, and the eclipse of that industry, with the ensuing de-industrialisation, which fostered their critique of technology. Moore makes a passing remark about "Black Panther activity" yet this was minimal in Detroit. The Black community was much more influenced by workplace militancy than the Panther's street-based appeal to the lumpenproletariat. In the forties, two radical Detroit auto-workers, Charles Denby and James Boggs...
developed links with a current emerging from Trotskyism centred around C. L. R. James, Grace C. Lee, Pierre Chaulieu (aka Paul Cardan, aka Castoriadis) and Raya Dunayevskaya (formerly Trotsky’s secretary). Chaulieu went on to provide the impetus for Socialisme ou Barbarie in France, whilst Dunayevskaya worked with Denby on News and Letters in Detroit.

Writing in 1965, Boggs made the city the centre of his strategy for revolutionary struggle with his call for “self-government of the major cities by the black majority, mobilised behind leaders and organizations of its own creation and prepared to reorganize the structure of city government and city life from top to bottom.” He was writing in the wake of the Watts uprising, and developed this outlook through his involvement in the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM). This was a grass roots workers’ organisation formed inside the auto plants following a series of wildcat strikes, but which aimed to develop alliances in the local community rather than organised labour.

The Eat the Rich Gang’s production of Wildcat! was rooted in experience within these same auto-factories, and was linked up with the old Facing Reality/Socialisme ou Barbarie network, e.g. Solidarity Motor Bulletin, based in London’s East End, as well as new currents emerging from Socialisme ou Barbarie. The Irrational in Politics was by Maurice Brinton, a London member of Solidarity. And here I must mention the second new text, Internationalists in France During the Second World War by Pierre Lanneret. The introduction offers key footnotes which illustrate the diversity of Socialisme ou Barbarie, which is too often reduced to being a creature of Chaulieu, with Guy Debord’s membership thrown in for good measure. Here it is revealed to be a meeting place of various extreme left and ultra-left currents (with all the factionalism that implies). The Eat the Rich Gang were part of an international network which had grown out of the desire “to assist and inform informal vanguard groups spontaneously created by workers at the workplace, to facilitate contacts between them”. This network was fundamentally communist, and provided a framework which extended from the anti-party German council communists to the ‘organic centralism’ of the Italian left communists.

The critique of civilisation emerged internationally within this framework, a key protagonist being Jacques Camatte and his comrades in the review Invariance. They developed out of the left communists insistence on the centrality of the realisation of Gemeinwesen, or the human community, as the goal of communism. It was a matter of establishing a society where people treated each other as humans rather than as things. Far from being “post-Marxist” Camatte is developing themes already addressed by Marx:

Communism is the positive supercession of private property as human self-stranglement, and hence the true appropriation of the human essence through and for man; it is the complete restoration of man to himself as a social, i.e. human, being, a restoration which has become conscious and which takes place within the entire wealth of previous periods of development. This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature, and between man and man, the true resolution of the conflict between existence and being, between objectification and self-affirmation.

Moore suggests that Camatte’s emphases on such matters as “deconstructing urban-rural binary oppositions . . . are crucial to the Fifth Estate endeavours”. Yet he fails to mention that these were concerns Camatte derived from Marx. Moore carefully excludes communism from his list of “diverse sources” which Perlman used in his development of “primitivism”. This is simply distortion. Perlman’s most widely read work is still The Reproduction of Daily Life, a concise exposition of Marx’s analysis of commodity fetishism.4 Perlman’s subsequent concern with re-establishing a “community of self-determined human beings” is rooted precisely in the theoretical developments of Marx’s Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts. It is not that I want to ‘claim Perlman for Marxism’, but I do wish to resist Moore’s subordination of Perlman and Fifth Estate’s theoretical work to ‘anarchism’.

Moore suggests that Against His-Story, Against Leviathan is Perlman’s most important work. I must admit I found it a disappointment (probably for the very reasons Moore likes it). For me Letters of Insurgents (1976) had a much stronger effect. Describing a fictionalised episode of the class struggle where a group of workers confronted a boss who promptly fled, Perlman wrote:

On the way to Zagad’s office, Jan and I had walked or rather ‘danced’, behind Claude, with Sabina between us, her arms around our waists, our arms around her waist. “This will make everything possible!” she’d kept saying, filling my head with images of a world where everything would be possible everywhere and at any time. Jan and I had lifted Sabina and ‘flown’ her up the stairs to Zagad’s office. Suddenly Zagad was gone and so were my images. Sabina’s arm left my waist and I was alone. How I envied Jan that moment. Sabina’s enthusiasm didn’t diminish after Zagad’s departure; it increased. And she showered Jan with all of it. Claude walked out behind Zagad. Sabina shouted “We’re done it!” and wrapped herself around Jan. How I wished Luisa had wrapped herself around me shouting, “We’ve done it!”. How I wished Sabina had turned to me! I crawled out of the office, lonely, disoriented. [...] Jan and Sabina left together though the office building entrance. I shuffled from the office back to the workshop but stopped before anyone saw me. I saw Luisa and Marc Gavlini leaving by way of the workshop entrance, arm in arm, gesticulating and laughing. Titus and Jasma were still in the shop. I backed away from my post and rushed back through the office building to the street. I walked aimlessly and wanted to die. I had proved myself for nothing, to no one. All my explanations had been wrong: Luisa hadn’t dropped me because of my backwardness nor because she wanted to be detached but because she had found another lover. Titus hadn’t scolded me because I’d taken Luisa from him. Only then did I become conscious that just before Titus’ outburst, during our meeting, I had laughed and nodded vigorously when Jan had proposed throwing all the machinery into the street as our first revolutionary act. How stupid I’d been to attribute Titus’ outburst to jealousy! My sympathy for Jan’s ‘scheme’ defined me as an outright ‘counter-revolutionary’ in Titus’ eyes, since for Titus the machinery was the revolution, the two were synonymous.

Fifth Estate have played a part in the renewed critique of civilisation, but far from being the “major paradigm shift” paraded by Moore, this critique has taken place within the communist movement at a time when a new wave of technology has
developed links with a current emerging from Trotskyism centred around C. L. R. James, Grace C. Lee, Pierre Chaulieu (aka Paul Cardan, aka Castoriadis) and Raya Dunayevskaya (formerly Trotsky's secretary). Chaulieu went on to provide the impetus for *Socialisme ou Barbarie* in France, whilst Dunayevskaya worked with Denby on *News and Letters* in Detroit.

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(Marx, 1975, p.348)

Moore suggests that Camatte's emphases on such matters as "deconstructing urban-rural binary oppositions...are crucial to the Fifth Estate endeavor". Yet he fails to mention that these were concerns particular to Camatte derived from Marx. Moore carefully excludes communism from his list of "diverse sources" which Perlman used in his development of "primitivism". This is simply distortion. Perlman's most widely read work is still *The Reproduction of Daily Life*, a concise exposition of Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism. Perlman's subsequent concern with re-establishing a "community of self-determined human beings" is rooted precisely in the theoretical developments of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. It is not that I want to 'claim Perlman for Marxism', but I do wish to resist Moore's subordination of Perlman and *Fifth Estate* theoretical work to 'anarchism'.

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> On the way to Zagad's office, Jan and I had walked or rather 'danced', behind Claude, with Sabina between us, her arms around our waists, our arms around her waist. "This will make everything possible!" she'd kept saying, filling my head with images of a world where everything would be possible everywhere and at any time. Jan and I had lifted Sabina and 'flown' her up the stairs to Zagad's office. Suddenly Zagad was gone and so were my images. Sabina's arm left my waist and I was alone. How I envied Jan that moment. Sabina's enthusiasm didn't diminish after Zagad's departure; it increased. And she showered Jan with all of it. Claude walked out behind Zagad. Sabina shouted "We're done it!" and wrapped herself around Jan. How I wished Luisa had wrapped herself around me shouting, "We've done it!". How I wished Sabina had turned to me! I crawled out of the office, lonely, disoriented. [...] Jan and Sabina left together though the office building entrance. I shuffled from the office back to the workshop but stopped before anyone saw me. I saw Luisa and Marc Glavni leaving by way of the workshop entrance, arm in arm, gesticulating and laughing. Titus and Jasna were still in the shop. I backed away from my post and rushed back through the office building to the street. I walked aimlessly and wanted to die. I had proved myself for nothing, to no one. All my explanations had been wrong: Luisa hadn't dropped me because of my backwardness nor because she wanted to be detached but because she had found another lover. Titus hadn't scolded me because I'd taken Luisa from him. Only then did I remember that just before Titus' outburst, during our meeting, I had laughed and nodded vigorously when Jan had proposed throwing all the machinery into the street as our first revolutionary act. How stupid I'd been to attribute Titus' outburst to jealousy! My sympathy for Jan's 'scheme' defined me as an outright 'counter-revolutionary' in Titus' eyes, since for Titus the machinery was the revolution, the two were synonymous.

(*p.434*)

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completely transformed the workplace. The motor industry has been particularly affected by this. Whereas in the past major investment in industry led to more jobs, the robotisation of the motor plants has meant that today such investment can lead to job losses. Far from offering a shorter working day, the new technology has led to longer hours and increased on the job surveillance. Industry after industry has succumbed to information technology. This has been recognised by workers — printers at The Guardian, for instance, who refused to touch new equipment for seven years, before their power was broken during the Wapping Dispute.

But Moore looses trace of all this in his promotion of 'primitivism' and extols precisely that which is weakest in Fifth Estate's trajectory. His accolade for Sun Frog's account of the 404 project as an attempt at putting "primitivist — and Camattian (sic) principles into action" looses sight of the desire for "a living, integral experience, incommensurate with power and refusing all ideology". It's not a matter of criticising the project, which is in many ways a healthy response to City life, but of fetishising it around primitivist ideology. Similar projects have been inaugurated on the basis of religion, racial redemption, as well as anarchist, communist and primitivist ideas. The fact that "Dominant social relations in capitalist urban space constitute a genuine obstacle to the instigation" of such projects was noted in 1641 by the Diggers when their project was suppressed by the state. Finally, the promotion of "a tenant-owned living space" is simply urban self-management as criticised in Negation's LIP and the Self-Managed Counter Revolution. Here 'primitivism' becomes completely devoid of its revolutionary roots in the communist movement and functions instead as an ideology which undermines communities of resistance with free floating ideology and which ignores the reality of the social relations within which it is immersed.

It's not that such projects are 'wrong' in some abstract, 'pure', revolutionary way, but that they revolve around managing a piece of capital, and so remain wrapped up within the logic of capital. This leads precisely to the problems experienced in the 404 and countless other projects. Such projects may work as a way of getting a roof over some of our heads, but they do not constitute a challenge to capital. In order to defend 'primitivism' as a 'syncretic ideology' Moore parasitically undermines the work of Camatte, Perlman and Fifth Estate, separating their criticisms of civilisation from their understanding of the workings of capital.

Ever since the Bible came out, civilisation has produced a hundred and one literary visions of the simplicities of primitive life. Countless elegies have offered Arcadian imagery of a return to a state of grace. Yet it was in his Summer Solstice sermon of 1371 that John Ball preached "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman" before an insurrectionary mass of peasants about to storm London. Within John Wycliffe's theology we can find a critique of alienation which poses the question of the abolition of classes and private property, of communism. The overthrow of civilisation is the task of communism.

NOTES
2 This is simply one quote from Marx. Compared to such anarchist writers as Proudhon and Bakunin, Marx attempted to develop a framework within which civilisation could be analysed. For a critique of Green Anarchist's anti-Messianism and Currents see Green Apocalypse by Luther Blissett and Stewart Home.
3 See L. Perlman, Having Little, being Much: A Chronicle of Freedy Perlman's Fifty Years, Black & Red, 1989. This remains the best overview of the Black & Red/Fifth Estate activities up to 1985, when Freedy Perlman died. Peter Werbe ended his first instalment of 'History of the Fifth Estate' with the remark that 'our story from 1975 to the present is much more difficult to relate quickly and simply since it involves the development of complex ideas as well as events'.

REFERENCES
NEGATION (1975) LIP and the Self-managed Counter Revolution Black & Red, Detroit
WERBE, P. (1996) 'History of the Fifth Estate, part 1: the early years' in Fifth Estate 347

Fifth Estate can be obtained from 4632 Second Avenue, detroit, Michigan 48201 USA (Please send them at least $2)
Black & Red can be contacted at P.O.Box 02374, Detroit, Michigan, 48202, USA
Phoenix Books can be contacted at P.O.Box 824,London N1 9DL
Unpopular Books can be contacted at Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS
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NOTES
Notes From A 'Post-colonial' State

by Amanda Araba Ocran

It is February 9th, 1996 and I am moving through a metal detector to get into Security Courtroom 1-2, at the Provincial Courthouse in New Westminster, British Columbia, Canada. The courtroom seats about 40 people. At least 15 of the people entering are journalists. Once all are seated, William Ignace, also known as Wolverine, a Sun Dancer and elder of the Gustafsen Lake Band, and his son Joseph, called JoJo, are led in, arms handcuffed behind their backs, to the prisoner’s box, a plexi-glass cage open on the side that faces the judge. Visitors are seated in rows behind the cage. I realise I’m holding my breath as the prisoners walk into the box. JoJo’s face is swollen and mottled. He cannot close his mouth well enough to hide his bloody gums. He walks stiffly as though he has trouble moving. His mother groans and calls out from behind the glass cage: “did they beat you again?”. JoJo awkwardly turns his whole body to answer and without raising his head, says slowly and tonelessly, “yeh they did, yeh they did”. A man sitting behind me stands up and says loudly “why do you guys always have to do that?”. A guard motions him back into his seat.

I feel ashamed to sit and watch while the court duly proceeds for a full hour before the defence lawyer is able to ask the judge for medical attention for JoJo injuries. No one ‘official’ alludes to how might he have received his injuries while in police custody and isolated from other prisoners including his father. JoJo has been continuously in police custody since the Gustafsen Lake armed stand-off ended peacefully with the surrender of the camp inhabitants. The judge, appearing annoyed that JoJo’s physical condition was raised at all, waves his hand dismissively, stating, “uhmm, yeh, I’ll instruct that that other matter gets attention”.

I try to absorb everything that is happening: the oily lack of interest of the judge, the smirking faces of the guards lined up against one wall (they really are smirking, one actually chuckled when the defence asked for medical attention for JoJo). The prosecution talks at length with the judge, as though they have just come from lunch together and were rudely interrupted by the court proceedings. The journalists keep smiling at the guards, and politely thank them for letting them in and out as needed. The defence is trying to keep the judge’s attention from wandering away from the issue at hand, “that this trial is about a land claim”.

