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The Nostalgias of Situationist Subversion

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of nostalgia within situationist theory and politics. After introducing the Situationist International and the need to rethink the politics of nostalgia, it is shown that nostalgia had both a productive and disruptive place in situationist thought; that it enabled some of their key insights yet also introduced incoherence and tensions into their political project. This productive and disruptive relationship is explored through two of the situationists' main concerns, the idea of the spectacle and the critique of urbanism.

The Nostalgias of Situationist Subversion

Introduction

The Situationist International (1957-1972: hereafter 'SI') presented itself as 'the most dangerous subversion there ever was' (Debord, 1989a:175). Today the situationists' nostalgia is almost as stark as their revolutionary zeal (Pinder, 2000; Löwy, 1998; Sadler, 1998). Yet this increasingly unavoidable aspect of their project remains difficult territory. The situationists' nostalgia is no sooner noted as it is explained away as further testament to their quixotic genius. It has been consigned to the status of strategy, reflecting the situationists' understanding of the politically disruptive, 'uncanny' qualities of the outmoded for Pinder (2000) and the role of the past as 'a poisoned weapon to be used against the existing order of things' for Löwy (1998:33).

This paper offers a closer, and more sceptical, reading of the place of nostalgia within this group of post-war avant-garde Marxist revolutionaries. By doing so it offers a case study of the intimate yet contradictory relationship between, on the one hand, an attachment to the past and, on the other, an ultra-radical desire to commence a new society. I shall argue that nostalgia had both a productive and disruptive role in situationist thought; that it enabled some of their key insights yet also introduced incoherence and tensions into their political project (in part, because it was unacknowledged). This productive and disruptive relationship will be explored through two central situationist themes, the idea of the spectacle and the critique of urbanism. These two examples also allow me to show how the form and object of nostalgia can be identified in two distinct (if interconnected) ways within situationism. The idea of the spectacle contains what I describe as an 'unrooted' nostalgia; a free-floating sense of loss that presents permanent marginality and 'the alienated life' as a political identity (and there are few who claimed a greater sense of alienation than the group's principal theorist, Guy Debord, 1931-1994). The Situationist International's concern for the demise of the city in the wake of modernising bulldozers, suggests a different tendency of nostalgic form and object, a tendency that evokes specific places and particular experiences and memories. 'Whoever sees the banks of the Seine', explained Debord in 1989, 'sees our grief' (Debord, 1991:45).

The first page of the second issue of Internationale Siuationniste (SI, 1958:3) is given over to an article whose title expresses what has come to be regarded as a traditional revolutionary hostility: 'Les souvenirs au-dessous de tout'[1]. The SI positioned themselves as 'the partisans of forgetting' (SI, 1958:4). The current reappraisal of nostalgia which is being undertaken across a variety of disciplines is making claims of this sort increasingly intriguing. As Scanlan (2005:3)

observes, for most of these recent commentators 'nostalgia is no longer the programmatic equivalent of bad memory'. Rather it is an often contradictory, yet inevitable, moment in the formation of engaged political subjectivity. Such analyses have been pressed with particular vigour within post-colonial research, where the depiction of 'alternative' nostalgias (Ladino, 2005a; 2005b; Legg, forthcoming), signals an attempt to disentangle dominant from marginalised uses of the past. What this indicates is that nostalgia is being explored today not simply as a strategic exercise, an ironic re-enchantment of the modern against itself, but as a necessary resource for those who find their political and social aspirations obliterated by monolithic versions of modernity. It also indicates that in examining the place of nostalgia amongst the situationists I am not intending to simply critique the SI nor, indeed, to belittle their project by reducing it to this one tendency. My exploration is designed, rather, to open up what I take to be an undigested but fertile aspect of their revolutionary imagination.

Rethinking the Politics of Nostalgia

> In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead. (Marx, 1998a:11; first published 1852)

This sentence has reverberated through more than a hundred and fifty years of revolutionary thought and practice. Marx's suspicion of those with an attachment to the past reflected a wider Victorian culture of virile optimism. For Marx, nostalgia was an unhealthy ailment within political life. His concerns were sharpened by the fact that popular struggles in England in the early-mid nineteenth century often combined anti-capitalism with an antagonism to industrialisation. The tendency of the masses to look backwards was met head on by Marx:

> We say to the workers and the petty bourgeois: It is better to suffer in modern bourgeois society, which by its industry creates the means for the foundation of a new society that will liberate you, than revert to a bygone form of society which, on the pretext of saving your classes, thrusts the entire nation back into medieval barbarism. (Marx, 1975:.266)

The equation of an attachment to the 'bygone' with 'barbarism' is given impetuous by the pathological undertones of nostalgia [2]. In essence, however, it rests on the assumption that to be rational is to be forward-looking [3]. Hobsbawn (1962:290) put the idea in a nutshell when he noted that ideologies that offer 'resistance to progress hardly deserve the name of systems of thought'. Although the persistent tendency of working class movements to look to the past for models of social freedom has been overcome by Marxist authors in a variety of

ways, the commonest and most indicative response has been to represent nostalgia as an irritant on the body of a maturing class sensibility. For Marx,

> The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself, before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past. (Marx, 1998:11)

A central component of the situationists' provocation was their desire to extend Marx's message and apply it to both the Stalinist and Trotskyist left. In De la misère en milieu étudiant, an SI declaration issued in 1966, they announce:

> This revolution must definitively break with its own prehistory and derive all its poetry from the future. Little groups of "militants" claiming to represent the authentic Bolshevik heritage are voices from beyond the grave; in no way do they herald the future. (SI, 1981:333)

Thus Popper's (1968) 'high tide of prophecy' created a new strand-line. For Popper, the authoritarian content of this form of political argument is, in part, a product of its use of something unknown and unknowable (the future) as a site of political legitimisation. However, the suspicions of Popper are limited by their very accuracy in mirroring the claims of Marxism. They do not help us confront the inability of revolutionaries to banish the past. For, although anti-nostalgia is clearly in evidence within the radical left, the notion that nostalgia can, in fact, be removed and discarded from political discourse is hard to sustain. In Spectres of Marx Derrida (1994) deconstructs Marx's efforts to repress the 'ghosts' of the past. For Derrida this is a doomed project; one that articulates a yearning for transcendence yet also a haunted fleeing (Geoghegan, 2002; also Cohen, 1993). In pointing us towards the 'haunting' of Marxism, Derrida's analysis overlaps with a range of critical reassessments of the centrality of representations of the pre or non-modern within the modern. The hankering for authenticity found within cultural primitivism (Jervis, 1999) and the avant-garde (Bonnett, 2000) are today commonly explored as transgressive themes produced within and against the modern. Nostalgia has begun to emerge as another aspect, another category, with which to tease out modernity's multiplicity. In Fritsche's (2002; see also Agacinski 2003) terms: nostalgia too is reproduced by and repudiated by modernity; it is another of modernity's 'unwelcome doubles'.

