Fantasies of Participation

The Situationist Imaginary of New Forms of Labour in Art and Politics

Gavin Grindon

ABSTRACT The Situationist International (SI) have become a canonical reference point when discussing artists' participation in political action or activism. This article attempts to decentre the SI from this position, by tracing their theories and representations of political agency and labour. I argue that their notion of agency is deeply conflicted, epitomized by the dual invocations 'never work/all power to the workers' councils. I examine how the SI's representations of agency betray an attraction to and fascination with 1960s reactionary fantasies around brainwashing, conditioning, control and torture. Their practical descriptions of a constructed situation, which 'makes people live' are, in fact, closer to torturous state control than total liberation. The notions of agency they mobilise draw on colonial and classist sources, which actually deny the agency of radical movements. As a result, the SI produce a series of weak fantasies of participation, in which agency is denied and 'demanding the impossible' is actually a demand to constitute and police the impossible. Artistic-political agency was both guarded centre and constituent other. The SI's policing of their identity, tied in name to the agency of 'situations', involved the ongoing exclusion and repression of other artists' more practically-engaged labour within social movements.
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On page 43 of *Internationale Situationniste* 9, there appears a print of a now lost painting by Michèle Bernstein depicting, its title informs us, 'The Victory of the Bonnot Gang'. It was part of a series of heroic reconstructions of absent victories. Perhaps the first of these, her 'Victory of the Grand Jacquerie, 1358', inverts the title of one of Loyset Liédet's illuminations for *Froissart's Chronicles* of 1470 to reimagine the fate of this peasant revolt. Debord opposed the paintings to Georges Matthieu's abstract battle paintings, destabilising the framing of mass slaughter as any kind of victory. But crucially, they orient the genre towards the subaltern and untimely project of revolutionary social movements, evoking a series of fantasies of political participation. The series not only steps outside the historical thread of social movement failures, but questions what it would mean to win and how that can be represented. Describing the paintings' impossible logic, Debord cited Lautremont, 'as long as my friends do not die, I will not speak of death'.[1] But the impossible celebration of victories

that never were lends paintings such as 'Victory of the Paris Commune' (Fig 1), a conflicted, ambiguous tone of both affirmation and melancholy. Veering away from figuration towards agonistic abstraction its rough figures are swallowed by a mass of dark smears evoking fiery or bloody catastrophe as much as a subaltern disappearance from historical representation. This ambiguity towards revolutionary agency and success was a central problem for the SI. The SI has been a seminal influence on the post-1968 imagination of political participation among artists, activists and theorists. But their reception, dominated by an opposition between representation and agency, has often neglected the SI's specific representations *of* agency. Critics and historians have regularly emphasised the productive power of the SI's imaginative projections, in which their call to 'demand the impossible', extends Lefebvre's revolutionary romanticism which put one 'in thrall to the possible'.[2] Yet their romanticism was also characterised by a 'left melancholic'[3] refusal to acknowledge possibilities, in which demanding the impossible was also a demand for the disciplinary constitution of the impossible. In Freud's account, melancholy relates to 'an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness'.[4] In the SI's visual and written representations of social change, the lost object that is withdrawn and constituted as impossible is revolutionary agency. Agency remains an elusive 'presence' in their work, appearing in negative through compulsive, even eroticised, images of political agency drawn from cold war colonial and classist ideologies. Their fantasies of

Fig. 1. Michèle Bernstein, *Victory of the Commune of Paris*, 1963 (detail). Original lost. Printed in *Destruktion Af RSG-6* (Galerie Exi, Odense, 1963) p. 8.

political participation develop in gravitation around this founding conceptual lack. As a result, behind the common characterisation of the SI as presenting an easy link between desire and liberation in straightforwardly affirmative situations, the actual images of political participation in their work explore something darker.

The SI's central conception of embodied agency, the constructed situation, is usually described by reference to their own early definition: 'A moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambience and a game of events'.[5] But, appearing in an article titled 'Definitions' which tries to fix 'situationism' and 'situationist', this is only one moment in a process of the group's self-rendition. Rather than a singular form or concept, the situation was a prospective conceptual bricolage of resonances and associations across the fields of sociology, politics, art and architecture, which evoked not a single medium or method, but a general production of social-subjective experience: 'This synthesis must bring together a critique of behaviour, a compelling town planning, a mastery of ambiances and relationships. We know the first principles'.[6] Even when termed Situationist, this prospective discipline was verbosely suffixed: 'We find the question is posed of inventing a situology, a situography and perhaps even a situometry ... What we are going to invent is Situationist activity itself. And also its definition'.[7] It was a conceptual placeholder whose precise definition was deferred: a supposition of possibility indicating a yet-to-be-invented form: 'Nothing is less pressing for us than the elaboration of a doctrine: We are far from sufficiently understanding those things that would sustain a coherent system'.[8] But for a concept of materialisation and embodiment central to the group's identity and project, the situation remained a conspicuously vacant category. Each time it was affirmed, it also signified this absence.

Never Work/All Power to the Workers' Councils: What Is Situationist Labour?

The SI's ambiguous conceptions of agency are clearly marked by the dual invocations above, which draw together the threads of a Surrealist war on work and a councillist refusal of work to present an alternate Situationist conception of labour which remains both evocative and unresolved. The central council-communist influence on the SI, Cornelius Castoriadis' *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (SouB),[9] focused on production in terms of a new form of labour whose content was transformed beyond the categories of work / leisure:

The problem is not to leave more and more 'free' time to individuals – which might well only be *empty* time – so that they may fill it at will with 'poetry' or the carving of wood. The problem is to make all time a time of liberty and to allow concrete freedom to embody itself in creative activity. The problem is to put poetry into work.[10]

Yet the form of this 'poetic' labour was set out in sober terms of a series of open production plans, denoting the workers, hours and material required, developed by an administrative structure of plenaries and delegates. Meanwhile, in the definition above the situation's mode of participation was anthropological and performative: a game. The SI's engagement with 'play' derived from their reception of Surrealism[11] and, although critical, inherited Surrealism's figuration of play in terms of leisure, such as that of the nomadic consumptive 'users' who drifted through Constant's New Babylon in a world of universal sur-leisure. Rather than Castoriadis' refigured creative labour, playful agency was often envisioned by the SI as a leisurely lack of labouring production.

Compulsive Participation

One clue to this ambiguity can be found in their imagination of the labour of political participation,[12] which was centrally influenced by two recent Marxist accounts of alienation. Firstly, in a series of articles entitled 'On the Content of Socialism' Castoriadis argued that pure Fordism had given way to a situation where more *participation* is required on the part of workers. They are required not to *lose* their creative autonomy, or to set it outside work, but to incorporate it *into* their work. Creative subjectivity was not opposed to work, but increasingly became its basis. The autonomy built by radical political participation, in resistance to work, was recast in mutilated form as participation in capitalist value-production; a new mode of work. But this was a contradiction. Capital now depended on the autonomy and initiative of workers at the same time as it tended to take those things from them. The worker is more than a machine or beast because s/he is *creative*, 'he produces for the capitalist more than he costs'.[13] But the more he is treated as a machine, the capitalist 'soon learns (to his cost) that a dumb beast cannot be substituted for the worker. The productivity of overexploited labour falls rapidly'.[14] Here, Castoriadis rejected Marxist accounts of objective laws of capitalist development. Instead he identified the worker's subjectivity as a latitudinal 'other' within capital, such that the value of labour was not fixed like other commodities. Rather than the fixed law of value

of object-commodities, labour's value was determined by an unstable power relationship between workers and bureaucrats. The worker was a necessary but excessive centre that could never be fixed.[15] This entailed a complex dynamic of participation and exclusion: 'Capitalism needs to achieve mutually incompatible objectives: the participation *and* the exclusion of the worker in production - as of all citizens in relation to politics'.[16] The problem of political participation was one of control: of latitudinal agency vis-a-vis forced participation. Secondly, Lefebvre developed an account of alienation in culture in terms of Trotsky's 'uneven development', which Debord pithily condensed, 'Henri Lefebvre has extended the idea of uneven development so as to characterise everyday life as a lagging sector ... one could go so far as to term this level of everyday life a colonized sector'.[17] At the heart of this concept is Marx's theory of primitive accumulation. Here, alienation takes the form of separation from control over one's own time and activity: the colonial subject is incorporated by capital as a more-or-less antagonistic *other*. Lefebvre and Debord's 'colonisation of everyday life' suggests that rather than a founding moment for capital, all social encounters are moments of colonisation in an ongoing internal enclosure of workers' subjectivity. Castoriadis and Lefebvre's shared emphasis on enclosure was transposed by the SI into literal forms of containment: 'Technically improved and collective straightjackets (houses, cities, real-estate developments) ... Power intends to enclose the individual in another, radically different self',[18] in a deconcentrated 'concentration camp world'.[19] Their exemplary narrow spatial enclosure was the fallout shelter, whose crisis-concentration of 'normal' life became a recurring visual obsession. Behaviour meanwhile was ambivalently conceived as both a hopeful Castoriadan kernel of 'radical subjectivity':

