Western University
Scholarship@Western

Digitized Theses | Digitized Special Collections

2009

BEYOND THE SPECTACLE: RETHINKING DEBORD IN THEORY & PRACTICE

Jessica Elaine Reilly

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/digitizedtheses

Recommended Citation
Reilly, Jessica Elaine, "BEYOND THE SPECTACLE: RETHINKING DEBORD IN THEORY & PRACTICE" (2009). *Digitized Theses*. 3806.
https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/digitizedtheses/3806

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Digitized Special Collections at Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digitized Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact wlswadmin@uwo.ca.

BEYOND THE SPECTACLE: RETHINKING DEBORD IN THEORY & PRACTICE

(Spine title: Beyond the Spectacle: Rethinking Debord)

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

by

Jessica Elaine Reilly

Graduate Program in Theory and Criticism

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

© Jessica Elaine Reilly 2009

Abstract

The aim of this project is to examine the intellectual contributions of Guy Debord beyond his writings in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967). Debord's thought has largely been reduced to a single concept, while ignoring his revision of the spectacle in 1988 as well as his other works. I argue that Debord's presence as a social and political theorist cannot be isolated from his aesthetic style as a writer and filmmaker or his years within the Lettrist and Situationist International, particularly when discussing his notions of unity, totality, and community. In contrast to scholars that see the theoretical work of Jean Baudrillard as a continuation of Debord's thought, I propose that Zygmunt Bauman's theorizing of *liquid modernity* and the *community of consumers* most accurately describes Debord's analysis of the integrated spectacle in contemporary society.

Keywords: Guy Debord, Spectacle, The Situationist International, Zygmunt Bauman, Liquid Modernity, Community of Consumers, Cities, Politics, Citizenship

Acknowledgments

To My Loving Partner Benjamin James Mavity:
My life and work would not be possible without you at my side each and every morning. I have come to know joy, trust, and happiness because of you.

I would also like to thank the following faculty members who have shaped my thesis and graduate work in invaluable ways:

My *deepest* thanks to Michael Gardiner:
Thank you for sharing the multifaceted magnitude of your mind and for the many hours of discussion (often about everything *but* my thesis) in the process of supervising this project. Thank you for your patience, your "faith", and for giving me the space to go through this process in my own way.

Antonio Calcagno:
You have been an everlasting intellectual mentor, a dear friend, and a culinary inspiration. Your confidence in my capabilities means the world to me.

Tim Blackmore:
Your classroom gave me a place to find my voice again. I am in awe of the kindness and integrity that you live with and offer to those around you.

Anthony Purdy:
Unknowingly you helped plant some of the earliest seeds of this project and gave me the room to develop them within a pedagogy that I have the greatest respect for.

Verónica Schild:
Thank you for your guidance, honesty, and support. The Theory Centre is a better place because of you.

Melanie Caldwell-Clark: part therapist, part comedian, and part godsend. You hold everything—and everyone—in the Theory Centre together.

Last, but not least: a *colossal* thank you to my dear comrades Miriam Love (My Asparagi) and Catherene Ngoh (Mon Petite Bison): you have kept me company through the darkest of my graduate student days. Your friendship, humour, and good taste in food made the Theory Centre into a place that I could call home.

A special thanks to the ghost of Joe Strummer.

Table of Contents

Title Page...i

Certificate of Examination...ii

Abstract...iii

Acknowledgements...iv

Table of Contents...v

Introduction: Consuming the Spectacle in the Liquid Modern World..............1

Chapter 1: Spectacular Possibilities:
The Theory and Practice of the Situationist International............................6

Chapter 2: Beyond the Totalizing Spectacle..33

Chapter 3: A Politics of Apathy:
Debord's Spectacle within Bauman's Community of Consumers..................61

Conclusions...94

Works Cited...96

Curriculum Vitae..99

This book should be read bearing in mind that it was written with the deliberate intention of doing harm to spectacular society. There was never anything outrageous, however, about what it had to say.

-Guy Debord, June 30th 1992, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Preface to the Third French Edition)

Introduction: Consuming the Spectacle in the Liquid Modern World

> If the time of systemic revolutions has passed, it is because there are no buildings where the control desks of the system are lodged and which could be stormed and captured by the revolutionaries; and also because it is excruciatingly difficult, nay impossible, to imagine what the victors, once inside the buildings (if they found them first), could do to turn the tables and put paid to the misery that prompted them to rebel. One should be hardly taken aback or puzzled by the evident shortage of would-be revolutionaries: of the kind of people who articulate the desire to change their individual plights as a project of changing the order of society.
>
> –Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (2000)

This project began as *an origin story*: not a story of a time or place, but the story of a *word*. My initial interest in the thinkers that have been examined, discussed, scrutinized and, perhaps at times, exploited, within this thesis came from an interest in the apathetic consequences of mass consumerism upon politics and citizenship. The *spectacle* appeared to be a word that had been appropriated into theoretical "buzz words" without a source. "The Spectacle" was indeed indebted to Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), but in a way that seemed disconnected from the work itself. If the spectacle had indeed infiltrated everyday life, as Debord had claimed, then perhaps the spectacle *was* fair game to be taken for granted by scholars and journalists alike.

Trying to imagine a politics outside of political spaces by linking the theoretical implications of Debord's *text*, *The Society of the Spectacle*, to the everyday *practices* and tactics of Debord within the Situationist International eventually led to a different origin story: *the origin of Debord*, a man who wrote that he was born in 1952 at the age of twenty, a man without an origin, a man who declared in his first film, "Cinema is dead. No more films are possible. If you wish, we can move on to a discussion" (*Howls for Sade*, Knabb: 2). I looked for a place to find the ideas *in the*

future of the man with *no past* who had also been dead for thirteen years when my project began.

A few months after my first encounter with the Situationists, I believed I had found the individual who had theorized the integrated spectacle that Debord wrote about in his reassessment of the spectacle in 1988 in the work of social theorist Zygmunt Bauman. Like many social and cultural theorists, Bauman too makes reference to the spectacle, but in Bauman's text, *Liquid Modernity* (2000), the reference(s) that he makes to Debord are particularly unique because it is *not* the Debord of 1967 that he quotes, but instead the Debord who published *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* in 1988. Within the pages of *Comments*, Debord wrote that as a consequence of the *integrated* spectacle, even those who thought themselves outside of spectacular culture could not actually offer a critique of the spectacle—without participating within its discourse.

If the spectacle has indeed been appropriated into not just cultural studies, but mass culture as a whole, then perhaps we can no longer talk about it using the same vocabulary. If the spectacle is just an empty signifier, then it must be subverted and articulated in a new way. I propose that Bauman's theorizing of *liquid modernity* and the *community of consumers* demonstrates the accuracy of Debord's theoretical descriptions of the *integrated spectacle* in the practices of a globalized world—and perhaps offers a space to revisit Debord's earliest observations without getting buried in theoretical misappropriation. In such a globalized world what sort of individual space do we occupy? Perhaps such space is now only capable of being collectively shared. So, how do we find ourselves in the places—in the spaces—that we live? What is at stake for us in the space that we occupy and the space of those who live with and around us?

This project began as a process of thinking about the politics of the spaces of everyday life. It was transformed into a project about a particular cultural moment of the French avant-garde in the 1950's and 1960's and the social critiques that were gaining momentum in the moments preceding the events of May '68. This project is also about a reconnection and a rethinking of those critiques within the globalized space that mass culture has ended up, in spite of—and in response to—a thinker such as Debord.

Debord argued that the spectacle had made the possibility of authentic community impossible. Bauman's analysis of both community and consumerism suggests that citizens of liquid modernity have organized themselves via illusionary or spectacular communities through consumption, which further alienates people from communal belonging and perpetuates the spectacle vis-à-vis all aspects of life: citizenship, politics, and so on. It is through the work of Zygmunt Bauman that I believe the end *and the beginning* of Debord's critique finds itself: in both the liquid modern moment *and* the urban metropolis as the centre point of a spectacular dialogue.

My conclusions read a narrative thread of critical utopia within Bauman, Debord, and the Situationist International. By discussion of spectacular communities in Bauman, I hope to lead to a possibility of ethics (the same ethics that appear as early as the *Potlatch* journals for Debord). Both thinkers—although one more explicit than the other—make a plea for the return of public space by considering the city as both the most consumed space, but also the most potentially revolutionary. The agora, as the market place, can be taken for granted as a space of consumerism—but also community.

Debord becomes a problematic thinker to engage with because his discussions of unity, totality, authenticity, and his open-ended definition of spectacle are often poorly formulated or explained with little clarity. In my approach to Debord, I do not claim to offer solid definitions to help read these concepts. Instead, I propose that the closest we can get to Debord's own understanding of these concepts is to recognize his works as a canon to be read and viewed as a whole, and not reduce Debord to the author of *The Society of the Spectacle*.

Chapter 1: Spectacular Possibilities: The Theory and Practice of the Situationist International

Architecture is the simplest means of articulating time and space, of modulating reality, of engendering dreams. It is a matter not only of plastic articulation and modulation expressing an ephemeral beauty, but of a modulation producing influences in accordance with the eternal spectrum of human desires and the progress in realizing them. The architecture of tomorrow will be a means of modifying present conceptions of time and space. It will be a means of *knowledge* and a *means of action*. Architectural complexes will be modifiable. Their appearance will change totally or partially in accordance with the will of their inhabitants.

–Ivan Chtcheglov, *Formulary For a New Urbanism*, 1953 (Pre-SI Text)

THE SAME HISTORY that threatens this twilight world is capable of subjecting space to a directly experienced time. The proletarian revolution is that *critique of human geography* whereby individuals and communities must construct places and events commensurate with the appropriation, no longer just of their labour, but of their total history. By virtue of the resulting mobile space of play, and by virtue of freely chosen variations in the rules of the game, the independence of places will be rediscovered without any new exclusive tie to the soil, and thus too the authentic *journey* will be restored to us, along with authentic life understood as a journey containing its whole meaning within itself.

–Guy Debord, Thesis 178 of Environmental Planning, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 1967

Although often conflated with the title of the author of *The Society of the Spectacle*, the *practices* of Guy Debord's *theories* were developed much earlier than the text's 1967 publication date, and continued to develop and be transformed until the year of Debord's death in 1994. The historical moment in which Debord found himself in 1988 (when *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* was published) prompted great revisions to his theory of spectacle twenty years after it had been originally formulated. As the accuracy, validity, and relevance of Debord's work continues to face scrutiny—in that his notion of the integrated spectacle foresaw what most people take for granted as the *globalization of everyday life*—a thorough analysis of Debord's life and thought must question the historical specificity in which his texts, films, and artworks (if we can call them that) were produced.

This chapter will establish a historical context for Debord and the Situationist International (and various other avant-garde movements of the time) that will be shaped by the theoretical concepts of *unitary urbanism* and the theory of the *dérive*, as

they were presented in the SI journals. Focusing on, among others, Simon Sadler's analysis of the Situationist International's relationship to urbanism and architecture in *The Situationist City* (1998), this chapter will also defend the argument that the "Situationist City" of New Babylon was predominantly the project of Constant Nieuwenhuys (rather than a project of Debord and the SI), which pre-existed the Situationists in the earlier years of the Lettrist International and remained with Constant when he officially cut ties with the SI in 1960, resigning due to aesthetic, theoretical, and personal conflicts (Wollen: 93).

An analysis of the years of Debord's life before the publication of *The Society of the Spectacle* will also demonstrate that the tactics of the Situationists are far more indebted to Debord's place within his previous avant-garde group, The Lettrist International, in which the theories of the *dérive*, *détournement*, *psychogeography*, and *unitary urbanism* had originated and developed. In many regards, the Lettrist International was simply a less politically engaged precursor to the Situationists. In consideration of the historical details of Debord's life, chapter two (focused more on Debord's poetics) will also consider the autobiographical content of Debord's films such as *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (1952) and *Critique de la séparation* (1961) to its theoretical content addressed within *The Society of the Spectacle*.

The Situation of Art, Architecture—and Urbanism

Ken Knabb, in his bibliography of readily available texts (in English) of the Situationist International, writes of Simon Sadler's study, *The Situationist City* (1998), "*The Situationist City* is a detailed but limited account of the situationist's early urbanistic ideals and psychogeographical experiments. Like most other academic studies, it scarcely mentions their revolutionary perspectives" (498). As the translator of the *Situationist International Anthology*, published in 1981 and then

retranslated and expanded in 2007, Knabb often appears particularly critical of Situationist texts other than his own translations (Knabb seems to prefer to let the texts speak for themselves).[1] In terms of scholarship, Knabb's bibliographic commentary prefers Anselm Jappe's theoretical reading of Debord (1993) as a unique Hegelian-Marxist theorist who was heavily influenced by Georg Lukács, as well as Vincent Kaufmann's bio*poetic* interpretation of Debord (2001), which reads Debord's work as a biographical corpus shaped by an aesthetic of loss, melancholy—and a desire for unity—which is entangled in what is seen as Debord's distinct *style* (it is not so much the *content* that makes Debord unique, but his *form*).

In the case of Sadler, although extremely detailed and rigorously researched, *The Situationist City* is arguably more focused on an *urban aesthetic*, as Sadler focuses primarily on the avant-garde tradition that the SI emerges from and the architectural interventions imagined before their demise, than the possibility of revolution to which they aspired. For the purposes of my own discussion, I will consider Sadler's text as a whole, focusing not just on his discussion of Constant's city, New Babylon, but also his discussion of unitary urbanism, in relation to Debord's text, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord's own writings on the theory of the *dérive*, and the journals of the SI. The goal will be to offer a more critical analysis of the theory, which appears in the aesthetic practices that Sadler's text focuses on.

The purpose of such reflection is to later look past Constant's individual project in order to consider whether the Situationist International and the "Situationist City" are failed utopian projects (particularly since Debord appeared to be so sceptical of utopia), or if the Situationist utopia actually functions as a *no place* that offers the possibility of a *critical* utopia, contributing new ways of envisioning the experience of

[1] Andy Merrifield, author of *Metromarxism: A Marxist Tale of the City* (2002), presents criticisms that are similar to Knabb in his review of *The Situationist City* in the Fall 2000 issue of Harvard Design Magazine.

urban space: re-reading, re-writing, and re-living the city, while never actually *building* it.[2] These questions about utopia will later be raised again in chapter three, in which the work of Zygmunt Bauman is brought into discussion of the discourse of spectacle within liquid modernity.

I will also suggest in chapter two (in which Kaufman's text is examined in greater detail) that the answer to questions regarding the failure of the Situationists can be answered through Debord and Sanguinetti's own analysis of the SI in *The Real Split in the International* (1972), which argues that the SI never intended to be a long-term project and, instead, aspired to organize a single proletariat class, making the dissolution of the SI a necessary stage in the development of class consciousness. I also propose that, within an under-emphasized part of Situationist scholarship, if a failure is to be found in the SI project, it was the Situationists' inability to fully connect with the workers (both before and after the events of May '68) and their own relationship to work (or lack thereof), which would have made a transition to a unified proletariat class impossible. As Jappe notes, "the Situationists persisted in thinking that postwar European society represented the last stage of a class society now several centuries old, which could only be followed by general upheaval" (1993: 43).

With respect to Sadler's criticism that the SI were often ambiguous regarding what revolution or the act of "constructing situations" would actually look like, the following concepts are freely used, but not always defined (as expressed within the pages of the SI journals). The accusation that Debord's theories have often lacked clarity, leading to vague and open-ended interpretations, is not unique to Sadler and

---

[2]For the purposes of my own discussion, I comprehend critical utopia as being closest to its use by Tom Moylan within his text *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (1986). Although discussing the literary utopias of science fiction novels, he titles his text after a Situationist slogan of May '68 and sees a revolutionary opening within the implicit critiques of these texts: "the critical utopia, read at the level of the ideologeme, becomes a meditation on action…The false utopia created by postwar consumerism which required a passive consumer is deconstructed in favour of the more radical utopia that re-engages the gears of active human resistance and creation" (49).

will be addressed in chapter two. What is specific to Sadler is that he does not fully make use of or address the contents of a situationist dictionary like many of the scholars who will be mentioned. Unlike *On the Passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time* (Sussman: 1990), Sadler does not draw upon the SI glossary from "Preliminary Problems in Constructing Situations" (SI Journal #1, June 1958) in the pages of his book.[3] For the sake of honouring Knabb's preference for the original text, Knabb's translation of the definitions have been reproduced below:

> **dérive (literally drifting):**
> A mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances. Also used to designate a specific period of continuous dériving.
>
> **détournement**:
> Short for: détournement of preexisting aesthetic elements. The integration of present or past artistic production into a superior construction of a milieu. In this sense there can be no situationist painting or music, but only situationist use of these means. In a more primitive sense, détournement within the old cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method which testifies to the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres.
>
> **psychogeography**:
> The study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals.
>
> **psychogeographical:**
> Relating to psychogeography. That which manifests the geographical environment's direct emotional effects.
>
> **situationist:**
> Having to do with the theory or practical activity of constructing situations. One who engages in the construction of situations. A member of the Situationist International.
>
> **situationism:**
> A meaningless term improperly derived from the above. There is no such thing as situationism, which would mean a doctrine of interpretation of existing facts. The notion of situationism is obviously devised by antisituationists.

---

[3] See pages 49-52 of the 2007 edition for the most recently revised translations.

The both vague and open-ended nature of the Situationist lexicon is one of the many paradoxical tensions present within the organizational structure of the Situationist International. The definitions are playful and ironic, effectively a parody of academic discourse, but they also intentionally attempt to resist definition, preventing interpretation or categorization, as the possibility of being misunderstood (and understood for that matter) by mainstream society appears to have been of great concern and preoccupation in many of the SI journals and for Debord in particular.

For Debord and the Situationist International, which officially existed from 1957-1972, the manifestation of the construction of situations vis-à-vis everyday life is one that occupies the psychogeographical space of the city. As the identified leader of the Situationist International, described by Sadie Plant as a fusion of Marxism and the avant-garde (1990: 3), the Situationists occupy a theorizing space as *both* readers and writers of the city. Scholar Peter Wollen, who was also an organizer of the Situationist exhibition that Elisabeth Sussman's text documents, reads the Situationists within a history of de Sade, Baudelaire, and André Breton, of "legendary moments which serve to celebrate the convergence of popular revolution with art in revolt" (1989: 67).

In brief summary, from the 1940's to the early 1950's, the Lettrist Group, the publishers of the avant-garde journal *Potlatch*, were gaining notoriety for their work with experimental film and their recognition of the capability to manipulate and defamiliarize visual images through technology.[4] Stewart Home, in his text, *What is Situationism?* (1996), observed that this early stage of development in the Lettrist Group lacked a materialist critique of everyday society, which would later be incorporated when Guy Debord, Gil Wolman, and Michèle Bernstein became

[4] See diagram 0.1 in Sadler.

involved. Their eventual departure would lead to the formation of the Lettrist International, existing from 1952-1957, which aimed to use art as a means of critical and revolutionary cultural practice (Plant: 1992).

