Spectacular Disruptions: Situationism and the Terrorist Gesture in Howard Brenton’s Skin Flicker and Magnificence

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The opening sequence of John Waters’ recent film Cecil B. Demented (2000) dramatizes a media disruption that is filmed by young cinematic revolutionaries: the self proclaimed “cinema terrorists” burst into a film festival gala and abduct a Hollywood diva (Melanie Griffith) and force her to star in their radical underground movie. The entire abduction is filmed, edited and later disseminated to cult fans who become enamored with the media interventions of the clandestine cinema radicals. The film suggests that in this historical moment the desire to “disrupt the spectacle” of Hollywood mainstream cinema primarily exists in the realm of fantasy. Cecil B. Demented dramatizes the left-wing fantasy of overthrowing the Hollywood system of image reproduction and replacing it with a more “authentic” grassroots version. However, it is significant that this parodic film
does not, in any way, suggest that radical cinema could actually serve the cause of revolution in a real life situation; the film tacitly implies that media disruption exists largely as a form of wish-fulfillment. However, it is important to note that would be revolutionaries thought very differently thirty years ago.

In October of 1970, members of the Chénier, a radical cell of the Quebec Liberation Front, kidnapped the well known politician Pierre Laporte, the Labour Minister of the ruling Liberal Party. The Quebec Liberation Front hoped to use media coverage of the event to promote their revolutionary platform; in a communiqué they called for the release of political prisoners and the establishment of a workers state. The attempt to disseminate a revolutionary agenda via the media was a popular trend in the early 1970s. Several other leftwing radical groups, most notably the Angry Brigade in Britain, the Baader-Meinhof Group in Germany and the Red Brigade in Italy, resorted to public acts of terrorism to further their political agendas. To understand these media interventions, it is necessary to understand the utopian leanings of the revolutionaries during the late 1960s and early 1970s; at this historic moment the counter-culture believed that revolution was just around the corner. Social unrest was sweeping the globe—Paris, Chicago, Prague, and Mexico City—and some activists believed that all that was needed was a "magnificent gesture": a symbolic form of direct action that would spontaneously mobilize students and workers and trigger a revolution. The counter-culture’s flirtation with terrorism also goes hand in hand with the proliferation of the media in the audio-visual electronic age. “It is no coincidence that terrorism has become a world-wide phenomena”¹ in the last 35 years. The media’s penchant for sensationalism and “live coverage” caters to terrorism: it gives the terrorist and his/her platform the center stage. Radical groups who have been completely ignored by the media can, with one symbolic gesture, suddenly gain access to the headlines and the evening news. The highly theatrical aspects of terrorism ensure that the general public will be interested in the “narrative of terror” that is enfolding. Terrorist acts are also often ephemeral acts—kidnappings, bombings, hijackings—that contain a built-in theatrical structure that is “para-theatrical, a performance with an involuntary audience, a happening with an unscripted scenario that can go badly wrong and often does.”²

Theoretically speaking, para-theatrical tactics, media interventions and the concept of “disrupting the spectacle” can be loosely traced to the influence of Guy Debord and the Situationist International.³ The Situationists played an important role in the University phase of the May ’68 student revolt; several Situationists (Guy Debord and Raoul Vaneigem) were instrumental in the Council for the Maintenance of Occupations (CMDC) which was formed on May 17 at the Sorbonne University.⁴ During the aftermath of the May ’68 student revolt, Debord’s notion of “disrupting the spectacle,” and the Situationist’s uncompromising stance against capitalist recuperation, gave their theoretical ideas and techniques a revolutionary mystique abroad: in the

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eyes of would be radicals they were weapons that had nearly triggered a revolution. In Britain, many Situationist ideas were ingested by leftist splinter organizations who began to reject parliamentary democracy in favor of “direct action.” A central tenet of the Situationist philosophy was their attack on the media and its dissemination of bourgeois ideology. In his classic revolutionary text, The Society of the Spectacle, Debord argued that Marxism had to be reinvented to accommodate the dramatic shifts that had occurred with the creation of a consumer-based society in the post-war era. The most significant sphere of repression was no longer the point of production—the factory—but the point of consumption: the media and its transmission of the bourgeois ideology to the general public. For Debord, the chief ideologue of the Situationist movement, the “spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of the social life. Not only is the relationship visible but it is all one sees: the world one sees is its world.” Hence, the only possible way to contest the spectacle is through the transformation of its signs and gestures or by creating “situations” which call into question the hegemony of the commodity.

