The literary and artistic heritage of humanity should be used for partisan propaganda purposes. It is, of course, necessary to go beyond any idea of scandal. Since the negation of the bourgeois conception of art and artistic genius has become pretty much old hat, [Duchamp's] drawing of a mustache on the Mona Lisa is no more interesting than the original version of that painting. We must now push this process to the point of negating the negation. Bertolt Brecht, revealing in a recent interview in the magazine France-Observateur that he made some cuts in the classics of the theater in order to make the performances more educative, is much closer than Duchamp to the revolutionary orientation we are calling for. We must note, however, that in Brecht's case these salutary alterations are held within narrow limits by his unfortunate respect for culture as defined by the ruling class—that same respect, taught in the primary schools of the bourgeoisie and in the newspapers of the workers parties, which leads the reddest worker districts of Paris always to prefer The Cid over Mother Courage.

In fact, it is necessary to finish with any notion of personal property in this area. The appearance of new necessities outmodes previous "inspired" works. They become obstacles, dangerous habits. The point is not whether we like them or not. We have to go beyond them.

Any elements, no matter where they are taken from, can serve in making new combinations. The discoveries of modern poetry regarding the analogical structure of images demonstrate that when two objects are brought together, no matter how far apart their original contexts may be, a relationship is always formed. Restricting oneself to a personal arrangement of words is mere convention. The mutual interference of two worlds of feeling, or the bringing together of two independent expressions, supersedes the original elements and produces a synthetic organization of greater efficacy. Anything can be used.

It goes without saying that one is not limited to correcting a work or to integrating diverse fragments of out-of-date works into a new one; one can also alter the meaning of those fragments in any appropriate way, leaving the imbeciles to their slavish preservation of "citations."

Such parodical methods have often been used to obtain comical effects. But such humor is the result of contradictions within a condition whose existence is taken for granted. Since the world of literature seems to us almost as distant as the Stone Age, such contradictions don't make us laugh. It is therefore necessary to conceive of a parodic-serious stage where the accumulation of detourned elements, far from aiming at arousing indignation or laughter by alluding to some original work, will express our indifference toward a meaningless and forgotten original, and concern itself with rendering a certain sublimity.

Lautréamont advanced so far in this direction that he is still partly misunderstood even by his most ostentatious admirers. In spite of his obvious application of this method to theoretical language in Poesies (drawing particularly on the ethical maxims of Pascal and Vauvenargues)—where Lautréamont strives to reduce the argument, through successive concentrations, to maxims alone—a certain Viroux caused

METHODS OF DETOURNEMENT*

All aware people of our time agree that art can no longer be justified as a superior activity, or even as an activity of compensation to which one could honorably devote oneself. The cause of this deterioration is clearly the emergence of productive forces that necessitate other production relations and a new practice of life. In the civil war phase we are engaged in, and in close connection with the orientation we are discovering for certain superior activities to come, we can consider that all known means of expression are going to converge in a general movement of propaganda which must encompass all the perpetually interacting aspects of social reality.

Regarding the forms and even the very nature of educative propaganda, there are several conflicting opinions, generally inspired by one or another currently fashionable variety of reformist politics. Suffice it to say that in our view the premises for revolution, on the cultural as well as the strictly political level, are not only ripe, they have begun to rot. It is not just returning to the past which is reactionary; even "modern" cultural objectives are ultimately reactionary since they depend in reality on ideological formulations of a past society that has prolonged its death agony to the present. Only extremist innovation is historically justified.
considerable astonishment three or four years ago by demonstrating conclusively that Malodor is one vast detournement of Buffon and other works of natural history, among other things. That the prosists of Figaro, such as this Viroux himself, were able to see this as a justification for disparaging Lautréamont, and that others believed they had to defend him by praising his insolence, only testifies to the intellectual debility of these two camps of dotards in courtly combat with each other. A slogan like “Plagiarism is necessary, progress implies it” is still as poorly understood, and for the same reasons, as the famous phrase about the poetry that “must be made by all.”

Apart from Lautréamont’s work—whose appearance so far ahead of its time has to a great extent preserved it from a precise critique—the tendencies toward detournement that can be observed in contemporary expression are for the most part unconscious or incidental; and it is in the advertising industry, more than in a decaying aesthetic production, that one can find the best examples.

We can first of all define two main categories of detourned elements, without considering whether or not their being brought together is accompanied by corrections introduced in the originals. These are minor detournements and deceptive detournements.

Minor detournement is the detournement of an element which has no importance in itself and which thus draws all its meaning from the new context in which it has been placed. For example, a press clipping, a neutral phrase, a commonplace photograph.

Deceptive detournement, also termed premonitory proposition detournement, is in contrast the detournement of an intrinsically significant element, which derives a different scope from the new context. A slogan of Saint-Just, for example, or a sequence from Eisenstein.

Extended detourned works will thus usually be composed of one or more sequences of deceptive and minor detournements.

Several laws on the use of detournement can now be formulated:

It is the most distant detourned element which contributes most sharply to the overall impression, and not the elements that directly determine the nature of this impression. For example, in a metagraph [poem-collage] relating to the Spanish Civil War the phrase with the most distinctly revolutionary sense is a fragment from a lipstick ad: “Pretty lips are red.” In another metagraph (“The Death of J.H.”) 125 classified ads of bars for sale express a suicide more strikingly than the newspaper articles that recount it.

The distortions introduced in the detourned elements must be as simplified as possible, since the main force of a detournement is directly related to the conscious or vague recollection of the original contexts of the elements. This is well known. Let us simply note that if this dependence on memory implies that one must determine one’s public before devising a detournement, this is only a particular case of a general law that governs not only detournement but also any other form of action on the world. The idea of pure, absolute expression is dead; it only temporarily survives in parodic form as long as our other enemies survive.

Detournement is less effective the more it approaches a rational reply. This is the case with a rather large number of Lautréamont’s altered maxims. The more the rational character of the reply is apparent, the more indistinguishable it becomes from the ordinary spirit of repartee, which similarly uses the opponent’s words against him. This is not naturally limited to spoken language. It was in this connection that we objected to the project of some of our comrades who proposed to detourn an anti-Soviet poster of the fascist organization “Peace and Liberty”—which proclaimed, amid images of overlapping flags of the Western powers, “Union makes strength”—by adding onto it a smaller sheet with the phrase “and coalitions make war.”

Detournement by simple reversal is always the most direct and the least effective. Thus, the Black Mass reacts against the construction of an ambiance based on a given metaphysics by constructing an ambiance in the same framework that merely reverses—and thus simultaneously conserves—the values of that metaphysics. Such reversals may nevertheless have a certain progressive aspect. For example, Clemenceau [“The Tiger”] could be referred to as “The Tiger called Clemenceau.”

Of the four laws that have just been set forth, the first is essential and applies universally. The other three are practically applicable only to deceptive detourned elements.

The first visible consequences of a widespread use of detournement, apart from its intrinsic propaganda powers, will be the revival of a multitude of bad books, and thus the extensive (unintended) participation of their unknown authors; an increasingly extensive transformation of sentences or plastic works that happen to be in fashion; and above all an ease of production far surpassing in quantity, variety and quality the automatic writing that has bored us so much.

Detournement not only leads to the discovery of new aspects of talent; it addition, clashing head-on with all social and legal conventions, it cannot fail to be a powerful cultural weapon in the service of a real class struggle. The cheapness of its products is the heavy artillery that breaks through all the Chinese walls of understanding. It is a real means of proletarian artistic education, the first step toward a literary communism.

