

Huddersfield World Congress of Psychogeographers

# Psychogeography Extreme

Phil Smith



“The whole of Europe put to sleep  
 By music, coal-fires, snow, and café life,  
 And suffocated by hot fogs and poppies,  
 And rocked by lovers, like a chest of breath,

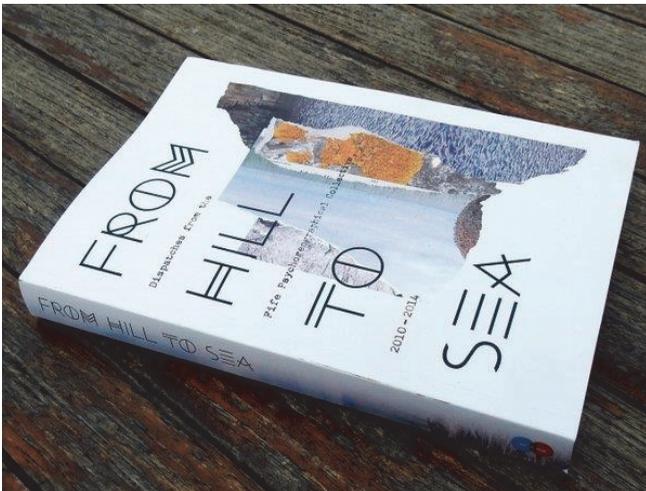
Is not, for the flâneur, drug strong enough.  
 A Europe... motionless with dust and night,  
 As if a squid her bag had emptied....

Is not mysterious enough for his infatuated tread!  
 The Furies are modern, they don't drive you they entice  
 With cafés, lovers, dusty streets.... with the Apocalypse  
 ‘Not this one, but the *next*,’ they hiss.”

This is an extract from “The Flâneur and the Apocalypse” by Rosemary Tonks, published in 1963 – it captures the same hungering desire for something more intense than melancholy or romance, and more vivacious than repetitions of crisis and war, that drives psychogeographers today, at a time when their movement and influence have never been so strong; a result of the resilience of their tradition, the development of literary and occult variations, and the emergence of a psychogeography-inspired walking arts.



Today, a number of psychogeographical associations and societies drift and spread a word based on original Lettriste and situationist documents, and more varied influences – among the outstanding examples are Manchester’s Loiterers’ Resistance Movement (with their current ‘Loitering With Intent’ exhibition) and the Fife Psychogeographical Collective whose publication ‘From Hill to Sea’ is a fabulous evocation of exploring contested terrains and an inspirational handbook for anyone wanting to make their own psychogeography.

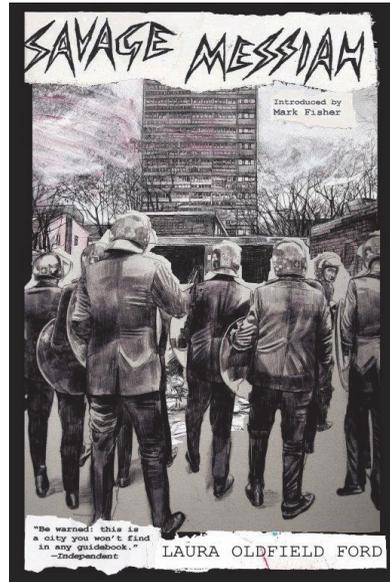
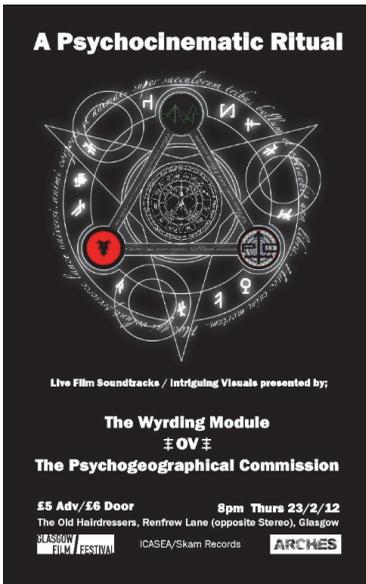


Numbers involved are fairly small, but their resilience has kept a political-psychogeographical narrative alive. They are less bedevilled than earlier groups by the legacy of old quarrels. Their practices are characterised by Tina Richardson, in the conclusion to *Walking Inside Out*, as anti-elitist, pluralist, reflexive, binary-busting, sensitive to affect and archaeological in their excavation of signs at odds with dominant discourses.

The literature on psychogeography increases in quantity and quality, the most significant publications including McKenzie Wark’s trilogy, Jean-Michel Mension’s autobiographical account of the Parisian SI, and *Expect Anything, Fear Nothing*, which illuminates the situationists in Scandinavia.