Situationist techniques—especially the concept of détournerement—were absorbed by the counter-culture and eventually by splinter groups who flirted with terrorism. Roughly translated, détournerement means diversion or deflection. However, this definition is, in many respects, too tame. A more evocative translation might be “aesthetic hijacking” or “creative appropriation.” In theoretical terms, the Situationists defined détournerement as the reversal of preexisting aesthetic elements to create a new subversive effect. It can be traced to Lautreamont’s creative plagiarism, Marcel Duchamp’s ready-mades and the Dada photomontages of the teens and 1920s. In theatrical terms, détournerement can be linked to Brecht’s verfremdungseffekt (to de-familiarize or to make strange). In Brechtian epic theatre, the actor uses the verfremdungseffekt to temporarily expose the ideological machinery implicit in realism. Both détournerement and the verfremdungseffekt involve the demystification of the theatrical medium: the Brechtian actor is analogous to the magician who momentarily reveals his secrets to the audience, thereby deflating the hypnotic power of his magic.
In Britain, détourment and other Situationist ideas were ingested by leftist splinter organizations who began to reject parliamentary democracy in favor of "direct action." Détourment was embraced as a tactic that could be used to sabotage media events. One such event was the "Miss World" pageant which was presented at the Royal Albert Hall in London in 1970. During the televised presentation a "slight interruption" occurred. In this excerpt, one participant gives her account of the "cultural intervention":

We threw smoke bombs, flour, stink bombs, leaflets, blew whistles, waved rattles. Bob Hope freaked out, ran off stage ... jumping from the seats, racing down the aisles, shattering the spectacle of beauty and saying "What the **** is all this about?"

This attempt to "disrupt the spectacle" was aimed at both the television audience and the Albert Hall spectators. It marks the attempt to invert the apparatus of the "spectacle"—television cameras—and to subvert its efficacy by creating a dislocation which forces the audience to consider an alternative version of the event. Since this disruption was probably excised by TV editors, it is doubtful that it had much impact on its intended mass audience.

In contrast to the "Miss World" "intervention," other groups, such as the Angry Brigade, embraced violent forms of "direct action." At a certain point in the early 1970s some left-wing factions became dissatisfied with nonviolent attempts to disrupt the spectacle. The Angry Brigade was an unorthodox terrorist group that briefly gained notoriety after a series of bombings during the early 1970's; they were also clearly influenced by the tactics and propaganda of the SI. Between December 1970 and August 1971, the Angry Brigade claimed responsibility for over ten separate bombings throughout Britain. The targets of the Angry Brigade were often symbolic public figures. The most notorious attack occurred in 1971, when the home of Robert Carr (the Tory Minister of Employment) was bombed. Ironically, Carr escaped injury because he was on holiday in Europe during the explosion. The Angry Brigade was also connected to an attack on Biba's
Boutique in Kensington in May of 1971. The propaganda of the Angry Brigade was often flavored with Situationist ideas. This communiqué appeared at the time of the boutique bombing:

Life is so boring there’s nothing to do except spend all our wages on the latest skirt, or shirt. Brothers and Sisters, what are your real desires? Sit in the drugstores, look distant, empty, bored, drinking some tasteless coffee? or perhaps BLOW IT UP OR BURN IT DOWN. The only thing you can do with modern slave houses—called boutiques—is WRECK THEM. You can’t reform profit capitalism and inhumanity. Just kick it till it breaks. Revolution.7

The Angry Brigade advocated the immediate realization of desires and placed its faith in “the spontaneity of the autonomous working class.”8 They skillfully used the media to facilitate their propaganda and gain access to the public. One editorial in the Evening Standard, described the Angry Brigade as “the red badge of revolution creeping across Britain and proclaimed: “these guerrillas are the violent activists of a revolution comprising workers, students, teachers, trade unionists, homosexuals, unemployed and women striving for liberation.”9 The strength of the Angry Brigade was their clandestineness: “The Angry Brigade is the man or woman sitting next to you. They have guns in their pockets anger in their minds.”10 Although the Angry Brigade was clearly influenced by Situationist tactics and propaganda, their embrace of revolutionary violence is contrary to the beliefs of the SI. (“From the strategical perspective of the social struggles it must first of all be said that one should never play with terrorism.”11) However, the Situationists’ formal disavowal did not prevent various radical leftist factions from advocating terrorism. In the early 1970s, some members of the counter-culture began to question the efficacy of non-violence in the struggle against a political and economic system that was, in their eyes, inherently corrupt, repressive and prone to use violence to defend wealth and privilege. The French police used violence and force to suppress the May ‘68 revolt, and this trend was repeated at the Democratic convention in Chicago and in the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia later that summer. All these examples of repression lent credulity to the case against non-violence. Many radicals of the post-68 era argued that the Situationists’ unwillingness to use terrorism enabled the CRS (French Riot Police) to suppress their revolution.