Over the past two decades we have seen nostalgia gain its revenge on Marx's attempts to banish and deny it [4]. For even within orthodox communist factions, a Marxist nostalgia both of itself and for itself has become prominent. In what is widely announced to be 'our' post-communist, neo-liberal, epoch, the left's hostility to nostalgia has begun to look hollow and self-defeating. This perception also arises from the fact that even those activists who are still very much with us are today often cast, even by their sympathisers, as representatives of 'lost worlds' of political militancy. The 'lost worlds' tag, employed by Samuel (1985; 1986; 1987) to narrate British communism, was used by Lynne Segal (2003;

2004) to title her recent pieces in Radical Philosophy on the 'memoirs of the left in Britain'. Although Segal seeks to place her interest in radical memoir as part of a 'new psychosocial approach to history' (2003:6), it is also, unmistakably and more straightforwardly, a reflection of a contemporary sense of loss and a desire for remembrance amongst leftist intellectuals.

Despite Segal's willingness to create a space for radical reminiscence it is, unsurprisingly, those standing outside the radical milieu who have often been the most pointed in observing its nostalgic content. Indeed, David Lowenthal's intervention in the 'Nostalgia strand' of the 'History Workshop 20' conference in 1985, has emerged as a touch-stone for a number of reassessments of the topic. In his consciously provocative chapter in The Imagined Past (Shaw and Chase, 1989), the edited volume which emerged out of these sessions, Lowenthal begins by describing their dominant mood:

> Diatribe upon diatribe denounced [nostalgia] as reactionary, regressive, ridiculous. The 'workshop' that yielded this very book deplored Britain's retreat into a cosy, pub-and-chocolate-box past, while our convenor termed nostalgia "perhaps the most dangerous … of all ways of using history". (Lowenthal, 1989:20)

Lowenthal cheekily tries to turn the tables on these assumptions by arguing that the idea of a 'History Workshop' is itself laden with nostalgia: an attempt at 'validating our endeavour by linking it with olden horney-handed toil' (p28). Lowenthal's main thesis is that nostalgia needs to be understood as a diverse political form. He also argues that it presupposes a critical distance from a (lost) past, rather than an attempt to return to it (Lowenthal, 1985).

Lowenthal's interest in the critical possibilities of nostalgia has been mirrored in other work, notably Turner's (1987; also Stauth and Turner, 1988) and, more recently, Eng and Kazanjian's (2003) and Legg's (2005) hesitant political retrieval of 'memory','melancholia' and 'mourning'. Lowenthal's agenda has been picked up more directly by Ladino (2005b) and Natali (2005). Both of these critics are also drawn to the disruptive, undigested yet productive place that a 'sense of loss' has within the cultural Marxism of Raymond Williams. Citing William's elegiac depictions of the organic landscape and communities of his own past which occur at the start of The Country and the City (1975), Natali notes,

> Williams's resists the urge, present in many Marxist critiques, to simply project his hopes and aspirations into the future … The conflict is left unresolved and in his theoretical work it becomes the tension between a 'militant particularism' devoted to the preservation of local identities and a socialist 'universalism' that has no place for the concern with historical and social singularity. For many leftist thinkers, this fondness for the past and the local is invariably accompanied by guilt, since renouncing such

> sentimentality is, according to Marx, precisely the committed critic's obligation (2005:23)

The growing body of work on nostalgia cannot be said to represent a resolution of the conflict depicted by Natali. Nostalgia is being approached in new ways but it is still eyed warily. Hence, the effort that characterises contemporary reassessments to differentiate good forms of nostalgia from bad forms of nostalgia. Such attempts at political and moral classification introduce a hierarchy of nostalgic forms, a hierarchy that implies that nostalgia is a subtle art which the ignorant can easily 'get wrong'. Fred Davis (1979) set the terms of much of the subsequent debate in Yearning for Yesterday. Davis introduced the following scale: 'simple' nostalgia; 'reflexive' nostalgia; and 'interpreted' nostalgia (what he also called First, Second and Third Order forms). The clear implication is that the more questioning and distant one's relationship to the past (i.e., the less 'simple' it is and the more 'interpreted') the better. Svetlana Boym (2001) offers a similarly loaded contrast between 'restorative' and 'reflective' nostalgia: the former is 'an attempt to conquer and stabilise time', to imaginatively reconstruct a lost home, whilst the latter is 'ironic, inclusive and fragmentary' (p50), or in Legg's (2004:100) terms, 'nomadic, evasive'. The most productive aspect of this categorisation is its attention to the object of nostalgia, more specifically to the difference between nostalgia for a particular imagined 'home' and a free-floating sense of loss. Although each has a tendency to slide or invade the other, it can, as we shall see, be useful to approach the 'rooted' and the 'unrooted' as distinctive nostalgic tendencies.

The most strikingly novel aspect of the new wave of work on nostalgia lies in the attempt to depict the role of nostalgia amongst communities who have long remained marginal to radical representations of those who are to give voice to Marx's 'poetry … from the future' (Ritivoi, 2002; Bennett and Kennedy, 2003; Rousseau, 2003; Boym, 2001; Ladino, 2005b). The Native American story-tellers discussed by Ladino articulate a sense of loss and remembrance that reflects their experience of modernity as a racialised condition which has shown little interest in their future. An attention to the way a 'counter nostalgia' can be employed to resist dominant images of the past and, more generally, Westernisation and racialised modernity, provides these contemporary studies with a politicised sense of the value of an attachment to 'the dead'.

> Counter-nostalgic narratives complicate simplistic narratives, invert oppressive ones, and create the potential for new formulations of social justice that utilise the unlikely ally of nostalgia as a catalyst for action. Against the widespread negative characterisations that dismiss or limit nostalgia, it is essential to draw attention to the range of ways in which nostalgia functions in order to recover more productive uses of this powerful and prevalent cultural narrative. (Ladino, 2005b)

Ladino's 'counter-nostalgia' overlaps with the insurgent 'counter-memory' Stephen Legg (forthcoming) identifies in colonial India. However, such 'alternative' forms need, perhaps, to be complicated by recognition of the cross-cutting nature of memory and affiliation. Nostalgia for other people's pasts appears to be as common-place as nostalgia for one's own. This ubiquitous habit of transference tends to proceed through the identification of the romanticised object of affection as having retained some pre or anti-modern virtue that 'we' have lost (for case-studies of this process see Iwabuchi; 2002; Bonnett; 2000). The idealisation of working class pasts also exemplifies this process of nostalgic displacement and is highly pertinent to our examination of the situationists. As we shall see, the situationists displayed a telling mixture of anthropological distance and fond attachment to the proletarian places and communities of Paris.