Ideas and realizations in the realm of detournement can be multiplied at will. For the moment we will limit ourselves to showing a few concrete possibilities starting from various current sectors of communication—it being understood that these separate sectors are significant only in relation to present-day techniques, and are all tending to merge into superior synthases with the advance of these techniques.

Apart from the various direct uses of detourned phrases in posters, records or radio broadcasts, the two principal applications of detourned prose are metagraphic writings and, to a lesser degree, the adroit perversion of the classical novel form.

There is not much future in the detournement of complete novels, but during the transitional phase there might be a certain number of undertakings of this sort. Such a detournement gains by being accompanied by illustrations whose relationships to the text are not immediately obvious. In spite of the undeniable difficulties, we believe it would be possible to produce an instructive psychogeographical detournement of George Sand’s Consuelo, which thus decked out could
be relaunched on the literary market disguised under some innocuous title like "Life in the Suburbs," or even under a title itself detourned, such as "The Lost Patrol." (It would be a good idea to reuse in this way many titles of old deteriorated films of which nothing else remains, or of films which continue to stupefy young people in the film clubs.)

Metagraphic writing, no matter how backward may be the plastic framework in which it is materially situated, presents far richer opportunities for detourning prose, as well as other appropriate objects or images. One can get some idea of this from the project, devised in 1951 but then abandoned for lack of sufficient financial means, which envisaged a pinball machine arranged in such a way that the play of the lights and the more or less predictable trajectories of the balls would form a metagraphic-spatial composition entitled *Thermal sensations and desires of people passing by the gates of the Cluny Museum around an hour after sunset in November.* We have since, of course, come to realize that a situationist-analytic work cannot scientifically advance by way of such projects. The means nevertheless remain suitable for less ambitious goals.

It is obviously in the realm of the cinema that detournement can attain its greatest efficacy, and undoubtedly, for those concerned with this aspect, its greatest beauty.

The powers of film are so extensive, and the absence of coordination of those powers is so glaring, that almost any film that is above the miserable average can provide matter for innumerable polemics among spectators or professional critics. Only the conformism of those people prevents them from discovering features just as appealing and faults just as glaring in the worst films. To cut through this absurd confusion of values, we can observe that Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* is one of the most important films in the history of the cinema because of its wealth of new contributions. On the other hand, it is a racist film and therefore absolutely does not merit being shown in its present form. But its total prohibition could be seen as regrettable from the point of view of the secondary, but potentially worthier, domain of the cinema. It would be better to detourn it as a whole, without necessarily even altering the montage, by adding a soundtrack that made a powerful denunciation of the horrors of imperialist war and of the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, which are continuing in the United States even now.

Such a detournement—a very moderate one—is in the final analysis nothing more than the moral equivalent of the restoration of old paintings in museums. But most films only merit being cut up to compose other works. This reconversion of preexisting sequences will obviously be accompanied by other elements, musical or pictorial as well as historical. While the filmic rewriting of history has until now been largely along the lines of Guitry's burlesque re-creations, one could have Robespierre say, before his execution: "In spite of so many trials, my experience and the grandeur of my task convinces me that all is well." If in this case a judicious revival of Greek tragedy serves us in exalting Robespierre, we can conversely imagine a neorealist sort of sequence, at the counter of a truckstop bar, for example, with one of the truck-drivers saying seriously to another: "Ethics was in the books of the philosophers; we have introduced it into the governing of nations."

One can see that this juxtaposition illuminates Maximilien's idea, the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The light of detournement is propagated in a straight line. To the extent that new architecture seems to have to begin with an experimental baroque stage, the architectural complex—which we conceive as the construction of a dynamic environment related to styles of behavior—will probably detourn existing architectural forms, and in any case will make plastic and emotional use of all sorts of detourned objects: calculatedly arranged cranes or metal scaffolding replacing a defunct sculptural tradition. This is shocking only to the most fanatic admirers of French-style gardens. It is said that in his old age D'Annunzio, that pro-fascist swine, had the prow of a torpedo boat in his park. Leaving aside his patriotic motives, the idea of such a monument is not without a certain charm.

If detournement were extended to urbanistic realizations, not many people would remain unaffected by an exact reconstruction in one city of an entire neighborhood of another. Life can never be too disorienting; detournements on this level would really make it beautiful.

Titles themselves, as we have already seen, are a basic element of detournement. This follows from two general observations: that all titles are interchangeable and that they have a determinant importance in several genres. All the detective stories in the "Série Noir" are extremely similar, yet merely continually changing the titles suffices to hold a considerable audience. In music a title always exerts a great influence, yet the choice of one is quite arbitrary. Thus it wouldn't be a bad idea to make a final correction to the title of the "Eroica Symphony" by changing it, for example, to "Lenin Symphony."

The title contributes strongly to a work, but there is an inevitable counteraction of the work on the title. Thus one can make extensive use of specific titles taken from scientific publications ("Coastal Biology of Temperate Seas") or military ones ("Night Combat of Small Infantry Units"), or even of many phrases found in illustrated children's books ("Marvelous Landscapes Greet the Voyagers").

In closing, we should briefly mention some aspects of what we call ultradetournement, that is, the tendencies for detournement to operate in everyday social life. Gestures and words can be given other meanings, and have been throughout history for various practical reasons. The secret societies of ancient China made use of quite subtle recognition signals encompassing the greater part of social behavior (the manner of arranging cups; of drinking; quotations of poems interrupted at agreed-on points). The need for a secret language, for passwords, is inseparable from a tendency toward play. Ultimately, any sign or word is susceptible to being converted into something else, even into its opposite. The royalist insurgents of the Vendée, because they bore the disgusting image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, were called the Red Army. In the limited domain of political war vocabulary this expression was completely detourned within a century.

Outside of language, it is possible to use the same methods to detourn clothing, with all its strong emotional connotations. Here again we find the notion of disguise closely linked to play. Finally, when we
have got to the stage of constructing situations, the ultimate goal of all our activity, it will be open to everyone to detourn entire situations by deliberately changing this or that determinant condition of them.

The methods that we have briefly dealt with here are presented not as our own invention, but as a generally widespread practice which we propose to systematize.

In itself, the theory of detournement scarcely interests us. But we find it linked to almost all the constructive aspects of the presituationist period of transition. Thus its enrichment, through practice, seems necessary.

We will postpone the development of these theses until later.

GUY DEBORD, GIL J. WOLMAN
From Les Lèvres Nues #8, May 1956

THE ALBA PLATFORM

From 2 to 8 September a Congress was held in Alba, Italy, convoked by Asger Jorn and Giuseppe Gallizio in the name of the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, a grouping whose views are in agreement with the Lettrist International's program regarding urbanism and its possible uses (see Potlatch #26). Representatives of avant-garde groups from eight countries (Algeria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Holland, Italy) met there to lay the foundations for a united organization. The tasks toward this end were dealt with in all their implications.

Christian Dotremont, who had been announced as a member of the Belgian delegation in spite of the fact that he has for some time been a collaborator in the Nouvelle Nouvelle Revue Française, refrained from appearing at the Congress, where his presence would have been unacceptable for the majority of the participants.

Enrico Baj, representative of the "Nuclear Art Movement," was excluded the very first day; and the Congress affirmed its break with the Nuclearists by issuing the following statement: "Confronted with his conduct in certain previous affairs, Baj withdrew from the Congress. He did not make off with the cash-box."

