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Jacques Tati's *Play Time* as New Babylon

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> The illusion has been shattered that a work of art has
> a fixed value: its value is dependent on
> the creative ability of the onlooker, which in turn
> is stimulated by the suggestions the work of art arouses.
> Only living art can activate the creative spirit,
> and only living art is of general significance.
> For only living art gives expression to the emotions,
> yearnings, reactions and ambitions which
> as a result of society's shortcomings we all share.
>
> Constant, *COBRA manifesto*, 1948[1]

In an interview for *Les Lettres françaises* in May 1958, after the release of *Mon Oncle*, Jacques Tati explained that he had not made up his mind as to what his next film would be about, adding that, instead of shooting a film, he would not mind constructing a building: "My building might not be perfect, but it would still be great putting it together."[2] Ten years later, Tati would talk of *Play Time* (1967) as the film of which he was proudest: "It's exactly the picture I wanted to make . . . I've suffered a lot because of it, physically and financially, but it's really the film I wanted to do" – a film for which he devised not only a building but a whole town.[3] *Play Time* was released in December 1967 after three years spent building the set and shooting the film.[4] Critical reaction was mixed and the public did not visit *Play Time* in great numbers.

Play Time has since often been considered an *avant-garde* film mostly for its *mise-en-scène* and its modification of the comedy genre in terms of narrative and characterization.[5] Little has been written about its political dimension.

What I propose to do here is to point out the relevance of *Play Time* to the 1960s in the light of Situationist writings. More specifically, I shall examine Situationist theories on urbanism with particular reference to *New Babylon*, the utopian urban project devised by the Dutch artist Constant who, after his participation in the *avant-garde* art movement COBRA, became a member of the Situationist International.[6]

Two months after Tati received the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film for *Mon Oncle*, Charles de Gaulle returned to power in May 1958, and in November the French voted overwhelmingly in favor of the new constitution which marked the birth of France's Fifth Republic. In July 1961, Tati was awarded the newly established *avance sur recettes* (a public grant based on the film scenario) for *Play Time* by the *Centre national de la cinématographie* (CNC; the French National Film Center). Tati's interest in urbanism, already apparent in *Mon Oncle*, was not merely incidental. It coincided with a wave of new housing projects made necessary by France's shortage of housing stock and rapid urbanization. Although they began before de Gaulle's era, these new developments took on a new impetus under the Gaullist regime. A total reorganization of the French capital and its vicinity was made possible by a new law (2 August 1961) which created the "district of Paris," an institution which was responsible for the preparation, development, and financing of new urban projects across 1,305 towns. Thus a number of high-rise estates were created in the outskirts of Paris. These *Zones à Urbaniser en Priorité* (ZUPs; Priority Urbanization Zones) were "based on the notion of the separation of accommodation, industry and offices, and increasing use of the car."[7] Moreover, the new regime, which Louis Chevalier described as "the reign of the technocrats," set about the construction of the business district of La Défense, a project on which De Gaulle was particularly keen.[8] Alongside rapid urbanization, France was beginning to enjoy the benefits of the affluent society, as evidenced by the steep increase in the ownership of cars and television sets.[9] Tati was not the only one concerned with the evolution of French society. The genesis of *Play Time* also coincided with the birth of the Situationist International.

The Situationist International was founded in 1957 by members of previous *avant-garde* movements, among them COBRA, the Lettrist International and the Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus.[10] Its aim was quite simply to "change life," putting forward both a comprehensive attack on art and a radical critique of society as a whole. Its main outlet was the *Internationale Situationniste*, of which twelve issues were published between June 1958 and 1972. Most articles in the first three years of the *Internationale Situationniste* tackled issues such as automation, urbanism, town planning, politics, and games theory, as well as cinema. While Situationists complained that "everyone was hypnotized by work and by comfort, by the lift, by the bathroom, and by the washing machine, and that young people everywhere had been allowed to choose between love and a garbage disposal unit and everywhere they had chosen the garbage disposal unit," they also believed that mechanization and automation could lead to a new leisure-based society.[11] For the Situationists, the new urban space represented the perfect arena where "scientific knowledge and technical skill could be brought into play" since "art and technology could become one" and "reveal the true dynamic and shape of *the city*."[12] Lifts, garbage disposal units, and technology are all present in "Tativille," the city of *Play Time*.