Around the same time the COBRA group (which was an amalgamation of artists from Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam), and IMIB (International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus) were delving into similar artistic practices to the Lettrist group, with an increasing interest in the impact of potential *psychic* interaction between architecture and urban space (Sadler: 4-5). The influence of the Imaginist Bauhaus, which was largely felt in the presence of artists Asger Jorn and Pinot Gallizio, had initially come into being through splits between the artists of the post-war Cobra group (Wollen: 67). These shared interests led to the meeting of numerous avant-garde groups from across Europe when they met in Italy at the *First World Congress of Free Artists* (1956), which had been organized by Jorn and Gallizio (Debord was not actually in attendance) and merged as the Situationist International in 1957 in Cosio d'Arroscia (88), resulting in the first issue of the Situationist Journal in 1958.

Besides an apparent shared desire to transcend the dependency on the unconscious and irrationality of Surrealism, this newly formed amalgamation was a project that aspired to bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering a theoretical vision that would lead to a *revolution* of everyday life. The dualism between theory-and-practice, between politics-and-art, and between academia-and-the everyday is one that identifies—and perhaps isolates—the awkward position of the Situationists (and Debord) in the historical development of cultural theory. The practices of the Situationists came to be realized through interaction with the

cityscape, but also in the textual architecture of their writings and their use of mixed media, collage, and mapping.

The visible aesthetic of the Situationist project would be always distinguished by the Marxist under-belly that distinguished the SI from any other collective, despite its emergence as a fusion of various post-war avant-garde movements that were interested in art, but also design and architecture, as "artists were to break down the divisions between individual art-forms" (Wollen: 68). Debord, and those who shared his vision, wanted to incorporate a materialist critique of everyday society, using art as a means of cultural practice that would offer a critique with revolutionary possibility. It is perhaps the textually embraced Marxism that carved out the SI as its own entity, since many more practices that the SI became famous for actually originated within the Lettrist International—including their critiques—as was written in *Potlatch*: "…the most dazzling displays of intelligence mean nothing to us. Political economy, love, and urban planning are means we must master in order to solve a problem that is first and foremost of an ethical kind" (Jappe: 54).[5] This question of an ethics *of living* would pop up again in the pages of the SI journal, *The Society of the Spectacle*, and in Debord's writings towards the end of his life.

As a movement engaged in a Marxist discourse and praxis, the Situationist International, even in their critiques, were heavily influenced by thinkers such as Georg Lukács and, with some degree of respect *and* dispute, Henri Lefebvre's sociological critiques of everyday life. As Lefebvre famously commented, his relationship with the SI was "…a love story that ended badly, very badly" (Ross: 70). Wollen suggests that Lefebvre's thought gave the Situationists an opening to think—to détourne—previously existing theoretical approaches into their own: "Lefebvre

[5] Jappe's translation is reproduced from *Guy Debord présente Potlatch (1954-1957)* pages 17-18.

seems to offer the possibility of an alternative to surrealism and existentialism, which was communist without being orthodox" (1989: 85).

The Situationist project was *visibly* expressed by influences of Dada and Surrealism, while Debord's text, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), as a work of Situationist theory, remained indebted to Hegel, Marx (and Feuerbach), and Nietzsche, albeit read through an undeclared Lukácsian lens that emphasized *commodity fetishism* as the underappreciated element of Marx which most relevantly spoke to contemporary culture (Jappe: 31).[6] In its critique, the SI maintained a rejection of consumer capitalism and consumer-driven ideologies, which Debord famously described as 'spectacles' in the early SI journals. For Debord, the spectacle encourages and advances the production of citizens who are spectators, rather than participants, through the illusion of false communities that secretly aid the cycle of consumerism and the alienated worker through the production of commodities: "the spectacle is that moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life" (Thesis 42).

Sadler notes Debord's remark in the first opening address of the Situationist International—"that which changes our way of seeing the street is more important than that which changes our way of seeing the painting" (69)—demonstrates both the influence of, and break from, the movements of Dada and Surrealism. In 1959, there were three very important exhibitions that helped establish the presence of the newly formed SI—but still as a presence of *artists* within the avant-garde (Wollen: 69):[7]

---

[6] Both Jappe and Kaufmann address the presence and influence of Lukács in Debord's thought in *The Society of the Spectacle*, while also noting that his only physical presence within the text is the epigraph from *History and Class Consciousness* at the opening of Chapter 2: The Commodity as Spectacle.

[7] Examples of Jorn's modifications, Gallizio's industrial paintings, and Constant's architectural models can be seen in Sadler's *The Situationist City* and Sussman's *On the passage of a few people through a brief moment in time*.

i) Asger Jorn displayed his 'Modifications' (*peintures detourneés*, altered paintings) at the Rive Gauche gallery in Paris, which featured "over-paintings" in which Jorn painted over second-hand canvases by unknown painters that had been purchased in flea markets.

ii) Pinot Gallizio's *caverna dell'antimateria* (grotto of anti-matter) were shown at the Galerie Renée Drouin, which was composed of his *pittura industriale*. These were rolls of canvas up to 145 metres long that were mechanically sprayed with custom-made resins that Gallizio made using his past experiences as a chemist. The rolls of canvas were draped all around the gallery and were also sold in segments by simply cutting the roll into pieces.

iii) Constant featured several of his *ilôtsmaquettes* (model precincts) at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, which were part of his vision for New Babylon, based on the principles of unitary urbanism with utopian aspirations of a city in which its inhabitants would have control over all sensory experiences.

Later these objects that maintained their distinction as artworks within the walls of gallery space would come to cause theoretical differences between Debord and the artists that produced them, leading to the excessive expulsions that Debord would become famous for (which date back much further than the origin of the SI and were just as much present within the Lettrists) (Jappe: 54). Wollen describes the splits that transpired in 1962 as the mark of a clear distinction between 'artists', 'political theorists', and 'revolutionaries' amongst the SI members, with the argument that "art could not be recognized as a separate activity, with its own legitimate specificity, but must be dissolved in a unitary and revolutionary praxis" (69). The consequential practice that resulted from this theoretical dispute was the expulsion of the Dutch, German, and Scandinavian members, after Jorn's brother, Jorgen Nash attempted to

set up a second Situationist International. The result of such an action was that the Situationist International purged its international members and became a concentrated French core.

Situationism aimed to be an artistic practice with immense political consequences that would be created within the city streets and *not* the spectacle of the gallery, which reduced art to the exchange value of commodity fetishism. Although *Potlatch* first used the phrase "construction of situations" in 1956, the relationship to art between the LI and SI might be captured in the distinction that "*Potlatch* called for the unity of art and life, not to lower art to the level of life as it was presently lived, but instead to raise life to the level promised by art", writing that the "new beauty will be SITUATIONAL" (Jappe: 57). For the Situationists (and the Lettrists), the goal of presenting a materialist critique of the commodification of everyday life—including leisure—was also, in part, a break from the Freudian psychoanalysis embraced by many of the avant-garde groups, particularly Surrealism. Even though the Situationist project is one that often talks about the experience of individual desire, it is a form of desire that needed to offer collective revolutionary possibility: an experience of aestheticized politics recognized in such thinkers as Walter Benjamin in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936). It was during this period that Debord was also auditing a class taught by sociologist Henri Lefebvre and began collaborations with Cornelius Castoriadis (1960) and others within the Socialisme ou Barbarie group (Wollen: 70).

It was at this moment that not only Debord's thought was changing, but also the Parisian landscape around him. Watching as an outsider in relation to the Situationists, Lefebvre observed that now "…Unitary Urbanism only had precise meaning for historic cities like Amsterdam that had to be renewed, transformed. But

from the moment that the historic city exploded into peripheries, suburbs... the theory of Unitary Urbanism lost any meaning" (Ross: 77). The personal universe that was Debord's Paris was literally being transformed before his very eyes. According to Jappe, between 1953-1957 French industrial output increased by 57%, while the average for all European countries was only 33%; consequently, the beginning of suburban housing complexes quickly followed. This increase in productivity coexisted with the first French television broadcast in 1953 and the first mass-produced washing machine (between 1954 and 1956 the average person had doubled their spending on household appliances in France), while the education system was seeing six times as many students in France by 1957 than in the previous two decades (53). This was a changing France that was ripe for sociological study.

In various Situationist journals and pamphlets, the SI described themselves as a "research laboratory" located physically within the streets of the city. In combination with the Marxist influences of the SI, Debord aspired to create an experience of a physically and psychically altered cityscape. Debord's theory of the *dérive*, explicated in a journal article in 1958 as a key situationist method, *literally* meant to drift. As Debord explains, "the dérive entails playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects; which completely distinguishes it from the classical notions of the journey and the stroll... in a dérive one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find" (Knabb: 63).

In contrast to Sadler's criticisms of unarticulated Situationist practices, Debord in fact offered many examples of what such situations would look like, albeit smaller rather than larger projects: "...slipping by night into houses undergoing demolition,

hitchhiking non-stop and without destination through Paris during a transportation strike in the name of adding to the confusion, wandering in subterranean catacombs forbidden to the public, etc—are expressions of a more general sensibility which is nothing other than that of the dérive. Written descriptions can be no more than passwords of this great game" (*Theory of the Dérive*, 1956). Bradley J. Macdonald's *Performing Marx: Negotiations of a Living Tradition* (2006) offers a similar sentiment: "to create a situation—as in the *dérive*—is to break free from normalizing discourse and to pronounce (in thought as well as action) the necessity of freedom, play, and creativity" (79).

The dérive challenges individuals to reconsider the structure and order of the urban centre, to rethink what are deemed "exit" and "entry" points within urban spaces, the purpose of such spaces, and their psychogeographical possibilities within the movement of the city. Like most of the contradictions encapsulated in the Situationist project, Debord noted that the "dérive includes both this letting go and its necessary contradiction: the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities" (Knabb: 62). Debord and other Situationists were greatly concerned by the observations of P.H. Chombart de Lauwe's study of geographical movement and the fact that most people actually experience very little of the city space that they dwell in (Sadler: 94).[8] Chombart de Lauwe's *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne* (1952) was published the same year Debord made his first film, *Hurlements en faveur de Sade*. His text was dedicated to Marcel Mauss (whose writing on the gift had been of relevance to Debord), and his elaborate maps immensely influenced the aesthetic of the SI journals (Wollen: 80) and most likely the maps that Debord and Jorn collaborated on. Debord, in the second

---

[8] See figure 2.23 in Sadler.

publication of the SI journal in December of 1958, writes "Chombart de Lauwe notes that 'an urban neighbourhood is determined not only by geographical and economic factors, but also by the image that its inhabitants and those of other neighbourhoods have of it'" (62).

Part of the revolutionary quality of the "drift" or *dérive* becomes the individual confrontation with the alienation and imprisonment of daily routines. This confrontation becomes revolutionary in that "the primarily urban character of the dérive, in its element in the great industrially transformed cities—those centres of possibilities and meanings—could be expressed in Marx's phrase 'Men can see nothing around them that is not their own image; everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is alive'" (63). For Debord, this acknowledged the role of human subjectivity within the landscape of the city because no matter the historical or political narrative—or the modernist architecture that aims to strip away history all together—it is not possible to remove the presence of individual human consciousness or the physical body that navigates through the city space.

Although Debord's method seems to encourage the enhancement of individual experience, the dérive also aspired to alter how people interact with one another in urban centres. Debord noted that "one can dérive alone, but all indications are that the most fruitful numerical arrangement consists of several small groups of two or three people who have reached the same awakening of consciousness... With more than four or five participants, the specially dérive character rapidly diminishes, and in any case it is impossible for there to be more than ten or twelve people without the dérive fragmenting into several simultaneous dérives" (64). These sensory-inducing antics always had a political gesture entangled within their playful front. In *Guy Debord: Revolution in the Service of Poetry* (2006), Kaufmann describes the ultimate purpose

of the dérive as constituting a "community of desire", writing of the dérive that "there can be no revolution without a collectivization of the means of production, but no revolution either without a collectivization of desire, without shareable and shared desires" (122).

Although a seemingly spontaneous action, Debord indeed had a practicing methodology, writing that "the spatial field of a dérive may be precisely delimited or vague, depending on whether the goal is to study a terrain or to emotionally disorient oneself. It should not be forgotten that these two aspects of dérives overlap in so many ways that it is impossible to isolate one of them in a pure state" (Knabb: 64). This movement throughout the city was one of challenging not only physical boundaries, but also boundaries of ideology, politics, and class, as the psychogeographical movement of the urban suggested that "one measures the distances that effectively separate two regions of a city, distances that may have little relation with the physical distance between them" (66).

In Sadler's analysis of the Situationists, he observes that perhaps part of the reason the SI failed as a movement (whether politically or aesthetically) was because even its own members could not fully articulate what revolution through the creation of situations would truly look like, and that the city they dreamed of living in indeed remained a dream as many of the Situationist projects *remained* critiques: "situationist architecture remained largely in the mind, awaiting activation through revolutionary modes of production" (69). Despite the interpretive space of the terminology offered in the earliest definitions of the SI Journals (which obviously intended to make such analysis and definition problematic), scholars such as Kaufmann have managed to offer concise explanations of the theoretical practices of the SI that capture and maintain concrete practice, while keeping their flexibility intact (which is perhaps one

of the reasons that Knabb prefers Kaufmann's scholarship despite its large emphasis on a biographical reading of Debord's poetics). As Kaufmann says, "psychogeography consisted in experimenting with the affective variants of the urban environment, an immediate aesthetic experience... brought about by walking around a city that is systematically explored" (108).

The Situationists rejected the imposed order and rationality of architects such as Le Corbusier and mourned the lost spaces caused by the "Haussmannization" of the Paris streets, famously described by Debord in *A Critique of Human Geography* (1955) as "a city built by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (9). In their denunciation of the modernist city, the Situationists envisioned a city of ideas, play, contradiction, and desire, described in Debord's aspiration of unitary urbanism, which "acknowledges no boundaries; it aims to form an integrated human milieu in which separations such as work/leisure or public/private will finally be dissolved" (Knabb: 69). The streets that would be the focus of their study were primarily those of Paris, London, and Amsterdam. In psychogeographical terms, the Situationist city aspired to truly force a confrontation between the individual body and the space it occupies. Often their use of collage and the creation of maps would involve images of human physiognomy, which identified the necessary inclusion of the body within the city, but also acknowledged the fragmentation of the body within architecture: the proletariat who were alienated not only from their individual labour, but also from their collective urban space.

According to Lefebvre, in the midst of these situationist theories of unitary urbanism, "... the *dérive* really was more of a practice than a theory. It revealed the growing fragmentation of their city. In the course of its history the city was once a powerful organic unity; for some time, however, that unity was becoming undone,

was fragmenting" as a consequence of modernity (Ross: 80). Thus, this *collective* possibility was necessary for the "unitary" aspect of unitary urbanism to exist as "a living critique of those forced modes of living and circulation emplaced within the city, in the process attempting to reconfigure urban space so as to allow for the creation of new desires... such a proposal involved not just the creation of new architectural sites, but also the active re-engagement of pre-existing forms by engendering new experiences and vectors through urban space" (Macdonald: 79).

As Sadler observes, "by analogy the Situationist city was at odds with the Corbusian vision of people at ease in an ideal urban landscape, a place where the struggle with nature, with the body, with space, and with class had inexplicably come to an end...In psychogeography all the struggles were acute again, making a nonsense of the Corbusian fantasy of the city as something abstract, rational, or ideal" (77). The Situationists recognized that human beings are, by their very nature, rarely any of those things *at all times*, resulting in a Corbusian metropolis that stripped the role of the human being from the city space in an abstracted and dehumanized interpretation of how pedestrians actually move within their urban spaces. Although Asger Jorn had actually worked with Le Corbusier earlier in his career, he felt that Le Corbusier had lost his revolutionary potential by imposing a repressive functionalism that led towards "standardizing, automation, and a more regulated society" (Wollen: 88). Unlike Henri Lefebvre's critiques of Le Corbusier,[9] which maintained a bit more subtlety, the Situationists approached Le Corbusier with sarcastic and scathing disdain:

> We will Leave Monsieur Le Corbusier's style to him, a style suitable for factories and hospitals, and no doubt eventually for prisons. (Doesn't he already build churches?) Some sort of

[9] See Lefebvre's comments on Le Corbusier and modernist architecture in *The Production of Space* (1974) and *Writings on Cities* (1996).

> psychological repression dominates this individual—whose face is as ugly as his conceptions of the world—such that he wants to squash people under ignoble masses of reinforced concrete... A Le Corbusier model is the only image that arouses in me the idea of immediate suicide. He is destroying the last remnants of joy. And of love, passion, freedom. (Knabb: 2)

In contrast to the high modernism of Le Corbusier, which the SI interpreted as more fascistic than utopian, the Situationists offered unitary urbanism, described by Sadler as "a vision of the unification of space and architecture with the social body, and with the individual body as well" (118). Part of the Situationist paradox of the dérive was the possibility of holding the tension between organization and spontaneity, partially because Debord recognized the impossibility of *fully* "letting go" within the experience of the city and, moreover, because he feared that a complete letting go would cause the Situationist aesthetic to fall into what he described as a "surrealist automatism" that would depoliticise the Situationists' collective goals (78). As an art *without works*, the practices of unitary urbanism overlapped between the pages of the SI journal, the words and images of their collages, and Debord's films. As Kaufmann notes, "*détournement* and *dérive* are here two sides of the same technique of disappearance or indeterminacy. The dérive is an art of detour, as well as an art of appropriating the 'actual decor of the streets,' an appropriation that occurs through movement, mobility..." (104-5).

In his own way, Debord's theoretical approach to the construction of situations, such as the dérive or the psychogeographical maps of Paris such as *The Naked City*, intended to offer some order and increase the possibility of revolutionary group activity, what Sadler calls "purposeful disorder" (120). At the same time, as Sadler notes, "from the outset psychogeography was regarded as a sort of therapy, a fetishization of those parts of the city that could still rescue drifters from the clutches of functionalism, exciting the sense and the body" (80). Debord also acknowledged,

in the possibility of psychogeography, an emphasis on the movements and experiences of the physical body in the city that were necessarily pre-linguistic, as he explained in *Theory of the Dérive*, that for certain experiences of the city, "the personal meaning they have for us is incommunicable". Sadler also observes that, culturally, this is a time in which the adaptation of Saussure's theories of the sign into social semiotics are becoming a means for explaining urban spaces (96). The *mythologizing* of messages (described in the cultural analysis of thinkers such as Roland Barthes) shares a commonality with the *speech* of the spectacle, as well as with the remapping of the city *as text* that would later be called a "pedestrian speech act" by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday life* (1984) (98). Like Barthes, the Situationists recognized the visual image as a type of language that would have to be engaged with as a tool for revolutionary consciousness within the city streets. In the face of consumer-driven capitalism, the Situationists were well aware of how the visual could be used to engage in critique, but also how it was *already* being widely used to manipulate the masses through media venues of spectacle such as advertising.