Literary and occult strains in Psychogeography continue to thrive:

The Psychogeographical Commission conducting rituals at Hawksmoor churches to exorcise the Jack the Ripper narrative, Paul Weston's *Glastonbury Psychogeography* attempting, with limited success, to wed a situationist *dérive* to visualisations and psychic questing. However, the occult thread is most commonly, and more effectively, used with a degree of irony and playfulness, as in Andy Howlett's search for the River Rea in his film 'Digbeth Delights'.



In the case of literary psychogeography the picture is more healthy, with writers like Gareth Rees, John Rogers, Laura Oldfield Ford, Lucy Furlong and Nick Papadimitriou (although the latter prefers to be called a “deep topographer”) producing a literature geared more to the experiences of exploratory walking than to literary experiment. Established figures like Iain Sinclair and Will Self continue to enjoy a high profile, and through them an idea of “psychogeography” reaches a mainstream audience.

The third, and, numerically, the most significant factor is walking arts. While its influences are many, it's unusual to meet a walking artist who is not familiar with psychogeography. While some of these artists operate in close partnerships and small groups, what is most characteristic of this new

movement is its meshwork of contacts and co-operations – sometimes formally, as in the case of the Walking Artists Network, which has some 500 members, but often informally through a growing number of actions, workshops, projects, seminars and festivals.



Where the walking arts of the 1960s and 1970s were predominantly male, solo and epic, today there has been an explosion of women's participation – something which mainstream media continues to ignore, but which Jo Norcup's 'Er Outdoors' programmes on Resonance FM are going some way to redressing.



In the UK alone there are now hundreds - there may be thousands - of people involved in these practices. The explosive growth in the participation of women represents a major and qualitative change in the nature of the *dérive*. Something which has not yet worked its way through into publication, but there are writings in the pipeline from the likes of Morag Rose, Helen Billingham, Ruby Wallis and others that may begin to change that.

At the same time the sociability of this new movement - exemplified by Rosana Cade's 'Walking Holding' in which audience members walk holding hands with people of different identities - has firmed up the positive traits identified by Tina Richardson. The plethora of aesthetic methods deployed, though not without their contradictions, represents a massive resource for psychogeographical practice, which has been hamstrung in the past by the historic flip-flopping of the Situationist International between modernist experiment and full-on iconoclasm.

The growth of walking arts, however, does not present a new psychogeographical style, but rather a general intuition that under present spectacular conditions, whatever conventions, images or stylistics we use will always float free of their politics and circulate according to the relations of the spectacle. That we take advantage of this fluidity to avoid the oppressive dominance of any one discourse, and to play and subvert within its free-





<b>Ways to Wander (walks/artworks)</b> When: 11 <sup>th</sup> August all day	
 <p>Ways to Wander, Triarchy Press, 2015</p>	Go for a walk with extracts from Claire Qualmann and Claire Hind's book <i>Ways to Wander</i> . Entries by women authors are selected here and reproduced as cards for visitors to use: read them as if each instruction were poetry, engage with each page as visual art or as a performance activity, let it remind you of places you've been or walks you'd like to do, or simply follow the instructions and take a walk.
Free – no booking required	
<b>Wikipedia edit-a-thon (workshop)</b> When: 11 <sup>th</sup> August all day	
 <p>photo: Claire Qualmann, 2015</p>	Wikipedia is an important repository of shared knowledge, with its pages ranking top in google searches. But less than 10% of its contributors identify as female, resulting in skewed content and gender bias. These workshop sessions seek to address this gender gap. Drop in for 20 minutes or two hours, improve the page of a favourite artist, or create one from scratch. Based on the rhizomatic Art+Feminism model.
Free – drop in – please bring a laptop.	

floating images, free to shift across styles, genres, techniques, making journeys rather than products, joining fragmentation to assemblage, and operating as multiple-personae rather than Karen Eliot/Luther Blissett anonymities.

Put together – this resilient tradition, growth in the literature, flowering of walking arts – has generated a qualitative leap in the variety of practices available to anyone coming to psycho-geography for the first time.

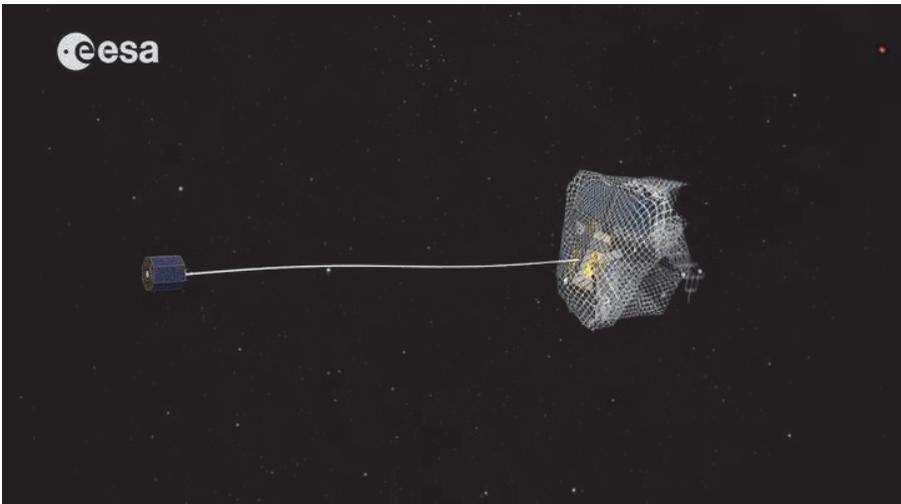
Look at Claire Hind and Claire Qualmann's collection *Ways to Wander* with tactics from over 50 walkers, or at Sonia Overall's pamphlet *Walking Sideways in Sandwich*,