Before looking at the way Tati criticizes the alienating impact of technology on Tativille's citizens, it is worth examining the technology its director availed himself of in the making of the film. *Play Time* was shot in 70mm, color, and stereophonic sound. Tati was always keen to keep in touch with the latest technical innovations on offer. This is not only true of *Play Time*. *Jour de fête* was shot in color in 1947, and in 1974 Tati was among the first to use video when he directed his last film, *Parade*. Tati's use of state-of-the-art film technology in *Play Time* does not serve any spectacular purpose, but instead contributes to the revolutionary aspect of the film. In fact, his handling of technical innovations echoes the way Situationists saw new film techniques as a means to change the role of cinema in society. In an article in *Internationale Situationiste* entitled "For and against cinema," film is described both as a passive substitute for the artistic activity which modernization has made possible and as an enslaving art form.[13] Yet it also "acknowledges interesting and valuable new technical applications such as stereophony or odorama" and states that "the progressive aspects of industrial cinema should be developed and put to use in the same way that an architecture based on the psychological function of ambience should allow the hidden treasure to come out of the manure of absolute functionalism."[14]

Tati was always adamant that he was not against modernization or modern architecture *per se*.[15] He told students at the *Institut des hauts études cinématographique* (IDHEC) that he was

> not against modern architecture if it is properly and effectively put to use, if it brings us something good. I am not very intelligent but I am not going to tell you that we should build small schools with tiny windows so that the pupils won't seen the sun, and that hospitals with dirty sinks, where one was badly looked after, were brilliant. . . .[16]

What he criticizes in *Play Time* is the use to which modern architecture is being put: "The film's satire is not about the place where we live but about the way we use it."[17] Tati explains that he is "against a certain way of life, a sterile homogenization which affects the way we think as much as the place where we live."[18] This denunciation takes place mostly in the first part of the film where repetition, homogenization, and banalization are the central

themes.[19] Among other things, Tati makes fun of what traveling has become in the modern world. The spectator cannot help pitying the group of American tourists who desperately try to catch sight of the real Paris but always end up in the most nondescript places. What should have been a unique experience has turned into a non-event. In thesis 168 of *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Guy Debord, the most prominent Situationist, analyzes the place of tourism in modern society and his comments seem perfectly appropriate to the obvious poverty of the Americans' Parisian sightseeing experience:

> Human circulation considered as something to be consumed – tourism – is a by-product of the circulation of commodities; basically, tourism is the chance to go and see what has been made trite. The economic management of travel to different places suffices in itself to ensure those places' interchangeability. The same modernization that has deprived travel of its temporal aspect has likewise deprived it of the reality of space.[20]

Among a number of Situationist concepts, that of "psychogeography" strikes a chord in relation to *Play Time*. Psychogeography is defined as "the study of the specific effect of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals."[21] Whether it be outside or inside buildings, the way the film's characters, including M. Hulot, wander about Tativille is often determined by the geography or the architecture of the place in which they find themselves. Thus M. Hulot is swallowed by the lift and spat out on the wrong floor, and glass partitions prevent him from meeting M. Giffard whom he came into town to see. In the first part of the film, characters are isolated from each other, either as the result of the deliberate organization of the workplace (as in the cubicles of the office block) or by the organization of the city itself. The civilization of the car is also targeted in *Play Time*. There are many scenes at the beginning of the film which echo the view of traffic circulation as "the organization of universal isolation," and indeed many more in Tati's subsequent film, entitled precisely *Trafic* (1971).[22] In Situationist terms, the car is "the sovereign good of an alienated life and an essential product of the capitalist market," while "the development of the urban *milieu* is the capitalist domestication of space."[23] The bland and alienating characteristics of modern architecture and urbanism mocked by Tati were ceaselessly reviled by the Situationists: "We have no intention of contributing to this mechanical civilization, to its bleak architecture, to its inevitably catatonic leisure."[24]

Society of the Spectacle, which was published in November 1967, a month before *Play Time*'s release, remains the key Situationist text. In it, Debord develops a radical and complex critique of capitalism and "pseudo-anti-capitalism" (that is, Eastern Europe, China, or Cuba). In the wake of Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), which became available in French in the