The displacement of nostalgia should remind us that nostalgia is always a process of transference, in which our emotions are mapped elsewhere. Often this 'elsewhere' has a concrete form: another time, another community, another place. However, nostalgia, as a narration of loss, is not necessarily wedded to the realm of specifics. I shall be developing this point throughout this article, for it promises to untangle some of the complexities of the relationship between nostalgia and the situationists. It also provides a less moralistic starting point for studies of nostalgia than the pursuit of a hierarchy of nostalgic forms. In this article I draw a distinction between nostalgia that tends towards the particular and nostalgia that offers a more abstracted sensibility of loss. These two tendencies are exemplified by reference to, respectively, situationist geography and the idea of the spectacle.

The Spectacle as Loss

The situationists have become identified with one central explanatory concept, 'the spectacle'. Debord explained the idea as follows:

> The first phase of the domination of the economy over social life brought into the definition of all human realisation the obvious degradation of being and having. The present phase of total occupation of social life by the accumulated results of the economy leads to a generalised sliding of having into appearing, from which all actual 'having' must draw its immediate prestige and its ultimate function (1983, thesis 17)

The spectacle implies a society of pacified viewers, of consumers of images. Many academic interpretations in the 1980s and 1990s sought to elucidate Debord's notion of the spectacle by claiming that it presaged post-modern ideas of the 'end of the real' (Plant; 1992; Bonnett, 1989). However, such comparisons mislead by drawing attention away from the fact that the SI was above all a

political group, engaged in revolutionary activity. The SI's members were not simply offering a critique of authenticity, they were seeking to re-establish it.

For Debord the task of the revolution is to reintroduce history. Society of the Spectacle (Debord, 1983; first published 1967) [5] draws deeply on the Hegelian notion of 'historical time' as a 'necessary alienation' (thesis 161) from the pre-political, cyclical, consciousness of pre-historical time. For Debord 'the bourgeoisie made known to society and imposed on it an irreversible historical time' (thesis 143). Within 'spectacular society' historical time has been overturned, masked and distorted by 'frozen time' (thesis 200), an anti-historical 'false consciousness of time' (thesis 158). Thus the revolution becomes synonymous with the reawakening of historical time, albeit with the proletarian and libertarian characteristics of unalienated experience:

> In the demand to live the historical time which it makes, the proletariat finds the simple unforgettable centre of its revolutionary project; and every attempt (thwarted until now) to realise this project marks a point of possible departure for new historical life. (thesis 143)

Yet this theorisation is suffused by another sensibility, namely a sense of absolute loss. This historical melancholia sustains Society of the Spectacle and becomes explicit and dominant in Debord's later works (Debord, 1990; 1991). Debord's revolutionary intent required that he identify and place some hope in those processes and social groups able to reintroduce historical time and articulate 'the poetry of the future'. Yet the scale and characterisation of loss that Debord depicted undermines this political logic, both in terms of his barely repressed despair with the present and with his tendency to conflate technology and alienation.

Before teasing out these themes in more detail it is necessary to establish that Debord's version of situationist thought was contested both within the SI and by a number of break-away factions [6]. Recent years have seen a reorientation of interest amongst some British and other European activists away from the 'authoritarian' Debord and 'French situationism' and towards the more sensuous and irrationalist radicalism of 'Scandinavian situationism' (Slater, 2001; Home, 1991; Tompsett, 1994). Something of the appeal of the latter is intimated by the quotation from Christian Dotremont that Asger Jorn, the Danish painter who was Scandinavian situationism's principal theorist, wrote on, and used as a title for, one of his early oil paintings: 'There are more things in the earth of a picture than in the heaven of aesthetic theory' (1947). Jorn and his allies expressed a hostility towards purely abstract theorisation, a position that led Jorn to an attempt to extricate the idea of 'value' from Marxist suspicion and imagine it as a revolutionary attribute rooted in the human capacity for creativity (Jorn, 1960a; 1960b). In Jens Jorgen Thorsen's terms (2005; first published 1963), 'situationism is art'. Thorsen went on to explain that, unlike the 'Parisian Situationists' who believe 'human beings are produced by their environment', in

fact ‘the continuous realisation of new possibilities of inter-human activity are the source of life'. Through such notions, the so-called ‘Second Situationist International’, distanced themselves from the bleak rationalism of Debord’s concept of the spectacle. However, the nostalgic content of the ‘Jornist’ project is both more obvious and, I would suggest, less intriguing than the dominant ‘Debordist’ line. The ‘Scandinavians’’ cultural reference points – which are typically exotic and permeated with an interest in folk and shamanic traditions that contain ‘the rhythm of life’ (see Crook, 1998) - place them within a well-established avant-garde primitivist tradition.

The writings of Guy Debord and the idea of a society of near total commodity-based reification – the ‘society of the spectacle’ – are likely to remain the most influential legacies of situationist thought. This status derives from their ability to give rhetorical shape to widely held concerns about the deepening of social alienation in late capitalism. The nostalgic content of the concept of the spectacle is not prominent, at least at first glance. My argument suggests that it has both a productive and disruptive presence, tendencies which worked themselves out within a nostalgic form that is characterised by a rootless melancholy, a revolutionary poetry of alienation. Further, this rootless melancholy forms an identity, a sense of the situationist as a sage yet uneasy spirit, a wise onlooker adrift in this ‘present age’.

Nostalgia In and Against the Idea of the Spectacle

‘We are bored in the city, there is no longer any Temple of the Sun’. The opening lines of Chtcheglov’s classic proto-text of the situationist enterprise, ‘Forumlaire pour un urbanisme nouveau’ (pseudonym: Ivain, 1958:15), evoke the romantic and surrealist heritage of the situationists. This epigram also suggests how a longing for the marvellous can be structured round narratives of loss and dissatisfaction and, by implication, that a rhetoric of yearning is a central situationist resource. An absolute aversion to the present, a contempt for those who settle for less than an end to all forms of alienation: each are archetypal situationist themes and each is driven by a powerful sense of humanity’s fall from both its potential and its mythic past.

