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Journal
Journal of Romance Studies, 7(2)

ISSN
1473-3536

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Publication Date
2007-07-01

DOI
10.3167/jrs.2007.07.02.01

Peer reviewed

The city, year zero: memory and the spatial unconscious*

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Abstract

Our notions of memory are altered if space is regarded as playing as constitutive a role as time in its formation, including what I am here defining as 'the spatial unconscious'. The spatial unconscious is what enables us to *see* the inaugural moments of an elemental civilization (a being-with-others) in a different perspective from the one offered by a view of civilization as a 'movement' from past to present to future. This essay traces the alternative pathway for the fate of civilizations and their cities that the standpoint of a spatial unconscious offers and which can be found in a remarkable series of French writers and artists from Montaigne to Rousseau, Deleuze and Lacan and from Baudelaire to Duras and Sophie Calle.
Keywords: space; memory; unconscious; the city; civilization; temporality; Deleuze; Rousseau; Derrida

Preface

In this essay I intend the term 'city' as a pre-eminent symbol of the 'civilization' that Freud defined as the 'wealth' of instinctual satisfactions made possible by a collective assent to forgo certain enjoyments (Freud 1995d: 6). I focus on a set of French authors and artists who have, in my view, forged a distinctive image of this 'city', one that acknowledges its painful restrictions, but puts greater emphasis on its role as collective support for individual desires. This favourable image of the city is something of a surprise, since one could have imagined that the cultural descendants of Rousseau, who painted so seductive a portrait of the state of nature, might be more inclined to utopian human prehistories, inhabited by happy 'savages' exempt from the sacrifices of instinctual satisfactions required for coexistence. One might also think that some would have been drawn (over the past two decades) to the post-historical utopias theorized by neo-Hegelians and postmodernists, who propose that the rhythms of gain and loss – the seemingly fundamental condition of communal life – are now overcome.[1] Far from being the case, the reverse is true for the French artistic and literary figures who followed Rousseau and that I discuss here (Duras, Deleuze, Certeau, Calle, Baudelaire, Lacan and Derrida): they persistently take a path *towards* the city. My revisionist reading of Rousseau's *Second Discourse* (1964b) at the end of the present essay offers an explanation for why this should be so.[2]

The term 'year zero' raises a fundamental question about the core narrative of how the 'city' originates. The problem for our collective cultural memory of this beginning

doi:10.3167/jrs.2007.07.02.01 ISSN 1473–3536 (Print), ISSN 1752–2331 (Online)

(which is represented in and by accounts of how 'the city' came to be for us, and of how it will end) is that it may be unduly shaped by the hidden animosity Freud says every individual ego secretly harbours toward the civilization that has forced it to surrender its would-be *jouissance*. The result, I argue, is that there are two deeply opposing stories of how 'the city' emerged to shape human life. Both are at play in every city we experience, but only when disasters occur does the first show itself. The first presumes we have never been human without the city: in this story the 'year zero' situates the city as *always already* there for *us*, constructed for and by the difficult intersubjectivity that is coeval with it: it is the root form of civilization, the encounter with the other in which something is both given and held in check, a being-with dependent on a being-without. The second city is the one that dreams of a full and final liberation from itself, in the aim of recuperating enjoyment lost. The second city, the one we see before us, seems ever en route to its own ruin and rebirth in a cycle of destruction and reconstruction. If the city year zero is a moment of recognition, the second city requires a certain forgetting; indeed, its motivating wish seems to be to obscure the city's root form (being-with/being-without) in hopes of a return to an archaic freedom *from* others in some future time *after* time – as prehistory returns – at the 'end of history'.

I believe this wish is shaped by the same *atemporality* that features in the Freudian unconscious.[3] One does not need postmodern theory to recognize an unconscious motivation for thinking of time as an unbreakable spatial (circular) link between the end of time and its beginning: it is the wish for a (figurative) continuity between the womb and the tomb. It encirclement constitutes the embrace of an 'unbearable closure of being'[4] that voids civilization and with it, its discontents. Even the commonplace concept of human time as an ascent or descent from past to present to future along a line pointed toward infinity participates in this unconscious wish, for a line so aimed will always, in the end, describe a circle, a return to the same.[5] One may take comfort in the circle's metamorphoses (Poulet 1966), but others – a Dante or a James Joyce (1964) – have seen the quintessence of hell in this encirclement.