> Nobody, no matter how alienated, is without (or unaware of) an irreducible core of creativity ... If ever social organisation extends its control to this stronghold of humanity, its domination will no longer be exercised over anything save robots, or corpses.[20]

And a tragic Hegelian shadow, crushed by capital:

> [Workers] really do participate in [property] through the daily sacrifice of their energy (what the ancients called pain or torture and we call labour or work) since they themselves produce this property in a way that excludes them.[21]

In this world in which 'concrete things are automatically the masters of social life'[22] Castoriadis and Lefebvre's social dynamic of participation/

exclusion became an 'environment/behaviour dialectic' of a vital but contingent agency trapped within-and-against a determinate capitalist materiality.

Socialism or Barbarism had taken its name from an essay which linked the prospect of nuclear war with labour management. Beyond fallout shelters, the SI's account of material enclosure also co-located Marxist labour crisis theory with images of geopolitical and psychological crisis. An article titled, 'The Struggle for the New Control of the New Techniques of Conditioning', describes a room employed for 'brainwashing', then still a neologism:

> The resolutely *other* furnishing of this closed room (transparent furniture, a curved bed); the lighting ... whose psychic effects had been deliberately intended ... waking up with damp clothes and dirty shoes ... projections of absurd and erotic films ...[23]

The account is drawn from a chapter of Lajos Ruff's 1959 book, *House of Torture: The Brain Washing Machine*. Ruff, part of the National Resistance Movement against Hungarian Communism, describes that after long imprisonment and torture he is transported to 'the magic room', irregularly shaped with a sloping bed, rotating coloured lamp shades, film projections and 'paintings of dice like abstract art'.[24] Drugs and theatrics, including a beam of silver light that tracked his movements, intensified the space's disorientating self-loss. Such narratives were more a conservative geopolitical fantasy originating in 1950s US accounts of Chinese attempts to turn prisoners through psychological abuse than evidence of a widespread or effective practice. Ruff's story is a late example of the mythological promotion of such abuses (epitomised by Edward Hunter's 1951 *Brain Washing in Red China*) which imagined neo-colonial fears of 'going native' as a systematic weapon: 'a psychological atomic reactor which is the symbolic apex of Communist organisation'.[25] This other nuclear weapon's destruction of rational individuality fitted easily into Western Cold War narratives of 'two worlds'. This scientist cold war fantasy of materially forced participation overdetermined their Marxian notions of enclosed agency.

Appropriating this conservative imaginary, the SI turned to emerging technocratic, behaviourist iterations of the discipline of cybernetics, in the work of Norbert Wiener and others, which explored control systems and their contingency. Cybernetics' application to labour management was a response to labour struggles increasingly centering on the crisis-dynamic Castoriadis had identified. Under a discourse of 'empowering'

workers, participation in self- managing one's own role became increasingly mandatory through 'feedback' mechanisms: a means to enclosure latitudinal agency in the workplace. The SI framed cybernetics as a whole in terms of material containment and coercion, a 'science of domination',[26] wherein the 'cybernetics of power' provided a mirror-image to the creation of situations. They responded with caustic ire to a hopeful enquiry by Abraham Moles, an academic who proposed a functional 'information aesthetics', publishing the exchange as a pamphlet and distributing it at a talk he gave with the artist Nicolas Schöffer.[27] This 'cybernetic society' was one of compelled participation, a torturous extraction of labour power through 'participation in something in which it is impossible to participate'.[28] It was in these terms that the SI criticised GRAV's 'liberatory' invocation that it is 'forbidden not to participate'.[29] Visualising the environmental materialisation of this dynamic of forced participation through the cold war lenses of fantasies of both brainwashing and cybernetics, the SI theorised a capitalist materiality aspiring to a containment and conditioning both total and impossible, such that 'an apartment, like a neighbourhood, conditions the people who live in it'.[30] This agency-destroying enclosure is figured in a diagram of the constricted space of possible movements of a worker in a 'rationalised' workspace, in Vaneigem's 1961 'Comments Against Urbanism' (Fig. 2). Reiterated amidst Situationist rhetoric and detourned comic book frames, one is tempted to read the figure in this image not as calmly moving between proscribed positions but, the dotted lines indicating comic-book motion, flailing wildly across its workspace, transforming it into a diagram of the workspace-as-struggle - the figure actively disordering and sabotaging its space, or perhaps only thrashing in tortured pain or mad boredom. A translation of 'Basic Banalities'[31] in *Der Deutsche Gedanke* replaces these motion-lines with actual restraints in an even more dramatic figuration (Fig. 3): a man held in an electric chair by leather straps and a rubber face mask, observed and controlled by a suited figure. Their awkward poses perform a spectacle of power and violence. The photograph is a news image from October 1940, taken during the execution of Willie Mae Bragg. The story was covered internationally as Mississippi's first execution, using carnival showman-turned-executioner Jimmy Thompson's travelling electric chair. The SI's use of this spectacle of state discipline as a broad metaphor for social bondage magnifies its fetishistic qualities. Even as it illustrates a critique of such bondage, the reiteration of the image is compulsive, even seductive.
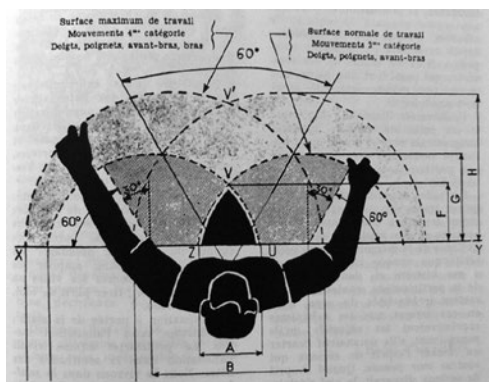
Fig. 2. *Maximum and Normal Work-Surfaces on the Horizontal Plane.*
Printed in *Internationale Situationniste* 6 (August 1961), p. 35.

Fig. 3. Untitled Photograph, *Situationistisk Revolution* 1, October 1962, np.