1950s, Debord considers that capitalist society has reached such a degree of alienation and separation that "what is now missing in life can only be found in the spectacle in the form of separated independent representations."[25] Since "the economy has subjected all aspects of human life to its own rules," all aspects of human life have been commodified, the final stage being both the fetishization of these commodities and the reification of their producers, this phenomenon affecting every aspect of everyday life.[26] It is this very impoverishment of daily life which Tati portrays in the first part of *Play Time*. The spectacle of consumer society is clearly targeted in the sequence in the chain store when the American tourists look ecstatically at the garbage bin. Nevertheless, Tati pushes his critique furthest in the scene in which Hulot is invited to visit his friend's apartment. The conversations inside cannot be heard. Hulot's friend makes a display of his material possessions (he is even proud of his parking meter), including a homemade film of his skiing holidays, which he is unable to show because he cannot work the projector. Tati shows the spectacularization and reification of life itself through a shot of identical flats seen through their glass front.

However humorously they are depicted in the sequence, these identical flats, in which the inhabitants watch the same television program, illustrate Debord's insistence that

> the question of the use of technological means, in everyday life and elsewhere, is a political question. . . . The new prefabricated cities clearly exemplify the totalitarian tendency of modern capitalism's organization of life: the isolated inhabitants (generally isolated within the framework of the family cell) see their lives reduced to the pure triviality of the repetitive combined with the obligatory absorption of an equally repetitive spectacle.[27]

When Tati criticized "the need of our civilization to make a show of itself," he seemed to be putting in simpler words Debord's first thesis, which reads: "The whole life of societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation."[28] Yet *Play Time* is not all doom and gloom. Jacques Tati not only reports a worrying state of affairs, he helps his spectators to find a way out. I would like to look at the way out devised by Tati in the light of Constant's *New Babylon* project.[29]

The ex-COBRA artists, Asger Jorn and Constant Newhenhuis, belonged to the first group of Situationists in 1957. Constant developed a special interest in urbanism and architecture, and, with Guy Debord, worked on the notion of Unitary Urbanism, defined as "the theory of the combined use of arts and techniques for the integral construction of a *milieu* in dynamic relation with experiments in behaviour."[30] It asserts that "man's environment can be totally unified and that all forms of separation – between work and

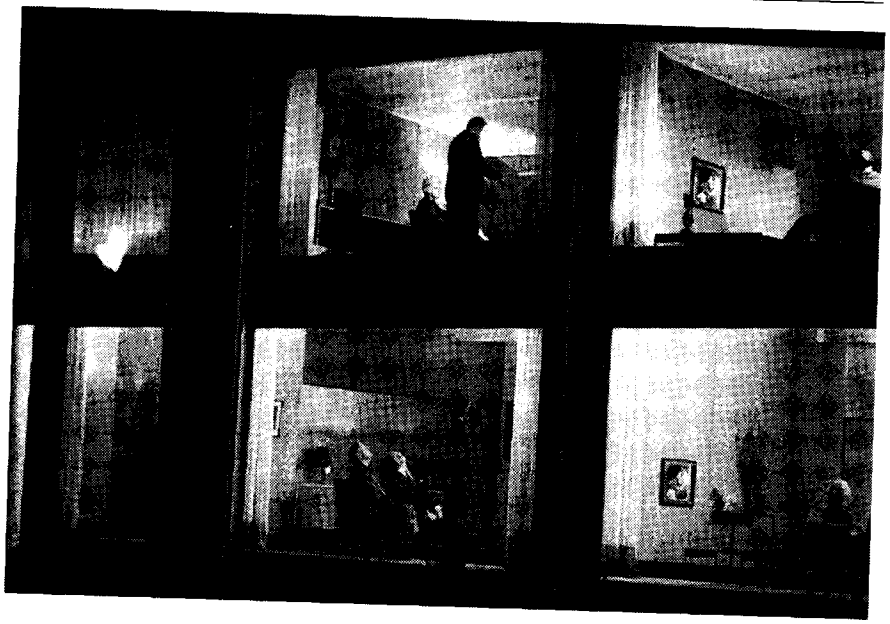

Figure 21.1 Spectacularization and reification in Jacques Tati's *Play Time* (*Courtesy of Specta Films CEPEC*)

leisure, between public and private – can finally be dissolved. But even before this, the minimum program of unitary urbanism is to extend our present field of play to every kind of building we can wish for."[31] I believe *Play Time* to be a filmic illustration of this minimum program.