...look at Dominique Baron-Bonarjee's black flag walks, Alison Lloyd's contouring of hills and tangling with the limits of romanticism or Louise Wilson's theatrical constructs across valleys and hillsides, the Walking Library, all the walks in search of lost urban rivers, or retracing death marches... This growth in numbers and variety changes the game. It opens the way for a shift from tactics to strategy.



So, for the rest of this talk, I am going to float a set of strategic proposals. They don't constitute a programme. Psychogeography has no organisations capable of implementing one. Instead they are loosely entangled ideas addressed to individuals and small groups with a view to influencing their practices, unclear what, if they are well-received and used, the dynamic of the movement will then be.

These general principles are: asymmetrical action, walking in precarity, the situational-*dérive*, disruption and disturbance, hyper-romanticism, the subjective battleground, encoding and re-encoding, totality, and experiment.



Asymmetrical strategy means thinking in terms of levers – being on the lookout for satellite capture moments, those opportunities when different masses exert comparable pulls and a tiny intervention can have a disproportionate effect.

One of these is the point where the psychogeographical *dérive* crosses the everyday.

Now, if we look at the 'drifting' of psychogeographers, much of it takes place by arrangement, generally in our leisure time, sometimes as part of a funded project, often it takes up a full day or a good half day. Part of what drives it is a sense of release from obligations into an intense, subjective and

emotional wandering – the metaphors used to describe its excitements can include pilgrimage, exploration, even Grail questing.

But what if you have children to look after? Endless compulsory job interviews to attend? What if you have limited stamina? What if you work long, exhausting and stressful hours that kill off any desire to get outside?

Where, then, is the psychogeographical journey for you?

It has to be in the gaps, in the smallest fractures in oppressive timetables. In small disruptions to personal routines; the late running of a train that allows you a few minutes to explore the hinterland around a station.

Perhaps we should start to rethink the ‘drift’ on a smaller scale, more geared to disruptions, tailored to the needs and opportunities of a precariat, of workers with very short bursts of free time, often when in states of exhaustion, of *dérivistes* who need to know how to quickly shift out of the routine, and quickly and reparatively slip straight back into it.

Clare Qualmann has already shown us one way with her ‘Perambulator’ drifts for parents and young children.



To make this shift, we need to get away from that utopian model of the ultimate ‘drift’ that has been lurking in the background of psychogeography

for a long while – the idea of the ‘permanent *dérive*’; advocated by Ivan Chtcheglov, modelled in the New Babylon designs by the architect Constant Nieuwenhuys. Not only because the unbroken hyper-sensitization of this ideal presents a walker with serious mental health challenges, but also because it largely excludes the very people who have most to gain from the psychogeographical re-appropriation of the surplus of pleasure stolen from them by the Spectacle.



A second subject for asymmetrical intervention is recreational walking. The romanticist promises that are made, and largely unfulfilled, by rambling and hiking are ripe for hijacking. Its large participatory base is used as authority to make quasi-religious claims for its affects. In practice, rambles and hikes are often prescriptive, ordered and homogenised within rigid footpaths, restrictive codes of behaviour, designations of what is and what is not of value in the vista, and with an indifference to textures, ironies and the entanglement of the walker in what she touches and sees and what touches and sees her.

In 1936, Stephen Graham wrote in *The Gentle Art of Tramping*: “wall-maps are busy studying you while you are thinking of other things. You are reading the *Arabian Nights*, but Arabia is reading you...” – rambling has still not understood that entanglement.

I have recently been reading the literature of the ramblers. The emphasis is on routes, kit and the prevention of accidents – provoking Tristan Gooley to write that he would “rather die walking than die of boredom reading about how to walk safely” – yet these books invariably find space to invoke a quasi-mystical communion with Nature and a direct and intense relationship either with ancient ancestors (‘we are walking in prehistoric footprints’) or with a normatized humanity (‘we all walk, and walking is what makes us human’).