Anticapitalist Cybernetics:
Revolution Isn't Showing Life to People, It's Making Them Live

The SI's critique of management-facilitated 'participation' gives the lie to the common characterisation of them as propagating simple liberatory, vitalist or affirmative 'situations' against spectacular passivity. But more than this, their appropriation of cold war fantasies of 'conditioning' alongside cybernetics doesn't simply expose the bad conscience of Western ideology. Instead they advanced a far more ambiguous position which displayed a clear *attraction* towards these imaginaries. Of Ruff's fantasies of mind-control through shock and disorientation, they argued:

> We are not *against* conditioning ... But from the institutions that work towards the impoverishment of mankind, we want to wrest the instruments of conditioning at their disposal.[32]

The totalitarian environment of Ruff's 'magic room', with its industrialisation of Surrealist convulsions of identity, actually offered a model and anticipation of their own practices. Debord was enthusiastic about artist Jean-Michel Rankovitch's 'show in which certain inaudible ultrasounds provoked certain psychological effects in the audience. Everyone knows that this is more advanced, in terms of how our Situationist experiments are defined'.[33] Their dream of a coercive materialism, that 'in the future, a free art will be an art that dominates and employs all the new techniques of conditioning',[34] puts in a new light their wish to *make people live*:

> Revolution is not 'showing' life to people, but making them live. A revolutionary organisation must always remember that its objective is not getting its adherents to listen to convincing talks by expert leaders, but getting them ... to achieve, or at least strive towards, an equal degree of participation.[35]

The forced participation of their own 'compelling town planning' and 'houses where one cannot help but love'[36] proposed a paradoxical space of *non-consensual play*, or as we shall see, play *with* non-consent. The SI found an allegorical parallel for such 'liberatory' enclosures in the labyrinth. Before its emergence as a leisure-form, the maze or labyrinth was an archetypal site of transformatory discipline, both play and torment. Rather than fixing a subject, such environments forced a ritual game upon a subject that disoriented their identity through a spatial and sensory disorientation; whether devotee seeking ritual self-loss; imprisoned minotaur; or rodent test-subject. Though Gallizio's 'Cave of Anti-Matter' is perhaps the first attempt to create such a space,[37] it took form beyond the SI's collective influence and was for Debord 'a reactionary farce [which] didn't

represent the movement'.[38] Instead, the unrealised exhibition 'Die Welt Als Labyrinth' proved a collective experiment at the limit of their resources. Willem Sandberg invited the exhibition for May 30–June 20th 1960 at the Stedelijk museum in Amsterdam, as a collaboration between Dutch and French members of the group. Echoing a section of Constant's New Babylon titled the Yellow Zone,[39] the exhibition was understood as partial and experimental, 'It is the only viewpoint financially possible for creating a truly never-before-seen mixed milieu ... we will create real urbanism next time'.[40] Short of the revitalising 'disorientation every day'[41] imagined by Constant's New Babylon, the exhibition was to include the construction of a new internal wall in the gallery, which would then be knocked-through, and a tunnel composed of Gallizio's industrial painting, 'extremely wide at the start, then becoming increasingly narrow, which everyone would be obliged to cross through – with difficulty'.[42] The gallery asserted that this architectural modification was not possible and the SI responded by declining the exhibition to 'safeguard the totality of our approach'.[43] The discomforting enclosure of this tunnel spatialised a Sadistic play with sensory torment and agitation, at the limit of an audience's consent, that Debord's earlier film *Screams for de Sade* had already elicited through containing a cinema audience but depriving them of sensory stimulus through blank projection, teased by snatches of dialogue and white flashes. This 'unitary ambiance' involved a total enclosing and overwhelming of the senses in an act of phenomenological control and subjection, through both cumulative use of media and their complete removal. More than the sum of its formal parts, the self-loss hopefully provoked by this environment was supposed to hold a transformative potential. Following Lefebvre's Marxian reworking of the Surrealist marvellous in his theory of 'moments', the SI associated this overpowering moment with the theoretical perspective of totality's attempt to grasp historical movement. Historical agency would be sparked by a phenomenologically total environment, a phallocentric whole whose determinate power would forcefully engender life, 'making people live' as Lefebvre's 'total man'.[44] Foster has complicated readings of Surrealism as simple, affirmative shock[45] and the SI's neo-surrealist imagination was no less problematic in figuring moments of traumatic social struggle as a self-annihilating play with sadomasochistic overtones. These abortive phantasmic explorations of forcible disorientation can be placed in illuminating relation to the SI's actual organisational activity in this period. Here there was an equal investment in, and ambiguity towards, the problem of participation: a problem tied to the orientation of their own political identity.

'Voting is Participation. Participation = Suicide'

The above slogan, framed by a hangman's noose in a poster produced by the *Atelier Populaire* during May 1968, echoed the SI's critique of political participation through institutional roles. The situation was identified not just with formal innovation, but with an organisational problem of participation: 'a revolutionary organization's relation to artists'.[46] Here there is another determinate cold war context: the tension between historic labour movements dominated by the party and union form and emerging new social movements organised through affinity and direct action.

The organisational mode the situation most resembled, as an immediate transformation of social relations, was direct action. From 1958, the SI followed SouB in specifically proposing direct action via workers' councils. SouB had argued that the 1956 Hungarian uprising marked a historic organisational shift in labour movements, from the party to the council: 'The Workers Councils put an end to the foolish dreams, disasters and despair which have attended all those who … have placed the hope for socialism in the elite party'.[47] Yet in common with SouB and others to the left of the Communist Party, attracted to but isolated from the counterpower of 1960s new social movements, they vacillated between various forms of political participation. The SI's fifth conference in 1962 is often regarded as a turning point, where they proposed that to be a situationist, one must not attempt to make 'situationist art':

> It is noted that would-be avant-garde artists are beginning to appear in various countries who have no connection with the SI but who refer to themselves as adherents of 'situationism' or describe their works as being more or less situationist … *antisituationist* art will be the mark of the best artists, those of the SI, since genuinely situationist conditions have as yet not at all been created. Admitting this is the mark of a situationist.[48]

While this has often been identified as an art/politics split with the SI abandoning art, more recent scholarship has resisted this division.[49] However, rather than picking sides, we can see this disavowal, and the flood of others which followed, as marking a split in organisational modes of participation. Definitively in 1962, the SI drew nearer to a form belonging to earlier labour movements, the Leninist revolutionary party cadre, deferring situations and councils as future modes of production. The cadre is, in Lenin's writing, the informal core organisational and disciplinary group within a party who identify not as workers but 'professional revolutionaries'. Rather than a disempowered speech act,[50] the SI drew a resonant and seductive power from this organisational iden-

tification by embracing it as absolutely sincerity and as camp. The SI's most successful work to this end was their journal. Its texts, images and even construction remained the SI's single consistent material practice. The journal was long the traditional object through which a cadre manifested itself, but for the SI especially it functioned as a constitutive self projection-object which embodied and maintained their collective identity. Not only did it literally bind together their fantasies of participation and serve as an authoritative site for announcements of history, intent and membership, but it developed the 'revolutionary romantic' aesthetic that was crucial to the groups' founding.[51] This aesthetic extended into the materiality of the journal, alluringly bound in reflective Lumaline, each issue a different metallic colour, a fetishistic peacock among the sober shelves of modestly printed political journals. Re-captioned superhero comics portrayed their party as a dominant band of 'total men' attacking or defending society, a phantasm closer to Bakunin's vision of a revolutionary secret society than Lenin's cadre. These built a mythology of a sect with transcendent power.[52] Later, they gleefully reprinted scaremongering tabloid newspaper accounts of the international reach and clandestine power of the mysterious 'Situationists', encouraging a vision of themselves as a spectre haunting Europe.[53] After their fifth conference, they photographed themselves standing on machinery and fraternizing with workers. Another photograph in IS5 pictures them as a group on a visit to the British Sailors Society, a historic labour organisation. Yet the 'TO LET' sign behind them reveals the building recently became empty, closed as the shipping industry declined in London's East End. The demise of the building – a Christian mission rather than union headquarters – made it possible to hire the space for their meeting. The founding lack haunting many of the SI's assertions of coherence related to the massed agency of social movements and the various successive revolutionary workers' associations this latter-day 'International' evoked. The suspensive tensions of maintaining the SI's projected body required its own anxious dynamic of participation and exclusion in relation to them, through 'repeated repudiation by which the subject installs its boundary and constructs the claim to its integrity'.[54] Their famous disavowals of art as 'antisituationist' were part of an anxious dynamic of attraction and repulsion in policing the boundaries of 'Situationist' identity, in relation both to new art-world practices (with their own various politics), and new cultural forms of political participation in social movements. To defend against these reiterations, they asserted the cadre alongside a tactical withdrawal from the experimental making they

once championed. While the administrative gloss of 'internal reports' and 'bulletins on the construction of situations' performatively invoked a largely-absent body of structured organisation, the Parisian SI referred to itself as the 'central council', conferring or revoking legitimate member identity on others by published decree. Debord wrote to Constant in 1959, 'the truly Situationist minority … controls the debate of ideas in the SI'.[55] The SI asserted that their ideas were to be found in everyone's heads, while at the same time there was no such thing as 'Situationism'. They nonetheless asserted the right of naming in a 'situationist dictionary'[56] to authoritatively navigate this position. The situation's tension between management and self-management was embodied in their own organisation as it attempted to maintain a situation-ist identity. Much can be revealed about this collective subject and the project it safeguarded by examining the SI's production of a constitutive 'outside' through successive exclusions. That this outside was actually inside the body of the group, as founding repudiation, was revealed as the SI progressively dismembered itself until its end in 1972, with Debord and Sanguinetti the only remaining participants.