Although the aesthetics of the Situationists are never far removed from those of Dada and Surrealism, they have also been shaped through a literary history of Rimbaud, Baudelaire, De Quincey, and Poe, the latter described as a writer of psychogeographical landscapes (94). Just as the Situationists had offered a new way of surveying and re-reading the urban landscape, they also had to find a new way of re-presenting and re-writing it, other than through the use of their journal. The antics of the Situationist aesthetic often involved physically writing on the landscape of the city, a tactic that was originated in the Lettrist International. Such activities included removing the word "Saint" from all street signs or renaming them all together. Most famous were the creation of maps which often rerouted and dismantled the imposed

order of city "logic" that was often taken for granted, found in creations such as Debord and Jorn's *The Naked City*,[10] which "mourned the loss of old Paris, prepared for the city of the future, explored the city's structures and uses, criticized traditional mapping, and investigated the relationship between language, narrative, and cognition" (60).

Often these maps would make connections between locations that did not naturally exist geographically. The methodology of these new mappings often involved imposing a previously existing map onto another geographic location or the creation of a new pedestrian map by using the plan of a previously existing transit map from another city (84). The Situationists aspired to organize, for both pleasure and politics, pro-active pedestrians that would play, but also influence, how they moved through the city. The landscape of revolutionary possibility was one that could be easily altered when need be. For example, the Situationists supported the creation of streetlights that could be turned on and off by pedestrians as they saw fit, writing that we should "put switches on the street lights, so lighting will be under public control" (110). This seemingly humorous gesture (like many of their tactics) offered a critique of the forced visibility caused by the architecture of Haussmann and Le Corbusier, but also the societal stereotypes of the lit and unlit spaces of the city—and the intentions of the individuals that make use of such spaces (91). The ambition of shedding light on the dark and unseen places or the hiding of what is usually visible further demonstrated the Situationists' discouragement of tourism as a spectacle-based exploration of the city, which further aided the flourishing of capitalism as a "city for sale", not a city in which to dream and live.

[10] See figure 1.32 in Sadler.

In the dismantling of the order of the city, as a critique of ideological and organizational order imposed through capitalism, the Situationists offered psychogeography as a means of separation from the mechanistic functioning of the city, which reduces urban spaces to spaces of commodity production and illusions of leisure that maintain the spectacle. But in their opposition to many social structures, their own methodology often interfered with the realization of their projects. In 1959, the Situationists came very close to having an exhibition in which they would construct a giant labyrinth within the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. This ambitious project fell through over creative differences with the director, Willem Sandberg, regarding their inability to provide concrete plans for the exhibition, necessary to conform to fire code and so on, which the Situationists claimed would limit the spontaneity of this giant dérive (115-116). This concern for the limitations of the gallery space overlapped with the Situationists' construal of the gallery as a space of commodity exchange. As Sadler notes, "the situationists' refusal to recognize the architectural boundary posed by the Stedelijk building was not merely artistic but ideological. Situationist space would not be separated from the city space by segregated curator space" (116).

Discussed in a blurred ownership of thought and space, the cultural position taken up by the Situationist International often included the claim that they would eventually create their own city, which had been associated with Constant Nieuwenhuys' designs for New Babylon, even though, according to Henri Lefebvre, the designs for New Babylon go back to 1950 (Ross: 70). This is not to say that this is an incorrect historical or theoretical reading of the Situationist International, as it is increasingly difficult to imagine where the line is drawn between the Situationists' relationship to Constant's work (at least in the years of cordial relations), and where

the distinction is between Constant's thought and that of Debord and the SI.[11] His writings appeared in the SI Journals and his essay *Le Grand Jeu à Venir* (The Great Game to Come) written in 1959 was part of the unitary urbanism project that the SI was so enamoured with at the time. The difference between Constant and the others may have been that Constant's projects never appeared as explicitly political as those of some of the other members—or that he never actually built anything. In terms of aesthetic alliances, Constant was the only member of the COBRA artists to join the Situationists other than Jorn (Kaufmann: 132). Although he voluntarily resigned, Constant was excommunicated from the Situationists in 1960 over irreconcilable differences. The differences largely seem to be about aesthetics and political disputes about architecture, which may have been further complicated by personal quarrels, such as Jorn running off with Constant's wife (Wollen: 86). After the break, the SI published in their journal that Constant was a "public relations man… integrating the masses into capitalist technological civilization with his models of factories" (Sadler: 153).[12] Although Constant did continue to develop the project once he had departed, in 1966 he admitted that it could not be brought to life due to economic conditions that had not yet been realized (153).

The Situationists, influenced by Marx, believed that the uprising of the proletariat would be related to new technological innovations, which would drastically increase leisure time and essentially eliminate work, leaving the average citizen to pursue and develop his or her own creative potentials. These were the very principles that Constant's New Babylon was to be founded on: "the urban framework for a possible post-revolutionary society of the future…devised on the assumption

---

[11] For a more recent and utopian study of Constant and New Babylon, in relation to the Situationists, see David Pinter's *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism* (2005).
[12] See figure 3.32 in Sadler for an image of the model that such criticism refers to.

that technologically advanced society in which, through the development of automation, alienated labour had been totally abolished and humanity could devote itself entirely to play" (Wollen: 99). For critics of the Situationists (and Debord), this stance seems easier said than done, as Debord himself never really had a day job and was often supported by his first wife, Michèle Bernstein, whose own work often funded Situationist activities. As Sadler notes, "New Babylon was so far removed from conventional concerns with profit and loss that its economy remained something of a mystery" (135). Later, in chapter two, the question of work within the SI and their Marxist critique of it will be revisited.

Constant's city was heavily dependent on the revolutionary possibility of technology and would have to be built from scratch, rather than emerging from previously existing urban space (107), leading to the designation of his plans for New Babylon as "the floating city". This may suggest one of the many reasons for Constant's eventual falling out with the SI, as such a building practice would have broken with the *détournement* of making use of the previously existing city (107). Debord's concern was that a place such as New Babylon, as a Situationist vision, was dependent on the agency of the people who lived within the city, declaring to the former members of the Lettrist and Imaginist Bauhaus at the first official meeting of the Situationists that "the comrades who call for a new, free architecture must understand that this new architecture will primarily be based on the atmospheric effects of rooms, hallways, streets, atmospheres linked to the gestures they contain. Architecture must advance by taking emotionally moving situations, rather than emotionally moving forms" (107). Closer in time to the parting of Constant from the SI, it was decided that the pursuit of unitary urbanism should never abandon the previously existing cityscape, but instead find new sensory ways to experience it

(121). The possibility of détournement is never far behind the possibility of unitary urbanism, described in 1959, in the third SI journal, as "the reuse of pre-existing artistic elements in a new ensemble... which may go so far as to completely lose its original sense—and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect" (Knabb: 67).

The other failure of New Babylon, as some critics observed in Constant's designs, is that the entire Situationist project aimed to eliminate alienation through the creation of situations, yet the drawings and models of Constant's conception of a Situationist city denoted a project far more likely to induce anxiety and alienation than inspire revolutionary possibility, if one actually had to live there. Sadler evokes Home's criticism, suggesting that "although the L.I., and later the situationists, planned a total transformation of the urban environment, they never advanced a workable plan of how to maintain a sense of human community during and after this transformation" (163). If not anxiety, the city-dwellers of the Situationist city would, at the very least, have had to have been extremely physically fit to navigate through the jungle-gym-esque constructions on a daily basis.[13] As Sadler notes rather humorously, in the privileging of the utopian body within the Situationist city, "living in New Babylon would have demanded extraordinary energy" (151), insofar as it would be a city "in perpetual and dynamic motion" (112).

Sadler addresses the problematic societal structure of Constant's city, which demonstrates no sensitivity to the pleasures of simplicity, intimacy, and repetition within everyday life: "Constant only allowed places for temporary privacy and rest in New Babylon, denying us space for permanent private habitation and ritual" (160). This criticism is easily extendable to Debord. As a project aspiring to *transcend*

[13] See figure 3.30 and 3.31 in Sadler.

everyday life. Debord often reads as though he is incapable of making peace with it. His open declaration of his many years of alcoholism in the first volume of *Panégyrique* (1989) "…I grew to like what lies beyond violent drunkenness, once that taste is past: a terrible and magnificent peace, the true taste of the passage of time" (2004: 30-31) further suggests that often Debord actually avoided living *in the moment* (both mentally and physically) at all costs. Sadler also observes that considering the constant comings and goings of its member as a result of numerous disputes, there is a certain degree of presumption (or arrogance) on the part of the Situationists to assume that all individuals would aspire to the same experience of revolutionary urban life, when they could not consistently agree upon it themselves (160).

With some of these flaws, faults, and inconsistencies in mind, it is still difficult to dispute that one of the things that the Situationist project offers, even in its failures, is its ability to force a confrontation with what we take for granted as spectators and readers within the cityscape and what the political consequences of that will be, what Barthes would call the "goes-without-saying", that must be analyzed as participants instead of spectators. Although, in many ways, the Situationist International *appears* to have offered a failed revolution, it could also be argued that the Marxism that shaped its movement was *always* incapable of sustaining itself until the necessary proletariat uprising had occurred, which is essentially part of the argument that Debord and Sanguinetti make about the dissolution of the SI in their text *The Real Split in the International* (1972). As they acknowledged in their own journal, the SI project had "invented architecture and urbanism that *cannot* be realized without a revolution of everyday life" (161).

Since such publications as Sadie Plant's *The Most Radical Gesture* (1992) which, among other things, attempts to bridge a gap between the Situationist International and postmodern theory after 1968, the Situationist International does not show signs of disappearing as a ghost of May '68 or as an indefinable politicized avant-garde movement and, instead, has carved a permanent place for itself in a narrative of critiques of everyday life in French thought.[14] As a critical utopia, the Situationist project, despite all its paradoxes, aspires to resolve the dispute between individual and collective desire, as the pursuit of individual desire in the Situationist city always aspires to offer collective results. The utopian possibilities of the SI will be addressed in more detail in the analysis of Debord's aesthetics in chapter two and its presence in the work of Zygmunt Bauman in chapter three.

As Debord remarked in the SI's founding conference: "it must be understood once and for all that something that is only a personal expression without a framework created by others, cannot be termed a creation" (122). Sadler observes that although the Situationists initially seemed to reject a utopian vision in their break with the avant-garde groups that had come before them, their project becomes easier to envision as a utopian possibility rather than a revolutionary critique of everyday life (161). Of the *never* built Situationist city, Sadler observes that "Constant was intent upon explaining the context rather than the content of his work. Readers could more easily discover the position of New Babylon within the history of utopia and recent social theory than how New Babylon's moveable partitions or atmospheric conditioning systems might actually work" (125).

Henri Lefebvre was in agreement that Constant was indeed a utopian architect, but also that many of the situationist-credited tactics were also contributions of

[14] This trajectory is dealt with in thoughtful detail in Michael Sheringham's *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (2006).

Constant's theorizing, such as his text *For an Architecture of Situation* (1953) and his earliest experiments of the dérive involving walkie-talkies in the streets of Amsterdam (Ross: 73). As for the project of unitary urbanism, Lefebvre appears to credit it as a uniquely Situationist project, which "consisted of making different parts of the city communicate with one another" (73). This unifying project was about engagement with a modernized city that was now in pieces, an observation that was shared by both Lefebvre and the Situationists: "we had a vision of the city that was more and more fragmented without its organic unity being completely shattered" (80).

Sadler's text, in its historical and architectural rigour, acknowledges that numerous architectural disciples were aware of Constant's work, while never seeming to fully grasp what the consequences of building such structures would—or could—be. As a utopian *no place*, Sadler appropriately concludes his discussion of Constant's New Babylon by observing that "the absorption of the situationist city into architectural fashion was its death" (155). Yet, the utopian vision of this unliveable city lives on, both in theory and in practice, as does Debord's thought.

Chapter Two: Beyond the Totalizing Spectacle

What communication have we desired, or experienced, or only simulated?
What real project has been lost? –*Critique of Separation* (1961)

Theories are only made to die in the war of time. Like military units, they must be sent into battle at the right moment; and whatever their merits or insufficiencies, they can only be used if they are on hand when they're needed. They have to be replaced because they are constantly being rendered obsolete—by their decisive victories even more than by their partial defeats. Moreover, no vital eras were ever engendered by theory: they began with a game, or a conflict, or a journey.
–*In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1978)

The Aesthetics and Poetics of Debord's Unity

The embracing of Guy Debord's observation that we are living in a *society of the spectacle* has, for many scholars, resulted in an over-simplification of Debord's text and an assumption that Debord's thought is best reduced to a theory of media studies, while largely ignoring his other works. In the pages of *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, Debord himself reprinted the following passage that appeared in *Le Monde* on September 19th, 1987 (most likely without surprise to him):

> That modern society is a society of the spectacle now goes without saying. Indeed people will soon only be conspicuous by their reticence. One loses count of all the books describing a phenomenon which now marks all the industrialized nations yet equally spares none of the countries which has still to catch up. What is so droll, however, is that all the books which do analyze this phenomenon, usually to deplore it, cannot join the spectacle if they're to get attention. (1988:5)

The first portion of this chapter will look at Debord's works—beyond *The Society of the Spectacle*—such as his autobiographical texts *Panégyrique* (volumes one and two) as well as his films such as *Howls for Sade* and *On the passage of a few persons through a rather brief unity of time*. The style in which Debord chose to visually represent *The Society of the Spectacle* as a film will also be discussed.[15] Such an

[15] Throughout chapter two, all quotations that I have used from the film *The Society of the Spectacle* are translations by Knabb in *Guy Debord: Complete Cinematic Works* (2003), while quotations from the text are always from the most recent Donald Nicholson-Smith translation (2006). My partiality for

analysis will be guided by Vincent Kaufmann's text *Guy Debord: Revolution in the Service of Poetry* (2006), which reads Debord's work as a biographical canon driven by melancholy, an unyielding desire for unity, and perpetual loss—while also attempting to discredit the notion that the Situationist International was a failed project as some critics and scholars have claimed. Kaufmann's biographical reading of Debord is motivated by a deep concern that the intentions of the Situationists have been misinterpreted as a long-term project driven by the ambition of becoming the dominant social class, when in fact the opposite was true.

Although Kaufmann often appears to be overly generous in his defence(s) of Debord (particularly in discussions of the public displays of expulsion within the pages of the SI Journal), I use Debord and Sanguinetti's *The Real Split in the International* (1972)—which defends the Situationists as a project aspiring to organize a unified *proletariat* class, making the dissolution of the SI a necessary stage in class consciousness—to agree with some of Kaufmann's claims. This is because, for Kaufmann, Debord's aesthetics are always marked by a quality of reminiscence that permeates his politics. In response, portions of this chapter will also revisit the unitary urbanism of *Report on the Construction of Situations* (1957), at the time defined as "the use of arts and techniques as means contributing to the composition of a unified milieu" (Debord: 38). Although a pre-Situationist document written fifteen years earlier, I believe this text offers a clear articulation of what the Situationist project was about in its earliest declaration of practices and methodologies,[16] and finds its historical narrative later documented in a post-May '68 landscape within the

Nicholson-Smith's translation is a personal preference (as I have not read the entirety of the text in its original French) for his syntactical style, which I think offers a clearer reading of Debord's ideas and emphasizes the poetic style of his writing.

[16] Debord wrote in *Report on the Construction of Situations* of the Situationist method: "we have neither guaranteed recipes nor definitive results. We only propose an experimental research to be collectively led in a few directions that we are presently defining and toward others that have yet to be defined" (42).

pages of *The Real Split in the International*. As Debord's urbanistic ventures largely sought to create an everyday life that was an art *without works*, I look back to this text to suggest that Debord's vision of the city becomes increasingly difficult to separate from his writings, films, texts, collages and, most importantly, his daily life:

> The comrades who call for a new, free architecture must understand that this new architecture will primarily be based not on free, poetic lines and forms... but rather on the atmospheric effect of rooms, hallways, streets—atmospheres linked to the activities they contain. Architecture must advance by taking emotionally moving situations, rather than emotionally moving forms, as the material to work with. (Debord: 38-39)

The second portion of this chapter will deal with criticisms made of Debord's implied desire for unity and totality, looking not only at his aesthetics through Kaufmann, but also through scholar David Roberts' reading of the spectacle in Debord's thought. In his article "Towards a Genealogy and Typology of Spectacle: Some Comments on Debord" (2003), Roberts examines the problems that arise in reading Debord that are caused by the broad definitions of his terminology, particularly the wide-ranging category of the spectacle, by focusing attention on the spectacle of religion, the festival, and the problems associated with Debord's ahistorical analysis. In agreement with many of Roberts' claims, my own criticisms of Debord's work concern the often overly vague definitions vis-à-vis his use of spectacle and authenticity, his pursuit of unity and totality (despite his critiques of both), and the nostalgia that adheres to Debord's use of spectacle, which often implies that the spectacle did not exist in pre-capitalist societies and that there is such a thing as a pre-spectacle world. As Roberts notes, "if the spectacle is as old as recorded history, it is because recorded history is as old as the state, as old, in other words, as the emergence of a social hierarchy based on a centre of military and religious power separate from the social group as a whole" (2003: 55).

The theoretical content of Debord's own thought in *The Society of the Spectacle* and *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* will be later addressed in more detail in connection with Bauman's theories regarding *liquid modernity* and the *community of consumers* in chapter three. Although Jappe, T.J. Clark (in his introduction to Jappe's reading of Debord), Kaufmann, Macdonald, and Roberts all detect a clear intellectual thread between Debord and Rousseau in his use of autobiography as a form of political and cultural criticism—albeit one that is not explicitly acknowledged by Debord—this is not an area of discussion that will be taken up here.

On the passage of a lost child through a brief unity of time: Debord as (Political) Memory Artist

In *Guy Debord: Revolution in the Service of Poetry* (2006), Kaufmann sets himself the task of looking for the man behind the *text* of *The Society of the Spectacle*, a book that manages to omit the first person pronoun from all of its pages. Instead he looks for the man behind the camera of several films, including *Howls for Sade,* which Debord believed he was reviled for making. As Debord remarked in the first volume of *Panégyrique* (1989), "…some think it is because of the grave responsibility that has often been attributed to me for the origins, or even for the command, of the May 1968 revolt. I think rather it is what I did in 1952 that has been disliked for so long" (22-23). For Kaufmann, understanding Debord's theories can only be done by looking at the particular aesthetic style that embodied his life. Of Debord, Kaufmann writes:

> Rarely has an author been so closely identified—wrongly, in my opinion—with a single book. This is the book that made him famous, a book that is fundamentally a critique of the appearances put in place by modern capitalist society to maintain the principles of exploitation and oppression. The author of *The Society of the Spectacle* declared himself to be a lost child of the spectacle, which he remained for the rest of his life. (12-13)

Honouring Debord's own claims, Kaufmann sees the impossibility of separating Debord's theory (his texts and his films) from his practices (the way he actually lived) because there is no distinction, for Debord, between the two. Although not so indebted to the personal details of Debord's life, Jappe offers a similar sentiment: "another way of thinking about Debord has come into play, namely trivialization. There must be very few present-day authors whose ideas have been so widely applied in a distorted form, and generally without attribution" (1993: 1).