The ‘potlatch’, ‘lazy liberty without content’ (Debord, 1983, thesis 127) and ‘festivals’ that are ‘the moment of a community’s participation in the luxurious expenditure of life’ (thesis 154) were associated by Debord with a pre-historical, pre-political era. Yet they are also evoked throughout situationist literature as: a) images of the kind of society that the situationists wished to create; and b), the inverse of the spectacle, which is portrayed as a society without real festival, without real life and without real liberty. As this implies, ‘primitive communism’ for the situationists was more than just a prosaic, base form of communism (as it is within orthodox Marxism). It was a site of fantasy and wistful longing. Moreover, the spectacle, for Debord, is produced within and through modern technology.

Although Debord's formal concern is with the co-option of technology by capitalism, he implies a much stronger critique.

> From the automobile to television, all the goods selected by the spectacular system are also its weapons for a constant reinforcement of the conditions of isolation of 'lonely crowds'. (Debord, 1983, thesis 28)

Debord's analysis wraps technology so closely around the spectacle as to make it impossible to disentangle the two. It is hard not to read passages, such as the one cited above, without being 'reminded' of a simpler, more authentic era. A similar dynamic may be observed in respect to Debord's critique of the ahistoricism of the spectacle. For, although the desire to escape the spectacle as a 'frozen' society and to re-enter history is explained by Debord as a revolutionary process of supercession, he binds his glimpses of non-spectacular society tightly to a childlike Arcadia, creating a privileged place for the politics of loss. In Society of the Spectacle Debord argued that within the spectacle the 'reality of time has been replaced by the advertisement of time' (thesis 154), a pseudo experience based on consumerism and fashion. Debord's Comments on the Society on the Spectacle (1990; first published 1988) sets both this yearning for real history and its connection to a sense of loss for the past into sharper relief:

> The precious advantage which the spectacle has acquired through the outlawing of history, from having driven the recent past into hiding, and from having made everyone forget the spirit of history within society, is above all the ability to cover its own tracks. (p15-6)

The value of nostalgia is beginning to nudge its way to the fore in Debord's later works. However, the difficulty of admitting or acknowledging its presence remains immense. This awkwardness introduces us to the disruptive role of nostalgia within situationism. Nostalgia is something unnamed and, hence, untheorised; a desire which goes unchecked and that ultimately works against the coherence of the theory of the spectacle.

Situationist texts are littered with collisions between nostalgia and anti-nostalgia. Rapture with technological liberation and dreams of sparkling 'situationist cities' of the future tussled with critiques of the technological mediation of the spectacle. As I have already implied, the latter tendency showed a persistent tendency towards, what is, from a Marxist perspective, a reactionary repudiation of technology:

> all aspects of technological development of the present and, above all, the means of so-called communication, are designed to produce the greatest possible passive isolation of individuals (SI, 1964:6)

It is revealing that the historical figure Debord cited in Society of the Spectacle to symbolise the revolutionary hopes of his day is General Ludd, the phantom leader of a famously 'backward-looking' resistance movement. Those rebellious currents of the 1960s that 'are the portents' of revolution, Debord tells us, 'follow a new "General Ludd" who, this time, urges them to destroy the machines of permitted consumption' (thesis 115).

In fact, Debord's evocation of 'a critique which does not compromise with any form of separate power anywhere in the world' (thesis 121) sets its itself against so many aspects of modern life as to make an engagement with progressive change virtually impossible. The 'totalism' of situationist thought, in which even anti-capitalist resistance is seen as another part of the spectacle, has often been attacked as a political dead-end (Bonnett, 1989). Consideration of the presence of nostalgia in situationism may help us to grasp how this impasse arose. For whilst a sense of loss may have enabled much of the emotion and excitement we find in situationist rhetoric, it also resulted in a despairing sensibility. It is not coincidental that Debord's suicide in 1994 is represented in later sympathetic treatise on the movement as a culmination of situationist praxis (for example, Home, 1995). The creation of a personal identity revolving round an attitude of political despair is etched deeply into Debord's intellectual journey. Society of the Spectacle offered precious few glimmers of hope, Comments on the Society of the Spectacle offers none. In a passage that brings together a technological and social pessimism, Debord tells us

> There is no place left where people can discuss the realities which concern them, because they can never lastingly free themselves from the crushing forces organised to relay it. Nothing remains of the relatively independent judgement of those who once made up the world of learning … There is no longer even any incontestable bibliographical truth, and the computerised catalogues of national libraries are well-equipped to remove any residual traces. It is disorienting to consider what it meant to be a judge, a doctor or a historian not so long ago, and to recall that obligations and imperatives they often accepted, within the limits of their competence: men resemble their times more than their fathers (1990:19-20)

Debord concludes this paragraph with a medieval Arab aphorism. However, he uses the preceding sentences to load it with some tendentious baggage. It would be better, he seems to be saying, for people today to resemble their fathers than their times. It is as an odd conclusion for the archetypal late modern revolutionary. Yet, as we have seen, it flows directly from the presence of a powerful nostalgic tendency within the idea of the spectacle. We have also seen that this tendency has a dual life in Debord's thought: it is both productive, a fertilising resource and disruptive, a force, unacknowledged and untheorised, that sowed incoherence into the situationist project. We shall address both of these themes through a different example of situationist activity a little later. However,

the idea of the spectacle also allows us to explore one of the two forms of situationist nostalgia which I have identified, namely 'unrooted' nostalgia.

Unrooted Nostalgia: The Spectacle and Radical Identity

The situationists were not the first political current to accommodate Marxism with romanticism. The surrealists and the Frankfurt School provide earlier examples. It is not co-incidental that both also offer examples of intellectual projects - such as Breton's 'gothic Marxism' of the uncanny (Cohen, 1993) or Horkheimer's hunger for social release (Shaw, 1985) – which articulate an omnivorous alienation from their times. However, the situationists provide the consummate twentieth century example of this type of radical identity. And it is an 'identity', for it established a sense of self that structured the situationists' experiences and interpretations.

In excavating the nostalgic content of the idea of the spectacle, what we encounter is rarely an attachment to particular periods or places that have been lost. Rather, we meet with a roving disposition; a restless, seemingly self-sufficient, state of yearning. In his film 'Critique de la séparartion' (1961), Debord provides an elegiac commentary on the 'sphere of loss':

> Everything that concerns the sphere of loss - that is to say, the past time I have lost, as well as disappearance, escape, and more generally the flowing past of things, and even what in the prevalent and therefore most vulgar social sense of the use of time is called wasted time – all this finds in that strangely apt old military expression "en enfants perdus" its meeting ground [in] the sphere of discovery, adventure, avant-garde. (Debord, 1992:49-50)

Although washed through with melancholy, Debord is outlining in this passage a heroic role for the situationists as the most abandoned, the most marginalised, yet bravest of social 'adventurers'. In a society of spectacle, a general assertion of disaffection and loss becomes the only authentic political and personal path. In this way, existing traditions of bohemian nihilism were given a theoretical backbone of communist militancy and hostility to the commodity. What emerges is a politicised way of living: of the 'authentic life' as a series of spontaneous acts of refusal of the spectacle that are simultaneously expressions of revolutionary hope and despair. The SI offered us a way 'to be at war with the entire earth, lightheartedly' (Debord, 1979).