One More Effort if You Want to Be Situationists!
Repressing Bad Situationisms

The notion of totality was central to the SI's imagination of the situation. From 1962, the term 'unitary' tended to give way to a Hegelian-Marxian social and philosophical 'totality' as a key description of the situation, marking a shift in emphasis from formal, spatial coherence to teleological historical advance.[57] Already in 1960 after the failure of the Stedelijk show, Debord argued 'the true development of unitary urbanism will inevitably be related to the search for global liberation, and not a pure formal construction, however large it may be'.[58] Its appearance was termed (recalling Lefebvre's use of 'presence' as a term for the moment of Hegelian aufheben) 'an avant-garde of presence'.[59] But this was an anxious projection. This avant-garde of presence replaced any specific presence with a conceptual projection of 'presence' itself, a term which connotes both materiality and spectrality. Echoing Marx's assertion that the working class would abolish class itself, they described themselves as 'the last avant-garde'. This 'last man' position employed totality as a critical means to exclude illegitimate bodies and to assert Lefebvre's 'total man' as an undivided phallic body at the summit of history. Increasingly millennial projections compulsively returned, with cumulative intensity, to the declarative tension of Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, dealing

with the problem of agency and totality, in various combinations of both Breton's 'beauty will be convulsive or it will be nothing',[60] and Marx's 'the working class is revolutionary or it is nothing':[61]

> The new beauty will be SITUATIONAL.[62]
> The art of the future will be the construction of situations, or nothing.[63]
> Proletarian revolutions will be festivals or nothing.[64]
> A single choice, suicide or revolution.[65]

The bad conscience of this absent-presence would haunt them, its future-in-the-present a sublime phantasmic rallying point, a byword for embodiment at the level of a historical event forcing the lock of social change, yet seemingly always just beyond their grasp. Barrot and Plant have explored the contradictions of the SI's notion of totality,[66] but rather than reading this as theoretical contradiction, late modernist crisis or proto-postmodernism, it can be understood by looking to the SI's organisational dynamic. Behind this concern with presence and absence stood an intense process of identification and disavowal. In a fetishistic game of *fort-da* with social movements, the reiteration of 'situations' was desired and documented as a growth of influence which drew the seductive 'victory' of social movement participation close, such that 'everyone shares our ideas'.[67] But when the idea of a constructed situation appeared to specifically manifest itself, it immediately seemed a monstrous double, a threatening resignification which displaced the centrality of the Situation-ists. These appearances became 'bad fantasies' which had to be identified and disavowed as unwholesome. Their status as deviant or incomplete embodiments was asserted through a series of critiques and exclusions. This symbolic constitution of the ideal of 'the constructed situation' through 'a series of demands, taboos, sanctions, injunctions, prohibitions, impossible idealisations, and threats'[68] not only instituted and maintained their collective Situationist identity, but attempted to police the projected practice of constructing situations as a normative centre and party line, in the face of multiple new practices which sometimes participated in social movements in ways the SI aspired to. They moved from a speculative practice of 'open creation' to one of defensive prohibition and occlusion. The situation was no longer a constituent imaginary, but a disempowering fantasy of idealised projection in which the term became increasingly fetishised, not by other 'would-be avant-garde artists',[69] but by the SI themselves. They turned to a narcissistic repression of the construction of situations.

During the 1962 split, those that opposed the 'non-activity policy'[70]

of the central council's 'positional Situationism', led by Prem and Nash, marked a breakaway aiming to continue exploring the creation of situations as a form of direct action. They argued 'Situationists must also practice practical activity',[71] persisting with experimental open creation, organised via 'voluntary associations of autonomous work groups'. Framing this as a less theoretically-led 'unpopular folk art',[72] they argued 'We tend to produce our theories after the event … The French work exactly the other way around'.[73] Called to a meeting in Paris, they were presented with a prewritten pamphlet announcing their exclusion. Tellingly, at the time, the excluded members were also defending against criminal charges for political activity. Their exclusion was mentioned by the prosecutor to discredit them, although the SI issued a statement of solidarity after the trial. The group shortly after announced the formation of a Second Situationist International.[74] This group's very name decenters the SI just as it accepts a secondary identity as illegitimate rejected double, whose disorder the SI diagnosed as 'Nashism'. Opposing the purely formal participation of Fluxus and happenings, their extension of the SI's early positions attempted to turn gallery shows into illegal mass demonstrations, termed 'Situationist anti-happenings' and 'collective ritual demonstrations', between 1962–65.

As the SI's construction of an image of themselves progressed, the term situationist was increasingly reiterated in the media and the art world, where it was could denote any radical or utopian artist working with new media; vague romantic affiliations with any anti-state libertarianism; or any particularly chic rebel or architect of scandal. The SI's proposal for a 'game of events' was thrown into crisis once it seemed to be put into practice by several contemporary artists. Locally, the Group de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV) made its own claim on the creation of situations,[75] as seemingly did Jean-Jacques Lebel's description, from 1963, of happenings as anarchist 'direct action' vis-a-vis transgression and social transformation.[76] In English, the term happening had been propagated by Kaprow to describe collective performative environments involving chance and the disruption of roles in a fashion that also recalled the SI's claims. Responding, the SI rejected happenings as 'a borderline case of the old artistic spectacle whose remnants get thrown into a common grave'.[77] Threatening the coherence of their projection, the happening was derided as both empty formalism *and* formless debris.

Furthermore, the SI found itself threatened by the adoption of this notion of happening-as-social-change among new social movement groups such as the Amsterdam Provos, to describe their experiments with the aesthetics and affects of direct action. Worse still, Nash supported them[78]

while Constant Nieuwenhuis, who resigned from the SI in 1960, now af-
filiated his New Babylon project with them.[79] Bergen Lucebert, another
CoBrA member who became a prominent poet in the 1950s, also pub-
lished in *Provo*. Meanwhile, the SSI framed their practice by echoing the
terms of the Provos, identifying their construction of situations with this
tendency for political happenings, 'the strongest weapon of Situationism
is an anti-authoritarian and provocative behaviour'.[80] The SI responded
by repudiating their project and any connection to their own: 'It is, how-
ever, erroneous to suppose that 'the Provos provide the theorists, until
now isolated, of the Situationist International with what they lacked:
troops capable of an intelligent representation'.[81]

> The *Provos* ... arose out of an encounter between a few dregs from the world
> of decomposed art in search of a career and a mass of young rebels in search
> of self-expression ... The Provos choose the fragmentary and end by accepting
> the totality.[82]

At the same time, the SI actively sought out, and rejected, exactly such
troops from the wave of social movement activist-art groups articulating
their own 'positive Dadaism' in a mixture of art and direct action. They
met the Chicago Surrealist Group (who had been the first to publish the
SI in the US)[83] and the milieu around Murray Bookchin's attempt to form
a united New York anarchist group, to consider Bruce Chasse, Robert El-
well, Ben Morea, Ron Hahne and Alan Hoffman (the latter three of Black
Mask) as a potential American section. Lastly, the milieu Debord briefly
considered 'English Situationists', suffered a similar fate after refusing to
break all contact with the excluded Americans.[84] This 'breakaway' current,
represented by the Second Situationist International, Provos and others
constitutes a second-wave Situationism in which Situationist practices and
ideas diffused among activist-art collectives who focused on the aesthetics
and affects of direct action. For the SI, these became abject Situationisms,
lacking the conceptual cleanliness of totality. The trauma of the 1962 break
for the 'Nashists' is reflected in an agonistic montage in *Situationist Times*
several pages long, incorporating flicks of paint and labyrinthine spirals of
diaristic text concluding in a final image of Debord's head on the body of
a foetus. The break was no less a narcissistic wound for the SI. Despite in-
tending to 'transition from a utopian revolutionary art to an experimental
revolutionary art',[85] they ultimately moved in the opposite direction. The
situation came to function not as a signifier for ongoing experiment, but as
the site of a series of fantasies of political participation which haunted the
SI as both guarded centre and constituent other.