The judge adamantly refuses to consider the land claim question, stating “I won’t hear that argument, so if you expect to raise it you will be going outside the jurisdiction of this court”. I guess that was exactly the point Wolverine attempted to make himself in one of his impromptu speeches interrupting the judge: “I don’t recognise the jurisdiction of this court. This ought to be heard in the Privy Council…”. The proceedings continue as if this, most basic question, had never been raised. Just as JoJo’s injuries are not to be openly discussed. The judge objects to Wolverine’s “ramblings”. But, the charges when read, over a dozen, all relate to issues of property. Private property. And, this court won’t hear a land claim? No, this court ‘hears’ land claims, it just depends on who is making them. Today, Justice is deaf, we must use sign language.

When the clerk says “all rise”, for the judge to leave, I remain sitting until the judge has left the room. One of the guards sees me and twitches. But I’m too far back in the row for him to really do anything. Everyone standing in the back row raises their fists in the clenched made famous by the Black Panthers during the civil rights movement. The one that people talk about now as history, “Be strong, be strong”, they say. The guards hustle Wolverine and JoJo out. The courtroom empties out slowly. In the main hallway every bench is covered with people, mostly women and children, some are elders. I decide that I won’t go back in next time since there are not enough seats for all the friends and family to get into the courtroom. It took a day’s travel for all these people to come down to New Westminster from up around 100 Mile House, in the interior. The judge refused to allow the trial to be held at 100 Mile House. Instead, the trial was going to be moved to Surrey, the heartland of the far-right Reform Party and home of the Aryan Nation.

I walk out of there into brilliant sunshine. What does ‘post-colonial’ mean, here, now? And what about colonialism? It isn’t stored safely in the archive, the museum, the library, the text, waiting for eager excavation. Here, among the living, it has its captives. Is this a ‘poetic predicament’? How is it that the post-colonial mode of thinking allows a safe retreat back to the (colonial) legal boundary between place and identity? Listen to post-colonial anthropologist James Clifford’s version of the Mashpee Identity Trial:

The testimony I heard convinced me that organized Indian life had been going on in Mashpee for the past 350 years. I concluded that since the ability to act collectively as Indians is currently bound up with tribal status, the Indians living in Mashpee and those who return regularly should be recognized as a ‘tribe’... Whether land improperly alienated after 1869 should be transferred to them, how much, and by what means was a separate issue. I was, and still am, less clear on this matter. (Clifford, 1988, p.336)

The Mashpee identity was on trial, not because of the representational dilemmas framed by Clifford, but because of a land claim sought by the Band. The hermeneutic logic of the Law that ensures Clifford demands that identity and place are framed as separate issues. This spatial apartheid operates throughout colonial and legal
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discourses, the “Euro-American system of dualistic reasoning” demanding that "oppression [and history] only comes in separate monolithic forms” (Trinh, 1989, p.104). I have to ask, why might a ‘post-colonial’ representation retreat from a colonially inscribed boundary between constructions of space and identity? It must be noted, that trespassing that boundary, that field of power, is a crime. A hundred years of bloodied silence were framed in New Westminster today by swollen lips protruding around seeping gums, and the judge speaking in colonial tongues.

What can ‘post-colonial’ mean to Wolverine, to his son JoJo? How can we entertain ‘post-colonial’ notions in this Court of Law? Remember “that other matter”? JoJo, sitting in a glass cage, bruised, on display, waiting to be judged for ‘trespassing’. On February 9th, 1996, in British Columbia, Canada: a ‘post-colonial’ state.

REFERENCES

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**EVERYONE’S WALLY**

I look to the revolution to rename every citizen with one sound and the composite name of all citizens to be the analog of the deepest terrestrial vibration so that when we are all called we will all hear.

Since Midsummer’s day of this year, the year of the Tiger, 30 people have been living on and around Stonehenge, all answering to the name of Wally. Dancing, frolicking, acting out the Gospel of Free using Stonehenge as a cosmic wristwatch with domes and dogs, and horses, and music and troubadour costumes, and giant shirts embroidered with the Eye of Horus. At the beginning of the French revolution there was a movement known as the JACQUERIE in which everyone called themselves Jacques.

Your name is your mantra. Eskimoos believing in the Seven Ages Of Man, that one change as is known, totally, every 7 years, have a different name every 7 years. The Canadian Government, who, as all Governments, try to undermine the recording angel, by keeping tabs on people for no reason, are confused. How can a baby mean Priscilla, or Sebastian, or Donald... maybe one only hits the mantra by which one is known for a few seconds. One can only be known by God.

How can one own land? The Indians roared with laughter when the first white man arrived in the North Indies and offered the Indians gold in exchange for their land. The Indians wandered all over it, and thought it as an earthly sky. How much is a cloud worth? But when they saw what whitley was up to they became embittered. Shambala, the founder of the Dreamer Religion said: “The white man drives stakes into My mother’s heart, he cuts her hair, he slashes open her womb, before she is ready to give him her fruit”.

Sons of the Sun, the Wallys, are letting the mysteries of Stonehenge work through them, despite the barbed wire that surrounds it, despite the army bases, and despite the stale nths of secular legalisms. Freedom is a career.

Wally was thus a name anyone could use. Multiple names are a playful and idealistic attempt to create havoc with officialdom, both within and beyond the margins of ‘art’.

The multiple-use name Emmett Grogan was used by San Francisco diggers in the 1960s. The book *Ringolevio* is an biography of several members of the diggers merged together as the autobiography of one ‘person’, Emmett Grogan. The name Karen Eliot refers to no one and is potentially everyone. In the 1990s, the multi-use name Luther Blissett was invented and spread by artists, writers, musicians, footballers and avant-guardists. The multi-using of the Wally name was abandoned by 1975 when, on the other side of the galaxy, the Mail-Artists Stefan Kukowski and Andrew Czaranowski initiated a project “...to change everyone’s name to Klaus Oldenberg”.

The name ‘Wally’ lost its efficacy by becoming over-identified with one man, Phil Russell. Russell (aka Wally Hope) was from a wealthy background and cut a rather more healthy and clean-cut image than the other scurrifs at Fort Wally. He had written and published much of the promotional material for the Stonehenge festival, which is said to have been his idea. Although the Wally camp was run as an open and undisciplined commune, Russell saw himself as the leader and was not afraid to march round issuing orders, not that anyone paid much attention to him. He would talk and talk to anyone who would listen. His favourite topics were the importance of sun
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I heard no more about the Wally story until 1982 when the political punk band Crass brought out 'Christ the Album'. This was their best-selling LP, it spent two weeks at number 26 in the UK album chart. This was a concept album based on the story of Wally Hope.

The record, like their others, came out with page upon page of sleeve notes and posters. It contained a booklet written by Penny Rimbaud that did much to establish the personality cult around Wally Hope, as well as create a conspiracy theory around the circumstances of his death. In the booklet, Rimbaud compares Russell with Sid Vicious and Charles Manson. Rimbaud's story was that while working towards a second Stonehenge festival, Russell was arrested for possession of a small quantity of LSD, for which he was placed on remand, where he refused to wear a prison uniform. He chose to defend his LSD use on religious grounds and was 'sectioned' to a mental institution. There he was pumped full of huge doses of anti-psychotic drugs which reduced him to a state of idiocy. Upon his release he suffered from an incurable condition of chronic dyskinesia as a result of his treatment, and so killed himself with an overdose of sleeping tablets. Rimbaud investigated the case further, uncovered a number of cover-ups, and received death threats as a result. Rimbaud's is an odd and very muddied story, in which many details do not concur with other known facts about the case.

But the next time the name Wally moved into media focus was in 1983 when the book How to Be a Wally was published. By now, the meaning of the word 'Wally' had changed in popular usage and now meant 'a stupid person'.

Then a series of children's books were published — and a syndicated TV animated series was based upon the old cry 'Where's Wally?'. Martin Handford's densely illustrated puzzle books, selling over 25 million copies in twenty countries, featured the character Wally4 wearing a red and white striped bobble hat, round, black framed spectacles, a red and white sweatshirt, blue jeans, brown shoes. The character appears as male, a caucasian with pale complexion, he is thin, has brown wavy hair, has a long chin, wears a constant smile and has three fingers and a thumb on each hand. He carries a brown walking stick. In short, he looks like the archetypal tourist. What is interesting in this series of books, is the cunning way the text encourages the reader to look at each picture very, very carefully - in order to find the Wally character. The character is often just one small person who happens to be in a huge, finely detailed crowd. So really the books could be said to be about the problem of recognising individual identity in a mass social context.

Back to the Rimbaud-inspired death cult. In 1987, the Crass album was reissued on CD. The Wally Hope story was dusted off in 1995 to provide a dead hero for a new generation of road-protesting crusties in a report in Squall magazine. Neil Goodwin writes:

Perched on a stone beside a bronze statue of the Indian goddess Shiva5, a small oak box carries the epitaph: WALLY HOPE DIED 1975 AGED 28, A VICTIM OF IGNORANCE. For twenty years the box that once contained the ashes of the man who founded the Stonehenge Free Festival has made regular appearances at Stonehenge gatherings.

Each year friends and former acquaintances, druids and festival-goers, preserve his memory by becoming official keepers of the box. It is the closest the modern Pagan/Hippy movement has to an icon; a lasting testament to torture and death at the hands of an intolerant regime.

Penny Rimbaud, author of the book 'The last of the Hippies', first met Phil Russell, alias Wally Hope, in 1974. She6 describes him as "A smiling, bronzed, hippy warrior"... This year, 1996, the Rimbaud/Wally Hope death cult story10 was used as the central theme of a book on the continuing hippie DIY counter-culture, Fierce Dancing. However, the author, CJ Stone, managed to make one interview with one of the original Wallies who now lives in the only house in Tepe valley, Wales. Chris Wally thought it was no wonder Phil Russell had been certified insane, and pointed out that Wally's death was an accidental side-effects of the profit-motivation of the powers-that-be. "His death was brought on just as much by his own intransigence — and by their failure to understand what he was trying to say — as by any dark machinations."

The Stonehenge Free Festival became a regular event around the time of the Summer Solstice and attracted many more people until 1985, when as part of a general offensive against working class self-organisation police roadblocks were set up to prevent the festival happening anywhere near Stonehenge!! To this day there is a general ban on gatherings taking place anywhere near Stonehenge around the Summer Solstice, and police roadblocks are set up throughout Wiltshire every June.

So we have seen how the meaning of the name Wally has changed since 1969, as different factions have attempted to use the name and the death of at least one person who used it, to their own ideological ends. From mysterious beginnings at some dimly remembered festival, Wally has since become a hippie martyr, a conspiracy theory, a name for a stupid person, and a commercial cartoon series for children.

We look forward to equally bizarre developments for Luther Blissett.

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Sleeve Notes

TechNET

by Howard Slater and Jason Skeet

TechNET is an affirmation of electronic dance music that seeks to elaborate and propel the continual outbursts of psycho-social tumult that this music is creating. Never numbered or dated, each issue of TechNET could be the first or the last. Always at a beginning and always incomplete, TechNET is a ‘glorified flyer’ that is given away at parties, deposited in record shops and sent out along the Third Rail into varying contexts.

Not being dependent on circulation numbers, not having specific goals, not being a ‘product’, allows TechNET to wander into a ‘space-between’ ... so far, sometimes, that it cannot be formatted and, at times, so ephemeral that it is defused rather than diffuse. Continually re-mixed and cross-phased, TechNET emerges after being inspired by the multiple personalities of both texts and tracks.

Whilst TechNET samples theoretical writing, it is used in a non-didactic way. It is turned into a means of expressing the experiential; of situating the music in a wider social-field.

TechNET rides outwards, a collaboration that also connects with the experience of listening, organising underground parties, making tracks and releasing records. The two texts that follow — ‘The Intensifier’ and ‘Listener as Operator’ — like the music, have taken us out along routes we didn’t even know where there...

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The Intensifier

the use of speed

Around 1988 the intensifier started going to illegal parties and raves. Mostly happening in lost empty factories on the edges of wastelands. People danced on burn-up cars, fucked suspensions moving in four-four time. The intensifier climbs over scaffolding. Metal drumming against metal and fires shifting edges. Parties could go anywhere. The intensifier loses it, then realises there is nothing to lose. Lucid
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STRATTON-KENT, E. (1988) 'Wally Hope: a morality play in six acts' Occulture 1(1) also information available from:
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confusion. In night-empty cities, a generation compose with speed, thinking/feeling: uncertainty, immensity, motion, forgetfulness, radiancy, waste. Transformed by moving fast, taking it all in at high velocity. The intensifier dancing, hooded, grey, enwrapped in white smoke and light. The intensifier moves, uses speed. Each party was the end of an era. Something to take and use. Compose yourself. Move.

the art of deception

The intensifier has no identity, no ideology, has no cause or desire to persuade. The intensifier senses the boundaries between things, like when sound is loaded into a computer to be recoded as a graphic and manipulated, combined, played with touch. Devious and impossible to anticipate, subtle and insubstantial, the intensifier leaves no trace. Mysterious and inaudible, no-one knows where it is going. Pretending to stand still and accommodate itself to the subliminal designs of corporate machines, the intensifier knows speed and deception secretly free it from imposed values.

the endless mix

The intensifier reads/writes about ... the activity of listening to music is a silent production ... a drift across the sounds ... a metamorphosis of the music created by wandering ears ... the listener insinuates into the music the ruses of pleasure, manipulation, combination, steals it, is transported into it, multiplies in it ... like the reverberations of stories stirring in a memory or the internal rumblings of sounds moving through a body, this silent production is an invention of memory ... music is the outlet or product of invisible histories ... we listen to the landscape of our memories ... music is a movement of strata, a play of spaces, the listener slips their own world into the music ... like language the forms of music are stolen by transients filling them with forests of desires, metaphors of their own quests ... the intensifier understands that the listener is the operator, using the endless mix of sound in unforeseen ways ...

the rhythm versus the melody

The intensifier, grey against a dark sky, dancing, every bone and bacteria in its body moving. Some things are taken and used in devious, invisible, silent ways, uses neither determined nor captured by the military-entertainment-surveillance mechanism in which these things are designed, manufactured and marketed. The intensifier dances, moves and transforms itself, insinuates itself in the memories of users. The individual is a crowd, the movement of incoherent and contradictory masses of social relations, swarms of possibilities, endless immersions in space. The intensifier dancing, grey and faceless. Wandering uses create an incoherent and contradictory anti-discipline manifest in the intensifier, grey against a dark sky, dancing. The intensifier insinuates itself everywhere, moving, transforming, inspiring celebrations. The intensifier combines rhythms and melodies, rhythm becomes melody and melody becomes rhythm.

the space war

The intensifier uses sound as a cultural weapon, inspiring thousands of simultaneous explosions on the borders between memory and loss. Immersing bodies in unpredictable ways, sound enters in several directions at once, producing internal connections and motions, anticipating a desire to interact with others. Through this body/mind motion a building is converted into a space of social-inspiration, a space that can be changed, reversed, stretched, wasted, lost or destroyed. The intensifier, fused to this psycho-social energy, moves through a space-between.

the future of music

The intensifier moves on, keeps moving. There are no rules. Genres cross fertilise constantly, mapping the mutant subjectivities of dancers. Now half-way through another decade, the intensifier isn’t waiting for the next new style to be re-discovered, only to be remembered again as inherited identity. The intensifier is not concerned with reaching an abstract audience, but chooses to operate at an immediate level, making parties and following desires. The intensifier, cut through by collective activity, which is the basis of any culture, moves against cults of the individual, attracting new vocabularies that talk about the make-shift creativity of crowds. The intensifier represents movements that anyone can use.