The Situationists’ disavowal of terrorism raises questions about the distinction between “disrupting the spectacle” and “terrorist acts.” Which guerilla tactics and “disruptions” are acceptable and which constitute terrorism? It could be argued that the Situationist’s rhetorical denunciations of the society of the spectacle are often deliberately confrontational and, in many cases, incendiary. After the May ‘68 revolt, the distinction between “disrupt-
ing the spectacle” and violent “direct action” against the spectacle (acts of terrorism) would become blurred. In the early 1970s, there was by no means a consensus on the issue of how to contest the hegemony of the “spectacle.”

Howard Brenton’s Terrorist Dramas

The gray area between disrupting the spectacle and violent acts of terrorism would become the topic of Howard Brenton’s two Situationist inspired political dramas: Skin Flicker (1972) and Magnificence (1973). Of all the New Left playwrights—David Hare, David Edgar, Trevor Griffiths—Brenton was the most profoundly influenced by the Situationist theory and practice. However, Brenton’s film Skin-Flicker and his full length play Magnificence are an examination of the moral and social implications of radical political gestures, media disruptions and terrorist acts; most significantly, the two works foreground the ever present specter of media recuperation: the notion that radical political gestures are immediately susceptible to co-optation.

Brenton was an internationalist who wholeheartedly supported the student radicals and their struggle against French authorities. Brenton visited Paris in 1969 and described the experience in an interview with Richard Boon: “I met many people who were survivors—barely survivors—of what had happened in ’68. I began to think of political things for the first time. The sense of loss was enormous: something had been attempted by my generation and it had been smashed.” During this visit Brenton came into contact with Situationist ideas and texts for the first time and was deeply influenced by their analysis of consumer society and their notions of “disrupting the spectacle”. Brenton was also receptive to their anti-elitist notions of creative plagiarism (which were borrowed from Dada) and their irreverent stance towards traditional artistic forms. The anarchism of Situationism deeply appealed to Brenton’s anti-cultural sensibility. Brenton read all the Situationist texts he could get his hands on and enthusiastically attempted to apply Situationist theories to his dramatic writing. The cross-fertilization of Situationist notions and Brenton’s growing political awareness
can be seen in Brenton’s choice of subject-matter; many of his plays contain young radicals who espouse Situationist ideas and flirt using acts of terrorism to disrupt the spectacle.”

The topic of terrorism also enabled Brenton to bring the margins of British society (the militant fringe) into the spotlight, thus expanding the debate of political drama to include the possibility of various forms of direct action. Brenton’s interest in terrorist heroes is synonymous with his attempt to write “a Jacobean play for our times.” In Brenton’s Neo-Jacobean plays, the social sphere is fraught with violence and societal discord. Like Brecht before him, Brenton’s interest in the Jacobean style, signified the attempt to make theatre a forum for social analysis and critical engagement rather than an art form that was devoted to solipsism and psychological issues. In Brenton’s eyes, the Jacobean form was laudable because it often demystified power structures by revealing that corruption was systemic rather than an isolated phenomenon; hence attention was shifted away from individuals and their moral shortcomings and redirected towards the prevailing system of power which constructs individuals not as free agents but as pawns of an ideological struggle.”13 Brenton also noted how the modern terrorism figure has parallels with the malcontent figure in Jacobean tragedy: each possesses a self-destructive element that is often directed at the state and the power structure which has in some way marginalized him.