Constant was to develop Debord's point further. The Dutch artist devised *New Babylon* thanks to Unitary Urbanism and other Situationist concepts such as the already mentioned psychogeography, and two others, the *dérive* and the "constructed situation." The *dérive* ("drift") is a "mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of transient passage through varied ambiences." A constructed situation is "a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambience and a game of events."[32]

As a city/society for *Homo ludens*, Constant explains, *New Babylon* rejects the utilitarian rationale which governs our present society. *Homo faber* has left very little room for *Homo ludens*. Yet, thanks to technological progress, it is foreseeable that all activities of production might be automated. This would free humankind from the constraints experienced in a utilitarian society and would result in a classless society in which freedom is a lived reality. In such a context, the inhabitants of New Babylon would be able to develop, expand,

and fulfil their creative potential in an environment in which they enjoy freedom in terms of time and space. New Babylonian culture is not the result of isolated activities or exceptional situations: instead, it is the result of the global activity of the entire population. The new form of urbanization thus created implies a new relation between the urban and the habitat, with human beings necessarily living a nomadic way of life. In New Babylon every place is accessible to everyone. Everyone changes places as they wish, when they wish. Life becomes an endless journey through an ever-changing world. *Homo ludens* finds, in New Babylon, the ludic city befitting a new way of life.

The long central sequence in the Royal Garden restaurant constitutes the turning point of *Play Time*. As a location, the Royal Garden becomes the psychogeographic vortex toward which drift a variety of people of diverse social and national origins. At the beginning, the customers tend to look like the clientele one would expect to see at the opening of a posh new nightspot. From the moment the glass front door is broken inadvertently by M. Hulot, there are more and more passersby who drift aimlessly inside the restaurant and start wandering about. Once inside, the drifters and some of the original customers become participants in a "constructed situation." The destruction of the Royal Garden, either provoked or spontaneous, and the resulting ambience show people coming, going, drinking, dancing, and singing together. From the dysfunctional place it was at the beginning of the evening, the restaurant has become a communitarian area in which unconscious desires come into the open: even M. Hulot starts flirting. Lucy Fischer is right to stress that "only when the restaurant décor is totally destroyed, do people begin to relax and enjoy themselves, and begin to *play*."[33] This is when and where order gives way to disorder, functionalism to chaos and a new form of harmony. But above all else, it is where people unite with their surroundings, where their behavior is no longer controlled by their environment, where they are no longer separated from it, but take hold of the place. Whereas, before, the city prevented people from meeting one another, the Royal Garden has now become a social place in the New Babylonian sense of the term: "For us, social space really means the concrete space where people meet, come into contact. Spatiality is social. In New Babylon, social space is social spatiality."[34]

Like the inhabitants of New Babylon, the people of *Play Time* seem to wander about the Royal Garden, looking for new experiences, unknown ambiences, not with the passivity of tourists but instead with the full awareness of their ability to act on the world, to transform it, to re-create it; and they do create a new social space in sharp contrast with the town depicted in the first part of the film. This happens because the space and the ambience have been altered by a succession of factors triggered by a number of occupants of the premises. Once more, the customers' behavior illustrates that of the New Babylonians as imagined by Constant:

> At every moment of their creative activity, the New Babylonians are in direct contact with one another. Each of their actions is public and each of them may in turn provoke new ones. All of these interventions form a chain reaction which only ends when a situation, which has reached a "critical" phase, explodes and transforms into a new situation. This process is not controlled by a single person, it does not matter to know who has triggered it and who will modify it in the future. In a way the critical moment is truly a collective creation.[35]

It is worth noticing that in order to make his explanation clearer, Constant uses the example not of a restaurant but of a café: "In New Babylon, at any moment anyone can change the atmosphere of the café by changing the noise level, the light, the temperature, the smells. A small group arrives and the configuration of the place will be altered. With a minimum of effort, all wished-for modifications can take place."[36] This strikingly echoes what happens in *Play Time*'s Royal Garden.