Meanwhile our Czechoslovakian comrades Pravoslav Rada and Kotik were prevented from entering Italy. In spite of our protests, the Italian government did not grant them visas to pass through its national iron curtain until the end of the Alba Congress.

The statement of Wolman, the Lettrist International delegate, particularly stressed the necessity for a common platform defining the totality of current experimentation:

"Comrades, the parallel crises presently affecting all modes of artistic creation are determined by an overall interrelated movement that cannot be resolved outside a general perspective. The process of ne-

gation and destruction that has manifested itself at an accelerating rate against all the former conditions of artistic activity is irreversible: it is the consequence of the appearance of superior possibilities of action on the world... Whatever prestige the bourgeoisie may today be willing to accord fragmentary or deliberately retrograde artistic tentatives, creation can now be nothing less than a synthesis aiming at an integral construction of an atmosphere, of a style of life... A unitary urbanism—the synthesis that we call for, incorporating arts and technology—must be created in accordance with new values of life, values which it is henceforth necessary to distinguish and disseminate..."

The final resolution of the Congress expressed a substantial accord in the form of a declaration in six points declaring the "necessity of an integral construction of the environment by a unitary urbanism that must utilize all arts and modern techniques"; the "inevitable outmodedness of any renovation of an art within its traditional limits"; the "recognition of an essential interdependence between unitary urbanism and a future style of life" which must be situated "in the perspective of a greater real freedom and a greater domination of nature"; and finally, "unity of action among the signers on the basis of this program" (the sixth point going on to enumerate the various specifics of mutual support).

Apart from this final resolution—signed by J. Calonne, Constant, G. Gallizio, A. Jorn, Kotik, Rada, Piero Simondo, E. Sottsas Jr., Elena Verrone, Wolman—the Congress unanimously declared itself against any relations with participants in the Festival de la Cité Radieuse, thus following through with the boycott initiated the preceding month.

At the conclusion of the Congress Gil J. Wolman was added to the editorial board of Eristica, the information bulletin of the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, and Asger Jorn was placed on the board of directors of the Lettrist International.

The Alba Congress probably marks one of the difficult stages in the struggle for a new sensibility and a new culture, a struggle which is itself part of the general revolutionary resurgence characterizing the year 1956, visible in the upsurge of the masses in the USSR, Poland and Hungary (although in the latter case we see the dangerously confusing revival of rotten old watchwords of clerical nationalism resulting from the fatal error of the prohibition of any Marxist opposition), in the successes of the Algerian revolution and in the major strikes in Spain. These developments allow us the greatest hopes for the near future.

From Potlatch: Information Bulletin of the Lettrist International #27
2 November 1956
THE SOUND AND THE FURY

There is a lot of talk these days about angry, raging youth. People are fond of talking about them because, from the Swedish adolescents' aimless riots to the proclamations of England's "Angry Young Men" trying to form a literary movement, there is the same utter innocuousness, the same reassuring flimsiness. Products of a period in which the dominant ideas and ways of living are decomposing, a period of major breakthroughs in the domination of nature without any corresponding increase in the real possibilities of everyday life, reacting often cruelly against the world they find themselves stuck in, these youth outbursts are roughly reminiscent of the surrealist state of mind. But they lack surrealism's points of leverage in culture, and its revolutionary hope. Hence the tone underlying this spontaneous negativity of American, Scandinavian and Japanese youth is one of resignation. Saint-Germain-des-Prés had already, during the first years after World War II, served as a laboratory for this kind of behavior (misleadingly termed "existentialist" by the press); which is why the present intellectual representatives of that generation in France (Françoise Sagan, Robbe-Grillet, Vadim, the atrocious Buffet) are all such extreme caricature images of resignation.

Although this intellectual generation exhibits more aggressivity outside France, its consciousness still ranges from simple immobility to premature self-satisfaction with a very inadequate revolt. The rotten egg smell exuded by the idea of God envelops the mystical cretins of the American "Beat Generation" and is not even entirely absent from the declarations of the Angry Young Men (e.g. Colin Wilson). These latter have discovered, thirty years behind the times, a certain moral subservience that England had managed to completely hide from them all this time; and they think they're being daringly scandalous by declaring themselves republicans. "Plays continue to be produced," writes Kenneth Tynan, "that are based on the ridiculous idea that people still fear and respect the Crown, the Empire, the Church, the University and Polite Society." This statement is indicative of how tepidly literary the Angry Young Men's perspective is. They have simply come to change their opinions about a few social conventions without even noticing the whole change of terrain of all cultural activity so evident in every avant-garde tendency of this century. The Angry Young Men are in fact particularly reactionary in their attribution of a privileged, redemptive value to the practice of literature: they are defending a mystification that was denounced in Europe around 1920 and whose survival today is of greater counterrevolutionary significance than that of the British Crown.

In all this revolutionary babble there is a common lack of understanding of the meaning and scope of surrealism (itself naturally distorted by its bourgeois artistic success). A continuation of surrealism would in fact be the most consistent attitude to take if nothing new arose to replace it. But because the young people who now adopt it are aware of surrealism's profound exigency while being incapable of overcoming the contradiction between this exigency and the immobility accompanying its pseudosuccess, they take refuge in the reactionary aspects present within surrealism from its inception (magic, belief in a golden age elsewhere than in history to come). Some of them even congratulate themselves on still being there, so long after the period of real struggle, under surrealism's arc de triomphe. There they will remain faithful to their tradition, says Gérard Legrand proudly (Surrealisme même #2), "a small band of youthful souls resolved to keep alive the true flame of surrealism."

A movement more liberating than the surrealism of 1924—a movement Breton promised to rally to if it were to appear—cannot easily be formed because its liberativeness now depends on its seizing the more advanced material means of the modern world. But the surrealists of 1958 have not only become incapable of rallying to such a movement, they are even determined to combat it. But this does not eliminate the necessity for a revolutionary movement in culture to appropriate, with greater effectiveness, the freedom of spirit and the concrete freedom of mores claimed by surrealism.

For us, surrealism has been only a beginning of a revolutionary experiment in culture, an experiment that almost immediately ground to a halt practically and theoretically. We have to go further. Why can we no longer be surrealists? Certainly not in obedience to the ruling class's constant encouragement of "avant-garde" movements to dissociate themselves from the scandalous aspects of surrealism. (This encouragement is not made in the name of promoting originality at all costs—how could it be, when the ruling order has nothing really new to propose to us, nothing going beyond surrealism? On the contrary, the bourgeoisie stands ready to applaud any regressions we might lapse into.) If we are not surrealists it is because we don't want to be bored.

Decrepit surrealism, raging and ill-informed youth, well-off adolescent rebels lacking perspectives but far from lacking a cause—boredom is what they all have in common. The situationists will execute the judgment that contemporary leisure is pronouncing against itself.
PRELIMINARY PROBLEMS IN CONSTRUCTING A SITUATION

"The construction of situations begins on the ruins of the modern spectacle. It is easy to see the extent to which the very principle of the spectacle—nonintervention—is linked to the alienation of the old world. Conversely, the most pertinent revolutionary experiments in culture have sought to break the spectator's psychological identification with the hero so as to draw him into activity .... The situation is thus made to be lived by its constructors. The role played by a passive or merely bit-part playing 'public' must constantly diminish, while that played by those who cannot be called actors, but rather, in a new sense of the term, 'livers,' must constantly increase."