These promises – of stepping out of time and into universality, of intense immersion in a mildly exotic landscape – are rarely met; because rambling is stuck in a Newtonian vision of clockwork nature, there to be observed, maybe even appropriated, but rarely to be tangled with. The walker is kitted up and separated out from the terrain, encountering its nature less by immersion and risk, and more through picturesque vistas represented in, and pre-empted by, a guidebook.

Against this, psychogeographers offer an intense and risky practice of walking and re-imagining space, a setting of ourselves at the mercy of spaces, a changing of spaces as we move through them, entangling, with romantic intensity, with the textures, spaces and organisms hated and feared by mainstream media: foxes, concrete, jellyfish and herring gulls, pylons and wind farms, alien invaders and decommissioned bunkers, buddleia, Himalayan Balsam and acres of solar panels.

Let’s campaign to transform the public footpaths into a learning structure, a labyrinth in which to learn about racist colonialism, religious conflict, and attenuated democracy – the defining elements of the landscape visible from these paths.

To offer a life-changing walk to the leisure walker and the long-distance pilgrim-hiker, as well as to the person with only a few minutes to spare, we need a *dérive* that can operate stretched thinly across wide fields, but also curled up in small dimensions within a malevolent and aggressive

spectacular society; for such flexibility we need to heal a wound in psychogeography that has been particularly resilient.

A wound that, simply by good fortune, I was inoculated against in 2001.



It was on one of the first drift-like walks that I took part in; a group of us had been walking since 4am and as the sun came up over the edge of the city we called in at a motorway service station. On the café's breakfast menu was printed a guarantee: "total satisfaction or your money back". So, we ate the breakfast and asked for our money back. This had apparently never happened before. "What was the matter with the meal?" they asked. "Nothing, it was fine, we just don't think that a cooked breakfast could ever constitute 'total satisfaction' for a well-rounded human being." And so we all sat at tables, filling in forms with the staff, trying to explain why we had not been "totally satisfied" by sausages and fried eggs. For a while that café became a people's philosophy seminar – what is satisfaction? What really does satisfy us? And what should, what could?



On that day I grasped an important principle I later found had been articulated by the theorist Michel de Certeau - that space is produced by the way you use it, that even walking in humdrum non-places is a re-making of space, and that a consciously disruptive journey can divert and subvert it.

In other words, that the walk of the *dérive* and the making of situations - those temporary actions at odds with dominant social relations - are not necessarily separate acts (which is how they are usually articulated), but, rather, that a

situational *dérive* is possible. In which a spontaneous situation-making and space-changing is possible at one and the same time as, and as part of, discovering one's "being-in-the-world" on a journey among strangers in those strange lands just beyond our own back fences, taking back - through encounters with things and organisms - some of the surplus of pleasure that the spectacle has robbed from us in exploitation and alienation.

On such a 'situational *dérive*' the walker spends nothing other than time and energy; she does not engage in commercial exchange, she buys no tickets, she pays no admission fee or rent; instead she gets her pleasures for free from the ironies,



contradictions and accidental poetry of the system. And that can happen just as much in short spontaneous wanders, where the disruption is soon disrupted, as in extended explorations.

I've been using the word 'disruption' to describe the break made by the walker from their everyday routine into the hypersensitized state of the drift. When this disruption entangles with a site that is equally disrupted then we can borrow from Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's book 'The Mushroom at the End of the World' and describes that double disruption as a "disturbance". Tsing uses the term to describe disrupted spaces where living processes and human agency combine to challenge capitalistic separation and translation of life worlds into units scaled up or down in the interests of asset accumulation. Her key example is how the commercial devastation of forests in the USA has created a large anti-capitalist economy of outsiders and migrants harvesting mushrooms growing in the remnants of the forests.



Any 'disrupted' drift should be trying to shift into 'disturbance', to entangle its own disruption of everyday life with a space that is itself disrupted.



A common example of ‘disturbance’ on a ‘drift’ is discovering ruins. You often hear this described, disparagingly, as “ruins porn” – I think that’s a mistake. Yes, there’s a neo-gothic thrill at abjection, but there is also the re-entangling of alienated and separated units with life worlds - and we should uninhibitedly celebrate such ‘disturbance’. Unlike shock capitalism’s exploitation of natural and unnatural disasters in order to ‘wipe the slate clean’ and ‘start again from scratch’, psychogeography embraces the creative possibilities in “disturbance”, celebrating and engaging with old knowledge and old materials, exploring and tending ruins and their decay not because of heritage’s subservience to old property, but because we aim to build in and with them.



This term ‘disturbance’ theorises something more radical than reform, because the existing conditions and relations are destroyed, they are not coming back, yet what comes next grows from the ruins of the previous system rather than by a wiping clean and starting from scratch. That I suggest is an entangled and unhuman alternative to both shock capitalism and to the quasi-Leninist dialectical leap and rupture that still lurks around psychogeography like a ghost without an organisation.