Although admittedly from the pro-Debord camp, Kaufmann makes his biases known as soon as his text begins. From the introduction, he is in agreement with Debord's own claims that he never "asked anything of anyone" (a claim he made more than once), or had any interest in ever being understood or appreciated as a writer and filmmaker. Although forthcoming, such a declaration also makes for a problematic discussion when engaging with commentary from those who knew Debord and within the actual pages of the SI journal, which Debord was largely responsible for writing—especially towards the end of the SI's existence, as discussed in *The Real Split in the International*. Kaufmann sees Debord's project as essentially about the pursuit of freedom at all costs. His engagement with Debord scholarship is not so dissimilar from Knabb's position as one of distrust for writers who consider Debord a lazy plagiarist of Marx's *Thesis on Feuerbach*, but also those who see him as the prophet of the contemporary world in which the spectacle is the everyday and the everywhere.

Kaufmann spends a great deal of his text philosophizing through a discourse of lost children: "Like lost children we live our unfinished lives" (*Howls for Sade*: 1952), present in the dialogue of Debord's films and in the "early years" of his life. In both his films and writings, Debord claimed that he was born at the age of twenty,

while his actual date of birth is documented as December 29th, 1931. It is worth observing that translators of Debord note the difficulty of translating his playful—and strategic—use of language. In John McHale's closing remarks of "On the Difficulty of Translating *Panégyrique*", in the second English translation (2004), he writes:

> Anyone who refuses to grasp the fact that this book contains many traps and multiple, deliberately intended meanings, or who has not managed to find somebody possessing the requisite qualifications and skills to not get hopelessly lost in its pages, should immediately give up all ambition... It must first of all be borne in mind that, beneath the classical French... there lies hidden an especially modern use of this 'classical language'; an innovation therefore as unusual as it is shocking. A translation must render the whole, and do so faithfully. (171)

For example, Kaufmann's translation of the closing line of *Howls for Sade* is "Like lost children we live our unfinished lives," while Knabb translates the closing line as "Like lost children we live our unfinished adventures" (2003: 11). It is also worth noting that McHale (who also translated *The Real Split in the International*) interprets the role of translation in Debord, and Debord's particular style as a writer, as an exercise in maintaining the text's totality. Although these are not the only inconsistencies between the texts of Kaufmann and Knabb, both in translation and research, I use this example to demonstrate just how easily the meanings of Debord's thought can be played with and manipulated. Kaufmann's own rhetorical strategy of interpreting Debord is often focused on formulating new questions of how to read Debord, rather than their answers. Presumably, Kaufmann's response to this discrepancy in translation would be to offer the following question: is there really any distinction for Debord between living and adventure? The answer: probably not. But, for Debord, *writing* was an essential component of such a way of living.

In 1957, prior to the formation of the Situationist International, Debord described the process of constructing a situation as "on every occasion, by every

hyper-political means, we must publicize desirable alternatives to the spectacle of the capitalist way of life, as to destroy the bourgeois idea of happiness" (Debord: 43). Such a goal may fall into what Macdonald calls the post-Marxist sentiment of Debord and the SI within a *politics of everyday life*, in which he defines the spectacle as the "socio-cultural process in which individuals passively reproduce the system... a consequence of needs and desires engendered by the generalized commodity form" (68).[17] Kaufmann's emphasis on Debord's *poetics*, rather than politics, aims to prove that Debord's actions are largely about the ability to communicate, to express through both word and image, and the survival of such communication in the face of the spectacle. Within Debord's definitions, the function of language becomes entwined in Debord's numerous explanations of the spectacle through simile, metaphor, and in reference to other texts: "the spectacle is the bad dream of modern society in chains, expressing nothing more than its wish for sleep. The spectacle is the guardian of that sleep" (Thesis 18). As claimed in the introduction to this thesis, it is Debord's form, not just his content, that attracts such interest and leads the previously mentioned scholars to continuously take seriously the importance of his aesthetic style, present in such methods as the *dérive* or *détournement*, just as much as his substantive thought. As Kaufmann summarizes, "Debord wrote as a strategist, he engaged in politics as a poet, he made war because he liked games and he constructed avant-gardes out of a sense of melancholy, as if he foresaw their coming dissolution" (xix).

Often Debord's images are intended to do the speaking for him, particularly given his pessimism regarding the decline of the French language. In the second volume of *Panégyrique* (1997), published three years after Debord's actual death,[18] he

[17] See pages 67-90 for Macdonald's full analysis in his discussion of Situationist theory as a post-Marxist practice.

[18] The third volume of *Panégyrique*, along with any volumes still in manuscript stage, were burned during the night of November 30th, 1994 in compliance with Debord's wishes.

wrote, "an image that has not been deliberately separated from its meaning adds great precision and certainty to knowledge... An authentic illustration sheds light on true discourse, like a subordinate clause which is neither incompatible nor pleonastic" (73-74). This remark is particularly striking, considering that this specific volume is largely made up of up images and very few words. The words that do appear are often quotations from other authors or other texts by Debord himself. Such a comment coming from Debord, as a sceptic of semiotics, also articulates a desire for the unity between the signifier and signified and suggests a linguistic structure in understanding the image, in contrast to the floating signifier of post-structuralism and deconstruction that Debord was theoretically suspicious of. In Debord's earlier works, such a desire for unity, even when seemingly fragmented in images, collages, and maps, appears connected to his own desire for unity in his overall project (pre-1988), originating in his philosophical engagement with Hegelian Marxism. For Kaufmann, it is also connected to his biography.

In making sense of the existence of Debord, and thus his works, Kaufmann places significant importance on Debord's early years in Paris in the 1950's (and the twenty years of life that Debord mostly kept secret before then), reading Debord as an *already* lost child when he bonded with the other lost children of 1951 in Saint-Germain-des-Prés. According to Kaufmann,[19] Debord was born into a family heavily invested in the shoe manufacturing trade. A few years before his birth, his maternal grandfather Vincenzo Rossi suddenly died. Debord's family remained financially secure even during the war,[20] but his father Martial Debord contracted tuberculosis

[19] The majority of Kaufmann's details regarding the life of the young Debord come from *Vie et mort de Guy Debord by* Christophe Bourseiller (1999).

[20] Debord seems to recount this differently, stressing poverty and being born "ruined" in the pages of *Panégyrique*, while Kaufmann suggests quite a financially stable upbringing—despite being "without an inheritance" as Debord mentions. Andy Merrifield's *Metromarxism* (2002) appears to take Debord's side in this discussion and plays up the image of a ruined and romantic Debord in his narrative of the

shortly after Debord's birth. As a result, the infant Debord could not touch or have any contact with his father, and Martial passed away when Debord was four (4). His young mother Pauline (who herself was only twenty at the time of Debord's birth) seemed indifferent to her new son, and Debord was predominantly raised by his grandmother, Lydia Rossi. Pauline later had two children with a married man by the name of Domenico Bignoli in 1940 and 1942, and eventually married a notaire by the name of Charles Labaste. When the family settled in Cannes, Labaste already had two children from a previous marriage. He adopted Pauline's children, Michele and Bernard, but chose *not* to adopt the young Guy, leaving Debord to be the only child with his biological father's surname and to be raised separately from the family by his grandmother (4).

In his youth, Debord is described by Kaufmann as brilliant but extremely lazy, completing his Baccalaureate in 1951 in Cannes, but proudly doing so as last in his class (7). According to Debord's friend Jean-Michel Mension, in the years of 1951-1953 in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, which Debord meditates on with such nostalgia within his films and the pages of *Panégyrique*, he once said that "he had no childhood" at all (5-6). Kaufmann contends that he is not trying to overemphasize the sometimes unsettling details of Debord's childhood, but only attempting to question whether Debord's becoming a "lost child" was really a choice at all, as he seemed to be a fragmented piece in a family that was constantly on the move. For Kaufmann, Debord was effectively born a lost child and, as a result, surrounded himself with other lost children when he fully discovered the streets of Paris in 1951, lying to his family under the premise that he was going there to study law (7).

Situationist International (93-111). In Kristen Ross' 1983 interview with Lefebvre, Lefebvre appears to be in agreement with Kaufmann's biographical details, suggesting that Debord was financially better off than he admitted (70).

The already established Lettrists, founded by Isidore Isou in 1946, had started to go beyond the previously existing avant-garde movements of the time. But, for the younger members of the Lettrists, Isou was moving into a mystical "dead end" and was eventually overtaken by much younger—and newer—members such as Gil Wolman and Debord (20). At the time described by Debord as the "Lettrist left wing," the urban adventures of a few Marxist Lettrists planted the earliest seeds for what would eventually become the Situationists (Debord: 42). Never being able to settle in one of the previously existing avant-gardes, Debord wrote in *Report on the Construction of Situations* (1957), written before the official formation of the Situationist International, that "the error that is at the root of surrealism is the idea of the infinite richness of the unconscious imagination. The cause of surrealism's ideological failure was its belief that the unconscious was the finally discovered ultimate force of life…." (Debord: 28). In the same text, Debord commented that he saw the same lack of materialist critique in the Lettrists as he did in the COBRA and Imaginist Bauhaus group: "…above all the absence of a comprehensive theory of the conditions and perspectives of their experiences led to their breakup" (34).

Like Debord's first film, which finishes with twenty-four minutes of a blank screen, Gil Wolman's film *Pour en finir avec le jugement de Dieu* finished with a final ten minutes that lacked any images, in combination with audio of the filmmaker mimicking the sound of vomiting. Known amongst the Lettrists as a *mégapneume*, the intent of the Lettrists was to get *beyond* the word, to "dearticulate" language, particularly for the viewer who was so desperate to see images returned to the screen—and conditioned to expect them (20). On June 30th 1952, *Howls for Sade* was show at the Musée de l'Homme. Besides provoking audience members to throw rotting vegetables from the balcony, it created a visible split within the Lettrists over

Debord's filmmaking, which would lead to one of the final breaks between Debord and Isou (Isou being the more vocally bitter of the two after the years following the Lettrists) (21). What may in fact have offended audience members even more than the twenty-four minutes of silence over a black screen, was Debord's audacity in using the opening of his film to declare himself and his films as a singular *event* in the history of cinema:

> VOICE 1. What a springtime! Notes for the history of film: 1902: *Voyage the Moon*. 1920: *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*. 1924: *Entr'acte*. 1926: *Battleship Potemkin*. 1928: *Un Chien Andalou*. 1931: *City Lights*. *Birth of Guy-Ernest Debord. 1951: Traité de have et d'eternité*. 1952—*L'Anticoncept*, *Howls for Sade*. (Debord: 2)

Such a gesture would have easily been foreseen by Debord as one that would induce anger and frustration in the audience but, besides the obvious, Kaufmann sees a very specific purpose for Debord's provocations: "from the first, it was important to move away from one-way communication, from the passivity that characterized modern forms of cultural consumption, to 'discussion,' to authentic dialogue, which is also conflict, of which scandal is the most extreme form" (22).

In many of Debord's films, the distinction between Debord's life, politics, and urbanism is often presented as a totality—or a search for lost unity—making it increasingly difficult to separate the films from Debord's analysis of the spectacle. The amalgamation of images, voiceovers, and textual quotations that makes up the composition of the film of *The Society of the Spectacle* (1972) begins by fragmenting the body of Debord's own love: his second-wife Alice Becker-Ho. Debord's opening quotation is a declaration of love for Becker-Ho, while a montage of photographs of her is visible upon the screen, but it is also about a desire for individual authenticity through unity:

> Since each particular feeling is only a part of life and not life in its entirely, life yearns to spread into the full diversity of feelings so

> as to rediscover itself in the whole of this diversity…In love, the separate still exists, but it exists as unified, no longer as separate: the living meets the living…THIS FILM IS DEDICATED TO ALICE BECKER-HO. (Debord: 43)

Many of the images of a topless Alice Becker-Ho, which initially appear to be a homage to her, quickly become interchangeable with the endless images of nude women and fragmented pairs of breasts that appear throughout the film; the bodies of the women become visible spectacles for Debord's aphoristic statements to be heard by his audience.

Historically not unusual for many bohemian counter-cultures, the role of the female body within the visual texts of the Situationists unfortunately seems to demonstrate that, even on the fringes, women were still the most marginalized subjects. In the film of *The Society of the Spectacle*, is Debord attempting to call attention to the fact that the female body is sexually objectified throughout the mediated spectacle, or is he actually participating in the objectification of the female body within his film? How is his audience to interpret the voyeuristic quality of the film? Do they resist or join in? Although I do not dispute the visual objectification of the female form within the film (as well as in Debord's collages and psychogeographical maps), I also believe that the excessive amount of female flesh in Debord's film is intentionally used to alienate the audience. The repeated images make his audience self-conscious of their role as spectator when forced into the position of voyeur, even if consequentially, depending upon how the audience member interprets the female body upon the screen. The endless breasts literally become tedious to the viewer: they are not erotic, nor sensual, but fragmented, alienating and, eventually, become boring.

In his maps and collages, Debord frequently uses the commodified human body to demonstrate the fragmentation and separation from lived experience outside

of the spectacular market place. As his voiceover accompanying the footage of a striptease, staged and costumed in clichés of "primitive" sexuality, observes, "fragmented views of reality regroup themselves into a new unity as a separate pseudoworld that can only be looked at" (Debord: 101). Besides the countless images of topless women, *The Society of the Spectacle* is also made up of numerous images of war: soldiers, missiles, and bombs. Both strategic and devastating, sometimes these are aerial shorts of destruction, while others show direct confrontation on the battlefield. Debord also includes footage from Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), focusing his attention on the distressing scene of a woman fearlessly carrying her crushed child's body into a wall of marching soldiers. Among numerous montages, Debord also represents the spectacle as a product of urbanization within images of modern architecture, housing projects, security cameras, automobiles, traffic jams, and televisions. The spectacle of both politics and entertainment are blurred with footage of Castro and Nixon and John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

It is also interesting that Debord uses two sequences from Orson Welles' *Mr. Arkadin* (1955), a fragmented film in its own right, which is also known as *Confidential Report*, depending on the version. Most likely, Debord would have been a sympathizer of Welles. Throughout his career, Welles found it impossible to create the types of films that he wanted to under the constraints of the spectacular image machine of Hollywood, some often edited beyond the point of what Welles recognized as his own work.[21] In contrast to Kaufmann's reading of Debord's life and aesthetics as a documentation of the loss of authenticity and identity in the face of separation by representation, the plot of *Mr. Arkadin* focuses on a young American who has been hired by a wealthy European to find his previous existence. The young

[21] See Jonathan Rosenbaum's (ed.) *This is Orson Welles: Orson Welles and Peter Bogdanovich* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992) for discussions between Welles and his biographer Peter Bogdanovich on the making of his films.

man must write a report of the millionaire's previous life in order to see if he has actually left a trace of his former self for others to discover (a very similar situation to the one Kaufmann reads into Debord's omission of the first twenty years of his life).

In the first sequence of *Mr. Arkadin*, while making a toast to friendship at a party, Arkadin recounts a dream of being in a graveyard of an unknown village. The villagers mark the tombs of their dead not by the years of birth and death of the deceased persons, but by the number of years that they were able to sustain a friendship. This sequence appears shortly after Debord's reflections of the events of May '68: "from this day until the ending of the world of the spectacle, the month of May will never return without evoking memories of us" (93). Within these segments, Debord includes the image of himself, Christian Sebastiani, and Patrick Cheval with the subtitle: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers" (93). Len Bracken's biography *Guy Debord: Revolutionary* (1997) suggests that this sequence, followed by images of Jorn and Chtcheglov, would attest to an overwhelming sentimentality in Debord, if it were not followed by militaristic imagery. Despite criticisms from Knabb that Bracken's text is sloppy in both its translations and its blurring of the facts and fictions of Debord's legacy (Knabb: 498),[22] he maintains a position similar to Kaufmann: "the people that mattered to Debord were all ultimately *enfants perdus*, those lost to revolution" (Bracken: 194). Besides the discussion of unified community within the May '68 revolts, earlier in his film career, Debord makes numerous references to the years of unique friendship in Saint-Germain-des-Prés (1951-53) with great nostalgia in *On the passage of a few persons through a rather brief unity of time* (1959): "outside the neighbourhood, beyond its fleeing and continually threatened changelessness, stretched a half-known city where people met only by chance, losing

[22] This is not surprising as Bracken describes his credentials as publisher of "sub-proletarian revolution, utopian fantasy, pornography and conspiracy theory" in the journal *Extraphile*, while his reading of Debord offers a far more casual tone in the writing and layout of his text.

their way forever" (18). These were the years when Debord's prevailing mode of communication was spending his days—and nights—in conversation in the workers' cafés of Saint-Germain, another world apart from the cafés of the intellectuals that Sartre was known to visit (Kaufmann: 41).[23]

Two years later, Debord's film *Critique of Separation* (1961) contained many of the ideas that would reach fruition in book form in *The Society of the Spectacle* in 1967, summarizing in its closing line, "I have scarcely begun to make you understand that I don't intend to play the game" (Debord: 39). In Debord's multifaceted style, *Critique of Separation* was a film about the spectacle, about cinema, about modernity and, most importantly, about the separated subject within everyday life. Juxtaposed with an aerial shot of the centre of a modernized Paris, Debord's voiceover declares to his audience:

> Until the environment is collectively dominated, there will be no real individuals—only spectres haunting the objects anarchically presented to them by others. In chance situations we meet separated people moving randomly. Their divergent emotions neutralize each other and reinforce their solid environment of boredom. As long as we are unable to make our own history, to freely create situations, our striving toward unity will give rise to other separations. (32)

It is this emphasis on separation that sociologist Roberta Garner stresses as being one of the most important and unique elements in the Situationist analysis of mass culture, namely that it is "…closely connected not only to alienation but also to false consciousness and commodity" (558). Thirteen years later, in the film of *The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord would say of separation: "the spectacle thus reunites the separated, but it reunites them only *in their separateness*" (Debord: 101). The

---

[23] Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre often appears to be Debord's greatest intellectual enemy, continually criticized for his politics, his philosophies, and his celebrity status within *Potlatch* and the SI Journals.

complementary image to this voiceover displays an attractive couple watching television together in their underwear.