Our notions of cultural memory are altered if *space* is regarded as playing a role, equally constitutive with time, in its formation. My focus on the moment of the city's 'year zero'– as new departure or as dead end – has thus led me to the discovery of something I can only call a 'spatial unconscious'. By setting out from this concept, I trace a pathway that breaks with the lure of the circle and permits us to think the city in its temporality, its emergence from and for its people. Cultural memory can either guide us to this moment or present the primary obstacle to recovering it – chiefly, wherever official memory demarcates, differentiates and discriminates between spaces (city and country; home and away), represented as a hierarchy of memories that privilege some over others it represses. It works – until catastrophe strikes. Then a different relation to enjoyment, to desire and to the 'being-with/being-without' that shapes civilization begins to re-emerge.[6] The spatial unconscious, whose discovery enables us to *see* the inaugural moments of an elemental civilization (a being-with-others) as constituting our unrecalled past, allows us to take at least a step in a new direction.

The French authors I treat here exhibit a powerful tendency to criticize artistic and philosophical rehearsals of the city's destruction. In these authors I find a sense of time and space that differs markedly from the one that equates beginning and end. In what follows I trace the peculiarly horizontal, wandering and open-ended pathway in French philosophy and art that links figures like Rousseau and Baudelaire, Duras and Derrida, Montaigne and Deleuze, Calle and Certeau to an alternative, non-hierarchical and anti-apocalyptic vision of civilization – and of the city that represents it. This 'other' city takes civilization as starting out not from the ego, but from a web of human relations that no isolated ego could ever directly recall.

1. 'Any-space-whatever'

In the wake of the nuclear and other devastations of cities in World War II, artists from Duras and Resnais (*Hiroshima, mon amour* [1960]) to thinkers like Sartre (preface to Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre* [1961]) and Lacan (*L'Éthique de la psychanalyse* [1986]) found themselves questioning deeply the nature and purpose of what now appeared as a sham: the 'civilization' that these destroyed cities once symbolized. But it fell to the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze in his *Cinéma II: l'Image-temps* (1985) to crystallize the realization that what had once passed for a Symbolic Order was in collapse. The war and its accompanying horrors were a trauma sundering Europe from its immediate history and shattering its long-held values. The result, Deleuze says, is that once-familiar spaces – and cityscapes especially – became 'any spaces whatever' (Deleuze 1989: xii): a just *anywhere* that no longer symbolized the best in civilization.[7]

According to Deleuze, postwar cinema represents a suddenly radical unknowability of *place*. The situating that ordinarily reflects one's position in the civil and moral order is now ruptured; the scenes that classically establish ethical actions are now forced out of their traditional locations and into spaces ('disused warehouses, waste ground, cities in the course of demolition and reconstruction' [Deleuze 1989: xi]) whose moral co-ordinates are as yet unmapped. The narrative organization of time and space fails to point the way from one instant to the next, either in film or in everyday life. The key to the city, the guide map has been lost: 'On tombe en effet dans un principe d'indéterminabilité, d'indiscernabilité: on ne sait plus ce qui est imaginaire ou réel' (Deleuze 1985: 15) ['We run in fact into a principle of indeterminability, of indiscernibility: we no longer know what is imaginary or real' (1989: 7)].