Several of Brenton’s plays and film scripts in the early seventies (*Fruit, Magnificence, Skin Flicker and The Saliva Milkshake*) contain terrorists who subscribe to a Situationist analysis of society, though they are reflective types rather than doctrinaire Situationists. Their beliefs are an eclectic mixture of Situationist theory, leftist paranoia and an almost religious desire for redemption *via* the ritual of revolutionary violence; their fanaticism is tinged with messianic overtones. They believe that society is controlled by elite sectors of society that continually impose their repressive view of the world through the promotion and exaltation of the commodity. For Brenton’s Situationist characters, the political sphere is entirely controlled by the representatives of the spectacle. Hence, the notion of working within “the system” is utterly futile. The alternative to the spectacle’s hegemony is contestation through “magnificent gestures” that disrupt the spectacle’s ideological function. In many of Brenton’s plays this strategy is enacted through depictions of terrorist acts—bombings and political assassinations—which violently disfigure the spectacle’s *modus operandi*. Brenton attempts to investigate whether this strategy of disruption actually produces any meaningful results at all.

**Skin Flicker**

*Skin Flicker* (1972) was Brenton’s first attempt at using film to address Situationist concerns. Brenton turned to film because he hoped to reach an audience that existed outside of the *cul-de-sac* of British alternative theatre.
The film was partly based on the Laporte kidnapping in Canada in 1970.\textsuperscript{14} Since the script of \textit{Skin Flicker} has never been published, Brenton’s synopsis of the film is extremely useful:

A teacher, a nurse and a garrulous layabout kidnap a public man somewhere in England. They employ a cameraman, a maker of blue movies, to record what happens. The story ends with the defection of the camera man, the murder of the public man, and the suicide of the kidnappers. At a later date, the material shot for the film is edited by government officials for training purposes, to instruct public employees in the \textit{mores} of extremist groups.\textsuperscript{15}

The story line is reflective of the early 1970’s and the counter-culture’s growing disenchantment with parliamentary democracy. Militant factions and splinter groups appeared in several western countries: The Angry Brigade and First of May Group (England), the Baader-Meinhof Group (Germany), the Weathermen, the Black Panthers (United States) and the Red Brigade (Italy). Some of these groups were indirectly influenced by a Situationist analysis of society and especially the notion of “disrupting the spectacle.” \textit{Skin Flicker} dramatizes one group’s decision to embrace the ultimate gesture of revolutionary commitment: political violence. The terrorist’s initial action is to “disrupt the spectacle” by filming the abduction of a famous media politician. In the future, they plan to distribute the film to the public as a means of furthering their political ideas and negating the spectacle’s monopoly on political discourse. Their plans fall through when the camera man that they have hired (a pornographic film-maker), disappears and becomes an informer. In this respect, the pornographer who filmed the abduction is analogous to the artist who is merely concerned with profit-making; his work is devoid of integrity, he is only interested in catering to whatever the spectacle demands. Furthermore, the analogy with pornography can also be applied to the terrorists themselves: their decision to film the event is suspect because it uses the spectacle of violence to attract viewers. Hence, the spectators are more interested in the titillating representations of violence and less concerned with the political issues being raised. In short, the artist-terrorists are using the mechanisms of the “spectacle” to contest the “spectacle”; the film’s conclusion demonstrates that this ultimately a problematic strategy.

\textit{Skin Flicker} also contains a key moment of spectator disruption. At the end of the film, we, as viewers, discover that the footage that we have been watching is actually a governmental film about the \textit{mores} of extremist groups. In a sense, the government filmmakers have used the technique of \textit{détournement}: they have re-appropriated a revolutionary narrative into a documentary film that valorizes state power and authority. Furthermore, Brenton’s work comments on the detachability of not only the image, but the
radical gesture itself; the revolutionary gesture is “always already”—to borrow a phrase from Althusser—reappropriated. Hence, when an image is recycled in a different context its revolutionary content is immediately neutralized through the process of recontextualization. All radical gestures are condemned to become ephemera that is seen only by the immediate witnesses. The inevitability of media reappropriation may be taken for granted in the twenty first century, however, for Brenton in the early 1970s, this is a striking insight.

Brenton’s depiction of Situationist concerns is by no means a partisan endorsement of terrorism or any form of violent “direct action.” Skin Flicker is a meditation on the clear limitations of spectacular disruption and the inevitability of co-optation; the spectacle is a remarkably flexible entity that can quickly deflate radical political gestures by re-contextualizing their revolutionary narratives. Skin Flicker also alludes to the political naiveté of the counterculture and suggests that the attempt to resist co-optation is a utopian ideal that cannot withstand the pressure of everyday political realities.

Magnificence

Much like Skin Flicker, Magnificence (1973) is also an examination of the efficacy of radical political gestures. Magnificence premiered at the Royal Court, the home of socially conscious British drama, in 1973. The play successfully launched Brenton’s career as a major British dramatist and media proclaimed voice of the counterculture. Prior to Magnificence, Brenton had mainly produced plays for itinerant fringe companies in Britain.