The metamorphosis of the city happens as a result of the destruction of the old setup and the creation of a new social format. It is in the aftermath of the wild night at the Royal Garden that a brighter morning dawns. The last sequence then takes on its deepest sense and should be read as a sign of optimism on Tati's part, as he himself acknowledged.[37] In this scene, a roundabout jammed with circling cars becomes a merry-go-round activated by what was once a parking meter, as a passerby blows a trumpet: the city is transformed into a fairground attraction park. In Tati's world, the merry-go-round, reminiscent of the circus floor, evokes childhood, fun, and games. In this ultimate scene, Tati brings play into the heart of the city. Furthermore, the props which compose this last sequence and the fashion in which they are used remind us that "all the constituents for a freer life are already at hand, both in the cultural as well as in the technical domains. They simply need to be given a new meaning and be differently organized."[38] Thus in *Play Time*, a new function is added to the means of transport: "from being simply tools," the cars "become instruments of play."[39]

In Situationist terms, cinema is the central art form of the society of the spectacle, since it depends on the separation of the spectator from the work of art. For the Situationists, no matter how much *Play Time* seemed to attack modern society in its content, it would always be merely another passive substitute for real artistic activity. The film would, therefore, lack any true political dimension. But *Play Time* is as political in form as it is in content. The revolutionary narrative aspect of the film stems from two deliberate decisions on Tati's part. On the one hand, Tati dilutes the notion of the film hero. On the other hand, he endows his spectators with a very active role in the viewing event. Tati refuses to show M. Hulot as the main character. The use of long takes, deep-focus and the 70mm format, as well as the absence

of closeups, allows Tati to turn every character into an extra – including Hulot himself – or, better still, to allow every extra to achieve Hulot's status. Tati refuses the fetishization of M. Hulot as character, and consequently Tati's own reification as filmmaker.

The main consequence of Tati's doing away with the notion of the film hero is that it gives the spectator more agency. This is probably where the film was most disorienting for its public. Tati may have been too confident of his audience's ability to participate in the viewing event. For without this participation, there is little point in watching Tati's favorite film. *Play Time* was Tati's "gift" – another Situationist key word – to his public: "The images are designed so that after you see the picture two or three times, it's no longer my film, it starts to be your film. You recognize the people, you know them and you don't even know who directed the picture."[40] In a very fine analysis Lucy Fischer describes what is required of the spectator for a full appreciation of *Play Time*. Tati's "democracy of gags and comics" rests, Fischer argues, on a dialectic of game and play: "The comic work as game, and the spectator's response as play."[41] This directorial decision is on a par with the thematic content of the film:

> Because of his formal emphasis on a gamelike mode, Tati's films can be seen not only to present, on a narrative level, the problem of passive leisure, but also, in their very structure, to inspire in the viewer a playful response. Hence they act as palliatives for the very problem they depict. Clearly the relation of structure and signification in Tati's work is extraordinarily tight – the form of his films addressing the issues of content.[42]

Play Time requires a dynamic and creative spectator. Just as the New Babylonians move about their cityscape, the watchers of *Play Time* must do likewise in the screenscape devised by Tati. Thanks to his use of the 70mm format and extreme depth of field, Tati creates a kind of dynamic maze through which the spectator must wander. His or her gaze must acquire a nomadic quality so as to err freely in Tativille in search of new discoveries. The spectator's gaze is therefore no longer controlled by the film's narrative. On the contrary, s/he has acquired a high degree of freedom: the spectator who watches *Play Time* circulates through the screen and each new viewing is therefore a new experience. Each new visit to Tativille leads to new pleasures.