Creative “disturbance” can also apply to views of the world. Some years ago I went to the cinema to see Peter Weir’s ‘The Truman Show’; a movie about the manipulation of one life for the entertainment of others. The audience consisted of me and a large party of young teenagers who had clearly come – given Jim Cary’s starring role - prepared for a sequel to ‘Ace Ventura, Pet Detective’. Hugely empathising and identifying with the ‘Truman’ character, these teenagers’ world views were in ruins by the end – the cinema, once the reliable provider of predictable entertainment, had become unstable; they had arrived a giggling mass, they left wide-eyed, silent, one by one, bracing themselves to face the giant simulacrum outside.



Back in 1998, Weir's film played like an apocalyptic vision of global control. Today it seems more like a standard guide for social media corporations who are far less interested in manipulating imaginary worlds than in focusing on how they can increase the subjective depth of our involvement in producing the content we pay them to consume. So it's appropriate that what 'The Truman Show' actually demonstrates most powerfully is not the wickedness of simulation, but rather the corrosive power of real relationships, real memories, the return of a lost real father and the escape to a real world; to pierce the veil and find authenticity; to throw out the refugees and rediscover the true England, to tear down the modern world and liberate your inner goddess, to get out of your car and immerse yourself in Constable's countryside....

Authenticity, not simulation, is the spectacle's road to delusion, manipulation and homogeneity. Psychogeography's alternative route to an agentive, anti-spectacular subjectivity is paved with wonderful simulacra, spectres, narratives, fictions and those phantasms rising from the repeated reconstructing of memory from parts spread across the whole brain... our past recreated every time, uniquely, just as we produce a space every time we pass through it...

There is no authenticity to be discovered in the self. We construct it continuously, its space no different from any other, as Doreen Massey would have said – always unfinished, always under construction – its authenticity, if we must use that term, coming not in what it is or was, but in how we make it, hide it, nurture and protect it, speculate with and hybridise it. It is our agency, not our record, that is subjective. And that is why the spectacle hits us there – not by erecting a screen between us and some 'real self', not by conditioning us into what we are not, but rather by entering into an exploitative and intimate relationship with who we most really are.

Invasive digital algorithms are not turning us into mindless consumers; they are helping us to become dynamic individualists directly plugged into a web by which we can separate and unitise our distinctiveness, ready to scale up when our emotional response at the centre of things suddenly 'goes viral' and generates divisible and exchangeable assets for corporate investors from our unique affect and agency.

This is the ‘psycho’ part of the psychogeographical battlefield; the psychological space of conflict with spectacle; not just us making our way as bodies through the city’s forest of symbols, it is also about how the spectacle makes its way digitally through us.

Psychogeographers may well engage in all sorts of collective activity; in parades, hand-holding, strikes and demonstrations, drifts, orgies and installations, but the battle with the spectacle will be won, lost or drawn by the subjective agency of individuals.

This, I think, is the key recognition which we need to have the courage to state; that though our traditions are, at least partly, in collective struggle, it is on the battleground of the subjective that the struggle against the spectacle will be fought...

And that psychogeography speaks not just to the articulate and well-read individual, but to those who are marginalised, exhausted and ignored; it places that individual, any individual, in a quest for their selves, a pilgrimage to their selves, an exploration in their selves.

That in the scuzzy gutters and back alleys, on the jetties and supermarket car parks, we are the Peace Pilgrims, we are the Hawksmoors, we are Najda, we are Barnaby, we are the cosmic detectives of esoteric and paranoid narratives – we are Mick Travis in ‘O Lucky Man’, Joe Frady in ‘The Parallax View’, we are Julianne Moore’s ‘Telly Paretta’ in ‘The Forgotten’... journeying to find the secrets...



*Christian looks for a way of escape outside the City of Destruction.*

As hyper-sensitized pilgrim-detectives, practising what Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing calls the “arts of noticing”, we read the signs and symbols of the everyday as vocabularies of power and appropriate them for our own poetry. Excited by our own status, by acting the avatar in our own dis-placed, disturbed and disrupted life, we can have the kind of limited-paranoid sensitivity that will enable us not only to see the shapes and symbols of power but to encode them, in other words interpret and explain them - and then later re-encode and appropriate them as parts of a ‘disturbance’.



So, for example, you could walk your local High Street, and look for the layer of commercial symbols there, and then having identified them begin to interpret or “encode” them – identifying not the product they represent, but the meaning they promote – so, for example, you might see: the three prongs of the Mercedes Benz badge, intended to express the company’s dominance on land, sea and air – doesn’t get much more proprietorial than that... or the hidden arrow in the FEDEX sign, or the red snake hidden in an out of date BT logo - maybe that was just a little too explicit? and no one quite knows why Starbucks specifically chose Mesaline as their symbol – a twin-tailed creature, she is not a mermaid, she was made into a serpent (not a fish) from the waist down after imprisoning her father in a mountain.