Magnificence is concerned with a group of leftwing social activists who decide to occupy a derelict flat. They drape banners on the outdoor windows, spray revolutionary slogans on the walls and pass out leaflets in the streets. However, their symbolic gestures go largely unnoticed until the local authorities learn about their illegal activities. The police force is quick to squash their utopian plans: they turn off their water and electricity and order them to evacuate the building. When the radicals refuse, the Constable sends his men up to evict them. When the police arrive a struggle quickly ensues; Mary, who is one of the squatters, loses her unborn child during the melee. The confrontation between the activists and the police is symbolizes the counterculture’s attempt to create an alternative society. Mary’s miscarriage
is a metaphor for the young revolutionaries’ utopian plans which have been destroyed. In the second act, Jed, the would-be father, returns to civilian life after a nine-month prison sentence. Jed discovers that his fellow radicals have gone their separate ways. Will has turned into a “speed freak” who is no longer interested in politics. He is wearing a Che Guevara tee-shirt, but it no longer means anything to him:

It’s just a tee-shirt . . . could be Marilyn Monroe on there or Benny Hill . . . Mickey Mouse, Steve McQueen. Apollo landing. Stars and stripes. Hammer and sickle.¹⁶

Will’s world has been reduced to images and cultural signs, and little else. Will has internalized the spectacle’s logic. His addiction to drugs is emblematic of his mindless consumption of the spectacle and how his revolt against the establishment has degenerated into a mere fashion statement. Jed decides to reform Will and proposes that the group consider a more radical gesture of “direct action”: terrorism. Cliff, who is no longer interested in “direct action” rejects his plan. Cliff now believes that the only option for social change is to work within “the system” (“work, corny work with and for the people. Politicizing them and learning from them”). As Jed prepares to take action, he delivers an enigmatic farewell speech to his former comrades; the speech appears to be a justification for his adoption of terrorism:

Went to see a terrible film once. Carpetbaggers. With Carole Baker. Right load of old tat, going on up there on the screen. Boring, glossy tat, untouchable being on the silver screen. And there was this drunk in the front row. With a bottle of ruby wine. And did he take exception to the film, he roared and screamed. Miss Baker above all came in for abuse. Something about her got right up his nose. So far up, that he was moved to chuck his bottle of ruby wine right through Miss Baker’s left tit. The left tit moved on in an instant, of course. But for the rest of the film, there was a bottle shaped hole. . . One blemish on the screen. But somehow you couldn’t watch the film from then. . . the poor bomber. Bomb’em. Again and again. Right through their silver screen. Disrupt the spectacle. The obscene parade, bring it to a halt! Scatter the dolly girls, let the advertisements bleed . . . bomb’em, again and again! murderous display. An entertainment for the oppressed, so they may dance a little, take a little warmth form the sight, eh? Go down in the mire eh? Embrace the butcher, eh? ¹⁷

Jed’s speech is couched in Situationist rhetoric. Carpetbaggers is the personification of spectacular culture. It is the story of a Howard Hughes-like millionaire who makes money, love and enemies in Hollywood in the 1920’s

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and 1930's. The fact that the film's director—Edward Dmytrk—was a former
Communist is a bitter irony which demonstrates how political artists are co-
 opted by spectacular culture. Much like the drunk's ruby wine, the film's
content is an "opiate" designed to keep the masses amused, intoxicated and
apolitical. Central to the Situationists' revolution was their attack on the mass
media. Unlike traditional Marxists, the Situationists shifted their attention
from the factory floor or the picket line to the point of consumption ("the big
silver screen"). However, this scene also alludes to the sheer ubiquity of the
spectacle and the enormous difficulty of contesting it in any meaningful and
lasting way. Jed's decision to embrace the butcher ("terrorism") implies that
he believes that his suicidal bombing will be a "radical gesture" that cannot
be ignored. Jed, unlike Cliff, cannot return to "normal life"; his rage and
frustration cannot be contained. His decision to blow up the Tory Minister of
the Environment (Alice) is not arbitrary: "Alice" is a public figure that Jed has
seen on television; he is a representative of the new school of politicians who
are groomed for media exposure. Jed chooses to "blow him up with a bomb,"
because he wants to destroy his false media-glossed image and thus rupture
the "spectacle." Alice is also a closeted homosexual who hides this fact from
the public; the contrast between the character's false public image and his
private identity (his homosexuality) alludes to the efficacy of the "spectacle":
its ability to construct a false public identity through the dissemination of
images.\footnote{\footnotetext{18}}