Listener as Operator

I do not write experimental music ... my experimenting is done before I make my music.

Afterwards it is the listener who must experiment.

Edgar Varese

In any discussions on the reception of music there are two common and interrelated assumptions: music is seen as an art form that is responded to physically and, if it is granted any 'intelligence', it is as a spiritual or mystical consciousness. The difficulty of talking about music leads to the kind of apprehension of the listening experience manifested by the media’s promotion of music makers as personalities. This advances a cultural mechanism whereby the producers of, say, a record, are held in higher esteem than its consumers. But beyond the production/consumption dichotomy and the cultural inaction this creates, there lies a social arena that enables the interpenetration of this apparent division. The listener as operator. The dancer as engineer.

Meaning is generated socially. Without dialogue there can be no meaning. Without interaction there can be no communication. The production/consumption dichotomy implies that listening to a record is an activity devoid of creative interaction yet, leaving aside notions of consciousness itself being formed in a process of social interaction, and concentrating on the record maker, we see not the work of individual genius but someone in creative interaction with music technology (a process of fusion, development and adaptation), with the whole history of a given genre, with an assumed audience and context. Factors such as experiencing a record, through
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anticipation and expectation, and hence of gathering meaning from the record, let alone dancing to it, can hardly even be talked about within the producer/consumer dichotomy.

Look at another form of audible communication, language. Rather than perceiving language as a stable edifice that speakers inhabit as a ready-made system, language is more accurately understood as a continuous generative process implemented in the social-verbal interaction of speakers. Language operates between speaker and addressee, with both parties informed by the other: the speaker can only speak with an addressee in mind, the addressee can respond and be the speaker.

When we interpret communication as dialogue it becomes possible to speak of the generation of a ‘space between’. Being intangible this ‘space between’ gives little concrete evidence of its existence. Thus theories of communication tend to fall back on one of two poles: the individual communicating (psyche) or the system of language (signs). The first yields ‘stars’ and ‘personalities’, the second, musical notation. However, with music it is possible for this ‘space between’ to be materialised as the record. So the record becomes a conceptual space, a machine that the listener operates. The record is not simply a communication that must be interpreted and fixed down but a place of interaction where meaning is generated by both the music maker and the listener.

The listener is involved in a silent production that never ends. The listener becomes engaged in a creativity that flourishes at the very point where practice ceases to have its own language (a know-how without discourse). This practice of the listener, this operating the record, can relate to the latter’s manifold uses: mixing, scratching, sampling, slowing up, speeding down, burning, smashing, lock-grooving; using it to dance to, as a psycho-physical energiser. Whatever its use the record cannot exist without the response of its audience, without the active perception and inner responsiveness of the listener. The record does not say it all; its sounds generate a different conceptual operation in the listener than the producer.

This is a wider sensorium than the delineation of producer and consumer suggests. For listening simultaneously demands openness to a surrounding world. Even at its most private, listening is about being socially connected, about making meanings. Listening is an activity that anticipates and expects. Being far from passive, it actively follows the desires it unleashes, opening itself up to communication and allowing subjectivity to mutate and merge. By being opened and joined, by desiring the sounds, by being engulfed by them, means that listening, once it occupies the ‘space between’, can no longer be satisfied with reproducing models but can change minds. Listening is social inspiration.

Transport of Delight,

Motorways of Blood:
Some New Proposals from The RAC

Transgressions recently received the following text. We are led to believe it has been contributed by some ‘youngsters’ working within the British government’s Department of Transport.

The Roads Advisory Committee has been formed in response to growing public interest in the future of road transit in the UK. We are a privately funded research initiative dedicated to exploring and disseminating new solutions to the current crises facing Britain’s transportation system. The essentially policy related points raised below have emanated from the Committee’s current principal project: ‘New Routes for Britain’s Motorway Network’, which is being prepared for final submission to the Department of Transport.

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Britain is laced with a superb network of arterial motorways, a system largely constructed from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s. It was one of the Committee’s initial and founding contentions that the survival and maintenance of this system is, at least in part, dependent upon the destruction and marginalisation of more ecologically and socially sustainable forms of transport. Moreover, that as more socially responsible modes of transportation are advised and implemented, that the motorway network will become the legitimate object of political speculation on its future usages and maintenance. This then is ‘the opportunity’ facing British road planners in the coming years.

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Watersheds and Watershed Emplacements

One of the largely unknown facets of Britain’s motorway network is its relationship to the country’s fluvial morphology. Over 60% of Britain’s motorway routes are positioned alongside, or adjacent to, the ‘receiving areas’ for 62% of the run-off from the nation’s total rainfall. What this means in practice is that, with a little, and we would contend, feasible human intervention, these routes could be employed as fluvial
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conduits. In order to increase the ‘efficiency’ of this process, and to extend the reach of any such project from 60% to 100% of the country’s motorway network, a series of ‘watershed emplacements’ could be constructed. These moveable and ‘landscape-sensitive’ artificial barriers would be placed at strategic positions within any one watershed area, thus increasing the efficiency of the flow of sub-soil and spill-off liquid towards its intended destination.

But, it might be asked, why would we want motorways flowing with water? The answer is simple. We don’t. We want them flowing with blood.

**The Spilling of Capitalist-bureaucracy: Motorways of Blood**

As many have remarked before us, the necessary struggle against the representatives of authoritarianism, bureaucracy and capitalism, is an inevitably ‘bloody affair’. However, what has often been overlooked is the opportunities this process presents for transport planners. And it is because of this that the Committee believes its has an important and unique role to play in the future development and management of Britain’s social and physical environment.

We and many other similar research and interest groups are of the conviction that the British landscape is disfigured by knots of parliamentarians and ‘yuppies’. Furthermore, these groups tend to clump together with others of the capitalist class. In the forthcoming and, perhaps, inevitable, class struggle we envisage that a majority of these individuals will be slaughtered. Moreover, that this ‘blood-bath’ will result in considerable sub and surface soil liquid run-off. Under our proposals, these predicted torrents of capitalist blood will flow in a manageable and socially-useful direction. The once dry and unsightly motorways of Britain will be transformed into attractive and environmentally sustainable ‘red rivers’.

But what use, other than the purely aesthetic, could these new fluvial features be put to? Again, we think we have an answer.

**Transport of Delight**

The Roads Advisory Committee has considered a number of exciting proposals concerning the use and maintenance of the predicted ‘motorways of blood’. However, we believe the moral force of one particular solution cannot, at present, be rivalled.

In summary, we envisage the salling of wind and solar powered pleasure barges along the new canal network. Such barges would be free of charge. They would be specifically built and designed to enable the numerous victims of capitalist oppression and boredom to enjoy leisurely cruises throughout the length and breadth of the UK. We suggest that children and elderly people would find a particular satisfaction in relaxed and contemplative drifts along Britain’s new ‘scarlet streams’.

Roads Advisory Committee

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**Dislocation on the Isle of Dogs**

by Fabian Tompsett

Some people will be familiar with the illustration on the left. It was developed by Gestalt psychologists to illustrate their understanding of how visual perception works. The image can be seen as a vase or two people facing each other in profile. These are distinct viewings, as the faces must disappear from consciousness for the vase to manifest itself and vice versa. Either the faces constitute a black figure against a white ground, or the vase constitutes a white figure against a black ground. It requires an act of will to move between each viewing, and there is an unstable point where the whole is simply seen as an abstract image.

Today in London we are participating in another reversal of figure and ground. The East End is frequently used as a back-drop for film and television. It is generally treated as a passive ground in front of which frightfully interesting characters do frightfully interesting things. However occasionally figures from the cityscape are drawn into focus and become elements in the narrative, abstracting them from their environment and placing them in the mythic structure of the film or TV programme. This process and the manipulation of these images has a real effect on the locations and the people who live in the East End. The use of the location can create a sense of dislocation.

To highlight this sense of dislocation, the illustration on the right refers to an item in an exhibition on visual illusions held at the National Gallery in the 1970s. The white lines can be seen as a cube in two distinct ways — either with the lower corner (A) projecting towards us, or with the upper corner (B) coming out at us. In fact the
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exhibit was actually a wire cube painted with fluorescent paint in a black box. The visitor was invited to hold the bottom of the cube in the tips of their fingers, perceptually reversing the way they saw the cube (i.e. they saw the corner facing them as the most distant) and then to gently rotate the cube. The visual reversion gave the illusion that the cube was rotating in the opposite way from that which the hand actually turned it. This gave rise to a most peculiar sensation in the wrist, as if the wrist was dislocated.

I want to relate these effects to the impact that film and television can have on our sense of space in the East End’s Isle of Dogs, which is where I live. The area has been transformed over the last fifteen years. This section of London Docklands has been at the centre of the so-called ‘regeneration’ of East London. This transformation has resulted in spectacular modern architecture which has frequently been used as a backdrop for various filmic enterprises. Indeed, the area has been actively promoted by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) for this purpose.

Before going any further I want to make some remarks about the organisation of the physical and symbolic cityscape through architecture and film. The separation and comprehend built and social structures with our internalised mental structures. All these are changing in relation to each other. But in the patterns of our life, certain journeys attain the quality of a familiar tune. These are our song-lines — a sequenced string of locations engraved on our memory, sometimes experienced half-awake in the early morning on the way to work, sometimes experienced half-asleep, coming home after a night out. Our unique experiences, the particular routes we use from our home to our work, to the shops, to visit our friends and family, are interwoven with those of our neighbours to create the texture of city life.

Urban planning and ‘regeneration’ grasps this texture and sets out to transform it. On the Isle of Dogs, we have been subjected to a fifteen year offensive by the capitalist state in restructuring our urban environment. Fifteen years ago, the Island was like the land time forgot: neglected working class communities wedged in between industrial sites, some derelict, others in lingering decline.

The entrance to the Island involved travelling down a narrow road between two walls so high that they dwarfed even a double-decker bus. Where once the activities of the docks were masked from sight, these walls now hid inactivity. When I moved to the Island our neighbours would joke about having been on the waiting list to get alternative council housing elsewhere for a dozen or more years. At times it seemed that the dock and factory walls surrounded the housing estates rather than the factories and docks; that we’d moved to an open prison, a barracoon, with an indeterminate sentence. The area was composed of the highest concentration of council housing in England, linked by this one road which went around the edge of the Island, providing access for the single bus route. Taxi drivers would refuse to go onto the Island. After a while you would learn how to trick them to take you nearer home. It seemed to be the one area not covered by London taxi-drivers’ comprehensive geographical training, known as ‘the knowledge’. The over-priced local shops were complemented by the sadness of Chrip Street market and its shabby stalls on the mainland. (I was shocked to read how Lewis Mumford described this as “a little masterpiece” featuring a “cheerful covered walk punctuated by sustaining columns”, but then he didn’t have to trudge there every week to do his shopping.)

This grim world has disappeared — or so we are lead to believe by the glittering images disseminated by the LDDC. The north of the Island has become the site of show piece architecture such as Cascades, a wedge shaped housing block and, of course, Canary Wharf, which has in many ways become an emblem of the Thatcher years, symbolising both the arrogance and the subsequent economic collapse. Despite the 1980s being a time of major architectural and building development in the City of London, the Isle of Dogs, a couple of miles down the road still drew most of the attention.

For those living on the Island, it was both a gradual and a rapid transformation. With little work on the Island, many people travelled daily through the building sites on the north of the Island, watching the zone being transformed. The developments they saw were clearly alien. Cascades offered housing for the rich, whilst the Canary Wharf complex was to be a bizarre hive for office drones who commuted in from the suburbs. It was clear that these facilities were ‘not for us’. This so-called ‘inner city regeneration’ had more in common with colonialism than the stated aim of improving the lot of the indigenous inhabitants. As the gap between rich and poor widened across the whole of Britain, the Island became a crucible where the extremes existed side by side. Estates which had been the poorest in London since Booth’s nineteenth century maps of urban poverty, were now down the road from yuppie flats equipped with private gyms and swimming pools. The inhabitants were never intended to mix.

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their minds. Alongside everything that a visitor, or visiting film crew, might see, this weight of the past hangs on in the minds of the living. Over the last century this layering of spatial memory has been interacting with filmic representations of the urban environment. In the last forty years television has turned this process into a domestic, interior dialectic. In Docklands this has happened at the same time as the decline of London as a port.

Capitalist film and television, as the industrialisation of the collective consciousness, interacts with the architecture of redevelopment in new strategies of class control and repression.

The same values which are reflected in buildings like Canary Wharf draw film makers to Docklands. Whilst working on 'Shopping', the camera operator, Mike Proudfoot, remarked that the makers of Batman could have saved millions on building the set of Gotham city, if they had used the East End. And, indeed, Canary Wharf is in some ways like a film set. It's failure to attract tenants gives the area an empty and haunted look, which in turn makes it easier to organise the area for the industrial needs of film makers. Indeed it is periodically used as a location for spectacular events, green lasers projected across London, or decorated by computer controlled lights which change according to pre-determined patterns.

Speaking at the 1993 East End Film Festival, a LDDC representative enthused about their desire to make a broad range of locations available to the film industry. She boasted about how the LDDC's powers could enable areas to be sealed off, reducing the number of people film-makers must approach for permission. Aside from the more obvious PR and strictly economic reasons for promoting Docklands as a film location, the LDDC was excited by the prospect of tides of "the kind of people you get involved in film, kind of interesting, lively, creative people who make things happen", i.e., middle class people as opposed to the indigenous working class inhabitants (who from this point of view are mere drudges). This is typical of the vicious class hatred that has accompanied the use of Isle of Dogs' locations by the film and TV industry.