Or you might choose the echoes of more general designs in your High Street – such as the faint remains of a Kabbalah ‘tree of life’ in Sir Patrick Abercrombie’s development of post-war Plymouth city centre.



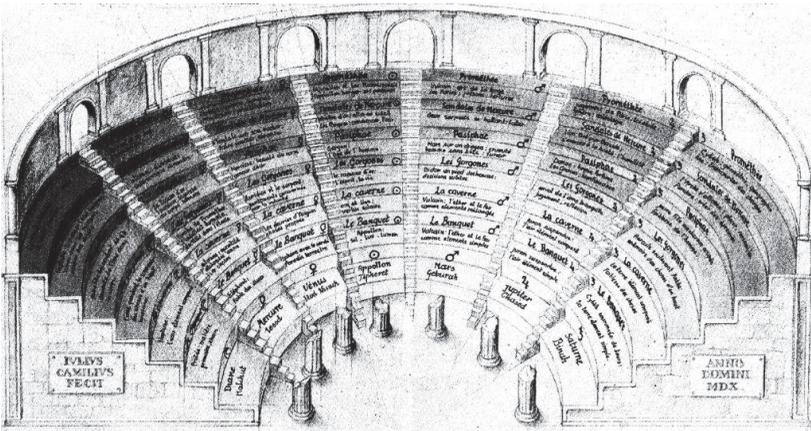
Once you have decided what these symbols and shapes and materials mean – the myths of power and the histories and philosophies they are intended

to invoke – your next phase is to re-encode these signs and shapes and things entirely according to your own associations, giving them whatever meanings you wish. So, let’s say that the snakes become symbols of doubleness and duplicity, and the arrow shows the way to hidden meeting places, and the ‘tree of life’ memorialises a forest that once stood where the High Street is now....

This is something like the old ‘art of memory’ or ‘theatre of memory’ – using a particular place and its features to memorise a complex set of facts or the different parts of a philosophy. Once you have memorised your re-encodings, you now have your own geographical theatre, inscribed with your own meanings rather than the spectacle’s. Permanently ready to be re-walked, savoured and refined. And yet there is no physical evidence to alert the authorities to the fact that their meanings have been vandalised and *détourned*.

The final stage is to share this re-encoding with others, and ask them to encode and re-encode a space and share it with you. Eventually you’ll be able to walk whole symphonic weaves of meaning in familiar places.

The making of such ‘theatres of memory’ should be open to anyone. But the making of alternative worlds, the ambition towards some kind of imaginary totality, is something that walking artists might want to address in their specialised practices.





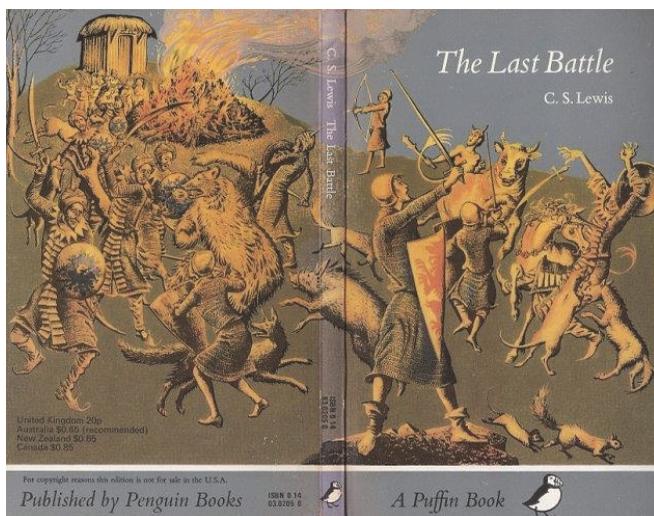
For some time now the occult-literary psychogeographers have been showing us the way – while many walking artists, influenced directly or indirectly by the critiques of Adorno and the Frankfurt School, have resisted anything suggestive of grand narratives, and a cut-up punk aesthetic was dominant for a while among psychogeographical groups, the schematic novels of Peter Ackroyd, the earth mystery-mapping of Iain Sinclair and the musical workings of Alan Moore and Tim Perkins, such as the ‘The Highbury Working’ or ‘Snakes and Ladders’, all display a totalising ambition, enabling the reader or listener to test them against their own contradictions –



There are other precedents for this kind of speculative totality - Arthur Kubin's *The Other Side*, Matthew Barney's epic 'Cremaster Cycle', Guy Maddin's 'My Winnipeg', The Future Sound of London's 'Dead Cities' album, the movies of Hans-Jürgen Syberberg... each suggests that there is another and 'entire' landscape inside or to the side of the everyday one...