The SI's romantic extremism encourages a proclivity for personal testaments of excess and marginality. Although Debord's one-time SI and enragé comrade, René Riesel (2005), has dismissed Debord's autobiographical statement Panegyric (1991; first published 1989; also Debord, 1997) as 'the aestheticisation of his life', there exists a continuity of self-conscious alienation between it and

Debord's earlier works. More specifically, it is noticeable from Panegyric how drawn Debord is to the idea of his own youth a site of adventure within and against an alienated world:

> In the zone of perdition where my youth went as if to complete its education, one would have said that the portents of an imminent collapse of the whole edifice of civilisation had made an appointment. Permanently ensconced there were people who could be defined only negatively, for the good reason that they had no job, followed no course of study, and practised no art. (Debord, 1991:23)

The image of Debord's 'tribe' as a 'rogue's gallery of hard drinkers and thinkers' (Mension, 2001, backcover), has been centre-stage in contemporary ultra-leftist nostalgia for itself (Mension, 2001; Rumney, 2002). It is a milieu that, then as now, takes a fierce delight in its lonely iconoclasm; a milieu personified by Debord, who muses in his own Panegyric 'I wonder if even one other person has dared to behave like me, in this era' (1991:17).

'Whoever Sees the Banks of the Seine Sees Our Grief': Situationist Nostalgia for Place

The situationists had a fascination with the built environment that reflected their interest in revolutionary politics as a struggle that takes place at the level of everyday life. However, this arena also shows us a number of struggles within situationism itself, between technocratic modernism and its repudiation; between the desire for endless disorientation and warm memories of the solidarities of working class life.

These conflicts were played out at a factional level. The principle split was between the technocratic planners of 'situationist cities' (notably the Dutch member of the SI - up to 1960 - Constant) and the more politically focused approach associated with Debord. The productive and disruptive role of nostalgia within situationist geography took place within these factions as well as between them. Indeed, the avowedly technocratic faction represented by Constant entered situationism through the critical loopholes created by Debord's ambivalent relationship to industrial modernity. However, as I show later, what is, perhaps, most striking about the nostalgic tendencies at work within situationist geography is that this is a rooted nostalgia, tied to specific landscapes and specific cities. The nostalgic form we encounter here is soaked with personal memories and particular attachments, evocations that the situationists struggled to corral within their familiar political lexicon.

Nostalgia In (and Against) Revolutionary Geography

The name 'Situationist International' obscures an elementary fact: this was a movement born and bred in one particular place, post-war Paris. The relationship many situationists had with Paris was a passionate one. In part this fire was lit by the perception that 'their' Paris - the Paris of bohemian and working class community - was under assault (Chevalier, 1994). Twenty-four percent of the surface area of the city was demolished and rebuilt between 1954-1974 (Pinder, 2000). Between the same two dates the working class population of the Ville de Paris fell by 44% (Sadler, 1998). Massive road building programs, housing developments on the city limits, the eradication of ancient markets such as the Halle aux Vins and Les Halles; to the situationists all these things seemed to presage the dawn of a homogenised and historically brainwashed city.

The situationists interpreted these changes through Debord's notion that within a society of the spectacle history was 'outlawed', to be replaced by 'frozen time'. Debord established this link in Society of the Spectacle through the following example:

> The 'new towns' of the technological pseudo-peasantry clearly inscribe on the landscape their rupture with the historical time on which they are built; their motto could be: "On this spot nothing will ever happen, and nothing ever has". It is obviously because history, which must be liberated in the cities, has not yet been liberated, that the forces of historical absence begin to compose their own exclusive landscape. (Debord, 1983, thesis 177)

In Vaneigem's (1961:36) terms: 'The new towns will efface every trace of the battles that traditional towns fought against the people they wanted to oppress'. What is being articulated here is a nostalgia for the political memories contained in buildings and streets that have witnessed past conflicts. It is not, ostensibly at least, a mourning for the loss of the picturesque or quaint but for popular memory. The SI and their direct forerunners, the Lettrist International (LI), were conservationists in a strictly political cause: 'beauty, when it is not a promise of happiness, must be destroyed' (Lettrist International, 1985:178; first published 1955).

The situationists' favourite illustration of the extinction of popular memory through urban renewal programs was the suppression of the street. Construed as the social and imaginative centre of working class community, the street was presented as endangered by modern urbanism; more specifically modern urbanism as devised by situationist bête noir, Le Corbusier. In 1954, the Lettrist International noted that

> In these days where everything, across all areas of life, is becoming more and more repressive, there is one man in particular who is repulsive and clearly more of a cop than most … Le Corbusier's ambition is the

> suppression of the street … [and] an end to opportunities for insurrection. (LI, 1985, 34-35)

This hostility suggested the need to move away from technocratic solutions to social problems and towards the re-use, and political re-signification, of the existing environment. Hence, we arrive at the idea of a 'turning aside', or détournement, of environments that are rich with memory and symbol

> The employment of détournement in architecture for the construction of situations marks the reinvestment of products that it is necessary to protect from the existing socio-economic system, and the rupture with the formalist concern of abstractly creating the unknown. (SI, 1960:9)

The situationists' attachment to the Paris of intimate streets, to a pre-car centred Paris, is reflected in their wandering, footloose (and foot based), geographical praxis, which they called 'pyschogeography'. Pyschogeography attempts to explore the city politically, identifying spaces and places of intensity and disorientation. Its principal technique was the drift (or dérive), which demands a playful yet militant engagement with the city (cf. the surrealists' Parisian wanderings, in which the aim was to give oneself up to chance; a comparison developed by Bonnett, 1992, and Bandini, 1996).