A Situationist Archive

The SI identified various public sculptural or architectural practices, approving of them for their situation-ish qualities, and composing a de-facto Situationist archive of instances of materialised critique: a nascent, fragmented mythological counter-canon of radical history; the Fourierist Phalanastry;[86] Parisian students (endorsed as 'situationist commandos') reinstalling a statue of Fourier removed by the Nazis; [87] Bakunin's attempt to use oil paintings as a barricade during the 1849 Dresden revolt;[88] the proposed demolition of the Amsterdam stock exchange to turn it into a playground for the area's population,[89] or the demolition of the Vendome column during the Paris Commune. These autonomous manifestations were often readymade situations by virtue of their organisational modes of production within actually-existing social movements: from riots and sabotage to worker's councils. Such identifications found their fullest form in two essays which read moments of mass direct action (the Paris commune and Watts uprising) through the notion of revolution-as-festival.[90] These 'festivals' were the ideal readymade situation. They served as an overdetermined phantasmic resolution of the SI's contrary investments and identifications.

These essays did not advocate councillist production instead fetishising the violence of these events. Tom McDonough has argued that the SI's characterisation of Watts as a 'potlatch of destruction', owes more to Bataille than to Lefebvre.[91] It might also be seen as a competitive break with Lefebvre: an excessive Lefebvrianism which bites the bullet of his conflicted 'revolutionary romantic' method. His suspensive aesthetic of deferred agency, with its unresolved Hegelian and Nietzschean totalities, deferred this festival to a future moment of revolution. The SI instead imagined a fantastical hyper-agency by embracing reactionary contemporary fantasies of the 'mob' as a provocative image of historical agency. The SI agreed with Lefebvre that the Commune was 'the biggest festival of the nineteenth century',[92] but against his melancholic account of the tragic pyre of Paris in flames, the SI celebrated individual acts of murder.[93] Similarly, in the second of these essays, on the 1965 Watts riots, they gleefully juxtapose the image of a burning storefront with the intellectual subtitle 'critique of urbanism', as if thumbing their nose at Lefebvre's spatial critiques. This latter essay was their most developed reading of revolution-as-festival, in which the mostly-white French cadre projected upon and identified with an abortive black working-class uprising in North America. Although the essay implicitly compared it to the Paris Commune, the Watts uprising was less clearly articulated as a political revolt. More limited in duration

and scale, it was characterised not so much by the organisation of committees as by looting, property damage and attacks on police. There was a greater uptake in radical political participation *after* the uprising, and its causes and meaning (as 'riot' or 'revolt') were highly contested.[94] Imagining the labour of Watts as play, they reproduce a newspaper photograph not with *detournement* but maintaining its original subtitle, 'playing with rifled cash register'. This reading, drawing attention to the cultural and affective aspects of the uprising, was not uncommon, as in a *New Left Notes* headline describing Watts as 'Almost a Happening'.[95] But the SI's exploration of this relationship between action and affect was deeply ambiguous. The SI saw citizens stealing commodities they couldn't use as an unintentional critique, taking 'modern capitalist propaganda ... literally'.[96] Yet the entire essay echoes this literal appropriation of capitalist ideology. LA as a media centre meant that Watts had massive international reverberations, and the SI's engagement with was not so much with Watts' actual local (or national) antagonisms as with the spectacle of Watts projected across the media.[97] Both the images which illustrated the SI's essay were drawn from the same issue of *Time* magazine. The SI's image of Watts as playful relied on the uncritical appropriation of racist and classist media images constructing Watts as irrational. The SI identified 'festival' not in the social movement culture of the modern demonstration or its precursors, but in the seductive mythic designation of the 'riot': an open legal category blanketing a variety of particular forms of mass-cultural public assembly as 'disorder'. This conception, dating from the 1714 British Riot Act and spreading among the colonies and elsewhere, was a keyword in a discourse which named a wide variety of cultural forms of public assembly in order to outlaw them. In visual and literary representations, it was bound to the image of mass collective action as a senseless manifestation of an unruly multitude outside of political agency or process. The SI's bold gambit was to visualise agency *through* reactionary images of social movement action as undirected non-agency. Watts, a black working class riot, offered an ideal template in that its spectacular mediation combined the twin mythological poles of abject colonial and class otherness. For the SI, accounts of Watts as lumpen-mob violence tied to a racist emphasis on primitive irrationality underwrote a dubious metaphorical play between blackness and philosophical negation: 'the blacks ... are the negation at work'.[98]

The cost of this bet on a spectacular image of negation was that it ignores actually-existing movement cultures and reduces radical agency to an exclusive image of heroic violence. Rather than finding in the images

of Watts a Dionysian transformation in the nature or content of work, the SI celebrate its powers of horror, in a serendipitous reactionary concurrence of a mid-twentieth-century consumerist notion of play-as-leisure with a classist, racist identification of 'riot' with irrational, primitive and childish effervescence: an excessive consumption beyond commodities. 'The theft of large refrigerators by people with no electricity, or with their electricity cut off, is the best image of the lie of affluence transformed into a truth *in play*.'[99] Their earlier disavowal of new forms of social movement action returns in inverted form in this celebration of the non-agency of the mob and a failure to conceive of movements as possessing their own cultures. Debord and Constant agreed that 'the working class, historically having no culture, implies the possibility, the necessity, of a new type of culture'.[100] The fantasies of the SI, whether the containment of their exhibitions; their journal's authoritative performance; or the riot-festival of these essays, are anxious projections of potency, historical determination and political power which betray a dual attraction and repulsion toward the agency of others.

Be Cruel: On Revolutionary Sadism

Despite these disavowals and idealisations, one final, key moment finds the SI returning to experimental construction in the light of all these tensions. If embracing brainwashing or riots as revolutionary imaginaries seems self-defeating, this project adopts self-defeat as an aesthetic tactic. Despite having rejected art work and excommunicated SSI members for not doing so, the SI's anxiety around the SSI's threat to their identity became clear when, following the SSI's 1962 exhibition *Seven Rebels* in Odense, the SI set aside their own embargo to stage a counter-exhibition on 22nd June 1963, *Destruction of RSG-6*.[101] Compelled to play their hand, the SI did not transcend their theoretical impasses so much as construct a monument to their contradictions. Against the open, participant-defined spaces of the SSI, whose radicalism was far from guaranteed, the SI's exhibition took the form of an enclosed labyrinthine narrative. The formal approach to enclosed unitary environments of their Stedjelik show was paired with a symbolic compression of contrary social dynamics. Visitors were enclosed in a pedagogic guided walk through their journal, in which their spatial movement was also a teleological one from enclosure to critique and action. The tone was millennial throughout. RSG-6 began by forcing visitors into the cramped space of capitalist material determination, in the form of one of the fallout bunkers regularly pictured in *IS*. In Debord's description, this small space is a morbid echo of