If, for Constant, "a fulfilling life can only be achieved through continuous creation and re-creation" and "Man can only fully realize himself by creating his own life," for Tati a successful film is one which allows the spectators to create and re-create the viewing event at will.[43] *Play Time*'s *raison d'être* rests on the spectators taking charge of the narrative, playing with it. Both New Babylon and *Play Time* represent an intensification of the urban and filmic spaces open to their respective residents and visitors. Tati refuses his specta-

tors mere contemplation of the film but encourages them to become actively involved in the same way Constant wants the inhabitants of New Babylon to be the active creators of their city. They both share Debord's belief that there "can be no freedom apart from activity, and within the spectacle all activity is banned."[44]

When it was released in December 1967, Tati played down the political overtones of his latest film. Yet in an interview in 1976 with Penelope Gilliatt he was much more explicit as to his own political inclination:

> Hulot is not the hero of *Play Time*. The main character is the décor and the heroes are the people who break it up. I am not a Communist. I could have been, if Communist history were not so sad. It makes me sound old-fashioned, but I think I am an anarchist. Great things were done by the historical anarchists.[45]

Gilliatt wrote that *Play Time* epitomized Tati's politics. Far from being reactionary, Tati in *Play Time* "'read' May before it happened," to use Keith Reader's phrase about the Situationists and May 1968.[46] The film promoted a playful, festive, and poetic revolution, on a par with the "revolutionary *fête*" of the Situationists.[47] It is in this light that the reference to "la Bastille" – one of the landmarks of the French Revolution and a square known since for its large popular gatherings – must be read when the inebriated customers start singing "*A la Bastille, on aime bien Nini Peau de chien*" in a restaurant which bears the name "*Royal* Garden."[48] Tativille is thus more akin to Pinot-Gallizio's playful machines and Constant's New Babylon project than to the "grids" of Mondrian, who has been mentioned in relation to *Play Time*.[49]

In Truffaut's *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, shot in 1958, the headmaster shouts at his pupils: "I dread to think of France in ten years' time, it won't be a pretty sight!" Truffaut wrote to Tati after he saw *Play Time* to comfort him in view of the poor reception of the film. "*Play Time* is the Europe of 1968 shot by the first Martian filmmaker," Truffaut wrote.[50] *Play Time* did indeed predict May 1968, but it was not shot by a Martian but by someone acutely aware of the society of which he was a member. It is as if Tati were talking to Truffaut's schoolboys, now in their early twenties, showing them that one of the ways to build a better place in which to live was through a "reappropriation" of the urban environment. In the aftermath of the events, Louis Chevalier wrote that "May 68 was also an attempt on youth's part to regain the city, which had been a place of freedom for so long but which had changed so much in the 1960s."[51] A few months earlier the inhabitants of Tativille had also reclaimed their city.

Notes

1 Constant, in Willemijn Stokvis, *COBRA* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), p. 30, originally published in "COBRA manifesto," *Reflex* I (Amsterdam, September–October 1948).
2 Marc Dondey, *Tati* (Paris: Ramsay Cinéma, 1989), p. 180.
3 Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Tati's Democracy", *Film Comment*, May June 1973, p. 40.
4 For a complete account of the film's early stages, see Brent Maddock, *The Films of Jacques Tati* (Metuchen, NJ and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1977), pp. 76–8; and Dondey, *Tati*, pp. 185–96.
5 See Rosenbaum, " Tati's Democracy," pp. 36–41; Lucy Fischer, "*Play Time*: the comic film as game," *West Virginia University Philological Papers* 26 (August 1980): 83–8; Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); Paolo Bertotto, "Magic City," in *Paris vu par le cinéma d'avant garde, 1923 1983* (Paris: Paris Expérimental, 1985), pp. 43–8.
6 Published after this chapter was written, David Bellos refers to the Situationist International in his biography of Tati, but he does so in a rather dismissive way, without mentioning Constant. See Bellos, *Jacques Tati, His Life and Art* (London: Harvill Press, 1999), pp. 268–77.
7 See Robert Gildea, *France since 1945* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 80–2; and Bernard Marchand, *Paris, histoire d'une ville, XIX^e-XX^e siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993), pp. 280–320.
8 Louis Chevalier, *L'Assassinat de Paris* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1977), p. 129; on La Défense, see Marchand, *Paris, histoire d'une ville*, p. 303.
9 See Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies, Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), pp. 15–70.
10 See Marie-Hélène Colas-Adler, *Groupes, mouvements, tendances de l'art contemporain depuis 1945* (Paris: École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1990), p. 97.
11 Christopher Gray (ed.), *Leaving the 20th Century* (London: Free Fall Publications, 1974), p. 2.
12 Ibid.
13 *Internationale Situationiste (IS)*,1: 9, reprinted in Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981).
14 Ibid.
15 See Jacques Tati in Michel Mourlet, "Tati ou pas Tati," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 30 November 1967.
16 Jacques Tati in Jean-André Fieschi, *La Voix de Tati* (Mulhouse: Limelight/Éditions Ciné-fils, 1996), p. 20.
17 Claude-Marie Trémois, "Play Time: le temps de s'amuser. Jacques Tati donne une leçon de 'mieux vivre' aux spectateurs pendant deux heures vingt minutes," *Télérama*, 17 December 1967.
18 Tati in Mourlet, "Tati ou pas Tati."
19 Rosenbaum, "Tati's Democracy," p. 40.
20 Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994), p. 120.