The old market at Les Halles was pyschogeographical mapped out following two drifts by Abdelhafid Khatib in 1958. The same area was tenderly observed by Debord a year later in his film 'Sur le passage de quelques personnes a travers une assez courte unite de temps' (1959). The prospect of the demolition and displacement of Les Halles, Khatib noted,

> will be a new blow to popular Paris, which has for a century now been constantly dismissed, as we know, to the suburbs. A solution aimed at creating a new society demands that this space at the centre of Paris be preserved for the manifestations of a liberated collective life. (1958:17)

Debord's own drunken, slightly boorish, drifts (1989b; first published 1956), as well as the collaborative cut-up maps (in which zones of intensity are snipped out, separated and connected by arrows) he made with Asger Jorn ('Guide pyscogéographique de Paris' of 1956 and 'Naked City' of 1957), can be read as typical avant-garde transgressions. Yet they are propelled by a deep sadness. McDonough (1996:65) suggests that Debord's maps 'stand as the last articulations of a city which is irretrievable, a Paris now lost to us'. For Simon Sadler Debord's cut-up maps may be seen as

> guides to areas of central Paris threatened by development, retaining those parts that were still worth visiting and disposing of all those bits that they felt had been spoiled by capitalism and bureaucracy' (Sadler, 1998:61).

In The Situationist City Sadler goes on to discuss the 'drift' as a form of heritage survey. The drifters, he explains, gravitated towards old working class streets and spaces: 'recording them for posterity, fastidiously avoiding the fluid traffic of the boulevards in favour of the still pools and backwaters of the city' (Sadler, 1998:56).

The productive role of nostalgia in situationist geography lies in its capacity to provoke a critical historical sensibility. This was nostalgia that acted, not as a retreat from time, but as a challenge to 'frozen time'; not a desire for all things gone but for landscape as an arena of struggle and popular memory. However, as we saw in respect to the idea of the spectacle, nostalgia could also be a disruptive force within situationism, creating incoherence and introducing theoretically undigested elements. One of the most glaring manifestations of this disruption is the ease with which the situationists allowed their avant-garde conceits to follow the pattern of Dada and surrealism and slip into an aristocratic dandyness. The drifter, once transmuted into the flâneur, may remain a cultural transgressor but is no longer recognisable as a communist revolutionary. Debord, Wolman and Bernstein's foppish, jokey protest letter to The Times in 1955, complaining about plans to demolish 'the Chinese quarter in London', retains its snobbishness despite its satire of the English:

> The only pageants you have left are a coronation from time to time, an occasional royal marriage which seldom bears fruit; nothing else. The disappearance of pretty girls, of good family especially, will become rarer and rarer after the razing of Limehouse. Do you honestly believe that a gentleman can amuse himself in Soho? (LI, 1985:171)

Sadler pointedly compares the situationist drifters to aristocratic 'gentlemen of leisure':

> Situationists mythologised the poor as fellow travellers on the urban margins, treating the ghetto as an urban asset rather than an urban ill … Like gentlemen of leisure, promoting their 'revolutionary' motto of Ne travaillez jamais (Never work), they reserved a sort of ancien disdain for the petit-bourgeois areas of Paris. (1998:56-57)

Nostalgia, unrecognised, undiscussed, was allowed to create spaces of condescension and contradiction in situationist thought. The ambiguities of the situationists' heady mixture of utopianism and wistful regret for the Paris of yesteryear opened up inconsistencies that acerbated the SI's factionalism. As this implies, the SI's schisms were a product of deeply entrenched and unrecognised intellectual fissures. Indeed, even years after the technocratic situationists, personified by Constant, had left the SI, Debord was still articulating a confusing combination of futuristic utopianism and pathos soaked anti-modernism. Through the theoretical slight of hand of festishising 'endless play' as

a revolutionary goal, these aspirations were welded into uncomfortable union. Debord connects ludic solipsism with class history by claiming the culmination of the latter can give birth to the former. Yet this association relies on a potentially endless deferment of authentic revolution as well as a doctrinaire reliance on a single form, 'the game', as its utopian conclusion. Debord's rhetorical flair only exacerbates the political thinness of the vision:

> History, which threatens this twilight world, is also the force which could subject space to lived time. Proletarian revolution is the critique of human geography through which individuals and communities have to create places and events suitable for the appropriation, no longer just of their labor, but of their total history. In this game's changing space, and in the freely chosen variation in this game's rules, the autonomy of places can be rediscovered without the reintroduction of an exclusive attachment to the land, thus bringing back the reality of the voyage and of life understood as a voyage which contains its entire meaning within itself. (1983, thesis 178)

Given the ambiguities within Debord's ludic vision, is not surprising that some radicals looked to the situationists as a movement committed to the creation of new cities of endless play. It is a little more surprising, perhaps, that so much contemporary academic commentary on situationist urbanism should concentrate on this tendency. Indeed, it is a perverse tribute to the SI's influence that Constant now finds his entire career celebrated and narrated as a contribution to so-called 'situationist architecture' (Sadler, 1998; de Zegher and Wigley, 2001; Borden and McCreery, 2001, Andreotti and Costa, 1999).

The effort required to imagine a coherent political project that includes Constant, Jorn and Debord is considerable (and, I believe, misjudged) [7]. It has demanded a variety of contortions, most notably the interpretation of Constant's fantastical models of situationist cities (most famously, New Babylon, 1974) as not really models at all but merely exercises in 'critical provocation' (Pinder, 2001:2; also McDonough, 1996). A more realistic assessment is to admit the discordant role of technocratic situationism within and against Debord's (and Jorn's [8]) situationist vision [9]. Constant plugged into a utopian urge within the situationist movement and wider avant-garde to imagine a new, modernist, Eden. His spectacular models and futuristic sketches depicted cities on stilts that hover over existing landscapes like vast, invading space-ships:

> In such huge constrictions we envisage the possibility of conquering nature and subjugating to our will the climate, the lighting and the sounds in these different spaces (Constant, 1959:38)

During one of the fractious meetings that precipitated his departure Constant gave voice to his hostility to any 'romanticised notion of a past reality' (Constant cited by SI, 1959:23) [10]. However, once gone, the SI lost no time in denouncing

Constant's 'technocratic concept of a situationist profession' as 'deviationist'. Constant, it was said, was a 'cunning operator' who,

> frankly offers himself, along with two or three plagiarised and badly understood situationist ideas, as a public relations man for the integration of the masses into capitalist technological civilisation. (SI, 1961:6)

Yet Constant was responding to aspects of the situationist project which were maintained long after his departure. We have seen how nostalgia produced a variety of critical interventions for the situationists. However, it remained an undigested force, colliding queasily with a thirst for utopian new beginnings. Both Debord and Khatib mourned the passing of Les Halles as a centre of working class community. Yet it is telling that just one sentence after calling for the area to be 'preserved' Khatib demands that it be gutted and replaced with 'situationist architectural complexes' and 'perpetually changing labyrinths' (1958:17).