the First Surrealist exhibition. In place of Dali's rainy taxi, a destroyed car outside the exhibition, instead fetishised mannequins recalling sex workers, this 'horrible' room contained an empty cot, preserved food and a mannequin bagged like a cadaver. An air-raid siren played constantly, alongside low 'disagreeable light' while sprayed deodorant impeded breathing. Visitors were disciplined by two managers of the space: 'assistants dressed in anti-nuclear jumpsuits (cowls, goggles) oblige the people to remain 10 minutes in this space'.[102] The exhibition took its title from a contemporary pamphlet, reproduced on the catalogue cover, in which a British activist group, Spies for Peace, leaked the existence of 14 secret 'Regional Seats of Government' bunkers in which government figures would survive a nuclear attack in 'a wholly self-contained community'.[103] The pamphlet was part of a historic moment of social movement action. Distributed at the 1963 Aldermaston march, it led protestors on a detour to occupy the site of RSG-6 in Warren Row village, Berkshire. But the SI's echo of this action returned to fantasies of conditioning and violence. In the next room visitors were invited to 'learn' from this disturbing experience of containment and act up. Rifles were available to fire at targets covered with photographic images of leaders: Kennedy, the Queen of England, de Gaulle, Khrushchev, Franco, Adenauer, and the Danish Foreign Minister. Debord's instructions indicate they were to be surrounded by paintings with titles such as *2 h 15 After the Start of the Third World War* which turned the abstract vitalism Bernstein's paintings had already appropriated to the service of topological 'modifications' projecting a Europe scarred by nuclear war, adding crushed glass, axle grease and human hair to the mixture. Whether the destruction of RSG-6 was to be a matter of nuclear or movement action became unclear, but it composed a traumatic environment of practice-range conditioning for armed revolt, evoking the central figure of a brainwashed Communist assassin in Richard Condon's 1959 novel, *The Manchurian Candidate* and the 1962 film adaption, one year before this exhibition. Visitors became potential Sergeant Shaws, or Harvey Oswalds – who would assassinate Kennedy six months to the day after the exhibition opened.[104] Debord's instructions stipulate that the third room only contain a series of Situationist 'directives', but a photograph of the second room (Fig. 4) shows them hung around the firing range. In Condon's novel, platoon leader Captain Marco is troubled by nightmares of violent conditioning watched over by Communist directors, but in the SI's dream, the firing range is watched over by the abstract directives of Situationist theory itself. Each time one shot a leader in the eye, one was rewarded with a copy of *Situationistisk*
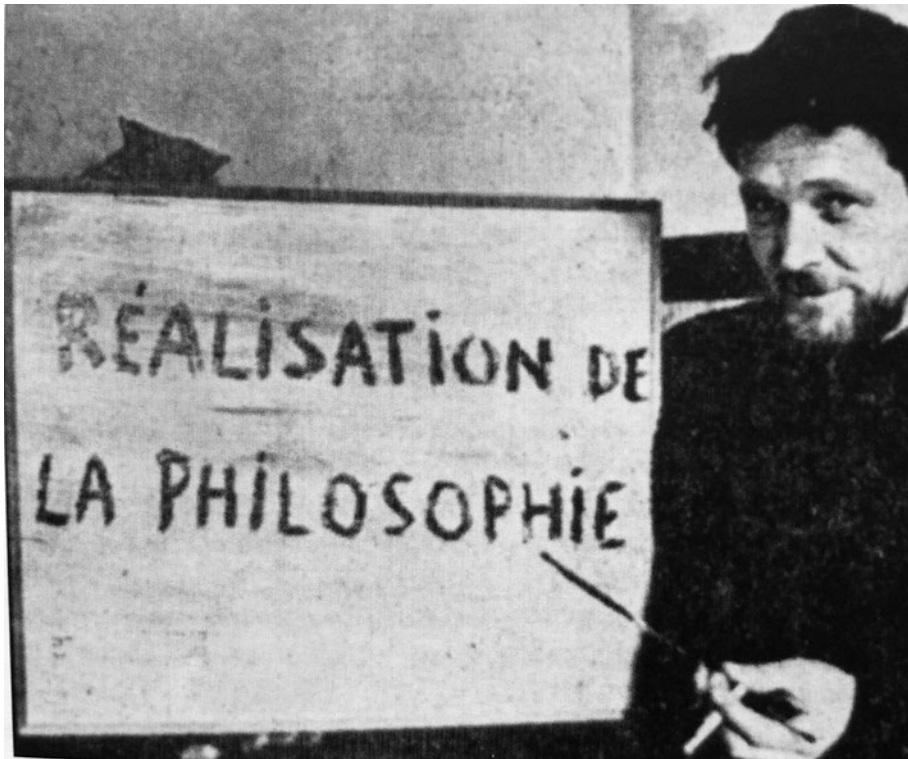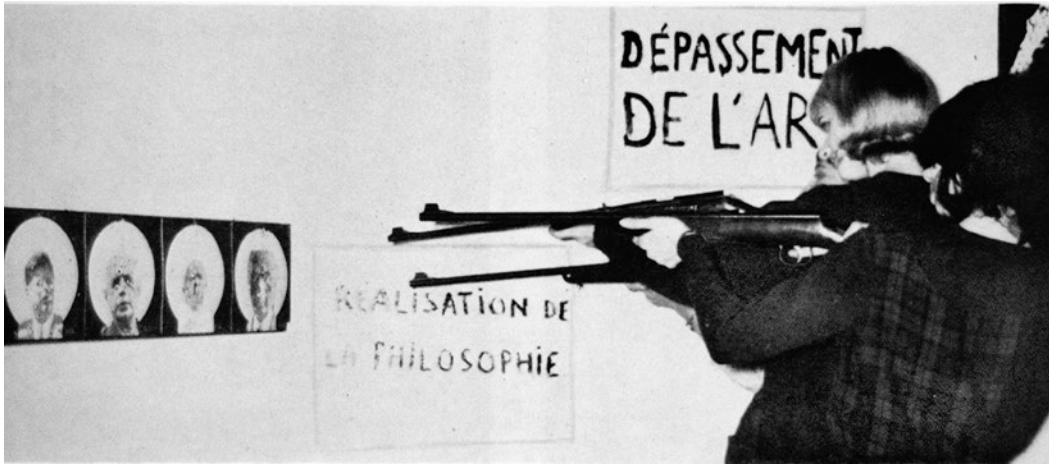
Fig. 4. Untitled Photograph. Else Steen Hansen (J. V. Martin), 'Homo Ludens', *Konstrevy*, no. 5/6, 1963, p. 201.

Fig. 5. Untitled Photograph, *Situationistisk Revolution* 2, March 1967, np.

Revolution. Meanwhile, Castoriadis's wager of Socialism or Barbarism was dramatised as Martin's nightmare-paintings were juxtaposed with Bernstein's dreams of victory.

Debord's second directive, '*Realisation de la Philosophie*', concentrates these contradictions. Marx's dramatic announcement of a methodological turn in dialectics, from critique to material agency, in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach is here ironically undermined by its materials. It is presented as – of all things – an artwork in a gallery, with the effect of drawing attention to its textual limitations in relation to its object-status. In the catalogue the textual content of these works assumes a pictorial status, as they are not pictured and only their titles, 'directive 1' to 'directive 5', are listed. Furthermore, in an image of 'directive 2' in *Situationistisk Revolution* 3 (Fig. 5), its instruction to demonstrate autonomous agency seems presented ironically with JV Martin pointing at it, as if to a chalkboard, like a smirking schoolmaster. It appears not as the impersonal logic of a historical turn, or even as impassioned partisan demand, but as a managerial 'directive'. Where textually it might function as a revelatory use of dialectical method, it appears here as an undialectical detournement of dialectical language itself. Read critically, it seems not only an ironic comment on the exhibition's crude symbolic passage from passivity to action but on the internal limits of the SI's own poetic appropriation of dialectics as an attempt to grasp social movement.