—Report on the Construction of Situations

Our conception of a "constructed situation" is not limited to a unitary use of artistic means to create an ambiance, however great the force or spatiotemporal extension of this ambiance may be. The situation is also a unitary ensemble of behavior in time. It is composed of gestures contained in a transitory decor. These gestures are the product of the decor and of themselves. And they in their turn produce other forms of decor and other gestures. How can these forces be oriented? We are not going to limit ourselves to merely empirical experimentation with environments in quest of mechanistically provoked surprises. The really experimental direction of situationist activity consists in setting up, on the basis of more or less clearly recognized desires, a temporary field of activity favorable to these desires. This alone can lead to the further clarification of these primitive desires, and to the confused emergence of new desires whose material roots will be precisely the new reality engendered by the situationist constructions.

We must thus envisage a sort of situationist-oriented psychoanalysis in which, in contrast to the goals pursued by the various Freudian currents, each of the participants in this adventure would have to discover precise desires for ambiances in order to realize them. Each person must seek what he loves, what attracts him. (And here again, in contrast to certain tentatives of modern writing—Leiris, for example—what is important to us is neither our individual psychological structures nor the explanation of their formation, but their possible application in the construction of situations.) Through this method, elements out of which situations can be constructed can be determined, along with projects to dynamize these elements.

Such research is meaningful only for individuals working practically in the direction of a construction of situations. Such people are all, either spontaneously or in a conscious and organized manner, presituationists—individuals who have felt the objective need for this sort
of construction through having recognized the present cultural emptiness and having participated in recent expressions of experimental awareness. They are close to each other because of their common specialization and because of their having taken part in the same historical avant-garde of that specialization. It is thus likely that they will share a number of common situationist themes and desires, which will increasingly diversify once they are brought into a phase of real activity.

The constructed situation is necessarily collective in its preparation and development. It would seem, however, that at least for the period of the first rough experimentations a given situation requires one individual to play a preeminent role as "director." If we imagine a particular situation project in which, for example, a research team has arranged an emotionaly moving gathering of a few people for an evening, we would no doubt have to distinguish: a director or producer responsible for coordinating the basic elements necessary for the construction of the decor and for working out certain interventions in the events (alternatively, several people could work out their own interventions while being more or less unaware of each other's plans); the direct agents living the situation, who have taken part in creating the collective project and worked on the practical composition of the ambiance; and finally, a few passive spectators who have not participated in the constructive work, who should be reduced to action.

This relation between the director and the "livers" of the situation must naturally never become a permanent specialization. It is a purely temporary subordination of a whole team of situationists to the person responsible for a particular project. These perspectives, or the provisional terminology describing them, should not be taken to mean that we are talking about some continuation of theater. Pirandello and Brecht have already expressed the destruction of the theatrical spectacle and pointed out a few of the requirements for going beyond it. It could be said that the construction of situations will replace the theater in the same sense that the real construction of life has tended more and more to replace religion. Clearly the principal domain we are going to replace and fulfill is poetry, which burned itself out by taking its position at the vanguard of our time and has now completely disappeared.

Real individual fulfillment, which is also involved in the artistic experience that the situationists are discovering, entails the collective takeover of the world. Until this happens there will be no real individuals—only specters haunting the things anarchically presented to them by others. In chance situations we meet separated beings moving at random. Their divergent emotions neutralize each other and maintain their solid environment of boredom. We are going to undermine these conditions by raising at a few points the incendiary beacon heralding a greater game.

In our time functionalism, an inevitable expression of technological advance, is attempting to entirely eliminate play, and the partisans of "industrial design" complain that their projects are spoiled by people's tendency toward play. At the same time, industrial commerce cruelly exploits this tendency by diverting it to a demand for constant super-

ficial renovation of utilitarian products. We obviously have no interest in encouraging the continuous artistic renovation of refrigerator designs. But a morализong functionalism is powerless to confront the problem profoundly. The only progressive way out is to liberate the tendency toward play elsewhere and on a larger scale. Short of this, all the naive indignation of the theorists of industrial design will not change the basic fact that the private automobile, for example, is primarily an idiotic toy and only secondarily a means of transportation. As opposed to all the regressive forms of play—which are regressions to its infantile stage, and always associated with reactionary politics—it is necessary to promote the experimental forms of a game of revolution.

DEFINITIONS

constructed situation: A moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a game of events.

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.

psychogeography: The study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.

psychogeographical: Relating to psychogeography. That which manifests the geographical environment's direct emotional effects.

psychogeographer: One who explores and reports on psychogeographical phenomena.

dérive: A mode of experimental behavior 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.

unitary urbanism: The theory of the combined use of arts and techniques for the integral construction of a milieu in dynamic relation with experiments in behavior.

detournement: Short for: detournement 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 sit-
nationist painting or music, but only a situationist use of these means. In a more primitive sense, detournement 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.

culture: The reflection and prefiguration of the possibilities of organization of everyday life in a given historical moment; a complex of aesthetics, feelings and mores through which a collectivity reacts on the life that is objectively determined by its economy. (We are defining this term only in the perspective of the creation of values, not in that of the teaching of them.)

decomposition: The process in which the traditional cultural forms have destroyed themselves as a result of the emergence of superior means of dominating nature which enable and require superior cultural constructions. We can distinguish between an active phase of the decomposition and effective demolition of the old superstructures—which came to an end around 1930—and a phase of repetition which has prevailed since then. The delay in the transition from decomposition to new constructions is linked to the delay in the revolutionary liquidation of capitalism.

THE SITUATIONISTS AND AUTOMATION
(excerpts)

It is rather astonishing that almost no one until now has dared to examine the ultimate implications of automation. As a result, there are no real perspectives concerning it. One has rather the impression that engineers, scientists and sociologists are trying to surreptitiously smuggle automation into the society.

Yet automation is now at the heart of the problem of the socialist domination of production and of the preeminence of leisure over labor time. The question of automation is the one most pregnant with positive and negative possibilities.

[...] Automation thus contains two opposing perspectives: it deprives the individual of any possibility of adding anything personal to automated production, which is a fixation of progress; and at the same time it saves human energy by massively liberating it from reproductive and uncreative activities. The value of automation thus depends on projects that supersede it and open the way for expression of human energies on a higher plane. [..]

The new leisure time appears as an empty space that present-day society can fill only by multiplying the pseudoplay of ridiculous hobbies. But this leisure is at the same time the basis on which can be built the most magnificent cultural construction that has ever been imagined. [...] Automation can develop rapidly only once it has established as a goal a perspective contrary to its own establishment, and only if it is known how to realize such a general perspective in the process of the development of automation. [...] PIERRE DROUIN (Le Monde, 5 January 1957), discussing the extension of hobbies as a realization of the potentialities that workers cannot express in their professional activity, concludes that "a creator lies dormant" in each person. This old banality is today of vital importance if one relates it to the real material possibilities of our time. The sleeping creator must be awakened, and his waking state can be termed "situationist." The idea of standardization is an effort to reduce and simplify the greatest number of human needs to the greatest equality. It is up to us whether this standardization opens up domains of experience more interesting than those it closes. Depending on the outcome, we may arrive at a total degradation of human life or at the possibility of continually discovering new desires. But these new desires will not appear by themselves in the oppressive context of our world. There must be a collective action to detect, express and realize them.