The Street of Situationist Nostalgia

The idea of the spectacle contains an abstract nostalgia, an unspecified sense of loss and alienation. By contrast, the ruination of Paris is different nostalgic territory. For here we encounter a set of specific, placeable, memories and attachments. Although what I am calling 'rooted' and 'unrooted' nostalgias are not discrete forms, they do contain identifiable and distinct tendencies. Rooted nostalgias (which, we must not forget, are not necessarily for one's own roots) evoke intricate and emotional reactions which are often bound up with feelings of loss associated with childhood (and, by implication, of revolution as a way of rediscovering childhood). They carry a sense of being wounded and of bewilderment, emotions which are compounded by the difficulty of articulating just what is at stake – especially politically – for those who have seen 'their city taken away from them'. This is not comfortable territory for revolutionaries. That the SI, and Debord in particular, broached it at all, is indicative of an openness that reminds us of the daring nature of the situationists' amalgam of militancy and passion.

In tracing the passage of these emotions through Debord's work, we can identify three stages, which also describe an age-line for the situationist generation. First, a youthful phase in the 1950s, characterised by a dandyish and solipsistic anarchist conservationism; second, a middle stage, characterised by a more doctrinaire, and sharply politicised, critique of urbanism; third and last, a late stage, characterised by mournful reverie for the loss of authentic city life. Although each of these stages has already been illustrated in this article, the last requires further discussion. In Panegyric Debord repeatedly employs a geography of loss to depict not only a general shift in the nature of French society but a personal journey, from hopeful radical to pessimist. After outlining in detailed terms the small area of Paris where he once lived [11], Debord says

> I never, or hardly ever, would have left this area, which suited me perfectly … Always briefly in my youth, when I had to risk some forays abroad in order to further extend disruption; but later for much longer, when the city had been sacked and the kind of life that had been led there had been completely destroyed – which is what happened from 1970 onwards … Whoever sees the banks of the Seine sees our grief: nothing is found there now save the bustling columns of an anthill of motorized slaves. (1991:44-45)

This nostalgia clearly sustains the alienated identity discussed earlier in this essay. However, it also disturbs and threatens it: for the securely political and aloof world vision associated with critique of the spectacle is here dragged down to earth. Debord, the avant-garde revolutionary, is revealed to be a lost soul, made homeless by the changes that have occurred in his lifetime. Debord's rage at what has happened to Paris could, perhaps, be explained as a matter of strategy. But Debord's intimate nostalgia suggests a less cerebral, if no less political, explanation, one which points to the memories and pleasures Debord once found within, now lost, Parisian streets. Indeed, Debord, who often spoke of his comrades coldly, articulated a vulnerability, a forlorn love, for Paris. He was drawn back, in spite of everything:

> when the tide of destruction, pollution and falsification had conquered the whole surface of the planet … I could return to the ruins of Paris, for then nothing better remained anywhere else. One cannot go into exile in a unified world. (1991:47)

Conclusions and New Departures

I have been arguing, not that nostalgia is good or a bad thing, but that it is inseparable from the situationists' revolutionary imagination. It enabled their political project, yet it also caused problems for that project. In large part, I have associated these problems with the difficulties that arise when nostalgia is unacknowledged and refused.

It is no surprise that nostalgia was an object of contempt for the situationists. Debord and Wolman's (1981:13) gnomic declaration that 'Life can never be too disorienting' is merely an extreme expression of the status accorded to deracination found across Marxist revolutionary movements. It is, perhaps, only since the collapse of left radicalism as a significant phenomenon in Western political life, along with the end of Soviet communism, that it has become possible to see the nostalgic content of radical politics as something more than a moral question, to be hedged round with apologies. This article has tried to open up this terrain by: a) identifying the productive and disruptive role of nostalgia and

b), distinguishing two forms of nostalgia within the situationist project, what I have called the rooted and the unrooted. This latter distinction has been illustrated by, respectively, the idea of the spectacle and situationist geography. Inevitably, these forms are not discrete but rather represent intercutting tendencies. Yet they do provide a sense of the multiplicity of nostalgia, its diverse scales and intellectual range.

Inevitably also, the situationists have also emerged as the subject of nostalgia. Reviewing the 'reverential' tone of the exhibitions that launched the SI into mainstream art criticism, hosted in London, Paris and Boston in 1989, Peter Smith (1989) remarked that 'We have seen a shift from the utopianism of the 1960s to a culture of nostalgia'. Smith bluntly contends that 'the exhibition and the books which accompany it look backward in a search for appearances as if they were compensatory fantasies for a forgotten dream' (p124) [12]. The surge of interest in the situationists in a period dominated by conservatism is certainly telling. Nevertheless, as we shall see, Smith is mistaken in his implication that the subversions of the past were free from nostalgia or, indeed, that the politics of nostalgia are inevitably non-revolutionary.

The situationists are gone. But the dilemmas of their nostalgic radicalism remain. Moreover, there are signs that these dilemmas are beginning to be actively engaged. I am not referring to the kind of punk and 'culture-jamming' cultural politics of the last thirty years that is sometimes classed as neo-situationist (Marcus, 1989). Far more interesting, I would suggest, are those rather less prominent trajectories that have sought to learn from, but also escape, the confines of the situationist project.

Perhaps the most important example is the attempt to fully combine the critique of 'industrial society', with which the situationists wrestled, into ecological radicalism. These influences have been drawn together by René Riesel. Riesel, one-time member of the SI and personification of enragé 'attitude', is now a campaigner against GM crops (see Riesel, 1999; 2005). In 2001 he explained to Libération his journey 'from situationism to the Farmers' Confederation'

> I left for the Eastern Pyrénées and became a [sheep] breeder, a way of life that suited me and allowed me to reconstruct a 'rear base', not in military terms, but in terms of relearning practices that in many respects make up the genuine riches of humanity. In the present state of our societies' decay, we need to re-endow a certain number of lost savoir-faires.

Riesel goes on to explain that 'Since the 'industrial revolution' in England, industrialisation has been an absolutely fundamental rupture with the essence of the progress of humanisation' (cited by Léauthier, 2005). Riesel's vision is a break from situationism but it is also emerges from it and represents a kind of resolution of some of its central tensions. What is striking about Riesel's

combination of revolutionary and agricultural traditionalist is how it has moved on with and from situationism.