Aside from the general terms of class domination embodied by the media, the use of familiar locations can give rise to feelings of dislocation and disorientation for the local inhabitant. For example, for many viewers, the first programme in the television series 'Bugs', might have been appreciated as a mundane action programme spiced up with computers and fancy architecture. However, for the inhabitants of the programme's Docklands location, this sort of mediocre television consists of bizarre leaps around a familiar environment. A car chase passes the same point four times — evocative of the Eisenstein's 'Battleship Potemkin' perhaps, but with none of the intensity. The mechanical construction of the car chase is simply a genre formality to get from plot point A to plot point B. But it is also a violation of its location; a dislocation of the Isle of Dogs.

Another programme, 'Tomorrow's People', a futuristic kid's production, was more imaginative, in that it integrated Canary Wharf into an occult plan for world domination led by Christopher Lee. Here, the building has become an extra large obelisk modelled on Cleopatra's Needle. Masonic magic is being used to recreate an ancient Egyptian ritual bestowing eternal life. An interesting idea but set within a Famous Five formula, whereby ridiculous middle-class youth save the cosmos. Although they use the famous vista from the James Wolfe statue in Greenwich Park, Canary Wharf is seen as a diabolical object rather than the latest instalment in ruling class architectural domination of the area (a history that has continued from Inigo Jones' Queen Anne House, through the work of 'That Great Architect', Christopher Wren, to the present day).

This latter theme is referred to in Soft Future Productions' 'Heliocentrum', screened recently on Channel 4. Here, they start with the seventeenth century heliocentric court of Louis XIV, the Sun King. But this discourse on his absolutist rule is transformed with representations of the 'Trafalgar Square anti-poll tax riot counterposed with Canary Wharf. In fact, this echoes the way Greenwich Palace, as a site of ruling class despotism, has been extended across the river to the Isle of Dogs and Canary Wharf. Whereas La Nôtre was the landscape gardener of both Versailles, home of Louis XIV's court, and Greenwich Park, Roy Strong, author of several books about the seventeenth century court's use of the spectacle as an organ of power, was an adviser for the architects of the Canary Wharf complex.

I want to use this parallel spanning three hundred years to undermine the whole conception of post-modernism. As Strong has demonstrated, the 'Spectacle' was a feature of the emergence of modernity, of the re-organisation of social life around economics. As the 'intellectual certainties' of the nineteenth-century dissolve, we should remember that they only ever existed in the minds of upper class male Europeans. Post-modernism reflects the incapacity of academia to cope with the increasing commodification of knowledge. It may have kept various careers afloat, but it will always be more of a symptom than a cure.

Class struggle has always manifested itself around the construction of symbolic landscape. In 1649 Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers set their commune up within sight of St. George's Chapel, Windsor. In the French revolution the site of the Bastille became a rallying point for revolutionaries, and Nôtre Dame was transformed by placing a pile of earth within. During the Russian Revolution the storming of the Winter Palace had to be restaged for the cameras. Like Marx pointing to the demolition of the Vendôme Column, I would like to suggest as an epitaph for Canary Wharf 'Soon to be Picturesque Ruins'.

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their minds. Alongside everything that a visitor, or visiting film crew, might see, this weight of the past hangs on in the minds of the living. Over the last century this layering of spatial memory has been interacting with filmic representations of the urban environment. In the last forty years television has turned this process into a domestic, interior dialectic. In Docklands this has happened at the same time as the decline of London as a port.

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Detained and Détourned


Peter Suchin

Because, presumably, of a sudden and disabling fall of snow the first day, this weekend event took a revised turn. Instead of beginning with the presentations of Pascal Dumontier (author of Les situationnistes et mai ‘68) and Gilles Tordjman (a contributor to Liberation), the Saturday session opened with the reading-out, in French, of texts by these authors, since the writers themselves were unable, because of the bad weather, to attend. These readings were supplemented by hand-outs of English translations of the same pieces. Dumontier’s text proposed that there had been three types of recent commentary on the Situationist International (SI): (1) the ‘maximalist’ critique, (2) a critique which offered a “theoretical refutation” of the SI project and (3), an approach to the SI which Dumontier characterised as “ideological recuperation”. The conclusion to this third section of the paper read as follows:

It is a banality to say that the world has changed since 1972 and the dissolution of the SI. But the social critique of tomorrow, if it still wants to have a revolutionary impact, cannot consist itself with simply rehashing themes formulated by the SI in and for its time.1

I wanted to report these remarks because they are, I think, very much to the point in a world in which courses on the situationists are currently being taught in academic institutions. The new-found academic worthiness of the Situationist International is pertinent to the very existence of the Manchester conference.2

I am not trying to suggest that the theories of the SI should not be taken into the ‘academy’. On the contrary, such erstwhile radical ideas should be disseminated within — and indeed without — academic institutions. But the problem comes when such critical positions, arguments and propositions for radical change are reduced to ‘mere’ ideas. The dissemination and discussion of ideas for their own intrinsic interest and value is not a trivial matter. Indeed, in a culture wherein knowledge for its own sake is being replaced by ‘useful’ information and in which training rather than education becomes the norm, the spread and protection of critical thought becomes a necessary act. But the commodification of critical theory is another thing entirely.

The Manchester conference was a confusing, and in some ways demeaning affair. Was it an academic gathering, a reunion of situationist-related radicals and their kin, or something else entirely? Possibly a deliberately ‘post-modern’ hybrid form? Did anyone know what exactly it was meant to be? Its status never did become clear. Could one take the event to be some kind of ‘radical’ activity, a challenge to conventional presentations and structures of the academic-ish conference or just some kind of mess, neither one thing or another? There was certainly, during that cold weekend in January, some kind of ambience of radicality at play, the would-be transgressive side-stepping of orthodox academic practice. For one thing, the conference was held at a famous pop night-spot, a place named after a phrase once uttered by the SI. But, this name aside, why hold a couple of days of ostensibly serious critical debate in a freezing cold, essentially unfriendly space whose one most evident quality was its unsuitability as a venue for the event being held? It didn’t work. It could not have done.

The overall ‘feel’ of much of ‘The Hacienda Must be Built’ was akin to the miserable conditions that obtain within contemporary further education. The bad weather notwithstanding, the structure of the two days was, at best, somewhat poor. And if certain of the speakers genuinely couldn’t make it to Manchester, well, one began to get the impression that some of the other ‘speakers’ just couldn’t be bothered to turn up. Ralph Rumney, for one, decided that he didn’t, after all, wish to attend, and sent instead a grumpy fax. Jamie Reid, supposedly a contributor to the Sunday afternoon panel discussion, did not arrive. Nor did Sadie Plant and Nick Land. One wondered if this latter double absence had anything to do with a recently published critique of what was acerbically termed ‘Cyberdrivel’, an article in which these writers were taken to task for their jargon-packed adventures in print.3 Present at the conference was a contingent of contributors to Here and Now, the journal in which the ‘Cyberdrivel’ piece appeared. Were Plant and Land avoiding them? Maybe the cybercouple were in cyberspace? Plant did send along a piece of her work, a kind of Throbbing-Gristle-meets-Cruise-Missile extravaganza, a noisy and to many of those present, irritating pop video. Reid also contributed an ‘arty’, rave-related video and light show. Sending in these works allowed Reid, Plant and Land to make a contribution without having to face up to any awkward or unpleasant questions that might have been put in their direction had they physically presented themselves.

Following on from the scrambling beginning of the reading out of Dumontier and Tordjman’s papers further realignments were carried out. Gus MacDonald (who was initially down as a Sunday speaker) and Len Bracken together took on a wide range of issues raised by the SI’s texts. Bracken’s paper, ‘Perspectives on revolutionary strategy and Debord’s game of war’, did, indeed, attempt to the complexities of Debord’s board game methods and he raised some notable points in connection with capitalist production and consumption. His claim that if everyone in the West stopped producing commodities immediately there would still be three years worth of goods available for consumption was the kind of insight that allows one to see capitalism from a whole new perspective. Such remarks, slightly shocking as they are, reframe certain everyday assumptions vis-à-vis work, production, need and want. As I understood it, Bracken was seriously proposing that people simply refuse to work, disarming in one fell swoop all those whingers who say that if people didn’t work
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It became apparent, almost before the first morning session was over, that the planned structure of the conference had been all but lost. The speakers that had turned up muddled through, agreeably going on stage at points in the programme not time-tabled into the original plan. When it came to the screening of Brigitte Comand’s Guy Debord, son art et son temps the audience, as requested, moved to a larger hall in the building wherein the screening was to be carried out. Indeed the piece was shown but, alas, the roof was partly made of glass and there was no means of masking out the intruding daylight. And so the film was barely visible, with atrocious sound quality to boot. The earlier part of the conference had been held in a room which had, as one of its most pressing features, a considerable lack of light. In this respect it would have been an ideal place to project Comard’s film.

By this stage many people were wandering about, looking for the cafe or the bookstall. It was very cold - you had to keep moving to try and avoid noticing it.

No-one seemed to know what arrangements had been made for Saturday evening. Was anyone meeting up with anyone else, and if so, where? There were rumours of a projected meeting place but also stories to the effect that the conference organisers were only telling select attendees of the conference where this was. Visitors from France and Germany were trying to find a place to eat. This little state of chaos at the end of a cold and unpleasant day was not much appreciated.

On the Sunday a range of speakers attended to a variety of issues. Lucy Forsyth spoke anecdotally about the time she lived with Debord and others in a house in the south of France. She took the opportunity to consider and correct some of the ‘myths’ surrounding Debord’s cult-leader status.

Phil Edwards presented an analysis of the SI’s claim that “the Hacienda must be built” in a paper that argued, not without a sense of irony that, on the contrary, “the Hacienda must be destroyed”. I suspect many people agreed with this proposition, on a literal level, by the end of the Sunday session.

The paper on situationism and recuperation presented by Richard Hooker was among the most critically interesting moments of the entire conference. Hooker stressed that the SI had clearly held to a practice in which the cultural and the political were seen as directly connected. And it was in practice, not ‘merely’ within their voluminous theoretical writings that the SI addressed this complex knife edge of concerns. A pest in the audience repeatedly, and unproductively, kept interrupting, proposing that Hooker had misunderstood what the SI had ‘said’. But Hooker calmly responded to the awkward interrupter. It was clear that the latter, notwithstanding Hooker’s evident erudition, was the pedant.

Manchester is a place very much associated with pop music. A relatively large attendance for the exchange between Anthony Wilson, Stewart Home, Mark Smith (of The Fall) and Jon King (of the Gang of Four) was, therefore, to be predicted. I wonder what some of that audience expected from this clutch of voices. What they got, in any case, was a discussion which, whilst sometimes quite amusing, far too often appeared merely the result of yet more bad planning, not to mention a clash of personalities, ‘theories’ and egos. Wilson prattled on about how he’d named his club the ‘Hacienda’ for no real reason - it just seemed like a good name. But he added, at some (very tedious) length that he always insisted his employees consume some SI literature when they began working for him. This sounded more like an act of arrogance and minor oppression than a gesture of liberation. The generally banal discussion bordered on impolite accusations exchanged between Smith and Wilson until, finally, insults did actually get exchanged. Smith purported not to know what situationism was; Wilson proceeded to explain it to him. But neither character had much of a clue as to what they were talking about. Home said little; he couldn’t get a word in between the bitter banter of Smith and Wilson. Smith at one point referred to the Gang of Four and when King disagreed, saying his band had never done that of which it was being accused, Smith wittily remarked that he meant the Chinese Gang of Four. At least this quip was amusing, and it showed that Smith wasn’t as naive as he initially appeared. However, this sharp, comic moment was in brash contrast to Smith’s pretty rude, boozy shouting down of the other speakers’ remarks.

There were a number of instances of this inability to listen to anyone else. Smith had evidently been on the alcohol earlier in the day. But it was later in the afternoon, during Ben Watson’s vituperative attack on what he called the “popsicle academy” that Smith’s interruptions were most prominent. Smith drunkenly shouted from the back of the hall that Watson’s talk was jargon-infested nonsense. The latter kept his cool and continued to read out his paper. This little fragment of audience participation was not a radical intervention from the floor but a burst, rather, of embarrassingly drunken behaviour. Frank Dexter’s remarks upon the implications of this outburst are apt. According to Dexter there is a,

widespread delusion that inarticulacy is somehow distinctively proletarian and, therefore, somehow revolutionary. Everything [Smith] said could have been put through an upper class accent-modulator and the audience reaction would have been completely different. Only in England could elementary bad manners (ignorance, stupidity, alcoholically interrupting others, egocentric inability to listen to anyone else, presumption of being forever ‘working class’ because of one’s origins and claiming as such to ‘represent’ them, etc.) be taken seriously as a radical posture. The occasional pearl of wisdom is straight from the bottle. The punk-thug attitude of contempt is more striking for the damaged psyche it reveals than for anything it may tell one about what it is an attitude towards ... Pimps like Wilson have been plying such stage-prole creeps with booze and gratifying their self-delusions for centuries ... to make a spectacle of themselves for the gratification of the (real) bourgeoisie. 4

Dexter’s comments on Tony ‘Hacienda’ Wilson and his ilk also seem worth quoting here:

what a slick, oily, recuperateur he is ... the essential sixties formation lies at the basis of his incoherent and self-serving ‘radicality’. Basically the ever-same eternal recurrence of adolescent rebellion against daddy serves as a profitable simulacrum of revolt against capitalism. There is an entire class of such people ... running the music biz.
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Neutral and Commercial... Just Like Everybody


Howard Slater

Being one of the first steps in the canonisation of club culture, Sarah Thornton’s book raises some serious issues about cultural empowerment and the retrograde role of academic cultural studies. In many ways Club Cultures could only ever appeal in an institutional arena where club cultures are generally looked upon with disdain and condescension. It is only within such a context that this text could appear 'hip' or radical.

The grave implications of this academic isolation emerge in the sub-chapter entitled ‘A night of research’ which brings into clearer relief the operation of the elitist discourses that can be witnessed throughout the book. Here, Thornton’s status as an ‘outsider’ to club culture, needing ‘guides’ and ‘informants’, increases the sense of ‘objectivity’ and judgmental superiority. These elements combine to give the writing a smug ‘governmental tone’ that renders the heterogeneous complexities of club culture “knowable, practicable and amenable to governing” (Johnson, 1993, p.151).