If our cities at one time appeared to symbolize the accumulated material and spiritual wealth of civilization, their collapse now testifies to a failure of that civilization.[8] Amid their ruins, uncomprehended urges, not reason, propel subjects through an alien cityscape of once-familiar spaces become singularly strange: just *anywhere*. Deleuze cites Roberto Rossellini's *Germania anno zero* (1948), a powerful film which condemns the regime that brought about its own destruction while it equally condemns our unfounded faith in the power of crude physical destruction to eradicate cultural dreams and memories. As Rossellini's film attests, culture's attempt at self-destruction cannot even obliterate its own worst nightmares. In the film, Edmund, a very young boy of eleven or twelve, picks his way through the rubble of postwar Berlin searching for sustenance for his family: his perpetually sorrowful mother, his ailing anti-Nazi father, and his brother in hiding for his dubious service in Hitler's army. As the boy collects and trades bits of food and cans, he runs into his former schoolteacher, an ardent Nazi. From the general destruction the teacher has salvaged a recording of Hitler's speeches which he plays for Edmund, who listens closely to this bit of debris from the seemingly defeated culture. The boy slowly comes to believe that his sick father is a weakling of the type Hitler reviled, and draws the logical conclusion that it is his duty to kill his father. He promptly does so. But this is no Oedipal triumph: at the end, Edmund commits suicide, leaping from a ruined building into the city's chaos below.

Deleuze designates those who populate postwar cinema as *seers*: 'characters who have lost their memories' and who, like Edmund, 'literally sink back into the past, or emerge from it, to make visible what is concealed even from recollection' (Deleuze 1989: xii). These are characters, then, who have landed in the past, sinking into it *without having travelled there by means of memory*. The past hits the subject and knocks him over in an incoherent way, unguided by organized memory and unsheltered by merciful instances of forgetfulness. Time thus takes on a weightiness and a dimensionality that renders it virtually indistinct from space – the space of unrecollected memories. Its cinematic representative, Deleuze tells us, is a new 'time-image' that fills the screen with a 'coexistence of distinct durations, or levels of duration: [where] the sheets of the past coexist in non-chronological order' (xii). Displacing film's earlier 'movement-image', the 'time-image' makes visible a host of unrecognizable, unrecalled memories that insist 'beyond the purely empirical succession of time-past-present-future' (xii.).

Sited where narrative memory has no purchase, and moving along unrecognizable pathways toward unknown destinations, this 'anywhere' of a time dense with space appears to be no more or less than an *unconscious*, akin to Freud's *andere Schauplatz* ('other scene') suddenly unburied from beneath its symbolic repression (Freud 1995a: IV, 48; V, 536).[9] But Deleuze's book does not simply lay bare the spatial unconscious: it is already its first analysis. Forty years after the shocks of the Second World War had passed, Deleuze took the occasion of the English translation of his book (1989) to make clear that his highly formal reading of cinema is intended to disclose the method that one art form found for dealing with the war's traumatic shattering of cultural continuity. He asks how this cinematic art dealt with the crushed spaces culture had once colonized as its own. How did its characters 'see' the devastated cities that had once reflected (in their very design as carefully hierarchized, patrolled spaces) the values of civilization but which had now become *just anywhere*?

If the time-image makes visible the spaces that shadow conscious activity, it is an activity that cannot say where it is going. Moreover, its cinematic 'anywhere' remains stubbornly located in an urban landscape, though one whose representative 'city' is stripped of its former glory as the treasury of civilization's best (its 'goods'). A film like Rossellini's shows that for all the fury unleashed upon it, the civilization-as-city has not been fully ruined: Berlin's 'destruction' is only an *ending* and not its absolute, apocalyptic *end*. Even as ground zero (Hiroshima), the city that (following Rossellini's lead) I am calling the 'city year zero' is not annihilated. Rossellini endorses no blissful return to pre-civil life, no revival of a gloriously pristine nature. Instead, like the end of a psychoanalysis, *Germania anno zero* brings out a much more daunting truth: that there is no terminus to civilization and no apocalyptic solution to its discontents.[10]

On the streets of postwar cinema, then, the spatial unconscious offers us nothing but a point of departure: a place where only one's fellows (and not nature or civil society or the gods) set the rules. We find ourselves here without alibi (the dream of elsewhere), setting off from degree zero to find a way of living on beyond civilization's so-called 'end': ways of reinventing it and its representative 'city' as an *other* city, the one hidden behind the official one. Its reality is that for now, it contains *just us.* Even if we start from here, from the time-image, we may still risk falling back on the official order's unreliable past, and frame this other city with that movement-image (the narrative of 'past-present-future') which inevitably proves apocalyptic: endtime.[11]