ASGER JORN

NO USELESS LENIENCY
(excerpts)

An intellectual or artistic sort of collaboration in a group devoting itself to the type of experimentation we engage in involves our everyday life. It is always accompanied with a certain friendship.

Consequently, when we think of those who have participated in this common activity and been excluded from it, we are obliged to admit that they were once our friends. Sometimes the memory is pleasant. In other cases it's ridiculous and embarrassing.

On the whole, later developments have confirmed the correctness of our reproaches and the irredeemability of the people who have not been able to remain with us. Few of them (though there have been some) have ended up joining the Church or the colonial troops. The others have generally found a place in the intelligentsia. There they grow old. [...] The recent formation of the Situationist International has given a new relevance to the questions of accord and breaking. A period of discussions and negotiations on a footing of equality between several groups, beginning with the Alba Congress, has been concluded at Cosio d'Arroscia in favor of a disciplined organization. The result of these new objective conditions has been to force certain opportunist elements into open opposition, leading to their immediate elimination (the purging of the Italian section). Certain wait-and-see attitudes have also ceased to be tolerable, and those of our allies who have not seen fit to join us immediately have thereby unmasked themselves as adversar-
ies. It is on the basis of the program since developed by the majority of the SI that all the new elements have joined us, and we would risk cutting ourselves off from these elements, and especially from those we will meet in the future, if we consented to pursue the slightest dialogue with those who, since Alba, have demonstrated that their creative days are over.

We have become stronger and therefore more seductive. We don’t want innocuous relationships and we don’t want relationships that could serve our adversaries. […] We will say flatly that all the situationists will maintain the enmities inherited from the former groupings that have constituted the SI, and that there is no possible return for those whom we have ever been forced to despise. But we don’t have an idealist, abstract, absolute conception of breaking. It is necessary to see when an encounter in a concrete collective task becomes impossible, but also to see if such an encounter, in changed circumstances, does not once again become possible and desirable between persons who have been able to retain a certain respect for each other.

[...] It’s true that a collective project like we have undertaken and are pursuing cannot avoid being accompanied by friendship, as I said at the beginning. But it is also true that it cannot be identified with friendship and that it should not be subject to the same weaknesses. Nor to the same modes of continuity or looseness.

MICHELE BERNSTEIN

ACTION IN BELGIUM AGAINST THE INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ART CRITICS

On 12 April, two days before the gathering in Brussels of an international general assembly of art critics, the situationists widely distributed an address to that assembly signed—in the name of the Algerian, Belgian, French, German, Italian and Scandinavian sections of the SI—by Khatib, Korun, Debord, Platschek, Pinot-Gallizio and Jorn:

To you this gathering is just one more boring event. The Situationist International, however, considers that while this assemblage of so many art critics as an attraction of the Brussels Fair is laughable, it is also significant.

Inasmuch as modern cultural thought has proved itself completely stagnant for the last twenty-five years, and inasmuch as a whole period that has understood nothing and changed nothing is now becoming aware of its failure, its spokesmen are striving to transform their activities into institutions. They thus solicit official recognition from the completely outdated but still materially dominant society, for which most of them have been loyal watchdogs. The main deficiency of modern art criticism is to have never conceived of the culture as a whole and the conditions of an experimental movement that is perpetually superseding it. At this point in time the increased domination of nature permits and necessitates the use of superior powers in the construction of life. These are today’s problems; and those intellectuals who hold back, through fear of a general subversion of a certain form of existence and of the ideas which that form has produced, can no longer do anything but struggle irrationally against each other as defenders of one or another detail of the old world—of a world whose day is done and whose meaning they have not even known. And so we see art critics assembling to exchange the crumbs of their ignorance and their doubts. We know of a few people here who are presently making some effort to understand and support new ventures; but by coming here they have accepted being mixed up with an immense majority of mediocrities, and we warn them that they cannot hope to retain the slightest interest on our part unless they break with this milieu.

Vanish, art critics, partial, incoherent and divided imbéciles! In vain do you stage the spectacle of a false encounter. You have nothing in common but a role to cling to; you are only in this market to parade one of the aspects of Western commerce: your confused and empty babble on a decomposed culture. History has depreciated you. Even your audacities belong to a past now forever closed.

Disperse, fragments of art critics, critics of fragments of art. The Situationist International is now organizing the unitary artistic activity of the future. You have nothing more to say.

The Situationist International will leave no place for you. We will starve you out.

Our Belgian section carried out the necessary direct attack. Beginning 13 April, on the eve of the opening of the proceedings, when the art critics from two hemispheres, led by the American Sweeney, were being welcomed to Brussels, the text of the situationist proclamation was brought to their attention in several ways. Copies were mailed to a large number of critics or given to them personally. Others were personally telephoned and read all or part of the text. A group forced its way into the Press Club where the critics were being received and threw the leaflets among the audience. Others were tossed onto the sidewalks from upstairs windows or from a car. (After the Press Club incident art critics were seen coming out in the street to pick up the leaflets so as to remove them from the curiosity of passersby.) In short, all steps were taken to leave the critics no chance of being unaware of the text. These art critics did not shrink from calling the police, and used their World Exposition influence in order to block the reprinting in the press of a text harmful to the prestige of their convention and their specialization. Our comrade Korun is now being threatened with prosecution for his role in the intervention.
THEORY OF THE DÉRIVE

Among the various situationist methods is the dérive [literally: 'drifting'], a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances. The dérive entails playful-constructive behavior 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 there. The element of chance is less determinant than one might think: from the dérive point of view cities have a psychogeographical relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.

But the dérive includes both this letting go and its necessary contradiction: the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities. In this latter regard, ecological science—despite the apparently narrow social space to which it limits itself—provides psychogeography with abundant data.

The ecological analysis of the absolute or relative character of fissures in the urban network, of the role of microclimates, of the distinct, self-contained character of administrative districts, and above all of the dominating action of centers of attraction, must be utilized and completed by psychogeographical methods. The objective passionnal terrain of the dérive must be defined in accordance both with its own logic and with its relations with social morphology.

In his study Paris et l'agglomération parisienne (Bibliothèque de Sociologie Contemporaine, P.U.F., 1952) Chombart de Lauwe notes that "an urban neighborhood is determined not only by geographical and economic factors, but also by the image that its inhabitants and those of other neighborhoods have of it." In the same work, in order to illustrate "the narrowness of the real Paris in which each individual lives... within a geographical area whose radius is extremely small," he diagrams all the movements made in the space of one year by a student living in the 16th arrondissement. Her itinerary delineates a small triangle with no deviations, the three apexes of which are the School of Political Sciences, her residence and that of her piano teacher.

Such data—examples of a modern poetry capable of provoking sharp emotional reactions (in this case, indignation at the fact that there are people who live like that)—or even Burgess's theory of Chicago's social activities as being distributed in distinct concentric zones, will undoubtedly prove useful in developing dérives.

Chance plays an important role in dérives precisely because the methodology of psychogeographical observation is still in its infancy. But the action of chance is naturally conservative and in a new setting tends to reduce everything to an alternation between a limited number of variants, and to habit. Progress is nothing other than breaking through a field where chance holds sway by creating new conditions more favorable to our purposes. We can say, then, that the randomness of the dérive is fundamentally different from that of the stroll, but also that the first psychogeographical attractions discovered run the risk of fixing the dériving individual or group around new habitual axes, to which they will constantly be drawn back.