This separateness is the political break that leads Debord's Marx-inspired theorizing to a *politics of everyday life*. Macdonald describes such a stance as a theoretical position that emphasizes the fact that "cultural and informational networks increasingly constitute societal identities and life-worlds", which symbolically reinforce power structures through a fetishized means of production:

> A theory of the politics of everyday life appraises those traditions and political surfaces that are arising within civil society that are potential platforms for engaging in collective political struggle. In this respect, one must be able to locate the diverse surfaces that are creating collective potentialities toward social transformation... a theory of the politics of everyday life is able to articulate conditions of power and potentialities of resistance and transformation that are both individuated and collective, personal and macropolitical... to conceptually link the different levels... by redefining cultural politics toward a sense of larger political struggle. (83-84)

For Debord, the lack of "real individuals" visually articulated in *Critique of Separation* makes the realization of authentic community impossible. Unfortunately, the manner in which Debord interprets the *real*, the *authentic*, or his other largely generalized claims and concepts, can usually only be taken for granted in a reading that emphasizes lived experience in the world over all else. Living, for Debord, is thought and action in unity. In Debord's totalizing approach, a "critique of separation" is about the relationship between individuals, but also between self and other, citizen and state, the means of production and the fetishization of the commodity. Perhaps crudely stated, and conceivably more Althusser than Marx, Debord looks at the movement within the superstructure to understand the base relations of society, but his analysis is always finalized in action, not thought alone: "an intellectual creator cannot be revolutionary by merely supporting some party line, not even if he does so with original methods, but only by working alongside the parties toward the necessary

transformation of all the cultural superstructures" (Debord: 36-37). Debord's emphasis on political *action* indeed raises questions for Jappe, Kaufmann, and Macdonald of how one can fully understand such a statement when Debord's own engagement with formal politics was limited. I propose that for Debord, the act of writing is always a political act.

Observed as early as the Lettrist years and frequently commented upon within the pages of SI Journals, the spectacle of consumerism had transformed the concept of leisure into a commodified product. Leisure was increasingly marketed to be bought and sold to compensate for the alienated labour experienced by workers, and the Situationist interpretation of Marx needed to address the changes of modern life and make it a central object of concern: "it is necessary to throw new forces into the battle of leisure. We will take our position there" (40). Such a stance also meant, I would argue not to the benefit of the SI, that their analysis underappreciated the smaller moments of everyday life such as preparing food and the sharing of a meal. The Situationists seemed to reject simplicity and repetition, denying it as an occasion for pleasure or as a non-spectacular process. They also ignored the possibility that workers could find their labour meaningful under the right conditions: "the most general goal must be to expand the nonmediocre part of life, to reduce the empty moments of life as much as possible" (39). Just as Debord's analysis shifted after the years of May '68, so would his desire to be surrounded by the urban. When he and Alice Becker-Ho said goodbye to the streets of Paris, their beloved city was no longer identifiable as the home Debord had cherished with such intensity in the 1950's.

The spectacle was a separation not just from labour, but from critical thinking. As Debord observed in the *Report on the Construction of Situations*:

> It is no longer a matter of noting the increasingly massive use of commercial publicity to influence judgments about cultural

> creation. We have arrived at a stage of ideological absence in which advertising has become the only active factor, overriding any preexisting critical judgment or transforming such judgment into a mere conditioned reflex. The complex operation of sales techniques has reached the point of surprising even the ad professionals by automatically creating pseudosubjects of cultural debate. (Debord: 32)

Debord and his fellow Situationists realized very quickly that the spectacle of the commodity would be directly linked to cultural identity and belonging (and thus alienation), becoming inseparable from a discourse of social inequality of how and why citizenship functions within a system of labour and consumption. Debord recognized that the question of citizenship and what level of inclusion a citizen has often gets replaced in the discussion of politics with that of consumer. The role of the citizen becomes increasingly intertwined in not just the social body that makes up a state or a nation, but the economic status within a symbolic economy in which they participate, which grants certain privileges of citizenship that are really about meaning and belonging. In his analysis of political events such as the Watts riots in the United States, Debord focused his analysis not on race, but on class:

> To destroy commodities is to demonstrate one's human superiority to commodities: to free oneself from the arbitrary forms that cloak the image of real needs. The flames of Watts consumed consumption. The theft of large refrigerators by people with no electricity, or with their power cut off, is the best possible metaphor for the lie of affluence transformed into a truth... Once it is no longer bought, the commodity lies open to criticism in all its particular manifestations. (Debord: 13-15)

Seven years later in *The Real Split in the International* (1972), Debord would look more intently at the spectacle in relation to minority communities and their revolutionary potential (including the environmental movement) in contrast to his earlier preoccupation with a unified uprising: "youth, workers, people of colour, homosexuals, women and children take it into their heads to want everything that was hitherto *forbidden* them, at the same time as they refuse most of the paltry results that

the old organization of class society *allowed* people to obtain and put up with. They want no more bosses, family or State" (Debord and Sanguinetti: 14). It is also within the pages of *The Real Split* that Debord stresses the existence of the Situationist International as an organizing collective for ideas that were *already* present within society, and not a novelty within the French avant-garde. Reductively speaking, the two main arguments most emphasized within the text are that there was nothing particularly new about the SI, and that the SI could only have ever been a short-term project because its goal was the creation of a unified proletariat.

As the relationship between citizenship and labour was habitually maintained in a duality of financial obligation and alienation within the workforce, Debord looked for an alternative to a post-industrial economy that had reinvented the use-value of leisure time, while the rise of systematic and unskilled labour had increased meaninglessness in the workplace. Despite Debord's hatred of Sartre, the Situationist relationship to work was also one that harboured an existential ethic. Frankfurt School philosopher Theodor Adorno expressed similar concerns to the Situationists. He observed in his essays, collected after his death, in *The Culture Industry* (1991) that culture had fallen victim to the practice of "hobbies" as a means of filling "free time," as though the empty moments were something to be dreaded. Like the SI, Adorno encouraged the embracing of time, not the rejection of it. Adorno writes that leisure should not be an effort to kill time, but one that should fill it with the utmost attention and imagination, in the recognition that leisure had merely become an extension of the commodity: "in a system where full employment itself has become the ideal, free time is nothing more than a shadowy continuation of labour" (194). For Debord, the decline in the use-value of labour and the increasing impossibility of meaningful work had greatly altered the connotations of leisure time and the assumptions regarding

how people should spend their time—and their money—in an endless cycle of the production of labour. Particularly within a culture of mass consumption, Debord would later observe, "more profoundly in this world which is officially so respectful of economic necessities, no one ever knows the real cost of anything which is produced. In fact the major part of the real cost *is never calculated; and the rest is kept secret*" (1988: 56).

The spectacle creates an invisible curtain between the labour involved in economic production and the commodities which are eventually created. Domestic space and private space, separated from the space of citizenship, become the target for the selling of *leisure* space: an effort to sell back the time the worker exchanges during his or her labour, in order to purchase a means of participation within a specific social class, which acknowledges her role and entitlement as a producer by permitting access to the products of capitalism and mass consumption. For Debord (and also for Bauman), this commodification of leisure is always enmeshed in the changing nature of time as a consequence of the spectacle, so much so that Debord titled an entire section of *The Society of the Spectacle* "Spectacular Time." Here, he wrote that "the entirety of the consumable time of modern society ends up being treated as raw material for the production of a diversity of new products to be put on the market as socially controlled uses of time" (Thesis 151). Debord concluded this passage with an acknowledged quotation from Marx's *Capital* (noteworthy as Debord often did not cite his references): "a product, though ready for immediate consumption, may nevertheless serve as raw material for a further product" (111).

Within *The Society of the Spectacle* and the pages of the SI journals, Debord's desire for unity appears to be submerged in a larger project of community—or at least one that has been lost as a consequence of the spectacle of late capitalism. Although

not articulated in the same theoretical terrain of scholarship on community found in Giorgio Agamben or Jean-Luc Nancy,[24] a discourse of community seems to find itself inside the discussion of Jappe, Kaufmann, and Macdonald, as it appears also in the words and images of Debord's films and texts: "once society has lost the community that myth was formerly able to ensure, it must inevitably lose all the reference points of a truly common language until such time as the divided character of an inactive community is superseded by the inauguration of a real historical community" (Thesis 136). But what is Debord's distinction between the *myth* of community and the *historical* community within the realm of the spectacle?

In *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, when he considered the implications of his 1967 text twenty years later, Debord abandoned the possibility of a proletarian uprising because the integrated spectacle had now become the dominant ideological force behind mass culture, but his discussion of a lost community did not disappear with it:

> For the agora, the general community has gone, along with the communities restricted to intermediary bodies or to independent institutions, to salons or cafés, or to workers in a single company. There is no place left where people can discuss the realities that concern them, because they can never lastingly free themselves from the crushing presence of media discourse… (1988: 19)

The authentic community, which has been fractured under the reign of the spectacle, has come to be replaced by the community of consumers within the integrated spectacle (as will be discussed in chapter three reading Bauman's work as an extension of Debord's thought). In the outcome of this shift, Debord characterized the culture of modernity as operating under five principles of the integrated spectacle: i)

---

[24] See Nancy's *Being Singular Plural* (1996), *Inoperative Community* (1991), or Agamben's *The Coming Community* (1990). In his discussion of 'The Imaginal World', Michel Maffesoli's claims that Agamben's analysis in *The Coming Community* pushes "to the limits the logic of Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*" (75) in his text *The Contemplation of the World: Figures of Community Style* (1996).

incessant technological renewal, ii) integration of state and economy, iii) generalized secrecy, iv) unanswerable lies, and v) an eternal present (11-12).

In his article "Towards a Genealogy and Typology of Spectacle: Some Comments On Debord" (2003), Roberts argues that the central flaw of Debord's overly broad and undefined use of the spectacle is that it is "vitiated by its lack of historical and analytical differentiation" (54). Focusing on Debord's poor articulation of the distinction between the *concentrated* and *diffuse* spectacle, he proposes what he describes as a double genealogy and a fourfold typology of the spectacle since the French Revolution. Although simplistically stated by Roberts, to the extent that "Debord is somewhat vague as to when the unity of the world was lost" (56), the conceptual problems that are consistently present in Debord's theorizing deserve to be dealt with as concrete criticism as they can make for an unnecessarily convoluted reading of Debord's ideas. Roberts claims that "Debord's concept of the spectacle is too compact to be analytically useful" (58), and thus proposes his typology in order to fragment the spectacle's totalizing properties.

As both the spectacle and the loss of unity is left ill-defined by Debord, Roberts attempts to delineate the multiple meanings that make the spectacle difficult to think through and also prone to misuse. He first splits the term itself into the following: i) spectacle as festival; and ii) spectacle *as* spectacle. Although the first seems more self-explanatory (despite the fact that Roberts accuses Debord of making it a silent distinction), it is the second definition that Roberts finds particularly problematic, because it has such a "wide range of reference—from sport and entertainment to the staging of politics and protest in the contemporary world" (54). In Roberts' reading of Debord, the concentrated spectacle is that of the totalitarian

regime,[25] while the diffuse spectacle is "associated with the abundance of commodities, with the undisturbed development of modern capitalism" (Thesis 65). This also includes "the religious and political functions of the festival, and the diffuse spectacle of the society of the spectacle," but, for Roberts, such a definition becomes hazy, because Debord claims, "the diffuse spectacle has taken over the traditional function of the spectacle" (54). Roberts looks outside of Debord to Durkheim in order to interpret the social function of religion within the spectacle as a form that arises "from the self-representation and the self-affirmation of the social group through collective assembly" (55). For Roberts, Debord largely ignores this social function, as he believes Debord does not fully consider the implications of the role of religion within society as a form of spectacle before capitalism. He also emphasizes the role of the festival, which he thinks is not fully differentiated in Debord's analysis. Roberts breaks down what he deems the *spectacle as festival* as:

> 1. The spectacle of the political religion of the moderns, directed, from the French Revolution to fascism, to the regeneration of society.
>
> 2. The spectacle of aesthetic religion of the moderns, the total work of art, directed to the aesthetic regeneration of alienated society and to the social regeneration of alienated art. (58)

He characterizes the second pair, of *spectacle as spectacle*, as:

> 1. The spectacle of the commodity, the capitalist justification for the world as aesthetic phenomena. In Debord's words: 'the spectacle is affirmation of appearance and affirmation of all human life, namely social life, as mere appearance' (Thesis 10).

[25] See Thesis 64 of *The Society of the Spectacle*.

> 2. The spectacle of the spectacle. Just as the total work of art accompanies the idea of total revolution, so the mass multimedia spectacles of the entertainment industry are the mirrors of the society of commodity consumption. (58)

Regardless of the fact that many of Roberts' criticisms are ones I strongly agree with in my own reading of Debord, Roberts' dissection of spectacle to include the *total* work of art raises questions of the extent to which his analysis fully engages with Debord's theorizing. It is important to not lose sight of the fact that, despite its being an easily available text, Roberts consciously omits Debord's 1988 writings of *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* completely from his analysis of the spectacle. I believe this should be considered an extremely consequential flaw in his methodology, as it is very clear (as reflected in the work of the other scholars mentioned) that Debord later changed his outlook on the spectacle from his writings of 1967, partially due to his years of living in Italy after the events of May '68 and to the murder of his friend and publisher Gérard Lebovici. By the time *Comments* was published in 1988, Debord believed that France, Italy, and the United States were the strongest examples of spectacular rule. Although Debord never actually lived in the United States, it did not stop him from making sweeping generalizations about North American society through the pages of the SI Journal and his other writings: "the abundance of televised imbecilities is probably one of the reasons for the American working class's inability to develop any political consciousness" (Debord: 39-40).

The point of my own survey of Debord's life and work (and close engagement with Kaufmann's text) is to suggest that the vagueness that shows itself in Debord's theories of spectacle, unity, and totality is indeed problematic, but is also easier to

comprehend when engaging with his thought as a whole. One cannot fully understand *The Society of the Spectacle* without knowing about the urban adventures of the Situationists through the streets of Paris, London, and Amsterdam, and within the critiques in their journal. Nor can one fully understand Debord's discussion of the image within the spectacle without being witness to the way he takes up his conflict in his filmmaking. Like the Platonic dialogues of *The Republic* that, despite its criticisms of art as imitation, choose a literary form instead of a formal philosophical treatise, Debord engages with the cinematic form of the image in order to think through it.

Roberts' analysis excludes Debord's films and other writings—including the SI Journals. Most of the concepts and topics that Debord pondered first appeared in *Report on the Construction of Situations* (1957), including the very first use of the spectacle, and would later reappear in *Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation* within the first SI Journal in 1958. Such writings foreshadow what would later develop in Debord's thought processes, as well as offering a historical framework in which to read them. To ignore Debord's own intellectual history seems hypocritical, particularly given Roberts' concerns about Debord's ahistorical analysis. Perhaps what Roberts' own analysis is lacking is the understanding of what Debord's initial aims were in his earliest theorizing in the SI journals: "…it should be understood that throughout this text we are ignoring the scientific or educational aspects of culture, even if the confusion we have noted is also visibly reflected at the level of general scientific theories and notions of education; we are using the term [culture] to refer to a complex of aesthetics, sentiments and customs: the reaction of an era on everyday life…" (Debord: 26).

Roberts, although very focused on a thorough analysis of Debord, by nature of exclusion does not make room for the visual, the aesthetic, the poetic, or the

stylistic qualities that attract thinkers to Debord. As Roberts focuses on a lack of logic and consistency in Debord's argument, he ends up avoiding the emotional, sensual, and playful goals that were part of Debord's work as a political project towards a revolution of everyday life:

> Spatial development must take into account the emotional effects that the experimental city is intended to produce...The situationist game is distinguished from the classic notion of games by its radical negation of the element of competition and of separation from everyday life. On the other hand, it is not distinct from a moral choice, since it implies taking a stand in favour of what will bring about the future reign of freedom and play. (Debord: 38-39)

Debord was a firm believer in the accuracy of Karl Marx's observation that "men can see nothing around them that is not their own image; everything speaks to themselves. Their very landscape is alive," a quotation that he was prone to repeating (sometimes shamelessly plagiarizing as his own). The importance of art, literature, and public space for Debord was always a project about meaning, identity, and belonging. Kaufmann, when reading Debord as a melancholic, notes his uncomfortable relationship to death, avoiding funerals, including that of his beloved grandmother (8). He does not see Debord's suicide as a longing for death on the part of a mentally ill person, but instead an ending of a life that Debord knew he could not live to the fullest as he had historically done so in all his waking moments. In what I read as an existential ethic in Debord's politics and poetics, I feel his critical thinking actually falls into a realm closer in thought to Heidegger's essays on art in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1971), for the latter's reflections on critical thinking as a type of poetics and his notion of dwelling as a means of being in the world—and whether such a type of thinking is possible for all human beings, as can be witnessed in the often elitist quality of Debord's verbal confrontations within the pages of the SI journal.

For Heidegger, human beings are the only species aware of "death as death" (Heidegger: 219). They are left to measure themselves against the unknown of their potential non-being. This single collective trait may be the only commonality in a world submerged in the spectacle, but perhaps it is enough to locate a community of shared responsibility through the existential anxiety it induces. Although such an inclusion of questions of (B)eing within a Heideggerian project may suggest an individualist and potentially alienating—in contrast to a collective—approach to the question of community, I suggest that it is specifically this emphasis on the individual that makes such a thing as a community of difference possible. I also say this knowing of Debord's distrust for intellectual projects such as Heidegger's, which often appeared at an unreachable distance from the realm of everyday life:

> The revolutionary critique of all existing conditions does not, to be sure, have a monopoly on intelligence; it only has a monopoly on its use. In the present cultural and social crises, those who do not know how to use their intelligence have in fact no discernable intelligence of any kind. Stop talking to us about unused intelligence and you'll make us happy; poor Heidegger! Poor Lukács! Poor Sartre! Poor Barthes! Poor Lefebvre!
> (SI Journal #9: 1963: 175)

As Debord outlived many of the other lost children, their lives cut short by suicide, prison and health-ailments associated with poverty, I argue the presence of potential non-being was with Debord in every strategic—and playful—move he made. Debord's emphasis on individually lived existence is what he believed would make the possibility of shared responsibility for a proletarian uprising possible, a community of individual desire and action that would lead to a movement as a collective whole. As Debord notes in his analysis of the Watts Riots, "any rebellion against the spectacle occurs at the level of the totality, because—even if it is confined to a single neighbourhood, such as Watts—it is a human protest against an inhuman life; because it begins at the level of the real single individual, and because

community, from which the individual in revolt is separated, is the *true social nature* of man, true human nature: the positive transcendence of the spectacle" (1965: 34).