Even the allegorical totality of C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* repays attention. A lot of psychogeographers, with varying degrees of irony, reference that first arrival of the children in Narnia – the lamppost and the faun – to express that 'through the wardrobe' feeling of a new and previously un-experienced world emerging from the familiar everyday one. What gets less attention from psychogeographers is the apocalyptic climax of the 'Chronicles' in an anti-Muslim struggle in the final book. In *The Last Battle*, published just after The Suez Crisis, the Anti-Christ arrives in Narnia. The book is a myth of a new world order, evoking the nightmare void of post-colonial chaos, exploitation and prejudice that is always just a wardrobe away from each and every one of us. It's a deeply reactionary and unpleasant book, but what it exposes are the real origins of that missing thing, that mystery, that void which drives modern occult narratives – and it's not a wounded King Arthur or some Celtic ghost or a superannuated jellyfish, it's the unresolved and unrepented murders of colonialism, continuing to haunt the occulted, hidden, layer of this land. It is this void and this trauma that, for me, drives the hyper-sensitivity of our drifts.



And it is by directly confronting this revenant of the colonial trauma in the streets, informed by seeking totality in a fictional-psychological practice, that we can begin to deal with that revenant that is returning, now, thankfully, in the form of new people to walk with, not monsters to be scared of or Grail goddesses to hopelessly hanker after.



We often experience the affect of this revelatory totality – of the making of a world ready to be changed – as ambience – or atmosphere – the spirit of a place, the *genius loci*. It's remarkable how often we share a common perception – at least in the way we represent these atmospheres. Somehow, by privileging the subjective, and focusing on the most numinous and insubstantial of things – ambience - psychogeography finds its collectivism – perhaps through a subtly shared culture of exploring, mediated by fictions, maybe in the direct effect of each other's presence.



Or, perhaps, it might be the space itself, the grinding of its many layers taking the primary part in this production of atmospheres we socially perceive and enjoy.

We may be riding arrows of time, but we are not following any apocalyptic or dialectical timetable. Our literature and the best of our wanders are reparative, healing and therapeutic, as we pursue principles and dynamics of dispersal, diffraction, salvage and re-semblage, encoding and re-encoding and sharing. We may have extracted the revelation from fictional apocalypses, but our ideal is not a spasm of transfiguration and floating-free, not a deregulation from flesh, but a diffusive entanglement across multiple fields...



If miracles come, so be it, if shining New Babylons arise, OK, but we will treat them just the same as other disturbances, ripe for salvage and *détournement*, as spaces resisting separation and the scaling up and down into assets.

Is this revolutionary?



I'll be honest with you – I'm not sure – because I've tried to build everything in this talk from what I have experienced happening, rather than starting from the assumption – as I think the situationists did – that there is a pre-prepared future which we have to find some way of inserting ourselves into. I have not assumed that, so I am left with a lot of tactics, a few stories, and some strategic principles that may be revolutionary, or something better, or something worse... but whatever they are they come from psychogeography in practice.

There is no point in pretending that these ideas are not essentially defensive – we face a spectacular-economy that has moved beyond authoritarian, market and integrated versions – today we live in and under a multiplicitous, digitized and globalised spectacle, no longer satisfied by

separation and scalability, it inflicts individuation and diversity; more pernicious than alienation, this spectacle will deliver versions of happiness and self-realisation in return for total, and unobtrusive, access to our subjectivity – the techniques of the secret services translated for retail opportunities.



In response – and I am trying hard not to sound like a New Age snake-oil salesman – our psychogeographical resistance will always be less about producing things and more about producing ourselves in multiple, semi-covert forms.

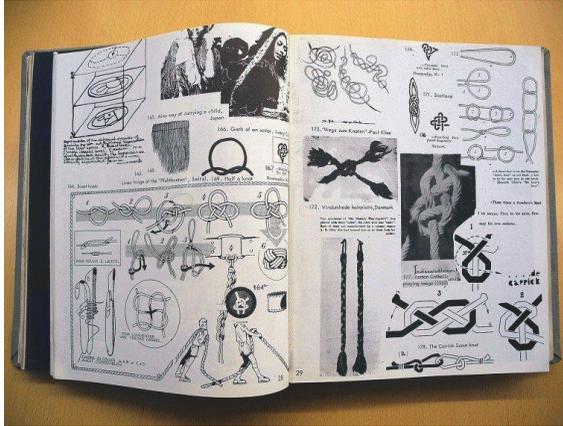
In his 1988 book *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord describes a spectacle which is not only integrated with market and state forces, but which has appropriated Debord's own critique of it for its own uses. There is no way out in Debord's 1988 description – it is almost as if, in his anxiety to convince us of his analysis, he removes all manoeuvre space and completes his theory in a pure form, justifying his retreat from Paris to his rural bunker, generalising his despair and anxiety around the murder of his friend and publisher Gérard Lebovici, realising a pessimism that had intermittently threatened to turn to extreme iconoclasm,



But, what if we played that movie differently, what if spliced together the stuff that got left on the cutting room floor, the messy milieu of the situationists that has now been conserved and re-assembled in McKenzie Wark's trilogy – spilling outwards and laterally, making a fool of any centralist momentum, and reaching back to Fourier and his hauntological dreams of bodies growing new sense organs?