The academic writes ‘truths’, not allowing stray elements into her/his carefully worked intellectual structures. Thornton doesn’t engage with sub-culture, rather she subjects it to pre-ordained academic tools and boxes it off under rubrics of ‘distinction’ and ‘authenticity’. These tools are themselves informed by academic isolation. Even though Thornton rails against the division between an objectivist approach and a subjectivist one, the practice of professionalism, its ways of operating, necessitate that she is always at a distance, always operating under undisclosed rules: “I was working in a cultural space in which everyone else was at their leisure”. Or, in the same passage, “I tried to maintain an analytical frame of mind that is truly anathema to the ‘lose yourself’... ethos of clubs and raves” (p.2). This capitulation to the mind/body dichotomy not only denies dancers their sensual intelligence but locates the generation of meaning firmly within the walls of the institution, or at least within the bodies of its emissaries. For not only does the scene not get to talk for itself but there is no reflexive consideration of the academic’s role (i.e., Thornton’s investment in her career, her sifting through interviews to select quotes that best compliment her thesis etc.).

This operation of ‘knowledges’, albeit conflated with ‘professional practices’, comprise a power that is wielded over club culture. In this way Thornton relegates an investigation of the desires unleashed through dancing to music to the status of generational conflict (“lost within the excesses and irresponsibilities of youth”). This age motif, as befits the study of youth culture, constantly raises its head and serves as a screen that obscures the wider psycho-social dimensions of the club/rave scene (there is only one speculative attempt to engage the latter process in the whole book: “crowds become a self-conscious cultural phenomena, one which generates moods immune to reproduction”). Even though resistance would remain hidden for anyone who confines the notion of freedom with “substantive political rights”, it is further obscured in this work by the academic/objectivist contention that the scene’s “supposed egalitarianism” is not a valid area of consideration as it does not offer a “value-free account”. Without getting into debates about ‘freedom’, the obvious question to ask is what makes the academic’s account a “value-free” one when “the rules of formation of discourses are linked to the operation of a particular kind of social power” (Gordon, 1980, p.245)? In other words, how and why should Thornton’s view become a socially sanctioned truth while the clubbers’ discourses are posited as deluded. A link arises here with the operation of the media. For both academics and journalists are legitimated through their role as specialist professionals invested with power/knowledge. Once the professional identifies with the aims of
The remainder of Sunday afternoon was taken up with presentations by Patrick Ffrench (on Walter Benjamin’s _filmdeur_, the city, and the situationists), Stewart Home and Fabian Tomsett (on radicalism and the mystical tradition, the destruction of the avant-garde and other complex intersections of diverse bodies of knowledge), and ended with Plant’s Swarmpendes. We were supposed to enjoy this extended pop video or was it there, as much pop music appears to be, as a means of actually policing critical thought? Images of riots and a loud beat that drowned out all possibility of conversation resulted in a number of people leaving the hall. As with Reid’s video any possibility of dialogue was destroyed, neither piece offering more than a repetition of conventional club-scene pop. (It always amazes me that, with the complex technology that’s available today for the making of music, the potential for interesting diversity is almost without exception reduced to a depressing sameness). I’d rather read Deleuze and Guattari or Virilio than have to suffer Plant’s awful aural translation of same. If ever one needed proof that radical theory, as taught in universities, had become as conservative a concern as the druggy culture of the club, this was it. Stewart Home had earlier made the point that pop rebellion was an institutionalised means of releasing anger and frustration within capitalism, a way of preventing, through a marketed image of rebellion, the taking place of any genuinely revolutionary action. Unfortunately, he was right.

NOTES
1. It appears that the texts were translated specifically for the benefit of those who attended the conference. Dumontier’s paper, in English translation, was entitled ‘The Situationist International as Subject and Representation’; Jardymn’s was rendered as ‘Refutation of a Few Judgements Passed on Guy Debord and His Books’. The translator was not named.
4. Dexter’s text, from which this and the following remark are taken, is a private letter to Peter Suchin, dated Monday, 28th January (1996). Quoted with permission.

Neutral and Commercial... Just Like Everybody
A Review of _Club Cultures: Music, Media and Distinction_ by Sarah Thornton

Howard Slater

Being one of the first steps in the canonisation of club culture, Sarah Thornton’s book raises some serious issues about cultural empowerment and the retrograde role of academic cultural studies. In many ways _Club Cultures_ could only ever appeal in an institutional arena where club cultures are generally looked upon with disdain and condescension. It is only within such a context that this text could appear ‘hip’ or radical.

The grave implications of this academic isolation emerge in the sub-chapter entitled ‘A Night of research’ which brings into clearer relief the operation of the elitist discourses that can be witnessed throughout the book. Here, Thornton’s status as an ‘outsider’ to club culture, needing ‘guides’ and ‘informants’, increases the sense of ‘objectivity’ and judgmental superiority. These elements combine to give the writing a smug ‘governmental’ tone that renders the heterogeneous complexities of club culture “knowable, practicable and amenable to governing” (Johnson, 1993, p.151).

The academic writes ‘truths’, not allowing stray elements into her/his carefully worked intellectual structures. Thornton doesn’t engage with sub-culture, rather she subjects it to pre-ordained academic tools and boxes it off under rubrics of ‘distinction’ and ‘authenticity’. These tools are themselves informed by academic isolation. Even though Thornton rebels against the division between an objectivist approach and a subjectivist one, the practice of professionalism, its ways of operating, necessitates that she is always at a distance, always operating under undisclosed rules: “I was working in a cultural space in which everyone else was at their leisure”. Or, in the same passage, “I tried to maintain an analytical frame of mind that is truly anathema to the ‘lose yourself ... ethos of clubs and raves’” (p.2). This capitulation to the mind/body dichotomy not only denies dancers their sensuous intelligence but locates the generation of meaning firmly within the walls of the institution, or at least within the bodies of its emissaries. For not only does the scene not get to talk for itself but there is no reflexive consideration of the academic’s role (i.e., Thornton’s investment in her career, her sifting through interviews to select quotes that best compliment her thesis etc.).

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society he/she can see nothing but his/her own conformist positions replicating in authenticity everywhend. Hence Thornton’s claim that as far as clubbers are concerned, “interest in authenticity and distinction would seem to be the norm”. Authenticity and distinction are mainstays of the status-quo.

It is at this point that we can get to the nitty gritty of Club Cultures. For it is in these two concepts — authenticity and distinction — that Thornton’s claim for originality within cultural studies lies, and it is through use of these tools that club culture is understood. By using Bourdieu’s theory of distinction Thornton hopes to legitimate club cultures as an area of academic study. What is most disturbing about this operation is that, whereas Bourdieu provides the reader with a means of deconstructing the operation of high cultures, Thornton inverts the whole paradigm and implants his concepts onto popular culture. The implication is that clubbers want to replicate already existing social norms — to have a ‘symbolic share’, to assert their “distinctive character”. It is unarguable that any sub-culture, existing as part of the dominant culture, will, to some extent, reproduce dominant cultural values: that there would be some who have a desire for status, who uphold hierarchies and “jockey for social power”. But Thornton’s main thesis implies that distinction is rife throughout the entire dance culture. Not unrelatedly, she blocks-off the psycho-social aspects of a culture whose common base-line is feelings of collectivity. Club Cultures’ desire for concrete evidence and proof acts to belittle these feelings and subordinate possibilities of resistance to normative criteria.

The thesis of ‘distinction’ becomes all the more problematic when we gradually realise that Club Cultures is not going to adequately delineate the club scene from the rave scene. This is a serious oversight. For just as Thornton highlights the tendency of clubs to cater to differing genres of music, the rave scene, at least at its inception, acted to bring disparate groups together. So, just as clubs seem ready-made for the ‘distinction’ thesis, the raves offered people something different; something that contained, but in no way consciously constructed, an effect of resistance. In this respect it is worth re-treading a facet of the raves that has become common currency, but which receives no mention in Club Cultures, namely the desire for collectivity, the group-experience. To adequately understand this desire it is worth coming out of the ivory tower and placing the rave in its social context, i.e., the political situation of the late 1980s and early 1990s. These were times when anti-trade union laws, new laws on affray and trespass, the crackdown on football fans and, more recently, the Criminal Justice Act, demonstrated a “tendency towards the prevention of sociability” (Barret, 1994, p.4). Following in the wake of Anti-Poll Tax demonstrations (which themselves saw disparate sub-cultural groups coming together) the rave experience articulated, however fleetingly, the “recurring struggle of people to reconstitute communities from what has been overlooked or not yet drawn into the hands of specific interests” (Barret, 1994, p.4). Just because ravers didn’t express themselves in conventional political terms should not be used to belittle their experience of coming together, the potential force of which should be read in conjunction with the increasing constrictions on social space. Anyone who has been in a rave or on a football terrace knows the feeling. Novelist Irvine Welsh (1995) has spoken of raves being “one of the only places that working class people can get together”. (this mention of a specific class orientation also casts doubt on Thornton’s thesis that the dance sub-culture is propelled by a desire for “classlessness”).

Departing again from clubs, but closely linked to the influence of raves, is the phenomenon of the ‘free-party’. The free-party has been a persistent feature of dance culture and is personified by Spiral Tribe (now mainly operating in Europe), Exodus Sound System and the United Systems Network. In many ways the free-party scene is the least “distinctive”, most anti-commercial and consciously oppositional of sub-cultures. Were it to be included in Club Cultures it would be under the category ‘underground’, which is yet another facet of dance culture that Thornton is quick to map out as a site of exclusivity. The problem here is that, in defining the underground solely in opposition to the “overexposed” or “the mass produced”, Thornton can only see in its adherents a desire to be “part of something that is not widely distributed” (p.121). Here there are flaws in the methodology. For, whilst she rightly criticises others for treating the media as monolithic, the yardstick by which she attempts discussion of the underground term ‘selling out’ is the long running television programme ‘Top Of The Pops’. Many people who are loosely involved in something that could be called, at one time or another, ‘underground’ would rarely watch such a programme. More to the point, these people more often than not see themselves as involved in activities that “by-pass” or run ‘parallel’ to the mainstream. They are just as involved in recycling the mainstream as in defining themselves in strict opposition to it. Many would attest to the view that just because a record/sound becomes popular doesn’t mean to say that it loses its sense of being ‘underground’. Thus the idea that the ‘underground’ bemoans those who ‘sell out’ because “the underground” thereby looses some “sense of possession, exclusive ownership and familiar belonging” (p.124) is far too pat. To use the dualistic device that is rife in Club Cultures we could turn this round and say that many people experience ‘the underground’ as a place where knowledge or ‘sub-cultural capital’ is shared and squandered and the mainstream as the site where people jealously protect insights as ‘trade secrets’. That Thornton chooses to illustrate her point by trotting out the ‘white-label’ scenario as being a “distinctive format” cherished by ‘the underground’ is just another means by which her thesis can be propped up - you could also read the white-label as an anonymous anti-product. Moreover, you could choose to focus on sampling and plagiaristic means of making music as non-propietary, anti-dificultive and group-creative events without individual authors.

Such counter-readings could go on and on. The point is that Thornton’s notion of ‘the underground’ is developed in too tight a relationship to the mainstream; it doesn’t escape the mainstream’s purview. This association may be linked to her contention that the media are involved in disseminating sub-cultures through the construction of moral-panics concerning youth crime and generational conflict. This is interesting to a degree, but Thornton, whilst claiming to be utilising a multi-dimensional perspective, tips the balance in favour of such media constructions. With reference to the tabloid Thornton suggests that “derogatory media coverage is not the verdict but the essence of ... resistance” (p.137). This interpretation acts to obscure those activities that are carried out as part of ‘the underground’. The lack of visibility of these activities is not so much a result of its participants jealously guarding a “release of knowledge”, as an outcome of “the underground”’s activities not fitting into readily marketable product categories and its desire to maintain a control over
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contextualisation, as well as an autonomy from any form of ‘editorial’ interference. Many of those who participate in the dance underground as composers, label runners, party organisers, fanzine producers etc. see it as a site of experimentation, as a place or an attitude that allows input irrespective of status and distinction; a place of discovery where inquisitiveness is activated; a site that doesn’t take at face value media imposed categories and genre mongering; a place that is not always motivated by commerce and profit whether it is sub-cultural or economic: “Underground is when you enjoy doing your thing without trying to please people you don’t like, or when you create something without thinking about the money it might bring in” (Duivenvoorden and Michigan, 1995). The ‘essence’ of resistance is far removed from tabloid opprobrium. Indeed in the dance culture there is no easily identifiable essence of resistance but a “warren of minute, individual, autonomous tactics and strategies” (Gordon, 1980, p.257).

What is objectionable about Club Cultures is the way that it acts to blunt and freeze over many of the positive and oppositional aspects of club/rave culture. What for many people has been a culture of social inspiration, amidst a political situation of profound pessimism, is canonised here as nothing more than a relay between institutions that reflect the status quo (cultural studies departments, tabloid press, style mags). There is very little sense of exploration, of speculation or possibilities. Instead the ritualised procedures of academia are trotted out. Maybe, in the long run, these criticisms place too great a credence in the possible ramifications of Club Cultures, when it is the operation of academic disciplines, their will to ‘truth’ and their social authority that is at issue. It is the implied ‘correctness’ of such writing that is so galling, the way that it acts to silence those who, “lacking a technical language” (de Certeau, 1986, p.26), cannot retort to disturb its impenetrable and artfully constructed theses. Even so it is worth recalling, along with de Certeau, that at the inception of the study of popular culture, at least in France, there lies the “elimination of a popular menace” - the 1852 police survey of street literature.

NOTES
1. The title of this piece is taken from the 23 Skidoo track ‘Tearing Up The Plans’

REFERENCES

Academic Architectures:
The ‘Strangely Familiar’ Experience
‘Strangely Familiar’, one-day symposium at the Royal Institute of British Architects, London, 27th January, 1996
‘Strangely Familiar’, exhibition at the Royal Institute of British Architects, London, 12th December-10th February, 1996

Simon Sadler and Benjamin Franks

As the market for post-modernism become saturated, the radical and egalitarian ideas that post-modernism once appropriated are to be dusted down and given some sleek repackaging. In fact, some of the ‘Strangely Familiar’ consortium, led by a caucus (lain Borden, Joe Kerr, Alicia Pivaro and Jane Rendell) originating from the Bartlett School of Architecture, London, are themselves professional designers (at Studio Myersough). The ideas of Walter Benjamin and Henri Lefebvre have never looked so good, woven around gorgeous Live! TV-style colours at the ‘Strangely Familiar’ exhibition and floating through the enchanting layouts of the ‘Strangely Familiar’ catalogue.

And the big guns, it seems, are rallying to the cause. ‘Strangely Familiar’ has been backed by a frightening battery of institutions - University College London, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the British Academy, Routledge, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, the University of North London, the Arts Council - and individual names (including Dolores Hayden, Elizabeth Wilson, Lynne Walker, Jonathan Charley, Sandy McCreery, William Menking, Doreen Massey, Edward Soja, Richard Sennett, and Peter Hall).