Chapter 3: A Politics of Apathy:
Debord's Spectacle within Bauman's Community of Consumers

It was not a serene unity, but a brittle fragmentation, as if these visions had only ever been very distant and incalculably darkened reflections, illusory and allusive glimmerings fading away almost as soon as they were born, mere specks of dust: just the banal projection of their clumsiest desires, an almost insubstantial haze of paltry splendours, scraps of old dreams they would never be able to grasp.
–Georges Perec, *Things: A Story of the Sixties* (1965)

When I began the critique of spectacular society, what was particularly noticed—given the period—was the revolutionary content that could be discovered in that critique; and it was naturally felt to be its more troublesome element. As to the spectacle itself, I was sometimes accused of having invented it out of thin air, and was always accused of indulging myself to excess in my evaluation of its depth and unity, and its real workings.
–Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988)

Guy Debord's writings, both independently and within the Situationist International, remain a plea for the reclaiming of public space, disengaged from the effects of commodity fetishism. In the face of globalization, Debord's awareness of capitalism's ability to found communities upon consumption and commodify leisure as an extension of labour—constructing the individual to be a spectator instead of a participant—demonstrates the ever-increasing significance of social spaces. As individuals continually search to invent new possibilities of expression within their social spaces, these sites become locations of both *individual* identity and *communal* belonging.

Social theorist Zygmunt Bauman acknowledges the plethora of associations that participation within a community entails, but that there is a price to be paid for doing so. In a post-9-11 landscape, at stake in the privilege of community is the ideological presence of *freedom* and *security* held within communal possibilities (2007: 4). Bauman also identifies the spectacle of consumerism as the threshold of the largest socio-economic barrier between social classes. Those that cannot "participate" within the financial movement of the economy cease to be recognized as active

citizens. As Bauman observes, "active participation in consumer markets is the main virtue expected of the members of the consumer society." Yet such an illusionary form of social participation only increases individual alienation and devalues genuine acts of citizenship, insofar as "consumption is a supremely solitary activity... even when it happens to be conducted in company" (2007: 78).

Bauman's theorizing of *liquid modernity* specifically addresses the problematizing of citizenship, politics, and the direct impact consumerism has had on both. What Debord described as "the society of the spectacle" is now what Bauman calls the "society of the consumers", while Debord's "lost community" has become what Bauman describes as "the community of consumers". The shiny, plastic—and easily disposable—liquefied world of the community of consumers is Debord's spectacle in practice. This remains a community that Debord identified decades earlier but, as the spectacle has now been appropriated into everyday discourse, is no longer attributed to Debord's thought. The community of consumers creates a sense of belonging through the continuous desire of commodified goods and services. Such perpetual desire prolongs and increases isolation vis-à-vis other citizens, as each individual attempts to make themselves both as distinct and similar as they can in relation to the products they consume. Maintained but always unfulfilled, continuous desire is the ultimate pursuit of the liquefied citizen. Unfulfilled gratification is always an individual phenomenon which, the more it pursues desire as an end in itself, becomes further and further removed from the desire of communal belonging, and perpetuates the disintegration of citizenship. For Bauman, the notion of the *public* good, *public* space, or *public* interest, has been bastardized by the spectacle. The realm of politics and government becomes a gossip column of the private lives (and confessions) of those in the public realm. The resulting spectacle of politics is a

society in which "'public issues' which resist such reduction become all but incomprehensible" (Bauman: 2000: 37).

In response to the language of the 'melting of solids' of Marx and Engels, the shift that Bauman sees in the move—from solid to liquid modernity—to a spectacle of everyday life recognizes the depletion of public space, in which what was once private is dragged into the public domain and transformed into spectacle. According to Bauman, liquid modernity encourages the hyper-individualization of the citizen and the abandonment of any previously held belief in a societal 'common good' to be shared communally. Because the goals of a capitalist society now emphasise citizenship as an entirely individual occupation, politics, citizenship and community have been left to be casualties in what Bauman describes as "the individual in combat with the citizen" (30). As liquid modern society is one that calls into question the relationship between freedom and human responsibility, a renewed mission for critical theory may find a rescue plan in the domain of public space. Bauman writes, "the task is now to defend the vanishing public realm, or rather to refurnish and repopulate the public space fast emptying owing to the desertion on both sides: the exit of the 'interested citizen'…" (39). The emptying of a genuine public space, of what was once the agora, is precisely where Bauman sees the new goal of critical theory positioning itself: "in short, one of the decisive stakes of lifelong education aimed at 'empowerment' is the *rebuilding of the now increasingly deserted public space* where men and women may engage in a continuous translation between the individual and the common, the private and the communal interests, rights and duties" (2005: 125)

Although Bauman's observations of the spectacle may seem more conservative in relation to Debord's revolutionary positioning of a politics of

everyday life, it could perhaps be because Bauman offers not an alternative, but a return to what Debord considers lost in the end of a historical community. For Bauman, the discourse of community has come to be articulated as a cultural desire that is incapable of existing in the present. The longing for community is always about something lost to the past, something to be aspired to in the future, but never attainable in the "now" (2001: 3). Debord's earlier Situationist writings (1957-1972) and his theorizing of the concentrated, diffuse, and integrated spectacle, lay the groundwork and offer a vision of the society that Bauman is now witness to, within a culture that has absorbed into the integrated spectacle that Debord had foreseen by 1988. If Bauman's standpoint does not seem to offer a revolution of the everyday, does the liquefied spectacle of Bauman indicate Debord's theories—and practices—as a failed project? Or can it suggest something revolutionary about Bauman's approach to social theory itself, which calls for a radical rethinking of the pursuit of critical theory in response to individualized mass capitalism?

Bauman's Spectacle:
The Private Life and the Public Good

> …the most promising kind of unity is one which is *achieved*, and achieved daily anew, by confrontation, debate, negotiation and compromise between values, preferences and chosen ways of life and self-identifications of many and different, but always self-determining, members of the *polis*.
>
> –Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (2000)

In section IV of *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, Debord identifies what he sees as the only major revision to his theories of spectacular culture since the publication of his original text, which he describes as the *integrated* spectacle. Similar to my first chapter, which included situationist terminology as defined in the pages of the SI journal, I prefer to use Debord's own words to articulate his distinctions between the concentrated, diffuse, and integrated spectacle:

> In 1967 I distinguished two rival and successive forms of spectacular power, the concentrated and the diffuse. Both of them floated above real society, as its goal and its lie. The former, favouring the ideology condensed around a dictatorial personality, had accomplished the totalitarian counter-revolution, fascist as well as Stalinist. The latter, driving wage-earners to apply their freedom of choice to the vast range of new commodities now on offer, had represented the Americanization of the world, a process which in some respects frightened but also successfully seduced those countries where it had been possible to maintain traditional forms of bourgeois democracy. Since then a third form has been established, through the rational combination of the two, and on the basis of a general victory of the form which had showed itself stronger: the diffuse. This is the *integrated spectacle*, which has since tended to impose itself globally. (1988: 8)

Unlike scholars and critics who follow a line of thought from Debord's spectacle of 1967 to Baudrillard's concept of simulacrum, this chapter instead follows a narrative of spectacle from Debord's 1988 *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* to Bauman's works *Liquid Modernity* (2000), *Liquid Life* (2005), and *Liquid Times* (2007). The key argument here is that Bauman's theorizing of liquid modernity offers an extension of Debord's thought in *Comments*, insofar as we can describe liquid modernity as conforming to the integrated spectacle of 1988, rather than Debord's writings of 1967.

My analysis of Bauman is aided by his texts *Community* (2001) and *Consuming Life* (2007) to suggest that citizens of liquid modernity have organized themselves via illusionary or spectacular communities through consumption, which further alienates people from communal belonging and, although insinuated into all aspects of social life, has had the bleakest consequences for politics and citizenship. While I look to Bauman's theorizing of liquid modernity, which has been central to his thought since 2000, I also consider the trajectory of utopia that has been present throughout Bauman's work for his entire intellectual career in order to shed light on the projects of critical utopia that appear to be present in both the works of Debord

and Bauman. I stress Debord—and his presence in the SI—as a thinker of *critical* utopia, despite Debord's well-documented distrust of utopian thought as disconnected from a materialist critique that would make revolution possible: "the Utopian strands in socialism, though they do have their historical roots in the critique of the existing social organization, are properly so called inasmuch as they deny history—inasmuch, that is, as they deny the struggle that exists…" (Thesis 83). However, this has not stopped numerous scholars from engaging with the Situationist International, and particularly Constant's New Babylon, as a utopian project. As Bauman notes, the "utopian imagination was essentially architectural and urbanistic" (2003: 14).

Although Bauman can be included in the many social and cultural theorists who have documented that "we are now living in a society of the spectacle" (as *Le Monde* had declared in 1987), Bauman does not make specific reference to Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* or the journals of the Situationist International in his remarks on the spectacle. Instead, what I have observed in his writing is the presence of Debord in Bauman's discussion of time and space within his first text entirely devoted to a theorizing of liquid modernity in 2000. This moment in Bauman's intellectual output may also symbolically represent his official departure from theories of postmodernity. It should also be noted that such scholars as sociologist Larry Ray, in his article "Postmodernity to Liquid Modernity" (2007), express a concern that Bauman's dichotomy of liquid versus solid modernity creates similar problems of binary analysis of a sort present in postmodern theory, and also argues that liquid modernity is simply postmodernity under a different name (69).

Like Debord, Bauman's articulation of liquid modernity is constantly expressed within multiple metaphors of the changing shape of a fluid modernity that is flexible, disposable, impermanent, and easily changes its form. The liquification of

mass culture displays a parallel expression vis-à-vis Debord's spectacle in which both are seeped and saturated into the fabric of everyday life. Ray, in criticizing Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, parallels Roberts' complaints about the ahistorical nature of Debord's analysis. As Ray puts it, "Bauman seems uncertain as to quite how to understand modernity. The concept is open to many modes of specification… but the complexity of these changes allows for many differences of emphasis" (70). Bauman's account of modernity sounds increasingly similar to Debord's interpretation of the spectacle's integration into everyday life: "modernity starts when space and time are separated from living practice and from each other and so become ready to be theorized as distinct and mutually independent categories of strategy and action (Bauman: 2000: 8). Despite his criticisms, Ray offers the following diagram (table 2.1) in his article, in which he breaks down the narrative structure of Bauman's text according to chapter to describe the typology of heavy and liquid modernity in Bauman's thought (68):

	Heavy Modernity	*Liquid Modernity*
Emancipation	Utopian—reality shaped by designers and planners	End of utopian visions
	Legislative reason	Individualization
	Class Politics	Self-critique of Individual
	Critique of Reality	Private colonized public
	Public 'colonizing' private	
Individuality	Means-ends calculation	Prioritizing ends
	Certainty and stability	Uncertainty and instability
Time/Space	Territorial conquest—wealth and power in *land*	Extra-territorial, cyber-space, 'disembodied'
	Hardware, bulk-obsessed, fixed, sluggish	Light, aesthetic, bricoleur
	Panoptic surveillance	Post-panoptic
Work	Fordist	Post-Fordist
	Careers	Rapid movement and

	Welfare Capital and labour	change, 'saturated with uncertainty' Fluid contracts and individual identities
Community	Nation-states Locales	Nations retreat behind communities Ephemeral 'community'
	Nationalism	Ethnic violence and cleansing

Within his chapter, entitled "Time/Space", Bauman directly quotes from Debord's *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, but not from the original text itself:

> It is difficult to conceive of culture indifferent to eternity and shunning durability. It is similarly difficult to conceive of morality indifferent to the consequences of human actions and shunning responsibility for the effects. As Guy Debord famously put it, 'Men resemble their times more than their fathers.' And present-day men and women differ from their fathers and mothers by living in a present 'which wants to forget the past and no longer seems to believe in the future'. (128)

The above passage that Bauman quotes appears within Debord's *Comments* on the page following the latter's definitions of the concentrated, diffuse, and integrated spectacle (Debord: 9). Consistent with the previous passage, the following remarks appear within this chapter in Bauman's discussion of the shift from heavy to light modernity":[26]

> The foundation of trust in progress is nowadays prominent mostly for its cracks, fissures and chronic fissiparousness. The most solid and least questionable of its elements are fast losing their compactness together with their sovereignty, credibility and trustworthiness. The jading of the modern state is perhaps felt most acutely, since it means that the power to goad people to work—the power to do things—is taken away from politics, which used to decide what sort of things ought to be done and who was to do them. While all the agencies of political life stay where 'liquid modernity' times found them, tied as before to their respective localities, power flows well-beyond their reach...To quote Guy Debord, 'The controlling centre has now become occult: never to be occupied by a known leader, or clear ideology'. (133)

[26] This portion of the text (pages 113-129) is also reproduced in *The Contemporary Bauman* (2007), a collection of essays that focuses specifically on the shift from postmodernity to liquid modernity in Bauman's thought in relation to the rest of his work.

Like Debord, for Bauman the spectacle is indeed the *everyday* and the *everywhere*, always outside of the physicality that would tie it to a fixed location. The end of utopia (as documented in Ray's chart) is related to what Bauman understands as a decline of territoriality and finality in political, social, and utopian ambitions, which are grounded and directed to a specific place and end goal. This is also altered by the changing nature of power structures that have become integrated into practices of consumption.

What makes the liquid modern spectacle unique is that, in contrast to the Bentham/Foucault panopticon in which the individual never knows when he or she is being watched (and must assume that they are always on display), the consumer of the spectacle lives to be watched: "spectacles take the place of surveillance without losing any of the disciplining power of their predecessor. Obedience to standards…tends to be achieved nowadays through enticement and seduction rather than by coercion—and it appears in the disguises of the exercise of free will, rather than revealing itself as an external force" (2000: 86). In the cultural epoch of the community of consumers, these are the same consumers of reality television and Facebook, easily willing and complacent to put themselves on display with the products they endorse: "leadership has been replaced by the spectacle, and surveillance by seduction. Who rules the (air) waves, rules the lived world, and decides its shape and contents. No one needs to force or nudge the spectators to attend the spectacle: woe to those who would dare deny them entry" (115).

The End of Utopia and the Liquid Modern Subject

In the opening of his essay, "Utopia With No Topos" (2003), Bauman declares that "to measure life 'as it is' by a life as it *should* be…is a defining,

constitutive feature of humanity" (11). For Bauman the desire to transcend the present moment and envision a future of possibilities is a universal aspiration: human beings imagine how life could be otherwise, whether such social dreaming is done with individual or collective pursuits in mind. This initial meditation upon future desires is what Bauman considers to be the "least destructible attribute of human existence" (12), but it is an attribute that becomes immensely complicated when the effort is made to weave it into the fabric of reality as a material project. One of these complex projects is the possibility of utopia.

Bauman's reading of utopia within liquid modernity offers the possibility of a *critical utopia* with *no topos* for globalized urban spaces. In my own methodology of thinking about utopia, I will situate myself in a definition of utopia as a *no place* which, as an opening for social dreaming, becomes a space for critical utopia, while also rejecting the possibility of an *individualized* utopia, as it does not aspire towards any sort of collective goal or betterment of society. I ground this understanding of utopia in Bauman's chapter, "Utopia and Reality", taken from his 1976 text, *Socialism: The Active Utopia*, in which he offers the following definition(s) for his own analysis of utopia:

> To sum up, one can define utopia—in the sense in which it will be used in this study—as an image of a future and better world which is:
>
> (1) felt as still unfulfilled and requiring an additional effort to be brought about;
>
> (2) perceived as desirable, as a world not so much bound to come as one which should come;

(3) critical of the existing society; in fact a system of ideas remains utopian and thus able to boost human activity only in so far as it is perceived as representing a system essentially different from, if not antithetical to, the existing one;

(4) involving a measure of hazard; for an image of the future to possess the qualities of utopia, it must be ascertained that it will not come to pass until fostered by a deliberate collective action.

(17)

It is when the pursuit of individual desire is no longer "fostered by a deliberate collective action" that the fire of utopian possibility burns out. For Bauman, this is the liquid modern moment, a moment in which citizenship has disappeared and been replaced by insatiable desire. In my own analysis of Bauman and Debord (post-1988), working within a more pluralistic definition of utopia becomes necessary in considerations of the dystopian image of the modern world that Bauman and Debord offer—without a utopian vision to replace it with—since, as Ruth Levitas observes in her text *The Concept of Utopia* (1990), "any general definition needs to accommodate to the fact that utopian scholarship does encompass a wide variety of approaches and questions, and this multi-dimensional approach is itself fruitful" (179).

In Bauman's article, "Utopia with no Topos", the decline of utopia has been replaced by individual pursuits, demonstrating an end to a utopian possibility as the liquid modern society is one of apathy, consumption, and individuality: always about the "now", and never the past or future. As described in my second chapter, Bauman's description of the liquid modern society maintains a close relationship to the five principal features of the integrated spectacle that Debord outlines in *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, particularly the fifth: the eternal present (1988: 11-12). In

contrast to the suggestion that utopia within liquid modernity becomes a utopia for a very specific social elite, superficially it would appear in Bauman's reading that instead utopia no longer exist at all. As a theorist of critical utopia, instead I believe Bauman's work demonstrates a utopian possibility through critical thinking, although never fully explained in a specific vision of a geographical space or political framework, but instead through a form of critique and analysis. Like Debord, Bauman's intent is not to have the definite answer of what society should be—but what it *could* be.

Although Bauman does not mark his observations in the death of grand narratives or the fragmentation of history in the abandonment of his postmodern theorizing of the 1990's, the movement from solid to liquid modernity continues to struggle with a disintegration of time and space as a result of capitalism. Bauman consequently proffers an image of a collapsed time that is marked by *instantaneity*, challenging the very possibility of aspiring towards a future moment: "if 'solid' modernity posited eternal duration as the main motive and principle of action, 'fluid' modernity has no function for the eternal duration to play. The 'short term' has replaced the 'long term' and made instantaneity its ultimate ideal" (2000:125). This instantaneity lives hand in hand with consumption, as the liquid life of the human subject is one that is incapable of ever feeling fulfilled by what Debord described as authentic meaning: "…being modern came to mean, as it means today, being unable to stop and even less able to stand still…Fulfillment is always in the future, and achievements lose their attraction and satisfying potential at the moment of their attainment, if not before" (28). Like Debord, Bauman does not offer a clear definition of what authentic existence would look like. As expressed in my first chapter, Debord's authenticity places its emphasis on lived experience in the world, never

simulation or substitute. In Debord's writings on the spectacle (and within the SI journals), great effort was devoted to investigating the changing nature of space and, inevitably, time. Bauman's interpretation of a collapsible space-time relationship closely resembles Debord's discussion of "Spectacular Time" in *The Society of the Spectacle*: "the spectacle, being the reigning social organization of a paralyzed history, of a paralysed memory, of an abandonment of any history founded in historical time, is in effect a false consciousness of time" (Thesis 158). [27]

This rethinking of time and space indicates a vast distancing from what Bauman regards as two previously held organizing principles of utopia: *territoriality* and *finality* (2003: 12). Bauman observes, "'Utopia' refers to *topos*—a 'place'. However imagined, visions of a different and better life portrayed in the description of utopias were always territorially defined: associated with and confined to a clearly defined territory" (12). The territorial function of the utopian place could assume a natural order and spatial relationship between physical and geographical boundaries, and the relationship between power and sovereignty to those places. The solidity of power implied a bond to the material location, as "power was a spatial notion, inscribed into the realm of sovereignty. And vice versa: the space was divided, and its divisions were circumscribed, according to the powers that ruled over it" (12). Thus, the progression—or decline—of state power was measured within the space it occupied and the boundaries that it crossed or created. Like Debord, Bauman does not ground his discussion of territoriality in a specific historical time within his analysis, which leads to criticisms similar to those that Roberts makes of Debord of a vague and ahistorical analysis. As he describes the negative consequences of a territorial

[27] See pages 109-117 of *The Society of the Spectacle*.

utopia, he excludes any discussion of historically specific examples of military invasions, ethnic cleansing, or fascist regimes in his analysis.