The resolution at the end of Magnificence is not an endorsement of
violent revolutionary action. Jed's "magnificent" gesture—blowing up the
Tory Minister—is pointless as Cliff states in the final speech of the play:

Jed. The waste. I can't forgive you for that. The waste of your
anger. Not the murder, murder is common enough. Not the
violence, violence is everyday. What I can't forgive you Jed, my
dear, dead friend, is the waste.\footnote{\footnotetext{19}}

This ending implies a rejection of the politics of "direct action" in favor of a
moderate position which is exemplified by Cliff, the non-violent revolu-
tionary. Brenton's dramatic exploration of the radical gesture is also a reflection
of disillusionment—the obsession with terrorism becomes a desperate, last-
ditch attempt at shattering the hegemony of the spectacle. The terrorist's
fanaticism contains a schizoid and self-destructive aspect. Much like the
malcontents of the Jacobean tragedy, the terrorist's suicidal bombing
represents the desire for closure and resolution.\footnote{\footnotetext{20}} It is a symbolic gesture
that will either redeem or destroy the movement; in the case of Magnificence
the bombing marks the failure of violent "direct action." It is significant that
Jed does not in any way retain autonomy over his disruption. The suicidal
bombing of a Tory minister will be mediated to the public as the deranged
work of a political sociopath who was motivated by revenge and psychological
dysfunction. In many cases, terrorism can be a blessing in disguise for the
state. By specularizing terrorism the state can turn terrorism into a controlled political spectacle; the terrorist action spreads fear in the general public, which creates the need for law and order which in turn valorizes the state authorities. Brenton’s drama again reiterates the fact that the radical political gesture is always subject to re-appropriation.

The chief concern of both Magnificence and Skin Flicker may be the Situationist desire to disrupt the spectacle; however, the central issue at the end of the day is certainly the issue of autonomy: who controls the narrative of the spectacular disruption. In both works, the radical gesture of the revolutionary terrorist is re-appropriated and re-deployed in counter-revolutionary narratives which reinforce both the authority of the state and the political status quo. In short, Brenton’s two works are a meditation on the clear limitations of the Situationist-inspired terrorist gesture and the inevitability of co-optation; historically speaking, they underscore the unfettered triumph of the “society of the spectacle” and the belated death of the counterculture’s utopian optimism. In another sense, we can conclude that the media had perfected the their own form of détourment. long before the arrival of the Situationists.

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2. Orr 3.
3. The connection between the Internation Situationist movement and various Left wing terrorist groups is strictly intellectual. The SI formally disbanded in 1972 and were only marginally involved in politics after the May ’68 uprising. In historical terms, it is important
not to overstate the significance and popularity of the Situationist movement. My comparison of Situationist movement and various terrorist groups suggests only that the various groups shared certain theoretical conceptions of political gestures, media disruptions and industrial capitalism. I am arguing that the Situationist International were pioneers in the sense that they introduced certain political and aesthetic concepts—*détournement* and “disrupting the spectacle”—that would become quite popular in the early 1970s. However, the cultural and intellectual genealogy that I have provided does not suggest that the Situationists are the sole authors of these concepts. For an excellent and detailed analysis of the historical importance of Situationist ideas in Britain see Graham White’s “Direct Action, Dramatic Action: Theatre and Situationist Theory,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 36 (1993): 329-340 and “Digging for Apples: Reappraising the Influence of the Situationist theory on the theatre practice in the English Counter-culture.” The latter is an unpublished article that was presented at the ASTR conference in November of 2000.


9. quoted in Plant 126.

10. quoted in Plant 126.

11. quoted in Plant 127.


14. The Quebec Liberation Front kidnapped and killed Pierre Laporte, the Canadian Minister of Labour in October of 1970.


18. The feminization of the Tory Minister (Alice) and his homosexual lover (Babs) is a trope that Brenton borrows from the “angry young men” literature of the late 1950s and early 1960s. In *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain,* Alan Sinfield argues that upper-class, establishment figures were often feminized while working class figures were masculinized as “tough” and “rebellious.” The binary opposition reinforces the notion that the establishment was “decadent” and “corrupt” and that their monopoly on