Admittedly, when it came to the ‘Strangely Familiar’ symposium Sennett was nowhere to be seen, and Peter Hall’s entertaining opening address on the impacts of information technology upon urbanism was partly dedicated to rubbishng some of the precepts of the day, in particular the work of Benjamin. The tone of general uncertainty as to what was to be expected of ‘Strangely Familiar’ had been set.

In fairness, it isn’t easy to set out a programme which will account for the perception and construction of the social reality of the city; one soon finds oneself having to account for everything everywhere at all times. As Adrian Forty writes in the catalogue ‘Forward’, ‘Strangely Familiar’ was born of “the failure of architectural history to throw any light on architecture’s relationship to the rest of the world... Despite the obvious significance of architecture in shaping experience, [it] seemed permanently stuck in a backwater of archaeology and attribution” (p.5).
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BARRET, J. (1994) 'The search for security' Here and Now 15 p 4
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Initially, the project examined the making of architecture as "congealed ideology", as the influential Marxist architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri had put it. But 'Strangely Familiar' now concentrates on the period after construction, since "architecture is not made just once, but is made and remade over and over again, each time it is represented through another medium, each time its surroundings change, each time different people experience it" (p.5).

'Strangely Familiar' experiments with three main organising themes. The first, "Conflict and Appropriation", borrowed from neo-Marxist traditions of understanding city space in terms of class conflict. The second, 'Memory and Narrative', a cultural studies approach, examined the constitution of cities in the individual and collective mind: "choosing what to remember, and deciding how to remember, are important procedures for social politics" (p.12). The third session, 'Identity and Experience', was the least clearly defined and overlapped the two preceding themes, but seemed to take more account of the way that the environment acts upon the individual, and how individuals reciprocally attempt to shape their environment.

The first session was the most coherent. A clear debate and set of strategies were apparent. Keenly propounded by Charley, the notion of space as something ultimately class-bound was questioned by Soja, who demanded a more complex, 'post-modern' analysis of urban form, one that combined 'micro' with 'macro' readings of the urban scene (accounting for both individual and collective aspiration, both interior and exterior spaces, both everydayness and history, etc.). Charley's intransigence was also questioned by Massey, who demonstrated that different social categories, such as age, cut across those of class. And, in an intriguing history of the London under-motorway, McCreery demonstrated that a proper understanding of urbanism is best pieced together through empirical research. Fleshing out the idea of urban class conflict, McCreery detailed both the strategies employed by protestors to the Westway, and its function, not merely as a means of capitalist circulation, but also as spectacular propaganda, an idealised image of modern consumer mobility for the 1960s and 1970s.

Such tendentious research was echoed in a couple of papers in the two later sessions. Menking's study of the Business Improvement District in Manhattan, where the governance of prime chunks of the metropolis has, in effect, been handed over to business interests, should be consulted by anyone who wishes to be informed about the terrifying future of the privatised city. A future in which the homeless are redefined as 'outreach workers', employed to scrape gum from the pavements and 'persuade' other homeless people to leave the area. This research was complemented by Boyer's commentary on the visual representation of the new Manhattan, showing how Times Square has been, and is being, remade into an ever more hyper-real 42nd Street, now articulated by the architect Robert Stern's LUTS (Light Units in Times Square) and directed by Disney, Virgin and Tussaud's.

Unfortunately, the two afternoon sessions began to get flabby. 'Strangely Familiar' attracted the worst sorts of academic indulgence - some papers turned into pseudo-poetic reveries on the city, others promised incisive histories but degenerated into a stream of undigested, directionless facts, which speakers would repeat apparently for their own fetishistic pleasure. Perhaps most disturbingly, and despite 'Strangely Familiar' professed interest in "other histories" (p.9), the representation of gender, race, sexual and non-Western issues was unsatisfactory in quantity, quality and critical insight.

These problems are significant because 'Strangely Familiar' has, quite rightly, even courageously, set out to change both the content and presentation of architectural discussion. And in this respect at least, it may well turn out to be a landmark event. In its attempt to bridge the boundaries of academic disciplines, and reach "those who build cities" (p.8), it could hardly have done better than secure the hospitality of the RIBA (even if none of the speakers at the symposium was an architect). In terms of presentation, moreover, it properly aimed for popularity and accessibility. The prices of the catalogue and symposium, whilst hardly peanuts, were not excessive. In theory anyone could walk into the exhibition (anyone in central London, that is). And, although the 'yoof'-style presentation was aimed a little too squarely at the information generation, the exhibition and catalogue tried hard to be jolly and unacademic.

But can 'Strangely Familiar' induce fundamental challenges to contemporary ideologies of urbanism? Has it sufficiently questioned the assumptions of the academic and architectural establishment? Despite its evocative use of images, 'Strangely familiar' required an inordinate level of English literacy to get much out of it. In fact, the catalogue was 'Strangely Familiar's most well-considered vehicle (and so is well worth acquiring), despite the project's obvious desire to break out of the constraints of the published word. The exhibition was built around texts reproduced from the catalogue, some of which were, in turn, replicated in the symposium (a mark of inexcusable laziness by those speakers concerned). Since the catalogue takes a good couple of hours to read properly, it seems unlikely that any visitor to the exhibition would have had the grit to read every word. Moreover, on our visit several of the multimedia supplements had broken down, as these things usually do. Sheltering under their cases, the scattering of objects that are supposedly 'metonymic' of the urban experience - a skateboard, a trolley, a telephone, and so on - unfortunately reminded the visitor of a traditional museum, without the concomitant programme of conservation.

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Guy Debord is Really Dead
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Sharon Stone

This is an English translation of an Italian text, "hacked out", as Stewart Home, writes in the introduction, "immediately after Guy Debord's suicide" (p.3) in 1994. Clearly less than overcome with grief, Luther Blissett delivers a scalding attack on the Debodist tradition. His main focus is upon the way Debord attempted to freeze the development of situationist thought. Drawing primarily on the Situationist International's last text, The Veritable Split in the International (written by Debord and his Italian collaborator Gianfranco Sanguinetti), Blissett delivers four main rebukes. He firstly charges that The Bore set up his canonical bad reputation, fostered the canonical style of contemplation, disseminated canonical misinformation" (p.8). This point feeds into a second accusation, that the Situationist International (SI) adopted judicial and authoritarian forms of organisation which "fostered a contemplative attitude and resulted in passivity" (p.12). This same attitude is tied, suggests Blissett, to an idealist current within the situationists' analysis of their own revolutionary role. Thus he finds in The Veritable Split,

the old idealist fallacy of Holy Spirit descending into unconscious matter, of 'consciousness being brought in from outside'. There, standing against the light, is the decrepit figure of the 'separate intellectual' who 'goes towards the people'... (p.20)

The implied allegation of arrogance is developed into a discussion of the French situationists' dismissal of the work of former colleagues in other countries. The "francocentric perspective" (p.15) has, he suggests, distorted the history of situationism. Fourthly, and finally, Blissett attempts to read The Veritable Split as a "kitsch text", a cultural form characterised by "failed emulation, inconsistency, maximalism" (p.17).

Apart from this last, intriguing but unfocused assertion of good taste, Blissett's accusations are hardly earth shattering. Indeed, there is a bizarre nativity to his discovery that Debord was "pompous", "puffed up" (p.23) and full of "boastful talk" (p.18). I would argue that the production of an aesthetic of extremism was one of the achievements of the SI, and one their most unfortunate legacies. The contradictions and problems of revolutionary avant-gardism (latent idealism, leadership cults and so on) have been around for some 150 years or so. What is interesting about the SI is, not only did they fail to learn from this history, but that they actually set about transforming these political traits into aesthetic ones: manufacturing and promoting themselves as and through an aesthetic sensibility of radicalism and 'alternativeness'. This explains both why the situationists, as Blissett notes, were unable to involve themselves seriously in ongoing political currents (including May 1968) and why, when challenged to develop a situationist form of socio-economic organisation, they

amongst all citizens. This failure was even evident within some of the most 'socially engaged' work presented at the symposium. For example, Hayden's 'Power of Place' project, which she has led from the University of California at Los Angeles. The project is an exemplary attempt to link historians, planners, architects and the public, and to retrieve and represent 'other histories' through the erection of new public monuments. In the event, one of Los Angeles' 'other histories' turns out to be a majority history, that of Black women. Nonetheless, the bureaucratic role assumed by Hayden and UCLA, with even the co-operation of locals (a few of whom were pictured mixing with keen graduate students at a wine and cheese party), passed without scrutiny.

Logically the question boils down to whether there can be a radical academy. Banding around radical ideas is not itself a radical activity. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of genuinely radical activity backed by the impressive institutional power that 'Strangely Familiar' has mustered. All credit is due to 'Strangely Familiar' for earning this backing, but the loyalties it is likely to exact may prove a hindrance to reaching the urban realities beyond the Porter's Lodge. Charley had gently to point out to his colleagues on the symposium panel that all their talk about 'appropriation' was naive romanticism: 'Have you ever tried 'appropriating' a house, for instance? I have, as a squatter. Pretty soon you find yourself confronted by a big policeman'. By comparison, the activity of skateboarding, celebrated by Borden, might be momentarily significant in its transgression of urban space, but offers little challenge to the socio-economic balance of power (and, as Borden himself pointed out, the mere marks left by skateboards have been used by the corporate owners of buildings as evidence of criminal damage).

With luck, 'Strangely Familiar' has the energy to sustain itself simply as a stocktaking of the 'radical inheritance'. But numerous speakers seemed unaware that many of their ideas had been articulated by groups such as the situationists decades before. 'Strangely Familiar', already encumbered with a 'Mission Impossible' corporate identity (logos, typography, and badge, the symbol of which - a 'global eye' - was incongruous to the point of being sinister), will have to become ruthlessly self-critical if it is to avoid the recuperative posturing of some current projects. On the same day as the 'Strangely Familiar' symposium, a conference convened at Manchester University on the 'legacy of the Situationist International' was basking in a preview by The Guardian (27th January, 1996), which represented the situationist legacy and its interlocutors as a charming side-show, "an avant-garde rave where lunch is [the] only certainty". Meanwhile, London's exclusive Architectural Association (AA) is about to publish the diploma course work of Unit 10, tutored by Robert Mull and Carlos Villanueva Brandt, under the title 'Unitary Urbanism'. The title refers to the Situationist International's call for the revolutionary seizure of city space. No matter how worthy Unit 10's intentions may be, this attempt to position the AA's professional training within a tradition of political radicalism rather than of modernist planning, with all its attendant notions of expertise and reform, is disingenuous.

The academy and its media are often excellent places for discussion, learning, and making a living. But, as part and parcel of the establishment, they can be ridiculously inappropriate places to attempt revolutionary praxis.
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London Psychogeographical Association
Newsletter Numbers 1-12 (1993-1995)
available from L.P.A., Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS. Library
and supporter subscriptions £3 (cheques payable to Unpopular Books).

Manchester Area Psychogeographic
available from M.A.P., 24 Burlington Road, Manchester M20 4QA. For past or future
copies send postage stamps and address

Dusty Bin

There’s nothing more entertaining than watching the reaction of situationist historians
and academic recuperators to the activities of the magico-Marxists of the London
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LPA makes them nervous, it bypasses their ‘critical faculties’ and leaves them feeling
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To understand what the LPA is up to let’s take a look at the story under that last
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royal event in aid of a posh school, the visit had been astrologically co-ordinated as a
magico-religious ritual, paying homage to a site of occult power. Elsewhere the LPA
has investigated how ruling class institutions are physically situated in order to draw
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The literal brains that dominate ‘critical theory’ start melting at this point. They
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Inventory
Volume 1, Number 1, 1995 and Volume 1, Number 2, 1996
available from 23 St. Marks Rise, London E8 2NL. Subscription £15 for 3 issues.

Alastair Bonnett

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unearting, of sniffing around in the city’s physical and emotional detritus, that supplies this magazine’s most satisfying, and surprising, moments. The first issue rewards its readers with some delicious objet trouvé. I was particularly taken by the long and obsessive hand-written rant against Underwoods Chemists, “foreign nationals” and dozens of other “callous animals”, “found in a telephone box in the Spring of 1990, Russell Square, London”. This piece includes a list of 42 “persons to be subpoenaed” (“1. HESELTINE ... 30. MICHEL WINNER; 31. JACK WARNER ...”).

Inventory also contains short critical articles that draw on classic urban cultural studies sources, such as Benjamin and Lefebvre. These are all interesting in their choice of theme (for example, kitsch in easy listening music; graffiti by Le Corbusier; planning for the millennium) but not always in their execution. A certain aridity certainly creeps into a few of the pieces in issue two of the journal, especially those where the bibliographies are overlong and the jargon academic. I guess I’m just a bit bored with Walter Benjamin and his endless, romantically ‘unfinished’, flashes of inspiration. He, and other figures like Lefebvre, seem to be increasingly used more to obscure and glamourise everyday life than to rediscover and disorient it. They certainly aren’t set in the context of revolutionary socialist argument and activism in which they might actually be politically useful.

Nevertheless, Inventory is doing something larger, and more vital, than most academic ‘critical studies’. It is bringing into collision disparate aspects of urban material culture: searching out ideas and things that give you a discomforting sense of the constitution and mutations of ordinary urban behaviour. I also like the fact that Inventory looks so incredibly drab. Its small, dun coloured, account-sheet like, form is just the kind of thing one might spy out of the corner of one’s eye in a telephone box in Russell Square.

Stelarc and Rainer Linz

‘Split Body: Voltage In/Voltage Out’
Zone Gallery, Newcastle, 30th-31st May, 1996

Stelarc

‘Psycho/Cyber: Absent, Obsolete and Invaded Bodies’
Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle, 1st June, 1996

Alastair Bonnett

People wandering up the Westgate Road in Newcastle at the end of May got an unusual treat. Just inside the Zone gallery, and visible from the street, stood the naked figure of Stelarc. A multitude of surgical looking wires dangled from his arms, torso and left leg. A metallic visor partially covered his face. Once inside, visitors were invited to touch animated representations of the artist on computer screens. These fed electric impulses directly into his muscles, causing endless spasms of eccentric movement in his wired limbs. Sound sensors on his body were amplified around the room, creating a grinding mass of industrial noise. Finally, several video cameras enabled multiple images of both him and his spectators to be screened behind him. These images were also fed into his visor and onto the world wide web.

So you got the sense that here was someone interested in the relationship between the body and technology. And though it wasn’t subtle, it worked. It provided both a visceral sense and an intellectual understanding of the possibilities of the mutation both of the body and of the ego; a vision of how our flesh and guts, along with our notions of self, are open to change and technological transformation.