As a system designed with the intent to exclude, the territorial utopia would categorize each individual to their appropriate place and the finality of the utopia would eventually lead to the forced movement of those undesired within the territory, resulting in the state of exception no longer being necessary (15).[28] The material envisioning of a modern territorial utopia sought to impose itself into the physical geography of everyday life. This mapping of space was intended to map what would later be realized as the 'good society', which in its larger picture would still offer the good life to the individual through the structure of the state. This structure would *physically* exist in the minds of its citizens, and be inclusive and defining in its design. As Bauman notes, "utopian imagination was essentially architectural and urbanistic... the purpose was to design a spatial arrangement in which there would be a right and proper place for everyone for whom a right and proper place would be defined" (14).

The second distinction that Bauman makes in previously existing utopian projects is that of *finality*, as the territorial goal of utopia would have a final goal and resolution. In the implied order of the territory, it was assumed that a "natural" conclusion would be reached: "not just a better society, but the best society conceivable, the *perfect* society, in which any further change could be only a change to the worse" (15). The concluding utopian movement would be its last, as political and societal perfection had been reached. This utopia of finality would have no surprises, no confusion, no chaos, only order, repetition, and predictability: "Utopias were visions of a closely watched, monitored, administered and daily managed world.

[28] Bauman's understanding of the 'state of exception' is borrowed from Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995).

Above all, visions of a pre-designed world, a world in which prediction and planning would have staved off the play of chances" (16).

In Bauman's analysis, this moment of territoriality and finality was indeed a moment. Out of step with other historical narratives of progress and development, the still present consequences of such visions of "nation-building" and "state-building" nonetheless resulted in what Bauman describes as "the most remarkable and fateful of modern social invention: the nation-state" (17). But just as these utopias were fleeting, Bauman's account of liquid modernity suggests that the model of the nation-state that so many political foundations have rested upon no longer bear the weight they once held over the social fabric of "civilized" societies. The beings that once ran the nation-state are now what Bauman refers to as the new 'global elite', but unlike the former rulers or heads of state, who were in some way connected to those they empowered or repressed, the global elite has no sense of responsibility for those who operate outside of their global networks, as social power is no longer in the hands of political officials of fixed geographical locations: "beyond the reach of the state's sovereignty, sealed in the securely locked briefcases of the new free-floating, extra-territorial, trans-national (or, as it prefers to call itself, flatteringly, 'multicultural') elite" (18). These "fixed" power-holders will only remain in power in their sustained ability to resist the ties of place and space, as power is always tied to mobility for the liquid modern subject:

> Power can move with the speed of the electronic signal—and so the time required for the movement of its essential ingredients has been reduced to instantaneity. For all practical purposes, power has become truly extraterritorial, no longer bound, not even slowed down... orderly space, has been all but cancelled. (2000: 10)

In a liquefied society, time no longer possesses the same use-value. Time is now valued in terms of reduction and speed. In liquid modernity, the long-term is no

longer a believable, sustainable—or desirable—notion: "the change in question is the new irrelevance of space, masquerading as the annihilation of time. In the software universe of light-speed travel… space no more sets limits to action and its effects, and counts little, or does not count at all" (117). This rethinking of time and space has been glorified in the economics of a globalized world. This is also why the spectacle, as envisioned by Debord, of the liquid modern world has just as much to say about divisions of social class as it does about individual belonging:

> People who move and act faster, who come nearest to the momentariness of movement, are now the people who rule. And it is the people who cannot move as quickly, and more conspicuously yet the category of people who cannot at will leave their place at all, who are ruled. Domination consists in one's own capacity to escape, to disengage, to 'be elsewhere', and the right to decide the speed with which all that is done. (120)

In some ways sympathetic, Bauman sees the urban-dweller of the liquid modern life as one who displays symptoms of genuine addiction, at times analyzing the liquid modern subject through a discourse of illness. Seen as a consequence of mass consumerism, commodity addiction is also present in Debord's discussion of the spectacle (both in 1967 and 1988). Bauman regards the community of consumers as a sick society that cannot find role models, individual meaning or a sense of self and, as a result, communal belonging. They connect with their fellow citizens by standing in line at the shopping mall on a Saturday afternoon. Bauman interprets the similarity of addiction ultimately being reduced to the fact that all addictions "destroy the possibility of being ever satisfied" (2000: 72) and, consequently, sustains the endless desire for another commodity to be consumed. The addiction of the consumer is about the maintenance of an identity created around the types of objects that they consume and what those objects communicate about them as a person. Such a habit, besides being expensive and time-consuming, also requires a commitment to the maintained

knowledge of the up-and-coming commodity: "…it is the continuation of the running, the gratifying awareness of staying in the race, that becomes the true addiction…Desire becomes its own purpose and the sole uncontested and unquestionable purpose" (73).

For Bauman, what is unique about the addiction to the commodity in the liquid modern society is that it disguises itself as the expression of the individual's *ability to choose.* Capitalism is always reduced to an argument about freedom: "…the archetype of that particular race in which every member of a consumer society is running (everything in a consumer society is a matter of choice, except the compulsion to choose—the compulsion which grows into addiction and so is no longer perceived as compulsion) is the activity of shopping" (73). As the places historically deemed public space become more and more cluttered with billboards and television screens, the activity of shopping is a space without boundaries. The act of shopping becomes like breathing: we are aware of the commodity even without fully acknowledging its presence: "…we shop outside shops as much as inside; we shop in the street and at home, at work and at leisure, awake and in dreams. Whatever we do and whatever name we attach to our activity is a kind of shopping…" (73).

In this spectacular culture, it is not just shopping that expresses itself as a form of addictive consumption: without any geographical ties to attach ourselves to, our bodies, our flesh, become free-floating objects to be consumed and commodified. Bauman observes that the commodified space of liquid modern culture can easily be the physical body of a member of the community of consumers. In the eternal present (to use Debord's phrase), an obsession with youth has become the norm, while children and teenagers who actually fall into this demographic are now considered a

viable consumer market in their own right.[29] The fragmented identity of the liquid modern subject becomes personified with the fragmented body that is constantly being altered, shifted, nipped and tucked. Like the desire that cannot ever be fulfilled, Bauman observes that the pursuit of the healthy body is one that becomes commodified by the distinct pursuit of what he terms *fitness*, in which the goal aspired to by millions of people is never a goal that can ever truly be reached. This goal of the *fit* body will be replaced by a new (and more unrealistic) goal of physical maintenance, that many companies will gain massive amounts of wealth from in the process: "all in all, health-care, contrary to its nature, becomes uncannily similar to the pursuit of fitness: continual, never likely to bring full satisfaction, uncertain as to the propriety of its current direction and generating in its way a lot of anxiety" (79).

The addiction to shopping in the liquid modern moment is an attempt to overcome an intense and paralyzing state of insecurity, what Bauman refers to as a "lack of existential security", that is compensated for through a possibility of various masks to hide behind. Some of these masks vary in monetary value but, most importantly, like any good commodity, they are always easily disposed of:

"identities seem fixed and solid only when seen, in a flash, from outside. Whatever solidity they might have when contemplated from the inside of one's own biographical experience appears fragile, vulnerable, and constantly torn apart…" (83). What it means to be *free* and to *choose* in the liquid modern moment is felt the most by those incapable of moving *without* leaving a trace, as "differential access to instantaneity is crucial among the present-day version of the everlasting and indestructible foundation of social division in all its historically changing forms: the differential access to unpredictability, and hence

[29] In *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, this is what Debord referred to as the spectacle's success at "raising a whole generation moulded to its laws" (7).

to freedom" (120). This form of exclusion as a utopia with no topos also lacks a shared goal for all its citizens: "territorially confined powers look anything but sovereign and most certainly do not hold promise of designing, let alone effectively managing, any kind of stable order, while the very idea of finality of any arrangement of human togetherness has lost most of its past credibility" (2003: 19).

In the disappearance of the territorial utopia and the nation-state, there is no longer a sense of nationhood with which the citizen of the state loyally identifies. The citizen of the liquid modern society has given up nationalism or patriotism, and has replaced it with *consumerism*. Identity, if anything, for the liquid modern subject is one that defies all ties to 'the land' and embraces their identity in the flexibility and adaptability of it: "identifying yourself with a commodity brand…you are not taking an oath of loyalty to any of the political units of the globe. If anything, such acts of identification help you to shake off the locally focused obligations and feelings of indebtedness to the 'natives'" (19). The impact of the internet upon mass culture and all aspects of both personal and public life has further increased the possibility of utopia with no topos, as cyberspace resists all forms of geographical location, crossing borders and boundaries, inside and outside of time and space. For the liquid modern subject, "membership of the global elite is defined by their *disengagement*, and by freedom from binding territorial commitments" (20). Such a global membership only increases class divisions for those that are trapped and excluded in their geographical limitations, as liquid modern subjects primarily interact with other global elites. Bauman's reading of the global elite may seem overly bleak as more and more celebrities seem to be expressing their concerns for AIDS in Africa, climate change, and democratic politics. In my own analysis of spectacular culture, I believe what

Bauman is trying to stress is the fact that the liquid modern citizen, although well-versed in the social concerns of their favourite celebrities, are more likely to imitate the celebrity choice of handbag than the celebrity choice of a donation to a charitable organization.

The shift from solid to liquid modernity makes long-term consequences increasingly invisible. Collective long-term goals and loyalties have been eradicated, important "until something better comes along", making engagement with the past or future one of little emphasis. What Bauman refers to as "the social elites" do not aspire for social or political goodness or to share their wealth with those who are still "tied" to time and space. The liquid modern society is a world in which you fend for yourself, in pursuit of your own dreams and aspirations: "…the globals hardly consider themselves as teachers and even less as examples to be followed…and so the actors do not feel obliged to assume responsibility of the consequences their actions may have on others" (20). That is not to suggest that there is no longer an aspiration to connect with one's fellow citizen, but it is now the spectacle of consumerism, specifically what Bauman refers to as the *community of consumers*, that bonds the global elite.

The social goals of this community greatly differ from utopian goals of territoriality and finality. There is no end goal of communal happiness for the community of consumers, as any form of delayed gratification is no longer a social norm. As consumption overwhelmingly has become a mode of highly flexible self-expression, tomorrow is not particularly worth waiting for. Aspirations of happiness for the global elite are not ones planned as long-term goals. Instead they are goals of *immediacy* with *short-term* consequence, as the desire for happiness is usually one of quick expiry and easy replacement or substitution. As this concern with the current

moment borders on obsession, the interest in the future for self (and the drastically forgotten Other) is shoved aside: "unlike the utopian model of good life, happiness is thought of as an aim to be pursued individually…as the novelty of a place wears off and the pleasures it offers turn tediously familiar…" (23). Often the short-term desires of the community of consumers have devastating long-term consequences for the planet. In agreement with Bauman, Debord observed in both *The Real Split in the International* (1972) and *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* that the strain that consumption had put on the natural environment would lead to an eventual catastrophe in which the earth would no longer be able to sustain the physical demands that capitalism had made on its dwindling resources while, at the same time, tens of thousands of human beings are without basic food, housing, and sanitation.

As the community of consumers functions within a very specific economic and social bracket, it remains apparent that living in a culture of consumption has not improved life for the working class, perpetuating the alienation of commodified labour that Debord discussed in *The Society of the Spectacle*. If anything, the experience of alienation has increased, as communal belonging defines itself within the community of consumers, a community of *apathetic* consequences: "all over the 'developed' and affluent part of the planet signs abound of people turning their backs on politics, of growing political apathy and loss of interest in the running of the political process. But democratic politics cannot survive for long in the face of citizens' passivity arising from political ignorance and indifference" (2005: 26). Liquid modernity's merging of the private and public sphere is one in which the public good is no longer about the basic rights of individual citizens that encapsulate a larger common goal of social harmony. Private spectacles have now become part of public discourse, further dissipating the concern over a social divide that politics can

no longer address. Bauman writes, "it can be supposed that the gap in question has emerged and grown precisely because of the emptying of public space, and particularly the 'agora', that intermediary, public/private site where life-politics meets Politics with the capital 'P'" (2000: 39).

Although almost a decade has passed since the publication of *Liquid Modernity*, in both *Liquid Life* (2005) and *Liquid Times* (2007) Bauman continues to see a utopia with no topos still waiting to be realized in the fabric of social life that has been saturated by the spectacle. It is also in these works that he explores the possibility of *returning* topos to the utopia by acknowledging that the metropolis, the place most violently victimized by the spectacle of consumption, may indeed also be the place to win back the ideals of citizenship and politics. If the utopia of territoriality and finality has lost its place, the possibility of the republic or the ideal society has gone with it, diluting politics to the same spectacular substance that the culture is now saturated with. It is the spectacle of politics that hides its inauthenticity through what Bauman calls "spectacles of sincerity" (2000: 86), attempting to humanize the political through interviews and confessions, the display of 'inner selves' that are merely the appropriate persona of the week for whatever social networks are being navigated through. The ability to easily change selves (via changing the image) becomes a symbol of freedom in the liquid modern world: "consumer choice is now a value in its own right: the activity of choosing matters more than what is being chosen, and the situations are praised or censured, enjoyed or resented depending on the range of choices on display" (87).

Bauman fears such dire consequences for the political realm because the liquid modern citizen holds the same set of standards for their elected officials as they do of their own personal social networks. The *spectacular* political leader can be a rock star

or a homewrecker, but never can get behind the times. They must be able to change their masks as quickly as the fashion cycles will permit or bear the judgments of a culture obsessed with the clothing and hairstyles of political representatives that can dominate the press coverage over discussion of actual political policy:[30]

> …spectators do not expect much else from the politicians… but a good spectacle. And so the spectacle of politics, like other publicly staged spectacles, turns into a relentlessly and monotonously hammered message of the priority of identity over interests, or into a continuing public lesson that it is identity, not the interests, that truly matters, and that it is who you are, rather than what are you doing, that really counts. (108)

It is specifically the consequence of a globalized world or what Debord described as the "integration of state and economy" (1988: 12) that Bauman sees as the source of political decay. Separate from the illusionary communities formed within the community of consumers, is the juxtaposition between the *global* and the *local*, which makes it impossible to find an active resolution between *(P)olitics* and *life-politics* of the everyday: "the real pews that shape the conditions under which we all act these days flow in a *global* space, while our institutions of political action remain by and large tiled to the ground; they are, as before, *local*" (2005: 82).Within this dystopian vision, the concern that takes precedence for Bauman over the community of consumers is not one for the identity-crisis-laden-shopping-addict, but a concern for what will be the *consequences* for the working poor that do not occupy a space of citizenship within the practice of consumption as a means of identity politics. The function of politics has changed along with the role and function of the capitalist

[30] If such claims seem hyperbolic, it should be kept in mind that in the earliest stages of this project in 2007, both televised and printed "news" coverage often commented on the haircut and clothing choices of Hillary Clinton as she campaigned to be to the Democratic nominee for the U.S presidential election. During the revising of this thesis, the front page of *The Globe & Mail* on Friday, September 4th 2009, read "Michelle Obama's style secret sets its sights on Canada". The subtitle for this front-page story was "Retail: One-Stop Shopping, Obama Style".

economy but, as Bauman observes, "…labour, on the other hand, remains as immobilized as it was in the past…" (58).

This crisis of consumerism results in what Bauman describes as *the collateral casualties of consumerism*, who are "exempt from the human community, exempt from the public mind" (2007: 127). The function of freedom in liquid modernity is not a question of human rights for all citizens, but instead it is the individual *right to choose* what you want, when you want, and to have as much of it as you want (without regard for those who have nothing at all). Consequently, it is often those that don't have the right to choose that work in the minimum wage (and lower) jobs that make it possible for the community of consumers to exist: "freedom translated above all as the plenitude of the consumer choice and as the ability to treat any life-decision as a consumer choice—has much more devastating effects on the unwilling bystanders than those for whom it is ostensibly meant" (2000: 89).

As the community of consumers increasingly demonstrates both a crisis of meaning and a crisis of the social good, it is no coincidence that, vis-à-vis Bauman's concern with who will be left behind in such a crisis, his most recent writings deal directly with the relationship between consumerism and community and what the future will hold for both. These readings specifically follow his train of thinking laid out in *Liquid Modernity*, *Liquid Life*, and *Liquid Times*, and continue to focus on how such reconciliation—if one is even possible—can only begin in the *topos* of urban spaces, in which the question of interaction between large bodies of cohabitating citizens can be addressed. In the abandonment of a utopian possibility of territoriality or finality, "the meeting of strangers is *an event without a past*. More often than not, it is also *an event without a future*" (2005: 95).

For Bauman it is *only* in the shared spaces that human beings can learn to treat each other as specifically that: an "other" *being*. This mutual sharing is not one that can be learned or practiced in isolation: "civility, like language, cannot be 'private'" (95). Unlike Debord's aspiration for revolt, revolution, and an eventual proletarian social class, Bauman is far more concerned with questions surrounding communities of difference. Many of his texts question the consequences of multiculturalism and what he deems forced communities such as slums and ghettos in which multiculturalism has visibly failed the citizens it was intended to embrace and protect. The space of the ghetto is one that Bauman describes as, although founded in similarity, is always structured on the *impossibility* of community and is marked by social policies of "exclusion and embodies spatial segregation" (2001: 122-123).

The unity that Debord longed for has been uprooted by the integrated spectacle. Although Bauman sees a desire for unity within liquid modernity, it is a curtain of homogeneity *disguised* as the presence of unity, which "selects, separates, and excludes" through artificial means that are based on the illusions of security and safety (14). This is perhaps why Bauman looks for solutions not by citizens who are communally bonded, but by those who live their daily lives in close proximity to endless strangers. If Debord abandoned all revolutionary potential by 1988 as a consequence of the integrated spectacle, Bauman instead looks to civility as a means of connecting individuals to their responsibility as members of the polis: "before it can be an individually learned and privately practised art, civility must first be a feature of the social setting. It is the urban environment which must be 'civil', if its inhabitants are to learn the difficult skills of civility" (2000: 95).