21 *IS* 1, p. 13, reprinted in Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 45.
22 Attila Kotyani and Raoul Vaneigem, "Program élémentaire du bureau d'urbanisme unitaire," *Internationale Situationniste* 6 (August 1961): 16, reprinted in Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 66.
23 Guy Debord, "Positions situationnistes sur la circulation," *IS* 3 (December 1959): 36–7, reprinted in Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 65.
24 Gilles Ivain (Ivan Chtcheglov), "Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau," *IS* 1 (June 1958): 16 (reprinted in Gray (ed.), *Leaving the 20th Century*, p. 18).
25 On Lukács and Debord, see Anselm Jappe, *Guy Debord* (Pescara: Via Valeriano, 1995), pp. 40–55, 22.
26 Ibid, p. 22.
27 Guy Debord, "Perspectives de modifications conscientes dans la vie quotidienne," *IS* 6: p. 23, reprinted in Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 71).
28 See Tati in Mourlet, "Tati ou pas Tati"; Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, p. 12.
29 For a comprehensive analysis of New Babylon, see Jean-Clarence Lambert, *New Babylon, Constant, Art et Utopie* (Paris: Éditions du Cercle d'Art, 1997); and Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 105–55.
30 *IS* 1, p. 13.
31 Debord, "Positions situationnistes sur la circulation," p. 36.
32 *IS* 1, p. 13.
33 Fischer, "*Play Time*," p. 87.
34 Constant, "New Babylon, une ville nomade," in Jean Duvignaud (ed.), *Nomades et vagabonds* (Ser. cause commune, collection 10/18, Paris: UGE, 1975), p. 205.
35 Ibid., p. 218.
36 Ibid., p. 228.
37 Tati in Mourlet, "Tati ou pas Tati."
38 Jappe, *Guy Debord*, p. 95.
39 Constant, "New Babylon," p. 211.
40 Rosenbaum, "Tati's Democracy," p. 34.
41 Fischer, "*Play Time*," p. 87.
42 Lucy Fischer, *Jacques Tati: A Guide to References and Resources* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1983), p. 38.
43 Constant, "New Babylon", p. 229.
44 Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, p. 21.
45 Penelope Gilliatt, *Jacques Tati* (London: Woburn Press, 1976), pp. 55–8.
46 Keith Reader, *The May 68 Events in France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1993), p. 53. For examples of negative views of *Play Time* as reactionary, see Dominique Noguez, *Le Cinéma autrement* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1987), p. 182; Albert Cervoni, "L'air du temps," *France Nouvelle*, 27 December 1967, p. 14; and Robert Benayoun, "Dullsville, Funless, Borecity, Snoretown and Lullabygrad," *Positif* 93 (March 1968): 61–2.
47 Pascal Dumontier, *Les Situationnistes et Mai 68* (Paris: Éditions Champ Libre, 1989), in Reader, *The May 68 Events in France*, p. 53. Tati himself acknowledged that *Play Time* was quite violent; see Fieschi, *La Voix de Tati*, p. 20.
48 My emphasis. *Nini peau de chien* is a song written by Aristide Bruant, a famous Parisian popular singer at the end of the nineteenth century.
49 See, for example, Emmanuel Abela, *Présence(s) de Jacques Tati* (Schiltigheim: LimeLight/Les Éditions Ciné-fils et la Ville de Schiltigheim, 1997), p. 19. See also Noguez, *Le Cinéma autrement*, p. 182.
50 François Truffaut, quoted in Dondey, *Tati*, p. 211.
51 Jappe, *Guy Debord*, p. 86.