Obviously this work has far-reaching social implications. Some of these were spelled out with admirable clarity by Stelarc at his lecture at the Tyneside Cinema on the 1st June. Basically, Stelarc is looking forward to the technological superseding of the human body. He claims that evolution has stopped and that the only way forward is through the creation of cyborg and virtual bodies. With his characteristic and infectious giggle, Stelarc explained how he longed to stuff as many bits of technology as possible into, and around, his short hairy form; that he wanted to shed his skin for an artificial replacement and to hollow himself out of organic matter. Exemplifying this process he showed the increasingly pale-faced audience slides of the insertion into his stomach (through his mouth) of various interior sculptures and other bits of biotechnology.

Stelarc is a relatively original cultural worker. But his performances only make sense within the wider context of technological and political development and debate. Although the idea of technologically superseding the body goes back (to Mary Shelly and beyond), the past few decades have witnessed corporate and governmental agencies psychologically and physically preparing society for a new phase in the commodification of human relations and reproduction. A new stage in the transformation of use values into exchange values is heralded by the commodification of the human subject into, for example, a credit card number in virtual space, a web page site or an e-mail number. The replacement of the organic body with technology is just another facet of this process. For what Stelarc forgets to mention is that all his body gadgets are bought and sold. They are commodities, with in-built and limited life-expectancies. When you plug yourself into cyberworld you are hooking yourself up to a commodity system.

And of course it’s ‘exciting’ and ‘new’, of course it makes everything else seem ‘obsolete’, of course it’s an ‘invasion’. That’s how commodity culture has always worked! In saying this I don’t want to equate the socialist body with the authentic, uncorrupted body. Essentialist dualisms of ‘body versus technology’ may have a certain strategic value but are, at root, profoundly socially conservative. It isn’t Stelarc’s gadgetry that I’m objecting to, it’s his lack of interest in the political and economic system in which that technology is currently used and is currently given meaning. In the context of the increasing concentration of access to technology in corporate and government hands (through mechanisms such as copyright control and the destruction of welfare and other ‘open-access’ orientated social systems) the notion that, as Donna Haraway (1992, p.159) puts it, the “cyborg is the figure born of the interface of automaton and autonomy”, is painfully unconvincing.
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London, Verso

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available from PO Box 4011, Seattle, WA 98104-0011. Subscriptions $10 a year

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Alastair Bonnett

Oblivion will be of considerable interest to readers of Transgressions. It covers similar ground, though it does so in a different way. On the plus side, it’s less academic, more readable, more playful. On the down side it’s more homogenous: the product of a small gang of self-consciously ‘playful’, situationist-inspired, urban pranksters. The issue under review is taken up almost entirely with an account of the dérives, détournement and general psychogeographical warfare undertaken in various American cities by the ‘Sunshine Boys’, Eddie Lee Sausage and Isaac Sanchez.

The Sunshine Boys clearly get about. And everywhere they go they aim to provoke and disorientate. Their accounts are diaristic and personal. Basically, they wander around trying to stick small spanners in the psycho-spatial reproduction of commodity culture. Hence, in Madison, we find them (as reported in ‘Media-rupture #117’) interrupting the oratory of Republican politician Jerry Brown with surreal interjections: “Seize the Elvehjem!”. Inspired by “their deep irreverence for any Star constellated in the Spectacle” (p.27) the Sunshine Boys also ridicule Brown’s promise of “jobs for every graduate”, shouting over the loud-speaker system, “We don’t want to work ... We want to play!” (p.28). They thus manage to provoke a minor disturbance and have to make a hasty escape into the assembled mass: “The Boys were subsumed into the corpus of the spectating crowd. Like two vital cells stirring in a cadaver”.

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The personal focus of this issue of Oblivion, and of the Sunshine Boys’ Fanletter, Days Between Stations, is justified in the latter by a quote from Raoul Vaneigem: “Megalomania is an important phase in the struggle of the self against the combined forces of conditioning”. This leads me to my one point of criticism about these two journals. Because I think Vaneigem’s statement is totally daft. Individualistic excess and narcissistic display are two of the central psychological mechanisms of late capitalist culture; they inform both the specialisation of creativity into ‘art’ and the wider process of commodity fetishism. And it is precisely because of its individualism, and ‘anti-political’ sub-text, that the Sunshine Boys ‘work’ is, at times, but one small stumble from looking and sounding like performance art. What a fate!

But I think I should end this review by quoting from the ‘Glossary of sunshinespeak’ (p.46). Although the language, however parodic, gets a tad pretentious in this appendix, some revealing distinctions do emerge, especially between ...

America I — A zone (or zones) of Baroque complexity and varied micro-ambiences conducive to pedestrian pleasures and peripatetic spatial practices. A field of traversal that is rich and resonant with emotive elements, episthical triggers, enchantments, and conducive to encounter.


The Book of Sodom

gordon brent INGRAM

Just like that Big Red song of the mid-1980s, Sodom “is a place where nothing really happens.” Given that the actual sex that was said to have taken place in Sodom was never described in the Bible, it is safe to assume that much of what we have come to associate with this place is largely the stuff of fantasy, paranoia and, perhaps, a bit of yearning. Certainly, Sodom has been more about the hetero-sexual than any sort of homosexual imagination. If there is to be a queer archaeology, how do we confront the fragmentary descriptions of anti-narratives around Sodom will have a central bearing on our sense of history, community, and place. In western culture, the biblical history of Sodom represents the genesis of a central pillar of homophobia; the notion of places that corrupt, and, in turn, the careful misrepresentation of gay male, lesbian, and bisexual experiences.

Sodom as mythic place has always been more about the fantasies of reactionaries than a site of sexual deviance or even sexuality. Film-maker Paul Hallam’s compilation of writings, from supposedly original descriptions (perhaps foreshadowing queer travel narratives), to present-day fantasies, confirms this. In the Talmud, we learn of a plain with up to five cities inhabited by “men of evil actions” (p.105). In Genesis 18-19, the Lord states that the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah are
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the older gay ghettos are increasingly transformed from sites of resistance to isolation and consumerism to high priced and only slightly queer Disneyworlds, Proust's 1929 essay is the most relevant to our own fin-de-siecle:

I have thought it as well to utter here a provisional warning against the lamentable error of proposing (just as people have encouraged a Zionist movement) to create a Sodomist movement and to rebuild Sodom. For, no sooner had they arrived there than the Sodomites would have taken so as not to have the appearance of belonging to it... They would repair to Sodom only on days of supreme necessity, when their own town was empty... (p. 104)

**Vermeer II**

Exhibition by Stewart Home at workfortyheeyetodo 51 Hanbury Street, London E1 July 27th-Sept 7th 1996

_Luther Blissett_

Vermeer II is Home's latest onslaught against the art establishment. It follows on from his denunciation of the Cezanne exhibition at London's Tate Gallery in _The Big Issue_. This he denounced as "a sort of fast-food culture where the big names of art are delivered up for mass consumption". He even suggested that a lot of art professionals disagreed with this sort of 'blockbuster' show, but were too worried about their jobs to say anything.

"Although Norman Rosenthal was unable to bag Vermeer for the Royal Academy, Stewart Home is bringing him to workfortyheeyetodo", the invite boasted. "Home is exhibiting degenerated photocopies of Vermeer's work. Thus blockbuster conditions are effectively stimulated without spectators having to suffer the inconvenience of being pushed and shoved by a milling crowd". The twenty-two pieces consist of photocopies suitably daubed with florescent paint. The invite claims that Home's treatment invokes the detoured paintings of the Danish philosopher, Asger Jorn. However, on examination they are much closer to Jorn and Arnaud's _La langue verte et la cuire_, where black and white photos are overpainted with blocks of colour to emphasise certain features. Home's pictures proved to be surprisingly 'pretty' and many were snapped up for £25 at the opening.

If Home's exhibition can be marked as a success, unfortunately the performance which accompanied it fell a bit flat. Without official announcement, rumour had ensured that people arrived by 4pm, for that was when John Fare was scheduled to put in an appearance. Home had been involved in promoting Fare's 'intervention' at the Tate's Cezanne exhibition. Dressed in a suit Fare had himself led around the exhibition in a blindfold telling all who asked that he was "taking in the aura".

This sort of prank relies on the naivety of the audience, and while middle-aged Tories in their Marks and Sparks' best might rise to the provocation, the audience at the opening constituted the 'cream' of self-styled 'critical art' in London. So when Fare eventually arrived blindfolded, everyone stopped talking to watch him 'perform'. Deprived of a response beyond the passivity of a traditional audience, Fare could do little. He started sniffing ostentatiously, eventually finding the table with the wine and
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Return to the Duplex Planet

Film (35mm, Black & White, 90' + 90', 1988)

**Fabian Tompsett**

A parable of social sci-fi, somewhere between Goddard's 'Alphaville' and Peter Greenaway's 'Prospero's Books', this is Luther Blissett's only attempt at conventional fiction. Carried out with a limited budget, it is still the only film to date made using the revolutionary "quadridimensional" technique, invented by Blissett himself: two projectors show simultaneously, side by side, two almost identical versions of the film that the audience, by suitably diverging their eyes, should blend into a single image, realistically displaced on four levels of depth (4D).

The film is an attempt to instrumentalise the notion of double consciousness developed by the African-American Hegelian, W.E.B. DuBois. On the very remote planet Duplex, at first sight utterly similar to earth, everything exists or happens in true double copy: there are two suns that shine, all the births are twins, when you marry you do it twice in two adjoinining churches, and so forth. The very concepts of uniqueness and originality are banned, each idea or action should reproduce or imitate what has already been done before by others. This satire on the racial slur that those of African descent are only capable of imitation is interrupted by the unexpected appearance of Mr Myzrpflk, a singular and asymmetrical individual. The only White person in an otherwise Black caste, Myzrpflk produces the right conditions for a popular uprising against the inflexible laws imposed by the despotic Double Directory. This explores a traditional Hollywood theme of the arrival of a western man, embodying the Western culture of the individual, who then transforms the 'traditional' society offering the illusion of individuation. However this familiar discourse is interrupted when the numerous followers of the Uni-Messiah are deceived by a false Myzrpflk, mass-deported and reprogrammed to follow submissively the dictates of the bi-bureaucracy. Left alone with his beloved Arira, the rebel hero can only take flight, living happily ever after adrift on the uninhabited side of Duplex.

The film may be said to shackle itself to a too literal instrumentalisation of DuBois' theory of double consciousness. This leads to some artificial scenes rather too characteristic of a second rate comedy, scenes where an initial joke is stretched too far. However, the inversion of the image of the redeeming White hero is effective. When

the two generals, Plagius, (both played by Luther Blissett himself) finally restore order in the capital city of Taliskaulls it creates a sense of relief. The citizens embark on a Carnival where two processions snake across the town, intertwining footage from Brazil and the New Orleans Mardi Gras. This celebration of a cultural duality, which dissolves identity as it continually recombines in new combinations, is counterpoised to the sterile duality of Myzrpflk and Arira, an archetype of the modern couple who lie at the heart of nuclear family.

(Note: The sound track of the film is available on 'Luther Blissett: The Original Soundtracks', a collection of work by his long-term collaborators Le Forbicdi Manitu (Manitù Rossi, Enrico Marani, & Vittore Baroni) for US$15 (cash or IMO) from: Vittore Baroni, via C. Battisti 339, 55049 Viareggio, Italy.)

**Here Comes Everybody**


**Mark Tey**

The language of technology is the language of liberation. We are led to believe that technology will free people from menial tasks, from poverty, from constraint, even from planet earth itself. Unfortunately these promises of release have rarely been fulfilled. Technology contains the potential for emancipation. Yet it is controlled by state and business interests who prefer to use it to confine our ambitions and channel our enthusiasms into cheering from the side-lines as yet another useless gizmo is shot into space, another giant leap taken on our behalf.

One of the ambitions of the Association of Autonomous Astronauts (AAA) is to make this recuperative process visible. However, I would not wish to suggest that they are engaged in a merely rhetorical struggle. They want to get into space something bad, they want to "leave the sneering lefties and the sell-outs at NASA behind to smell our rocket fumes" (p.15). The overall aims of the AAA federation are spelled out in the sub-title blurb that appears on the inner-cover of the booklet under review.

Published April 23rd 1996 on the occasion of the first anniversary of The Five Year Plan for building a world-wide network of local, community-based groups dedicated to building their own space ships.

The same ambitions are expressed in more surreal fashion in the AAA's mutant slogans, "ABOVE THE PAYING STONES — THE STARS!" and "Only those who attempt the impossible will achieve the absurd". Those sky-gazers who have been receiving the Inner City AAA's irregular bulletin, Escape From Gravity, will be familiar with that last call to arms. These same folk won't, however, find much to surprise them in Here Comes Everybody, since a large part of its contents is made up of reprints from Escape From Gravity. Clearly the booklet has been designed as a launch-pad, from which the AAA hopes to propel itself onto a wider public. As if to confirm this intent, my copy contains a slender slip of paper reminding me that the AAA will soon be featured on the BBC television programme, 'Future Fantastic'. It
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Published April 23rd 1996 on the occasion of the first anniversary of The Five Year Plan for building a world-wide network of local, community-based groups dedicated to building their own space ships. *

The same ambitions are expressed in more surreal fashion in the AAA’s mutant slogans, “ABOVE THE PAYING STONES — THE STARS!” and “Only those who attempt the impossible will achieve the absurd”. Those sky-gazers who have been receiving the Inner City AAA’s irregular bulletin, Escape From Gravity, will be familiar with that last call to arms. These same folk won’t, however, find much to surprise them in Here Comes Everyone, since a large part of its contents is made up of reprints from Escape From Gravity. Clearly the booklet has been designed as a launch-pad, from which the AAA hopes to propel itself onto a wider public. As if to confirm this intent, my copy contains a slender slip of paper reminding me that the AAA will soon be featured on the BBC television programme, ‘Future Fantastic’. It

Return to the Duplex Planet
Film (35mm, Black & White, 90’ + 90’, 1988)

Fabian Tompsett

A parable of social sci-fi, somewhere between Goddard’s ‘Alphaville’ and Peter Greenaway’s ‘Prospero’s Books’, this is Luther Blissett’s only attempt at conventional fiction. Carried out with a limited budget, it is still the only film to date made using the revolutionary “quadridimensional” technique, invented by Blissett himself: two projectors show simultaneously, side by side, two almost identical versions of the film that the audience, by suitably diverging their eyes, should blend into a single image, realistically displaced on four levels of depth (4D).