This return to the metropolis appears to be as close a return to material utopia as can be expected: a utopian return to the daily interaction of everyday life.

Bauman's metropolis does not expect all citizens to embrace one another as equals through similarity; instead it encourages an embracing of differences, to simply let the other be. In response to the question, "what does it mean for the urban environment to be 'civil', and so to be a site hospitable to the individual practice of civility?," he offers the following reply:

> It means, first and foremost, the provision of spaces which people may share as public personae—without being nudged, pressed or cajoled to take off their masks and 'let themselves go', their intimate thoughts, dreams and worries. But it also means a city presenting itself to its residents as a common good which cannot be reduced to the aggregate of individual purposes and as a shared tasks which cannot be exhausted by a multitude of individual pursuits…so that 'wearing a public mask' is an act of engagement and participation rather than one of noncommitment, and withdrawal of the 'true self'. (2000: 96)

Aspiring to a common social good and having awareness of your fellow *stranger* does not necessarily require you to invite them to dinner or to engage in conversation with them on the subway; instead it is the ability to "interact with strangers without holding their strangeness against them and without pressing them to surrender it or to renounce some or all the traits that have made them strangers in the first place" (2000: 104-5).

This becomes problematized as what has been understood as public space has become confused within the community of consumers with the spaces of commodified leisure. In contrast to the daily interactions of strangers in parks or city sidewalks of a utopian *topos*, the shopping mall is *outside* of social space, described by Bauman as a "place without place" but also a "purified" space. Although the shopping mall is most definitely at home within the spectacle, it is also without pluralism or difference; it has been white-washed in ideological consumption, offering a shared goal for all that walk through its doors: "shopping/consuming places offer what no 'real reality' outside may deliver: the near-perfect balance between

freedom and security" (99). Although Bauman's use of liquid modernity has replaced most of his discussion of postmodernity, its presence can be felt in the quasi-religiosity of the act of shopping, as the grand narrative once offered by religion is indeed compensated for in the act of consumption: "inside their temples the shoppers/consumers may find, moreover, what they zealously, yet in vain, seek outside: the comforting feeling of belonging—the reassuring impression of being part of a community" (99). The relationship between religious spectacle and the spectacle of commodity is also present in Debord,[31] but this illusionary or spectacular community is never genuinely 'communal' in Bauman's understanding of the civil community (which cares for self and other) because it is only interested in sameness, *never difference*: "we may say that 'community is a short-cut to togetherness, and to a kind of togetherness which hardy ever occurs in 'real life': a togetherness of sheer likeness, of the 'us who are all the same' kind" (100).

For Bauman, it is specifically this reduction to sameness that offers the most dangerous consequence. Sameness makes the small differences more extreme, more intolerable. Sameness becomes a fear of difference, an escalation of intolerance, which is why the politics of the community of consumers is increasingly a *politics of fear* in which such citizens are willing to invest large amounts of income to feel safe and secure and, most importantly, protected from their fellow citizens: "...the more effective the drive to homogeneity and the efforts to eliminate the difference, the more difficult it is to feel at home in the face of strangers, the more threatening the difference appears and the deeper and more intense is the anxiety it breeds" (106).

---

[31] In Roberts' discussion of a typology of the spectacle, he criticizes Debord for not acknowledging the church's own disapproval of capitalism: "Debord dismissed the crucial historical fact that the political and aesthetic religions of modernism, whether on the right or left, regarded the capitalist culture of the commodity as their deadly enemy, while laying claim to being its sole authentic dispossessor" (59).

Bauman observes that the globalized citizen (usually a member of the community of consumers or global elite) is one that is timeless, without location, navigates in an online world, and feels the least attached to specific geographical location as "home". Often, those on the other side of the social divide are most at stake in their local level politics when the neighbourhoods they reside in are described as ghettos and are deemed as the most worthless citizens in the cycle of the economy. Bauman notes that these citizens are branded by liquid modernity as 'unfit', 'redundant' and 'useless' and, most dangerously, done so *permanently* (one of the few permanent acts of the liquid modern culture) (2005: 69).

This contrast between the globalized and local citizen once again finds its utopian battleground in the city centre. The possibility of resolution becomes more impossible as the city space, in its political infrastructure, often carries far more weight and pressure to be self-sufficient from exterior government sources, essentially being left to fend for itself. As Bauman notes, "to cut a long story short, *cities have become dumping grounds for globally conceived and gestated problems*," as the occupants of urban centres and their elected officials are often handed down situations from higher-up levels of government that they are incapable of dealing with at a local level of budget, resources and infrastructure: the often misunderstood "task of finding *local* solutions to *globally* conceived troubles and quandaries" (83).

Bauman's Liquid Modernity as a Project of Critical Utopia

Although evident in the multiplicity of anxieties, alienations, and devastations that liquid modernity presents, Bauman never really offers his own 'solid' or 'fixed' vision of what utopia or the 'good society' may be or come to look like, while never abandoning its possibility. Michael Hviid Jacobsen, is his essay, "Solid Modernity, Liquid Utopia—Liquid Modernity, Solid Utopia: Ubiquitous Utopianism as a

Trademark of the Work of Zygmunt Bauman" (2007), examines the role of utopia throughout the corpus of Bauman's work in relation to his theories of liquid modernity. Jacobsen suggests that part of the distrust for utopian thought may have to do with its assumed "liability" due to its associations with fascism and communism (218). Like Bauman, Jacobson sees utopia hitting a crossroad with reminders of the totalitarian history that has been demonstrated in the envisioning of utopia. Consistent with the problems of language that present themselves in Debord's concept of spectacle and Bauman's liquid modernity, Jacobsen is attentive to the complexity of defining what the term 'utopia' is actually understood to mean, as it functions through a narrative of utopian studies to be discussed and critiqued:

> This uncertainty…to the inherent ambivalence of the notion of utopia as simultaneously possibility and reality, conterfactuality and negation, constantly receding horizon and final destination, latency and actuality, immanence and transcendence, alternative and embodied end-state, telos and nomos, etc. Thus, any declaration of the state of utopianism must take into account what is actually meant by 'utopia' (218).

Thus, Jacobsen returns to Bauman's pre-liquid modernity work of the 1970's and looks to Bauman's own past of his expulsion from the University of Warsaw in March 1968 on charges of dissidence and corrupting Polish youth and consequently, his exile to Britain as the roots of his uncomfortable relationship between utopia and socialism (219). Bauman's persistence of utopia as a type of critical thinking can already be seen in *Socialism: The Active Utopia* (1976), in which he also defined utopia as an 'activating presence' (221). In contrast to conservative, closed, and inflexible notions of utopia, Jacobsen reads Bauman's as a theory of *active utopia* as an "iconoclastic, critical, counter-cultural, transformative alternative and action-oriented antipole" (221).

For Bauman, utopia is always embedded in the culture that it originates from, while reaching forward by replying, responding and creating history, because "social life cannot in fact be understood unless more attention is paid to the immense role played by utopia" (1976: 12). Jacobsen observes that the socialist streak of Bauman's earlier work within "the idea of caring for and defending the weak" (223) has come to reinvent itself in new forms. In the liquid modern society of Bauman's later works, it is this concern for those that get excluded by globalization, by the community of consumers, the decay of public space, as the *working poor* that become most at stake in Bauman's approach to critical theory. Continuing Bauman's thought as a "utopia with no topos", Jacobsen isolates the two most influential utopian projects that have been shaped by modernity to intertwine during the course of Bauman's intellectual career: socialism and capitalism. Although seen as being in distinct opposition, both were projects bent on offering a utopia that would materialize in real life (227).

As the liquid modern subject's identity is composed entirely of individual pursuits, Jacobsen borrows from the language of Althusser to demonstrate that subjectivity for the liquid modern citizen is a formation of the spectacle itself:

> people today are primarily socialized and interpellated as consumers through the mass media and through their daily mediated confrontation with celebrities and lifestyle experts on display. There is no longer any need for panoptical guardians—only in connection to those unfortunate 'flawed consumers'... Liquid modern society valorizes the never ending search for stimulation. (230)

Despite the dystopian vision that articulates itself in large portions of Bauman's work, Jacobsen recognizes Bauman as a critical utopian thinker, as his project is one immensely devoted to the possibility of improving the present *and* future for many of the world's working poor, marginalized, and *stateless* citizens, but does so in a way

that is resistant to classification of political associations, ideologies and institutions (235).

In the liquid modern society, perhaps Bauman's anti-methodology is as close to a return to a 'solid' utopian vision as can be hoped for in a culture of the community of consumers that lacks collective responsibility. As Bauman's approach of critical analysis never offers what a utopian society would look like in response to the dystopian liquid modernity, Jacobsen asks a necessary question: "Is this a strength or a weakness?" in Bauman's work (235). This becomes an increasingly valid question since, despite numerous studies, articles, and theorists sourced in Bauman's work, his descriptions of liquid modernity and the community of consumers often become a distorted image of mass culture, running the risk of making more generalizations than stating actual facts: "more often than not presented as a caricature rather than a reflection, a deliberate overstatement more than an objective analysis, an exaggeration more than a mirror image" (Jacobsen: 236). I would argue that these are similar criticisms to those that have already been raised of Debord's analysis of spectacular culture for lacking enough historical specificity to offer concrete solutions for the reclaiming of a hyper-globalized society. For both Bauman and Debord, the act of asking questions of how society could be otherwise becomes a utopian visioning in its own right, particularly for Debord, who attempted—as early as the pages of the SI journals—to avoid specialization at all costs.

Jacobsen recognizes that for Bauman's project, the gap between utopia and dystopia is a small one. Within Bauman's personal history, Jacobsen sees very good reason for Bauman's distancing from visions of an ideal society:

> Twice in his personal life has he experienced what the fatal consequences may be when totalitarian systems or regimes strive to force utopia through; the first time when the Nazis in their quest for world domination sought to annihilate all the human diversity

> and on that account murdered six million European Jews; the second time, later in his life, when the Communists, fuelled by anti-Semitism and the fear of disobedience sought to eradicate political dissidence and critique by expelling and eventually eliminating any unwanted opposition. Both ethnic cleansing and political purges were examples of modern totalitarianism going berserk in its ambition to force utopia a from its ethereal and imaginary existence down to earth, to turn latency into manifest reality, and to embody utopia in specific social structures or institutions. (237)

As a critical utopian thinker, Bauman's project encourages a resurgence of collective potential through engagement with individual gestures of citizenship as basic as civility. Consistently referred to as a "public" intellectual, his distinction between public and private space and the absolute necessity of reclaiming it as the new collective goal of critical theory, proposes a utopian possibility through individual action. Jacobsen summarizes Bauman's utopian stances as "…an inclusive, comprehensive, multifaceted and indeed critically and politically potent utopia with universalistic underpinnings…more liquid than solid" (237). In Bauman's devotion to utopian thought, his project is genuine enough to recognize that history *repeatedly* has informed us that the utopian possibility is not necessarily best for all individuals involved, which is why his project will remain a critical one. But that does not mean that Bauman will let himself stop dreaming of a better life for the world's forgotten citizens.

Bauman's project continues to see the political consequences of Debord's spectacle and that, like the Situationist project, it is a battle to be fought on the grounds of the urban. In the resolution of the social divide seen in Bauman's theorizing of *liquid modernity* and Guy Debord's revolt against the *society of the spectacle*, both offer a rethinking of localized urban politics and how they operate within the fragmentary and fleeting walls of a globalized world. As the restructuring

of public space will remain a local fight from global pressures, Debord's poetic and political tactics may just be the solidity that Bauman has been looking for as a means of individual action: a revolutionary pursuit of individual desire with *intentionally* collective results.

Conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been two-fold. My attraction to Debord began as an interest in whether Debord's conceptual understanding of the spectacle maintained its origins both inside academia and within popular culture. The survey that I have conducted of Debord's thought throughout this project was done with the intent to offer a more comprehensive approach to Debord's ideas within the pages of *The Society of the Spectacle* and his years in the Situationist International. Rather than reduce Debord to his notion of spectacle, I have attempted to engage with Debord's works as a totality, with particular interest in Debord's theoretical relationship to the critical manifestations of unity, community, and authenticity within his texts and films.

If the discourse of spectacle has been misappropriated by both the academy and mass culture, then Debord's lexicon must find new representation in contemporary society. Within my own discussion, I identify Zygmunt Bauman's articulation of liquid modernity and the community of consumers as the most analogous description of Debord's theorizing of the integrated spectacle. As Debord had abandoned the possibility of revolution by 1988, Bauman attempts to find a space for the members of society who have slipped through the cracks of the spectacle in its integration of state and economy. While Debord turned his back on the metropolis, Bauman looks to the streets of the city as a means of mobilizing citizens through an embracing of difference through civility in public spaces and an emphasis on local urban politics.

The elusiveness of Debord's use of spectacle, unity, community, and authenticity presents additional challenges in reading Debord as a political and social theorist, but I do not believe that Debord's lack of academic structure discredits the

consequences or usefulness of his thought. I argue that Debord's own understanding of these concepts becomes clearer when engaging with his thought as both theory and practice: the way Debord lived within his own critique of everyday life, and the works that he created as a response to such experiences.

One cannot fully appreciate *The Society of the Spectacle* as a text of Situationist theory without knowledge of the urban adventures of the Situationists that took place in the streets of Paris, London, and Amsterdam, nor without reading Debord's earlier articles within the pages of the SI journals. Many of the same theoretical ideas from his writings also appear in the images of his films. Engagement with Debord's discussion of the image within the spectacle becomes limited without a visual understanding of the way he utilizes the image as a détournement within the process of his filmmaking.

I stress a reading of Debord that embraces his work not just as a social or political project, but a poetic one. Debord maintained an aesthetic style throughout his life that was uniquely his own. The détournement that existed in both his writings and films was an art *without works* that, fundamentally, was always an art of living that aspired for a revolution of everyday life. Although this revolutionary potential did not sustain itself for the duration of Debord's intellectual career, I believe Bauman's description of the integrated spectacle within liquid modernity and his emphasis on the reclaiming of public space can offer a bridge to Debord's earlier urban projects within the Situationists, as well as a passage to revisit the years in which his revolutionary perspective dissolved within the pages of *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*.

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor. The Culture Industry London; New York: Routledge, 1991.

Agamben, Giorgio. The Coming Community. trans. Michael Hardt. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

Baudrillard, Jean. Simulations. trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.

Bauman, Zygmunt. Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World. Cambridge: Polity, 2001.

---. Consuming Life. Cambridge: Polity, 2007.

---. Liquid Life. Cambridge: Polity, 2005.

---. Liquid Modernity. Cambridge: Polity, 2002.

---. Liquid Times. Cambridge: Polity, 2007.

---. 'Living in Utopia'. Published by the Czech Internet journal *Respekt* at: www.respekt.inway.cz, 2005.

---. Socialism: The Active Utopia. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976: 9-37.

---. 'Utopia with no Topos', *History of the Human Sciences*, 16(1), 2003: 11-25.

Benjamin, Walter. Illuminations: Essays and Reflections. trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1968.

Bourseiller, Christophe. Vie et mort de Guy Debord. Plon: Paris, 1999.

Certeau, Michel de. The Practice of Everyday Life. trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Debord, Guy. Comments on the Society of the Spectacle. trans. M. Irmie. London; New York: Verso, 1990.

---. Considerations on the Assassination of Gérard Lebovici. trans. Robert Green. Los Angeles: TamTam Books, 2001.

---. Guy Debord présente Potlatch (1954-1957). Paris: Gallimard, Collection Folio, 1996.

---. Society of the Spectacle. trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: Zone Books, 1994.

---. Panegyric: Volumes 1 & 2. trans. James Brook and John McHale. London; New York: Verso. 2004

Eliott, Anthony. ed. The Contemporary Bauman. Ed. Oxon: Routledge, 2007.

Garner, Roberta. ed. Social Theory: Continuity and Confrontation. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2007.

Heidegger, Martin. Poetry, Language, Thought. trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper, 1971.

Home, Stewart ed. What is Situationism?: A Reader. Edinburgh: AK Press, 1996.

Jacobson, Michael Hviid Jacobsen. "Solid Modernity, Liquid Utopia—Liquid Modernity, Solid Utopia: Ubiquitous Utopianism as a Trademark of the Work of Zygmunt Bauman." Elliott 217-240.

Jappe, Anselm. Guy Debord. trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Kaufmann, Vincent. Guy Debord: Revolution in the Service of Poetry. trans. Robert Bononno. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Knabb, Ken (ed and trans.). Guy Debord: Complete Cinematic Works. Oakland: AK Press, 2003.

---. (ed. and trans.).The Situationist International Anthology. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981.

Lefebvre, Henri. Critique of Everyday Life: Volume One. trans. John Moore. London; New York: Verso, 1991.

---. Everyday Life in the Modern World. trans. Sacha Rabinovich. London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1971.

---. The Production of Space. trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

---. Writings on Cities. trans. and ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

Levitas, Ruth. The Concept of Utopia. Hertfordshire: Philip Allan, 1990.

Lukács, George. History and Class Consciousness. trans. R. Livingstone. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1971.

Macdonald, Bradley. Performing Marx: Contemporary Negotiations of a Living Tradition. New York: State University of New York, 2006.

Maffesoli, Michel. The Contemplation of the World: Figures of Community Style. trans. Susan Emanuel. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Merrifield, Andy. Metromarxism: A Marxist Tale of the City. New York; London: Routledge, 2002.

Moylan, Tom. Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination. London: Methuen, 1986.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. Being Singular Plural. trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O' Bryne. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

---. The Inoperative Community. trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Perec, Georges. Things: A Story of the Sixties. trans. David Bellos. Boston: David R. Godine, 1990.

Pinder, David. Visions of the City. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005.

Plant, Sadie. The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in the Postmodern Age. London; New York: Routledge, 1992.

---. "The Situationist International: A Case of Spectacular Neglect", Radical Philosophy 55 (1990): 3-10.

Ray, Larry. "From Postmodernity to Liquid Modernity: What's in a Metaphor?" Elliott 63-80.

Roberts, David. "Towards a Genealogy and Typology of Spectacle: Some Comments on Debord", *Thesis Eleven*, Number 75. London; Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003: 54-68.

Ross, Kristin. "Lefebvre on the Situationists: An Interview", *October*, Vol. 79. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1997: 69-83.

Sadler, Simon. The Situationist City. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998.

Situationist International. The Real Split in the International. trans. John McHale. London: Pluto Press, 2003.

Sheringham, Michael. Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Sussman, Elisabeth ed. On the passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time: The Situationist International 1957-1972. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990.

Wollen, Peter. "The Situationist International", *New Left Review*, I/174 March-April, 1989: 67-95.