An insufficient awareness of the limitations of chance, and of its inevitably reactionary use, condemned to a dismal failure the celebrated aimless ambulation attempted in 1923 by four surrealists, beginning from a town chosen by lot: wandering in the open country is naturally depressing, and the interventions of chance are poorer there than anywhere else. But this mindlessness is pushed much further by a certain Pierre Vendenys (in Medium, May 1954), who believes he can put this anecdote in the same category with various probability experiments on the grounds that they all are supposedly involved in the same sort of antideterminist liberation. He gives as an example the random distribution of tadpoles in a circular aquarium, adding, significantly, "It is necessary, of course, that such a population be subject to no external guiding influence." In these conditions, the palm really should go to the tadpoles, who have the advantage of being "as stripped as possible of intelligence, sociability and sexuality," and consequently "truly independent from one another."

At the opposite pole from these imbecilities, the primarily urban character of the dérive, in its element in the great industrially transformed cities—those centers 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."

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, since the cross-checking of these different groups' impressions makes it possible to arrive at objective conclusions. It is preferable for the composition of these groups to change from one dérive to another. With more than four or five participants, the specifically 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. The practice of such subdivision is in fact of great interest, but the difficulties it entails have so far prevented it from being organized on a sufficient scale.

The average duration of a dérive is one day, considered as the time between two periods of sleep. The times of beginning and ending have no necessary relation to the solar day, but it should be noted that the
In the "possible rendezvous," on the other hand, the element of exploration is minimal in comparison to that of the ordinary rendezvous. It is a matter of coming to a specified place at a specified time, and the subject is known in advance. The subject's identity may be known to him, or he may be invited without knowing to a place he may or may not have even seen the person before. He may meet the subject, or one he has arranged with, and take him where he has arranged to go. Thus a loose and general acquaintance is often enjoyed among our entourage, leaving it to the host to guide us through his quarters. But given the right circumstances, a specific rendezvous can be arranged with the virtually unlimited resources of the environment. Each of the above possibilities can be arranged with the virtually unlimited resources of the environment. Each can be arranged with the virtually unlimited resources of the environment. Each can be arranged with the virtually unlimited resources of the environment.
"The apartments of the helicoidal house will have the form of slices of cake. One will be able to augment or diminish them by shifting movable partitions. The half-floor gradations avoid limiting the number of rooms, since the tenant can request the use of the adjacent section on either upper or lower levels. This system permits the transformation of three four-room apartments into one twelve-room apartment in less than six hours."

(To be continued.)

GUY DEBORD
1956

INTERNATIONALE SITUATIONNISTE #3 (December 1959)

DETOURNEMENT AS NEGATION AND PRELUDE

Detournement, the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble, has been a constantly present tendency of the contemporary avant-garde both before and since the establishment of the SI. The two fundamental laws of detournement are the loss of importance of each detourned autonomous element—which may go so far as to lose its original sense completely—and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect.

Detournement has a peculiar power which obviously stems from the double meaning, from the enrichment of most of the terms by the coexistence within them of their old senses and their new, immediate senses. Detournement is practical because it is so easy to use and because of its inexhaustible potential for reuse. Concerning the negligible effort required for detournement, we have already said, "The cheapness of its products is the heavy artillery that breaks through all the Chinese walls of understanding" (Methods of Detournement, May 1956). But these points would not by themselves justify recourse to this method, which the same text describes as "clashing head-on against all social and legal conventions." Detournement has a historical significance. What is it?

"Detournement is a game made possible by the capacity of devaluation," writes Jorn in his study Detourned Painting (May 1959), and he goes on to say that all the elements of the cultural past must be "reinvested" or disappear. Detournement is thus first of all a negation of the value of the previous organization of expression. It arises and grows increasingly stronger in the historical period of the decomposition of artistic expression. But at the same time, the attempts to reuse the "detournable bloc" as material for other ensembles express the search for a vaster construction, a new genre of creation at a higher level.

The SI is a very special kind of movement, of a nature different from preceding artistic avant-gardes. Within culture the SI can be likened to a research laboratory, for example, or to a party in which we are situationists but nothing that we do is situationist. This is not a disavowal for anyone. We are partisans of a certain future of culture, of life. Situationist activity is a definite craft which we are not yet practicing.

Thus the signature of the situationist movement, the sign of its presence and contestation in contemporary cultural reality (since we cannot represent any common style whatsoever), is first of all the use
of detournement. We may mention, on the level of detourned expression, Jorn’s altered paintings; Debord and Jorn’s book Mémoires, “composed entirely of prefabricated elements,” in which the writing on each page runs in all directions and the reciprocal relations of the phrases are invariably uncompleted; Constant’s projects for detourned sculptures; and Debord’s detourned documentary film, On the Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Brief Period of Time. On the level of what Methods of Detournement calls “ultradetournement, that is, the tendencies for detournement to operate in everyday social life” (e.g., passwords or the wearing of disguises, belonging to the sphere of play), we might mention, at different levels, Gallizio’s industrial painting; Wyckaaert’s “orchestral” project for assembly-line painting with a division of labor based on color; and numerous detournements of buildings that were at the origin of unitary urbanism. But we should also mention in this context the SI’s very forms of “organization” and propaganda.

At this point in the world’s development all forms of expression are losing all grip on reality and being reduced to self-parody. As the readers of this journal can frequently verify, present-day writing always has an element of parody. “It is necessary,” states Methods of Detournement, “to conceive of a parodic-serious stage where the accumulation of detourned elements, far from aiming at arousing indignation or laughter by alluding to some original work, will express our indifference toward a meaningless and forgotten original, and concern itself with rendering a certain sublimity.”

The parodic-serious expresses the contradictions of an era in which we find ourselves confronted with both the urgent necessity and the near impossibility of bringing together and carrying out a totally innovative collective action. An era in which the greatest seriousness advances masked in the ambiguous interplay between art and its negation; in which the essential voyages of discovery have been undertaken by such astonishingly incapable people.

**SITUATIONIST THESSES ON TRAFFIC**

1

The mistake made by all urbanists is to consider the private automobile (and its by-products like the motorcycle) essentially as a means of transportation. Such a misconception is a major expression of a notion of happiness that developed capitalism tends to spread throughout the society. The automobile is at the center of this general propaganda, both as sovereign good of an alienated life and as essential product of the capitalist market: It is being generally said this year that American economic prosperity is soon going to depend on the success of the slogan “Two cars per family.”

2

Commuting time, as Le Corbusier rightly pointed out, is a surplus labor which correspondingly reduces the amount of “free” time.

3

We must replace travel as an adjunct to work with travel as a pleasure.

4

To want to redesign architecture to accord with the needs of the present massive, parasitical existence of private automobiles reflects the most unrealistic misapprehension of where the real problems lie. It is necessary to transform architecture to accord with the whole development of the society, criticizing all the transitory values linked to condemned forms of social relationships (in the first rank of which is the family).

5

Even if during a transitional period we temporarily accept a rigid division between work zones and residence zones, we must at least envisage a third sphere: that of life itself (the sphere of freedom, of leisure—the truth of life). Unitary urbanism acknowledges no boundaries; it aims to form a unitary human milieu in which separations such as work/leisure or public/private will finally be dissolved. But before this, the minimum action of unitary urbanism is to extend the terrain of play to all desirable constructions. This terrain will be at the level of complexity of an old city.