The film is an attempt to instrumentalise the notion of double consciousness developed by the African-American Hegelian, W.E.B. Dubois. On the very remote planet Duplex, at first sight utterly similar to earth, everything exists or happens in true double copy: there are two suns that shine, all the births are twins, when you marry you do it twice in two adjoining churches, and so forth. The very concepts of uniqueness and originality are banned, each idea or action should reproduce or imitate what has already been done before by others. This satire on the racial slur that those of African descent are only capable of imitation is interrupted by the unexpected appearance of Mr Mxyzptlk, a singular and apparently individual. The only White person in an otherwise Black caste, Mxyzptlk produces the right conditions for a popular uprising against the inflexible laws imposed by the despotic Duplex Directory. This explores a traditional Hollywood theme of the arrival of a western man, embodying the western cult of the individual, who then transforms the ‘traditional’ society offering the illusion of individuation. However this familiar discourse is interrupted when the numerous followers of the Uni-Messiah are deceived by a false Mxyzptlk, mass-deported and reprogrammed to follow submissively the dictates of the bi-bureaucracy. Left alone with his beloved Arira, the rebel hero can only take flight, living happily ever after adrift on the uninhabited side of Duplex.

The film may be said to shackle itself to a too literal instrumentalisation of Dubois’ theory of double consciousness. This leads to some artificial scenes rather too characteristic of a second rate comedy, scenes where an initial joke is stretched too far. However, the inversion of the image of the redeeming White hero is effective. When

grabbing a bottle. Fortunately when he put the bottle to his lips a woman at the back started to applaud, thus bringing the sorry little episode to a close.

In the end Fare’s tomfoolery undermines the more serious points raised by Home’s critique: that artefacts have a productive power of their own before which both artist and audience are reduced to a similar position. “It’s not so much a case of ‘everyone can do it’ rather than one of ‘everybody does it whether they like it or not’: you are implicated”. In the face of this, Fare’s self-indulgent antics provided merely a brief interlude to the social networking which constitutes the central function of opening parties such as this.
will be interesting to observe how the BBC copes with the complex and multi-dimensional strategies employed by these space missionaries. For the AAA asserts its right to be, at one and the same time, completely serious and riotously ridiculous. Their whole project is premised on the contention that one can be engaged in an important debate about the uses of technology at the same time as taking the piss out of oneself and others. I would imagine that the BBC will want to highlight the latter aspect of the AAA’s activities whilst marginalising the former. The AAA needs to be careful not to ease the path to this interpretation. They need to insist on the maintenance of the creative tensions at work within their project. I mention this because every now and then Here Comes Everyone displays signs of collapsing into boring eccentricity. For example, the discussion with Raido AAA (pp.24-26) appears to align the organisation with an assortment of ‘weird hipster’ phenomena (such as the Temple of Psychick Youth, “anarchist things” and William Burroughs). I have no idea why the AAA would want to append itself to such a drab list of inarticulate and lost causes. It’s certain that they will never achieve orbit with this kind of baggage.

Earth calling AAA. Earth calling AAA. Your escape velocity is being impeded by the redundant weight of the avant-garde. Jettison immediately.

Breakflow
Not numbered (1996)
(available from Breakflow, 89 Vernon Road, Stratford, London, E1 4DQ, £3)

Mark Tey

Dance music, situationist politics and post-structuralist theory have been squelched together to produce the heady brew that is Breakflow. It may look rather hum-drum — all that closely written text, the blank cover — but it claims to offer “strictly underground funk”. Sounds juicy!

Breakflow blends its various contributing influences through the notion of “autonomous creativity”. “Electronic dance underground” music is interpreted as “the music best suited to practices of freedom”. [The work of Breakflow’s “sister project, TechNET”, which partly explains this proposition, appears elsewhere in this issue of Transgressions.] Situationist politics and Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus are dribbled into the mix in order to provide techniques of free expression and critiques of the repression of desire.

Thus Breakflow wishes to observe and enable “experimental agency” with the assistance of avant-garde and underground cultural workers. This approach has quite a long history but it fills me with something like dread. It’s not that I doubt the libertarian imperative behind the various ideas and practices that Breakflow explores. It’s just that they seem to me to be partly or wholly, products of elitist environments. If these ideas and practices are to be useful they need to be treated critically, as politically contradictory phenomena, rather than heroic models of emancipation.

Some of my concerns were confirmed when I read the documents by the situationists Alexander Trocchi and the German Spur group that appear in Breakflow. These are useful, hard-to-find, historical sources, the former being circulated as part of Trocchi’s Sigma Portfolio in 1964, the latter being Spur’s ‘Manifesto’ first released in 1958. However, despite the reverence sometimes accorded the Spur group, their ‘Manifesto’ is total bollocks. They drone on that “Art is the domain of freedom”, that “We oppose the logical way of mind” and that they seek the “restoration of individualism”. These silly clichés are so dull they make my brain ache. A little funnier is their resolution that “Kitsch is the daughter of art. The daughter is young and smells good, the mother is an ancient stinking hag”. Well kitsch may smell OK but, on this evidence, Spur stinks of lad’s ego-wank.

The documents by Trocchi are more alluring but present the same problems of masculinism and exclusivity. Trocchi is, at present, having a mini-revival amongst literary types who see him as a lost genius and get a vicarious kick from his so-called life-style (most famously, financing his heroin habit by pimping for his girl-friend). The texts in Breakflow provide a useful corrective to this distortion. They show that Trocchi’s concerns were not literary but political. He strove for ‘cultural liberation’. Yet there is something decidedly cliquey about Trocchi’s emancipatory practice. He calls for the construction of a cultural “salon”, “a kind of cultural Turkish baths”, a “living-gallery-workshop-auditorium-happening situation where conferences and encounters are to be undertaken”. Groovy. And loads of “marijuana”! Nice. But a political challenge to capitalism? Well, not entirely.

As Breakflow demonstrates Trocchi’s “happening situation” and today’s underground dance music do share a number of characteristics. But I’m not convinced that they are all politically useful. The electronic music reviewed in the journal exhibits the same counter-cultural ghetto mentality propagated by Trocchi. The “techno underground” do, I’m sure, create funky situations. But I don’t see why “a sound that’s dark, heavy, noisy and groovy” is any more emancipatory than my aunt’s off-key warblings. And at least with her you can join in.

Man in a Suitcase
Send three postage stamps to: The College of Omphalopsychism, 7 Grandle Street, Manchester M14 5WS

Luther Blissett

“Omphalopsychism is a strategy. It is not a form of mysticism; it is not an avant-garde art or anti-art movement; it is not a doctrine of ideological opposition chipped of the old block”. Tracing its origin to Baalram, a fourteenth century Calabrian monk who used the term to slag off some navel gazing hermits on Mount Athos, Omphalopsychism is roundedly presented as a strategy which involves “Free-falling from the womb of the void without a map […] Through the navel”. Various memories have been collected, and texts from Damascus to the Diadoch, a fifth century Neoplatonist sit side by side a psychogeographic account of airports, where these “gateways to the sky” are compared to the hermetic symbolism embodied in mediaeval cathedrals.
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Landranger 168: Colchester and Blackwater Area
1:50,000 by Ordnance Survey
(1992, Southampton, Ordnance Survey)

Alastair Bonnett

This eccentric and lurid work claims to be “The all purpose map” for the Colchester and Blackwater area of Essex. Indeed, the whole document is characterised by extraordinary delusions of grandeur. All “viewpoints” are, apparently, accounted for, as are all “Public conveniences”, “heights” and “gradients”. Also delineated is all “sand”, “dunes”, “outcrops” and “water”. The list of features named and pin-pointed is vast. Yet the evidence that any of these things have actually been assessed in a rigorous or disinterested fashion is extremely thin. Instead Ordnance Survey’s neat lines of demarcation betray a lazy and cavalier authoritarianism. They appear to believe that readers will be cowed by their arrogance. But it’s a dangerous strategy. Particularly so when they push their ideological agenda too far, to the edge of visibility. Succinctly expressed this agenda expresses the territorial fantasies and strategies of international capitalism. There are two areas where this set of interests has started asserting itself a little too nosily; namely, in the sphere of transportation and in the establishment of blank or white parts of the map. I shall address these two points in a moment. However, before I forget, let me draw your attention to the related imposition of the mystical so-called ‘British National Grid’ on the area in question. This occult concoction is a brazenly utopian attempt to annihilate space and establish a world of equivalence within which global capitalists may run amok. It is interesting to note that this vulgar reliance on irrational symbolism has been subverted on this particular product of Ordnance Survey’s craft by a series of what appear to be printing errors that distort the grid, causing it to warp around South Woodham Ferrers in a decidedly spooky fashion.

The outstanding and most visible aspect of Landranger 168 is the attention given to routes and forms of transportation. The road is treated as an object of fetishistic adoration: it is engorged, pumped with sickly colours and spurted across the surface of the chart in ridiculously abundant streams. No one believes that the A414 is actually that big, or that the only objects that exist in the Dengie Marshes are large yellow roads. The military background of the Ordnance Survey has combined with its prostration before the communication needs of capital to create an obsessive and worrying fixation on road transport. A similar point may be made in relation to the electricity pylons and train lines that zigzag across the white, apparently meaningless, voids that comprise the bulk of the map’s surface. These latter areas are the silent centre around and across which the busy, buzzing, circuits of capital are strung. Occasionally we find them cryptically labelled as “Danger Area”. But usually they remain blank, not uncharted but not-to-be-charted, not-to-be-explored. Standing on the fringes of these impenetrable tracts we find the mansions of their owners and controllers. The Ordnance Survey, industrious bootlickers that they are, slavishly pinpoint and name these edifices, cravenly doffing their cap to Munden Hall, Slough House and numerous other ranches. It becomes apparent that the blank areas around these properties are not mapped, not filled-in, because they are off-limits. The masses are invited to shuttle moronically along roads and train-tracks to their sites of work and social reproduction. They have no blank space, they are mapped, made predictable and routinised. The owners of territory and capital, by contrast, control the production of visibility. Their king-size houses are sentimentally celebrated but their grip on 99 per cent of the landscape remains unmarked.

There’s one final weird thing about this dreadful piece of propaganda. As I mentioned earlier, Ordnance Survey claim to have spotted all the “viewpoints” that exist in the Colchester and Blackwater area. They advertise this fact on the front of their creation and on its inner legend. But, as far as I can see, not one “viewpoint” has actually been placed on the map itself. One can travel the length and breadth of East Essex, it seems, and still not get to see anything. Nothing to see, nowhere to go but home and work. What a fucking life. My advice is to leave your map at home. Get into those blank spaces and fill them with events, labyrinths, fires . . .

Melancholic Troglobyte
No.1, £3.50 from Box MT, 121 railton road, Herne (the Hunter) Hill, London SE24 Bilingual (Persian/English).

Luther Blissett

“The entire world is melancholic, mad, rotten and so is everything in it” runs the quote from Robert Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy (1621) on the cover underneath Dürer’s illustration of this dolorous mental condition. Inside quotes from Frank Herbert’s Dune jostle with those from Nietzsche and Frances Yates. Written by “proletarian products of cultures as diverse as the Middle East and Britain”, MT is offered as a contribution:

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This transition from tightly controlled Marxist discourse to a frank admission of incomprehension is reflected in the subsequent pages. The Fatwa issued against the “mullah-bourgeoisie” draws on the history of the Mazdakis/Manicheans of Persia and the Zanjis of Africa alongside more well known currents of opposition in Europe such as the rebels of Kronstadt and the rioters of Los Angeles. The anger of this text is tempered by humour and punctuated by curious but appropriate illustrations. Other articles deal with the Japanese samurai, psychogeography, film, the Mithra cult, Robin Hood and finally the Zanj, a ninth century slave rebellion in what is now Iraq. I presume the same articles are repeated in Persian translation which reads from right to left starting at what Roman script readers would call the back.

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longer than the few hundred years of capitalism. This doesn’t simply mean addressing
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The Listening Voice
The Newsletter of the Equi-Phallic Alliance, No.1
available for a few stamps from: EPA, 33 Hartington Road, Southampton, SO14 0EW

Luther Blissett

This bulletin concerns itself with contentious issues which have risen within the
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of individuals have been hidden behind false names and epithets — Dr. Mintern, the
Blandford Elite, the Fatman, Weedy. Yet despite not being involved in the dispute it
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excavations within virtual Wessex proved, to him at least, that not only were all the
archaeological remains synthetically made, and placed, but that the chalk underneath the
archaeology was also made, that it too is synthetic. If that is the case then all Wessex
history is myth, right down to its version of the class struggle (that aspect being Cheesey
in the extreme). He discovered the theory of the underchalk (and was the first person to
postulate that caves are suspended in a wider void). Together with Barny, he proved that
places are on stilts, that machineries exist which can raise and lower the elevation of
place, as required, according to social conditions, in order to pacify the dispossessed, to
quieten those who suffer enclosure. Now we must finish his work.
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This bulletin concerns itself with contentious issues which have risen within the contemporary poetry scene and which I must admit I know nothing about. The names of individuals have been hidden behind false names and epithets — Dr. Minter, the Blandford Elite, the Fatman, Weedy. Yet despite not being involved in the dispute it makes compulsive reading. In this it reminded me of the periodic installments I would get about faction fights within the Essex Rock and Mineral Society from my father in the late seventies. I knew none of the protagonists and little about minearology, but the unfolding of the dispute was fascinating. Previously I had participated in intense disputes where I had strong opinions about the issues involved. So to see such a confrontation from an external, more 'objective' position helped me differentiate between how group dynamics function and the resolution of abstract issues.

The EPA take to task 'Wessesism', a poetic proto-fascist current they accuse of projecting place onto placelessness, enclosing the "poetry of the south" which turns out to be an empty, mystified "poetry of place". Against this they pose the work of the apparently dead Dr Minter whose:

evacuations within virtual Wessex proved, to him at least, that not only were all the archaeological remains synthetically made, and placed, but that the chalk underneath the archaeology was also made, that it too is synthetic. If that is the case then all Wessex history is myth, right down to its version of the class struggle (that aspect being Cheesey in the extreme). He discovered the theory of the underchalk (and was the first person to postulate that caves are suspended in a wider void). Together with Barny, he proved that places are on stilts, that machineries exist which can raise and lower the elevation of place, as required, according to social conditions, in order to pacify the dispossessed, to quieten those who suffer enclosure. Now we must finish his work.
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Recent years have witnessed a growth of interest in the cultural politics of the city. A debate has arisen on the contested nature of urban space and its transgression and transformation by different social groups.

Transgressions is an independent journal with an international perspective that aims to situate itself at the heart of this discussion. Drawing on activists, cultural workers and writers from urban planning, architecture and art history as well as from sociology, geography, and cultural studies, Transgressions provides an essential forum for the critical debate of the contemporary city.

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