Another striking development may be witnessed in the evolution of pyschogeography. The term has been picked up by groups of 'urban explorers' in a variety of Western cities (many of which were charted between 1995-2000 in Transgressions: A Journal of Urban Exploration; for example, Bonnett, 1998; Bin, no date) [13]. Again, a new openness to the past is characteristic of these groups. Avant-garde aloofness has begun to give way to an attention to social and personal memory. Thus, for example, the Nottingham Pyschogeographical Group (founded 1996; see art.ntu.ac.uk/mental), have conducted drifts based on interviews and maps drawn by old residents of the city. The result has been a kind of a transgressive mapping of the past onto the present but also of the lives of the old onto the young. Other recent reinventions of situationist geography, associated with the 'reborn' London Pyschogeographical Association, have spliced it with Scandinavian situationism, to produce a novel form of radical geography replete with arcane reinventions of the political heritage of the ordinary landscape. The London Pyschogeographical Association (LPA; founded 1992; see LPA, 1992; Home, 1997) claims to plot the ley-lines of class power and conduct drifts into the occult spaces of the British aristocracy. It has pioneered what it calls 'magico-Marxism', a simultaneously whimsical and troubling refusal of modernity's power to erase places and pasts.

Drawing the wandering historical geographies of Ian Sinclair (1995; 2003a; 2003b; Atkins and Sinclair, 1999; see also Keiller, 1994; 1997), into the LPA's fold, James Heartfield (2005) has recently called 'Londonostalgia' a condescending anachronism that 'is only possible because "London" is over'. In this paper I have sought to make this kind of dismissal more difficult. Heartfield clings to a idea of nostalgia as a removable stain upon the bright clothes of proper politics, something that anyone who is not a fearful conservative can and should have nothing to do with. Yet, as we have seen, the most outrageous revolutionary politics of the last century contained clear nostalgic tendencies. Nostalgia isn't a disease, nor is it a virtue. One can turn away from it, but it remains nevertheless. Let's face it, the dead will always be with us.

Notes

1. The phrase is translated as 'Nostalgia beneath contempt' by 'International Situationist Online'. Citations from Internationale Situationniste derive from the compendium published by Editions Champ Libre in 1975. However, those English-language readers interested in the situationists now have the most comprehensive set of English translations that is available for any avant-garde group. 'Situationist International Online' (http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/situ.html) provides full translations of all issues

of Internationale Situationniste, as well as a vast range of other situationist texts (for example, a full translation of the journal of the Lettrist International, Potlatch). Further material can be found at 'The Situationist International Text Library' (http:/library.nothingness.org.articles/SI/all/). I have consulted these translations, and sometimes used them, in making my own translations from the French.

2. The term 'nostalgia' was coined in 1688 by Johannes Hofer, by combining the Greek 'nostos' (return home) and 'algos' (pain). It referred to what was considered to be a medical disorder, an extreme longing for home. The earliest citation in the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) is from 1770 and derives from Joseph Banks, botanist on James Cook's Endeavour: 'the greatest part of them [the crew] were now pretty far gone in the longing for home which the Physicians have gone so far as to esteem a disease under the name of Nostalgia'

3. The implication that radical nostalgia is a contradiction in terms is also presupposed in the treatment provided for a related condition, namely 'left-wing melancholia' (Brown, 1999; Hirtler, 2001). Benjamin (1994) who coined the phrase, mockingly noted that the left-wing melancholic 'takes as much pride in the traces of the former spiritual goods as the bourgeois do in their material goods'.

4. Also brought into visibility is the ability of the anti-nostalgic, largely Marxist left, to secure a dominant place in interpreting the meaning of attachments to the past. Outside of this tradition, the role of nostalgia in the radical tradition has long been widely recognised. Within Britain, the defence of the 'common man' was, for much of the nineteenth century, articulated as a species of resistance to modernity (Stafford, 1987). William Cobbett and the 'Tory radical', Richard Oastler (see Driver, 1946), mixed their pragmatic support for the working class with heady doses of sentimental regard for the 'ancient' freedoms of 'Englishmen'. Later in the century, socialist libertarian nostalgia, most ably represented by William Morris, combined medievalism with a bucolic revolutionary vision.

5. Citations from Society of the Spectacle are from the 1977 revised translation of the first English translation of 1971 (Debord, 1983). Readers now have the opportunity of cross-checking a number of translations of the book against each other and against the French original (Debord, 1967). The latter is available at 'The Situationist International Text Library' (http:/library.nothingness.org.articles/SI/all/), whilst the 1977, 1994 and 2002 English translations are available at 'Situationist International Online' (http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/situ.html)

6. A concern with the SI's exclusions and splits often dominates activist, non-academic, forms of situationist history. Suffice to record that the SI had 72 members throughout its life-span (1957-1972), and only three when it dissolved

itself 1972. In 1969 the SI declared that it 'worked hard to make it almost impossible to join the SI' (SI, 1969:93).

7. The Italian situationist Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio, who produced large rolls of 'industrial painting', sought to combine some of the primitivist and technocratic tensions within the movement when he extolled the role of the modern revolutionary artist in 1959 (cited by Bandini, 1996:51): 'we are close to the primitive state but equipped with modern means: the promised land, paradise, eden can only be the air we breath, eat, touch, invade'. However, Pinot-Gallizio's pieces, despite their 'industrial' label, were craft-based, and certainly far easier to assimilate into the situationist milieu than the megastructures modelled by Constant.

8. Jorn scholar Graham Birtwistle explores the split between Constant's technocratic and Jorn's primitivist vision of landscape in his essay 'Old Gotland, New Babylon' (Birtwistle, 1996)

9. One of the oddest conclusions of this effort to turn Constant's megastructures into something situationist is that, today, some 'playful', postmodern architects of commercial mega-malls happily imagine themselves as the heirs of the SI. Thus, for example, a line has been drawn by Jaschke between situationism and Jon Jerde's commercial megastructures in San Diego and Las Vagas (Jaschke, 2001).

10. Constant has spoken of his own resignation from the SI in terms of his dislike of the fact that there were 'too many painters' (2001:23).

11. 'exactly in the triangle defined by the intersections of the rue Saint-Jacques and the rue Royer-Colard, rue Saint Martin and rue Greneta, and the rue du Bac and rue de Comailles' (Debord, 1991:43-44)

12. A more recent exhibition on the situationists tripped itself up on nostalgia almost before visitors were through the door. To enter the exhibition of situationist material at The Aquarium gallery in London in August 2003 one had to step over the, apparently non-ironic, graffiti, artfully sprayed on the entrance floor, 'Nostalgia ends here'.

13. The SI's acid factionalism is also alive and well. The elaborate pyschogeographical initiative launched in Britain in 1999, known as PPUK (pyschogeography.co.uk), was identified as 'Debordist' by a few advocates of the Second Situationist International. The 'anti-Debord' faction constructed a web 'mirror-site', extinguishing the PPUK's activities and development.

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