6

It is not a question of combating the automobile as an evil in itself. It is its extreme concentration in the cities that has led to the negation of its role. Urbanism should certainly not ignore the automobile, but even less should it accept it as its central theme. It should reckon on its gradual phasing out. In any case, we can foresee that the central areas of certain new complexes, as well as of a few old cities, will become closed to automobile traffic.

7

Those who believe that the automobile is eternal are not thinking, even from a strictly technological standpoint, of other future forms of transportation. For example, certain models of one-man helicopters presently being tested by the US Army will probably have spread to the general public within twenty years.

8

The breaking up of the dialectic of the human milieu in favor of automobiles (the projected freeways in Paris will entail the demolition of thousands of houses and apartments although the housing crisis is continually growing worse) masks its irrationality under pseudoprac-
In fact, we want ideas to become dangerous again. We cannot accept the spinelessness of a false eclecticism, as if we were Sartres, Althusseres, Aragons or Godards. Let us note the wise words of a certain Professor Lhuillier, reported in the 21 December Nouvel Observateur: "I am for freedom of thought. But if there are any Situationists in the room, I want them to get out right now." While not entirely denying the effect that the dissemination of a few basic truths may have had in slightly accelerating the movement that is impelling the lagging French youth toward an awakening awareness of an impending more general crisis in the society, we think that the distribution of On the Poverty of Student Life has been a much more significant factor of clarification in some other countries—where such a process is already much more clearly under way. In the afterword of their edition of Khayati's text, the English situationists wrote: "The most highly developed critique of modern life has been made in one of the least highly developed modern countries—a country which has not yet reached the point where the complete disintegration of all values becomes patently obvious and engenders the corresponding forces of radical rejection. In the French context, situationist theory has anticipated the social forces by which it will be realized." The theses of On the Poverty of Student Life have been much more truly understood in the United States and England (the strike at the London School of Economics in March caused a certain stir, the Times commentator unhappily seeing in it a return of the class struggle he had thought was over with). To a lesser degree this is also the case in Holland—where the SI's critique, reinforcing a much harsher critique by events themselves, was not without effect on the recent dissolution of the "Provo" movement—and in the Scandinavian countries. The struggles of the West Berlin students this year have picked up something of the critique, though in a still very confused way.

But revolutionary youth naturally has no other course than to join with the mass of workers who, starting from the experience of the new conditions of exploitation, are going to take up once again the struggle for the domination of their world, for the suppression of work. When young people begin to know the current theoretical form of this real movement that is everywhere spontaneously bursting forth from the soil of modern society, this is only a moment of the progression by which this unified theoretical critique, which identifies itself with an adequate practical unification, strives to break the silence and the general organization of separation. It is only in this sense that we find the result satisfactory. We obviously exclude from these young people that alienated semiprivileged fraction molded by the university; this sector is the natural base for an admiring consumption of a fantasized situationist theory considered as the latest spectacular fashion. We will continue to disappoint and refute this kind of approbation. Sooner or later it will be understood that the SI must be judged not on the superficially scandalous aspects of certain manifestations through which it appears, but on its essentially scandalous central truth.

THE SITUATIONISTS AND THE NEW FORMS OF ACTION AGAINST POLITICS AND ART

Up to now our subversion has mainly drawn on the forms and categories inherited from past revolutionary struggles, mainly those of the last century. I propose that we round out our contestatory expression with means that dispense with any reference to the past. I mean by this not that we should abandon the forms within which we have waged battle on the traditional terrain of the supersession of philosophy, the realization of art and the abolition of politics; but that we should extend the work of the journal onto terrains it does not yet reach.

A great many proletarians are aware that they have no power over their lives; they know it, but they don't express it in the language of socialism and of previous revolutions.

Let us spit in passing on those students who have become militants in the tiny would-be mass parties, who sometimes have the nerve to claim that the workers are incapable of reading Internationale Situationistes, that its paper is too slick to be put in their lunchbags and that its price doesn't take into account their low standard of living. The most consistent of them thus distribute the mimeographed image they have of the consciousness of a class in which they fervently seek their stereotype Joe Worker. They forget, among other things, that when workers read revolutionary literature in the past they had to pay relatively more than for a theater ticket; and that when they once again develop an interest in it they won't hesitate to spend two or three times what it costs for an issue of Planète. But what these detractors of typography forget most of all is that the rare individuals who read their bulletins are precisely those who already have the minimal background necessary to understand us right away, and that what they write is completely unreadable for anyone else. Some of them, ignoring the immense readership of bathroom graffiti, particularly in cafés, have thought that by using a parody of schoolboy writing, printed on paper pasted on gutters like notices of apartments for rent, they could make the form correspond to the content of their slogans; and in this at least they have succeeded. All this serves to clarify what must not be done.

What we have to do is link up the theoretical critique of modern society with the critique of it in acts. By detouring the very propositions of the spectacle, we can explain on the spot the implications of present and future revolts.

I propose that we pursue:

1. Experimentation in the detournement of romantic photo-comics as well as of "pornographic" photos, and that we bluntly impose their real truth by restoring real dialogues by adding or altering speech
bubbles. This operation will bring to the surface the subversive bub-
bles that are spontaneously, but more or less consciously, formed and
dissolved in the imaginations of those who look at these photos.
In the same spirit, it is also possible to detourn any advertising bill-
boards—particularly those in subway corridors, which form remark-
able sequences—by pasting over pre-prepared placards.

2. The promotion of guerrilla tactics in the mass media: an impor-
tant form of contestation, not only at the stage of urban guerrilla
warfare, but even before it. The threat was blazed by those Argentinians
who took over the control station of an electric newspaper and broad-
cast their own directives and slogans. It is still possible to take ad-
vantage of the fact that radio and television stations are not yet
ruled by troops. On a more modest level, it is known that any ham
radio operator can at little expense jam, if not broadcast, on a local
level; and that the small size of the necessary equipment permits a
great mobility, thus easily enabling one to slip away before one's po-
tion is trigonometrically located. A group of CP dissidents in Den-
mark had their own pirate radio station a few years ago. Counterfe-
t issues of one or another periodical can add to the confusion of the
enemy. This list of examples is vague and limited for obvious reasons.

The illegality of such actions makes a sustained engagement on this
terrain impossible for any organization that has not chosen to go un-
derground, because it would otherwise entail the formation within it of
a specialized organization, which cannot be effectual without com-
partmentalization and thus hierarchy, etc. Without, in a word, finding
oneself on the slippery path toward terrorism.* We can more appro-
priately envision propaganda by deed, which is a very different matter.
Our ideas are in everybody's mind, as is well known, and any group
without any relation to us, or a few individuals coming together for a
specific purpose, can improvise and improve on tactics experimented
with elsewhere by others. This type of uncoordinated action cannot be
expected to bring about any decisive upheaval, but it can usefully
serve to accentuate the coming awakening of consciousness. In any
case, there's no need to get hung up on the idea of illegality. Most
actions in this domain can be done without breaking any existing law.
But the fear of such interventions will make newspaper editors par-
anoic about their typesetters, radio managers paranoid about their
technicians, etc., at least until more specific repressive legislation has
been worked out and enacted.

3. The development of situationist comics. Comic strips are the only
truly popular literature of our century. Creations marked by years at
school have not been able to resist writing dissertations on them; but
they'll get little pleasure out of reading ours. No doubt they'll buy
them just to burn them. In their task of "making shame more shameful
still," it is easy to see how easy it would be, for example, to transform
"13 rue de l'Espoir [hope]" into "1 blvd. du Désespoir [despair]" merely
by adding in a few elements; or balloons can simply be changed. In
contrast to Pop Art, which breaks comics up into fragments, this
method aims at restoring to comics their content and importance.