What if we took our inspiration from the outtakes of the situationist story



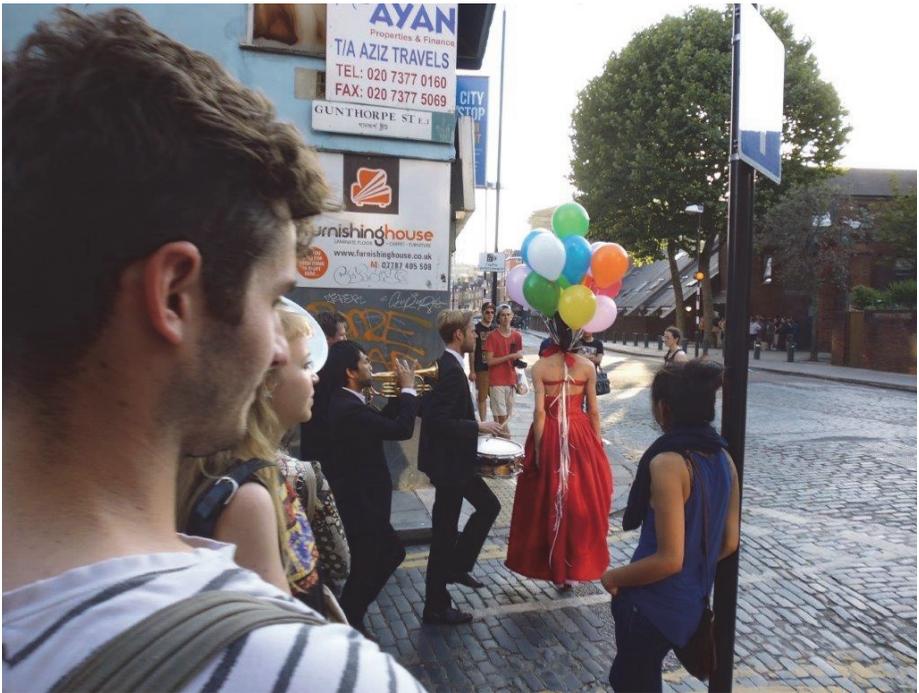
– the knots and knotting of Asgar Jorn in the *Situationist Times*, the cancelled labyrinth intended for the Stedelijk Gallery in Amsterdam – building not where psychogeography is supposed to be strong – in the elegance of its theorisation – but rather where it is supposed to be weak – in the failure of its art-making?

For sure, Debord and his closest allies turned away from the aesthetic and towards the everyday, but that sharp turn did not address the problem of how to represent the everyday in transformation, without which their efforts would lead to solipsism.... which wasn't, sadly, far from the truth...



Indeed, it is representation that turns the *dérive* experimental – representation operating like the “cut” or “separation” in the physicist Niels Bohr’s definition of an experiment, the decision which separates the experiment from everyday immersion in the world in which all things are entangled.

The ‘drift’ is an experimental slicing, a defining of the limits of the experiment and an inclusion, within the space of that ‘cut’, of the experimental apparatus itself as part of the object under investigation. Narrating the street, and bathing it with cinematic images, makes a psychogeographical cut, that renders the street understandable rather than, and as well as, ambient.



This is practical stuff, operational stuff. Once the choice to represent the street is made we can forget theorisations of representation, and search for ways in the mess rather than the theoretical, from what is on the cutting

room floor rather than on the screen... what is important is not the description of difference or the record of crisis, but the descriptions of differences that matter, of crises that constitute a 'disturbance'. Then, salvage becomes possible; accumulation is resisted.



In a recent blog, the film-maker Adam Scovell describes a solo 'drift' around the resort of New Brighton on Merseyside – how it has been cleaned up, anonymised and emptied of people, in distinct contrast to the heaving resort he remembers visiting as a child, where working class people – to the amazement and disgust of the media and its middle class audience – sat among piles of rubbish and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Now the workers have been liberated from their pleasure....

Let's go back to rubbish, to disturbance, to salvage...



In his book *How Forests Think*, the anthropologist Eduardo Kohn describes how he was about to fall asleep under a lean-to in the foothills of Sumaco Volcano in Ecuador's Upper Amazon when one of the local hunters warned him – “Sleep face up! If a jaguar comes, he'll see you can look back at him, and he won't bother you. If you sleep facedown he'll think you're prey and he'll attack.”

We need to follow the same advice in relation to the Spectacle – we need to dream face up, dream outwards, dream with our face to the world, but our multiplicity hidden deep within... hide your signal within a signal - don't be prey. Be a forest. Face the world.

Thank you.