The RSG-6 pamphlet had derided the futile 'play' of government drill-tests in the face of nuclear genocide as a monomaniacal fantasy, 'in this nightmare world, the authorities still pursued their childish dreams ... In the RSGs the heads of department were known officially as "players".'[105] But as Martin's schoolmasterly gesture suggests, the SI too were playing at managerial control. The distancing effect of Martin's direction towards a directive might also frame the exhibition as an invitation to play with totality and agency. The exhibition's 'total' overwhelming discomforting of the audience involved a baseline of consent in which it was possible to leave the gallery, revealing the exhibition not as a sincere experiment in conditioning but a seductive invitation to a negotiated play in which one submitted to a fantasy of de-individuated Communist violence. *RSG-6* did not realise a 'situation' as either a shock of realisation or attempted conditioning, but as a scene of compulsive play with traumatic disciplinary conceptions of 'failed' social change. It is revealing in this respect that the installation photograph shows three attractive fashionable women as the rifle-bearing subjects of this fantasy. Choice and consent are central attributes of a sovereign liberal subject often conceived as masculine,

while women's exclusion from such subjecthood has often made them the figure of fantasies of domination. This fantasy of brainwashed political violence is played out with an erotic subtext that would be repeated 11 years later in images of a rifle-bearing Patty Hearst. Halberstam argues the subjective unbecoming of masochism's 'failure' might have a political equivalent in a refusal of 'proscriptive forms of agency' and victory.[106] We might find in the eroticised deathly compulsions of RSG-6's fantasies of forced labour an unwitting critique of the SI's own conceptions of agency, themselves transformed into 'a truth in play' open to criticism and altera-tion. Perhaps their reworking of the enclosure or subsumption of labour as a sadomasochistic play with nightmares of participation and dreams of agency might produce a strange 'lightness and joy'[107] which escapes the suspended romantic/melancholy dichotomy of Marx's eleventh thesis itself. Rather than a left-melancholic fetishisation of past 'victories' which has partly made possible what Wark calls the SI's '50 years of recupera-tion',[108] we might find in the masochistic compulsions of the SI's fantasies of participation a rejection of movements of success and succession for a more productive and joyful failure. We might think of the contradictions of these Situationist fantasies not as an archive of melancholic failures but, in Vaneigem's own words, as 'the step back preparatory to the leap of transcendence'.[109]

Notes

1. Guy Debord, 'The Situationists and the New Action Forms in Politics and Art', in *Destruktion Af RSG-6* (Odense: Galerie EXI, 1963), p. 12.

2. Henri Lefebvre, 'Le Romantisme Revolutionnaire', *Nouvelle Revue française*, no. 58, 1957, p. 43.

3. Wendy Brown, 'Resisting Left Melancholy', *Boundary* 26, no. 3 (1999), pp. 19–27.

4. Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *Complete Psychological Works*, vol. 14, 1914–1916 (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 244.

5. 'Definitions, Internationale Situationniste 1, 1958', in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1995), p. 45.

6. Guy Debord et al., 'Une Idée Neuve En Europe', *Potlatch* 7, 3 Aug 1954', in *Guy Debord Présente Potlatch (1954–1957)*, ed. Guy Debord (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), p. 51.

7. Asger Jorn, *Open Creation and Its Enemies*, trans. Fabian Tompsett (London: Unpopular Books, 1994), p. 30.

8. Guy Debord and Gil Wolman, 'Pourquoi Le Lettrisme?,' in *Guy Debord Présente Potlatch,* p. 187.

9. A council communist group that broke away from the Trotskyist Fourth International in 1948. See Stephen Hastings-King, '*L'internationale Situationniste, Socialisme Ou Barbarie, and the Crisis of the Marxist Imaginary*', *SubStance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism*, no. 90 (1999), pp. 26–54.

10. Cornelius Castoriadis, 'On the Content of Socialism II', in *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 2, *1955–1960: From the Workers' Struggle against Bureaucracy to Revolution in the Age of Modern Capitalism*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 107.

11. Notably, this Western engagement with social movement cultures cited Surrealism and Dada rather than Constructivism, 'I knew very little about the constructivist avant-garde ... I probably discounted it as pure plastic research'. Debord to Constant, 3 March 1959, in Guy Debord, *Correspondence* (*June 1957–August 1960*), trans. Stuart Kendall and John McHale (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), p. 221.

12. This sociological term is used here to expeditiously distance us from the SI's own theorisations of such processes, although its focus on 'inclusion' tends to confer legitimacy on existing institutions, denigrating extra-institutional political labour and often excluding the micro-political and affective dimensions which their ideas sought to emphasise.

13. Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Socialism or Barbarism', in *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 1, *1946–1955: From the Critique of Bureaucracy to the Positive Content of Socialism*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 88.

14. Castoriadis, 'Socialism or Barbarism', p. 88.

15. Notably, he later deployed 'potlatch' as evidence. Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Marxism: A Provisional Assessment', in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), p. 26.

16. Paul Cardan, *Modern Capitalism and Revolution* (London: Solidarity, 1965), p. 3.

17. Guy Debord, 'Perspectives for Conscious Alterations in Everyday Life', in *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 70.

18. Théo Frey, 'Perspectives for a Generation', in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Doocuments*, ed. Thomas F. McDonough (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002), p. 167.

19. Raoul Vaniegem, 'Basic Banalities II', in *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 132.

20. Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Rebel Press; Seattle: Left Bank Books, 1994), pp. 191–92.

21. 'Basic Banalities I', in *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 98.

22. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (London: Rebel Press, 1987), thesis 216. On the neglected materiality of Debord's spectacle, see Richard Gilman-

Opalsky, *Spectacular Capitalism: Guy Debord and the Practice of Radical Philosophy* (London: Minor Compositions, 2011).

23. 'The Struggle for the New Techniques of Conditioning', in *Leaving the 20th Century: The Incomplete Work of the Situationist International*, ed. Christopher Gray (London: Rebel Press, 1998), p. 9.

24. Lajos Ruff, *The Brain-Washing Machine* (London: Robert Hale, 1959), p. 72.

25. Ruff, *The Brain-Washing Machine*, p. 70.

26. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, thesis 42.

27. 'Correspondance Avec Un Cybernéticien', *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 9 (1964), pp. 44–48.

28. Raoul Vaneigem and Attila Kotányi, 'Elementary Program of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism', in *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 66.

29. 'Response to a Questionnaire', in *Situationist International Anthology*.

30. Uwe Larsen, 'Répétition et nouveauté dans la situation construite', in *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 8 (1963), p. 58.

31. Raoul Vaniegem, 'Grundlegende Banalitäten', *Der Deutsche Gedanke*, no. 1 (1963), pp. 29–32.

32. Larsen, 'Répétition et nouveauté dans la situation construite', p. 57.

33. 'Debord to Gallizio, 10 Feb 1958', in Debord, *Correspondence* (*June 1957–August 1960*), p. 83.

34. 'Debord to Constant, 25 Sept 1958', in *Correspondence* (*June 1957–August 1960*), p. 159.

35. Guy Debord, 'For a Revolutionary Judgement of Art', in *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 312.

36. Ivan Chtcheglov, 'Formulary for a New Urbanism', in *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 3.

37. See Nicola Pezolet, 'The Cavern of Antimatter: Giuseppe 'Pinot' Gallizio and the Technological Imaginary of the Early Situationist International', *Grey Room*, no. 38 (2010), pp. 62–89; Frances Stracey, 'The Caves of Gallizio and Hirschhorn: Excavations of the Present', *October*, no. 116 (2006), pp. 87–100.

38. 'Debord to Constant, 20 May 1959', in *Correspondence* (*June 1957–August 1960*), p. 250.

39. 'Description de la Zone Jaune', *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 4 (1960), pp. 23–26.

40. 'Debord to Constant, 12 Feb 1960', in *Correspondence* (*June 1957–August 1960*), p. 362.

41. 'Potlatch 5, 1954', in Guy Debord, *Guy Debord Présente Poltatch* (*1954–1957*) (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), p. 38.

42. 'Debord to Gallizio, 14 Feb 1960', in *Correspondence* (*June 1957–August 1960*), p. 331.