4. The production of situationist films. The cinema, which is the
newest and undoubtedly most utilisable means of expression of our
time, has marked time for nearly three quarters of a century. To sum
it up, we can say that it effectively became the "seventh art," so dear
to film buffs, film clubs and parents' associations. For our purposes
this age is over (Inco, Stroheim, the one and only L'âge d'or, Citizen
Kane and Mr. Arkadin, the letrist films), even if there remain a few
traditional narrative masterpieces to be unearthed in the film archives
or on the shelves of foreign distributors. We should appropriate the
first stammerings of this new language; and above all its most con-
summate and modern examples, those which have escaped artistic
ideology even more than American 'B' movies: newsreels, previews,
and above all, filmed ads.

Although it has obviously been in the service of the commodity and
the spectacle, filmed advertising, in its extreme freedom of technical
means, has laid the foundations for what Eisenstein had an inklings of
when he talked of filming The Critique of Political Economy or The
German Ideology.

I am confident that I could film The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-
Commodity Economy in a way that would be immediately understand-
able to the proletarians of Watts who are ignorant of the concepts
implied in that title. And this adaptation to a new form would un-
doubtedly contribute to deepening and intensifying the "written" expres-
sion of the same problems; which we could verify, for example, by making
a film called Incitement to Murder and Debauchery before drafting its
equivalent in the journal, Correctives to the Consciousness of an Other
Class That Will Be the Last. Among other possibilities, the cinema lends
it itself particularly well to studying the present as a historical problem,
to dismantling the processes of reification. To be sure, historical reality
can be apprehended, known and filmed only in the course of a com-
plicated process of mediations enabling consciousness to recognize one
moment in another, its goal and its action in destiny, its destiny in its
goal and action, and its own essence in this necessity. This mediation
would be difficult if the empirical existence of facts themselves was
not already a mediated existence, which only takes on an appearance
of immanence because and to the extent that consciousness of the
mediation is lacking and that the facts have been uprooted from the
network of their determining circumstances, placed in an artifice
isolation and poorly strung together again in the montage of classical
cinema. It is precisely this mediation which has been lacking, and
inevitably so, in presituationist cinema, which has limited itself to
"objective" forms or re-presentation of politico-moral concepts, when-
ever it has not been merely academic-type narrative with all its hy-
pocrisies. If what I have just written were filmed, it would become
much less complicated. This is all banalities. But Godard, the most
famous Swiss Maoist, will never be able to understand them. He might
well, as is his usual practice, recuperate the above—pick out a word
from it or an idea like that concerning filmed advertisements—but he
will never be capable of anything but brandishing little novelties
picked up elsewhere: images or star words of the era, which definitely
have a resonance, but one he can't grasp (Bonnot, worker, Marx, made
in USA, Pierrot le Fou, Debord, poetry, etc.). He really is a child of
Mao and Coca-Cola.
The cinema enables one to express anything, just like an article, a book, a leaflet or a poster. This is why we should henceforth require that each situationist be as capable of making a film as of writing an article (cf. "Anti–Public Relations," IS #8). Nothing is too beautiful for the blacks of Watts.

RENÉ VIÈNET

TO HAVE AS GOAL PRACTICAL TRUTH

In attempting to present to the new revolutionary forces a model of theoretico-practical coherence, the SI can and must at any moment sanction, by exclusion or break, the failings, insufficiencies and compromises of those making of it—or recognizing in it—the most advanced experimental stage of their common project. If the insurgent generation, determined to found a new society, manifests an alertness, based on indisputable first principles, to smash every attempt at recuperation, this is not at all out of a taste for purity, but out of a simple reflex of self-defense. In organizations prefiguring in their essential features the type of social organization to come, the least of requirements consists in not tolerating those whose power is able to tolerate quite well.

In its positive aspect, the “exclusion” and “break” response raises the question of membership in the SI and of alliance with autonomous groups and individuals. In its “Minimum Definition of Revolutionary Organizations” the 7th Conference stressed among other things the following point: “A revolutionary organization refuses to reproduce within itself any of the hierarchical conditions of the dominant world. The only limit to participating in its total democracy is that each member must have recognized and appropriated the coherence of its critique. This coherence must be both in the critical theory proper and in the relationship between this theory and practical activity. The organization radically criticizes every ideology as separate power of ideas and as ideas of separate power.”

The coherence of the critique and the critique of incoherence are one and the same movement, condemned to decay and rigidify into ideology the moment separation is introduced between different groups of a federation, between different members of an organization or between the theory and practice of one of its members. In the total struggle in which we are engaged, to yield an inch on the front of coherence is to allow separation to gain the upper hand all the way down the line. This is what spurs us to the greatest vigilance: to never take our coherence for granted, to remain alert to the dangers that threaten it in the fundamental unity of individual and collective behavior, to anticipate and avoid these dangers.

That a secret fraction [the Garnautins] was able to form among us, but also that it was rapidly exposed, sufficiently indicates our rigor and our lack of rigor in transparency in intersubjective relations. Put another way, this means that the SI’s influence stems essentially from this: it is capable of setting an example, both negatively, by showing its weaknesses and correcting them, and positively, by deriving new exigencies from these corrections. We have often reiterated the importance of our not being mistaken in judging individuals; we have to prove this continually and thereby at the same time make it more impossible for people to be mistaken about us. And what goes for individuals goes for groups as well.

We recall the words of Socrates to one of the young men he was talking to: “Speak a little so I can see what sort of person you are.” We are in a position to avoid this kind of Socrates and this kind of young man if the exemplary character of our activity ensures the radiating force of our presence in and against the reigning spectacle. To the mafiosi of recuperation and to the smalltime jerks who are going to agree to present us as a directing group, we should counterpose the antihierarchical example of permanent radicalization—we must not disseminate any part of our experiences; we must establish, through the dissemination of our methods, critical theses and agitational tactics, the greatest transparency concerning the collective project of liberating everyday life.

The SI should act like an axis which, receiving its movement from the revolutionary impulses of the entire world, precipitates in a unitary manner the radical turn of events. In contrast to the backward sectors that persistently strive for tactical unity above all else (common, national and popular fronts), the SI and all the organizations will meet each other only in the search for organic unity, considering that tactical unity is effective only where organic unity is possible. Group or individual, everyone must live in pace with the radicalization of events in order to radicalize them in turn. Revolutionary coherence is nothing else.

We are certainly still far from such a harmony of progression, but we are as certainly working toward it. The movement from first principles to their realization involves groups and individuals, and thus their possible retardations. Only transparency in real participation cuts short the menace that weighs on coherence: the transformation of retardation into separation. Everything that still separates us from the realization of the situationist project is only the result of the hostility of the old world we live in; but the awareness of these separations already contains their resolution.

Now, it is precisely in the struggle against separations that retardation appears in various degrees; it is there that unconsciousness of retardation obscures consciousness of separations, thereby introducing incoherence. When consciousness rots, ideology oozes out. We have seen Kotányi keep the results of his analyses to himself, communicating them drop by drop with the niggardly superiority of a water clock over time; and others (the most recently excluded) keeping to themselves their deficiencies in all respects, making like a peacock while lacking the tail. Mystical wait-and-see-ism and egalitarian ecumenicalism had the same odor. Vanish, grotesque charlatans of incurable malaise!