43. 'Debord, Constant, Jorn to Sandberg, 7 March 1960', in *Correspondence* (*June 1957–August 1960*), p. 338.

44. Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, *Introduction*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1991), p. 173.

45. Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), p. 58.

46. Debord, 'For a Revolutionary Judgement of Art', p. 311.

47. C. L. R. James, Pierre Chaulieu, and Grace C. Lee, *Facing Reality* (Detroit: Berwick, 1974), p. 10.

48. 'The Fifth SI Conference in Göteborg', in *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 88.

49. Tom McDonough, 'Rereading Debord, Rereading the Situationists', *October*, no. 79 (1997), p. 9.

50. As, for example, in Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos and the Avant-Garde* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

51. Gavin Grindon, 'Revolutionary Romanticism: Henri Lefebvre's Revolution-as-Festival,' *Third Text* 27, no. 2 (2013), p. 218.

52. *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 8 (1963), p. 55.

53. 'Judgements Choisis', in *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 11 (1967), p. 49.

54. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 114.

55. 'Debord to Constant, 26 April 1959', in *Correspondence* (*June 1957–August 1960*), p. 242.

56. Mustapha Khayati, 'Captive Words (Preface to a Situationist Dictionary)', in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, ed. Thomas F. McDonough (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002), p. 173.

57. 'Unitary' is used less frequently after this, and often as a stand-in for totality, for example as 'unitary critique', 'Minimum Definition of Revolutionary Organizations', in *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 223.

58. 'Debord to Constant, 21 June 1960', in *Correspondence* (*June 1957–August 1960*), p. 362.

59. On 'presence' in Lefebvre's thought, see Robert Shields, *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 53.

60. Andre Breton, *Nadja* (New York: Grove Press, 1994), p. 160. Later in 1948 the Surrealists had defined Surrealism as 'to be nothing, to be everything. To open the individual.' 'Appendix 2: Definitions of Surrealism', in *Surrealism against the Current: Tracts and Declarations*, eds. Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski (London: Pluto, 2001), p. 206.

61. 'Marx to Engels in Manchester, London, 18th February 1865,' in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 42 (New York: International Publishers, 1987), p. 94.

62. Guy Debord, 'Reponse à une enquête du groupe surrêaliste belge', in *Guy Debord Présente Potlatch* (*1954–1957*), p. 41.

63. Guy Debord, dir., *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (1952).

64. 'On the Poverty of Student Life, 1966', in *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 337.

65. Vaneigem, 'Basic Banalities I', p. 93.

66. Jean Barrot, 'Critique of the Situationist International', in *What Is Situationism? A Reader*, ed. Stewart Home (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1996), pp. 24–62; Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (London, Routledge, 1992).

67. René Viénet, 'The Situationists and the New Forms of Action against Politics and Art', in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, p. 183.

68. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 106.

69. 'The Fifth SI Conference in Göteborg', p. 88.

70. Jacqueline de Jong, Jorgen Nash, Ansgar Elde, *Danger! Do Not Lean Out!*, Paris, 13 Feb 1962.

71. Bauhaus Situationniste, *Who are the Situationists? Alternativ Documenta* (1972), np.

72. 'First Declaration of the Spur Group', in *Spur*, no. 1 (1960), p. 1.

73. *Situationist Times*, no. 2 (1962), p. 61.

74. Ibid., p. 60.

75. 'We are particularly interested in the proliferation of works which permit of varied situations, whether they … contain in themselves a principle of transformation, or whether they call for active participation from the spectator'. Group Recherche d'Art Visuel, 'Manifesto (1966)', in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Howard Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 411.

76. See Jean-Jacques Lebel, *Le Happening*, (Paris: Éditions Demoël, 1966).

77. 'The Avant-Garde of Presence', in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, p. 147.

78. 'Jörgen Nash Kämpar För Sitt 'Provotariat'', in *Provo*, no. 6, 24 Jan, 1966, p. 39.

79. Constant Nieuwenhuis, 'Nieuw Urbanisme', in *Provo*, no. 9, 12 May, 1966. Trans. as 'New Urbanism,' *Delta: A Review of Arts, Life and Thought in the Netherlands* 10, no. 3 (1967).

80. Bauhaus Situationniste, *Who are the Situationists? Alternativ Documenta* (1972), np.

81. 'Révolte et récupération en Hollande', *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 11 (1967), p. 66.

82. 'On the Poverty of Student Life, 1966', p. 328.

83. Penelope Rosemont, *Surrealist Experiences: 1001 Dawns, 221 Midnights* (Chicago: Black Swan, 2000), pp. 102–3.

84. Gavin Grindon, 'Poetry Written in Gasoline: Black Mask and Up Against the Wall Motherfucker', *Art History* 38, no. 1 (2015), pp. 170–209.

85. 'Debord to Constant, 8 Aug 1958', in Debord, *Correspondence* (*June 1957–August 1960*), p. 149.

86. *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 4 (1960), p. 21.

87. *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 12 (1969), p. 97.

88. Debord, 'The Situationists and the New Action Forms in Politics and Art', p. 10.

89. 'Renseignements Situationnistes,' *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 3 (1959), p. 16.

90. For further discussions of this notion, see Gavin Grindon, 'Alchemist of the Revolution: George's Bataille's Affective Materialism', *Third Text* 24, no. 3 (2010), pp. 305–17; idem, 'Revolutionary Romanticism: Henri Lefebvre's Revolution-as-Festival', in *Third Text* 27, no. 2 (2013), pp. 208–20.

91. Tom McDonough, *'The Beautiful Language of My Century': Reinventing the Language of Contestation in Postwar France, 1945–1968* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), p. 139.

92. Guy Debord, Attila Kotányi, and Raoul Vaneigem, 'Theses on the Commune', in *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 314.

93. 'The rebel who, when a suspect bourgeois insisted that he had never had anything to do with politics, replied, "That's precisely why I'm going to kill you."' Ibid., p. 315.

94. See Gerald Horne, *The Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 1995).

95. 'Newark Riots – NCUP views: Almost a Happening', *New Left Notes* 2, no. 27 (July 24, 1967), p. 1.

96. Guy Debord, 'Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy', in *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 155.

97. For a more detailed and firsthand account from a perspective sympathetic to the SI, see 'Riots', *LA Provo*, no. 4, 1966, p. 13.

98. Debord, 'Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy', p. 158. In fairness, Kotanyi, who wrote most of their pieces on Algeria, co-authored. This articulation of Watts as a symbol of 'black' negation was common among radical and counterculture groups even in LA.

99. 'Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy', p. 155.

100. 'Debord to Constant, 21 March 1959', in *Correspondence* (*June 1957–August 1960*), p. 228.

101. On this exhibition see Frances Stracey, 'Destruktion RSG-6: Towards a Situationist Avant-Garde Today', in *Neo-Avant-Garde*, ed. David Hopkins (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 311–30, Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, 'To Act in Culture

While Being against All Culture: The Situationists and The 'Destruction of RSG-6', in *Expect Anything Fear Nothing: The Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere*, ed. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jakob Jakobson (Copenhagen: Nebula; New York: Autonomedia, 2011), pp. 75–113. I thank Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen for the image reference to illustration 4.

102. 'Debord to Martin, 8 May 1963', in Guy Debord, *Correspondance*, vol. 2 (*Septembre 1960–Decembre 1964*) (Paris: Fayard, 2001), p. 222.

103. Spies for Peace, *Danger! Official Secret: RSG-6*, 2. On the pamphlet and action, see Sam Carroll, 'Danger! Official Secret', in *History Workshop Journal*, no. 69 (2010), pp. 158–76.

104. It would be in the spirit of the SI's mythmaking to claim a causal connection.

105. Spies for Peace, *Danger! Official Secret: RSG-6,* p. 5.

106. Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 136.

107. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 413. Here we might find an alternative to both Lefebvre's Revolutionary Romanticism, and the Western Communist melancholy identified in Charity Scribner, *Requiem for Communism* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2003).

108. McKenzie Wark, *50 Years of Recuperation of the Situationist International* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008).

109. Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, p. 119.