Desire for the city's endtime already shows up in Marguerite Duras's and Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1960)*,* the film made fifteen years after the war ended. The film opens with Riva ('La Française') making love to the Japanese engineer she has met by chance in Hiroshima.[12] Her lovemaking is accompanied by insistent images of the city's nuclear devastation which fill the screen as if they were her own memories of Hiroshima's annihilation. Claiming that she has 'tout vu' ['seen everything'] in the devastated Hiroshima she responds to the Japanese lover's objections ('Non, tu n'as rien vu' ['No, you've seen nothing']) by insisting that she saw it all. She seems to thrill to the city's annihilation, which, she murmurs to her lover, also led to the return of a brilliantly renewed super Nature. She even reports that on the fifteenth day after the bombing: 'Hiroshima se recouvrit de fleurs. Ce n'était partout que bluets et glaïeuls, et volubilis et belles d'un-jour qui renaissaient des cendres avec une extraordinaire vigueur, inconnue jusque-là chez les fleurs' (Duras 1960: 28) ['Hiroshima was covered in flowers. Everywhere there were cornflowers and gladioli, and morning glories which were reborn from these ashes with an extraordinary vigour, unknown in flowers until then'] (all translations are mine except where otherwise specified).

As the images and her voice-over drone on, we slowly realize that (as Duras's note explains) Riva has in fact taken this description directly from John Hersey's eyewitness account. It seems that documentaries, film and literature have supplied Riva with ready-to-wear screen memories of Hiroshima's destruction as paving the way for the providential return of a radiant nature.

The opening sequence thus obscures the reality of the city's actual continued existence: it seems unimaginable to Riva that the destruction of Hiroshima was not absolute. By romanticizing its annihilation Riva is refusing to recognize the city's real persistence. Her backstory makes clear why: her counterfactual memories are the echo of her own mad recoil at surviving the war's end and the death of her great love, an enemy soldier shot down as she was eloping to Germany with him. Riva has outlived the tragic *Liebestod* of her German soldier – the love-death supposed to enshrine the memory of star-crossed lovers.[13] Denounced in her hometown of Nevers as a collaborator, her head shaved, Riva's narcissistic 'end-of-the-world' syndrome (the ego's theory that its death also implies the death of the whole world) is challenged by the simple fact of her survival.

> Elle sait qu'on ne meurt pas d'amour. Elle a eu, au cours de sa vie, une splendide occasion de mourir d'amour. Elle n'est pas morte à Nevers. Depuis, et jusqu'à ce jour, où elle rencontre ce Japonais, elle traîne en elle, avec elle, le 'vague d'âme' d'une *sursitaire* [italics in original] à une chance unique de décider son destin. Ce n'est pas le fait d'avoir été tondue et déshonorée qui a marqué sa vie, c'est cet échec en question: elle n'est pas morte d'amour le 2 août 1944 sur ce quai de la Loire. […] Elle livre à ce Japonais – à Hiroshima – ce qu'elle a de plus cher au monde. Sa survivance à la mort de son amour, à Nevers. (Duras 1960: 154–5)

> [She knows that one doesn't die of love. She has had, in the course of her life, a splendid occasion to die of love. She did not die in Nevers. Since, and up till this day, where she meets this Japanese man, she bears within her the vague yearnings of a deferred conscript for a unique chance to decide her destiny. It is not the fact of having been shaved and dishonoured that marked her life; it is this failure: she did not die of love on 2 August 1944 on the banks of the Loire […]. She gives this Japanese man – in Hiroshima – what is most dear in the world to her […], her surviving the death of her love, in Nevers.]

It unconsciously galls Riva that the city and the civilization that imprisoned her, dishonoured her and killed her lover was not itself annihilated – neither the old city of Nevers, whose walls kept out madmen and dogs (but not the invading Nazi army) nor the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima (where she is acting in a film for peace, amid thousands of globe-trotting tourists and visitors). Buildings and walls come and go, but the essence of civilization as guardian (and censor) of our memory remains in place, despite the ravages it has suffered and its weakened power to keep our unrecollected memories invisible. The real question of the film is whether Riva will be able to bear the understanding that she, like the city she despised, has survived the end of her melodramatic role as lover of her civilization's enemy.

Duras's scenario, like the time-image of Deleuze, is a way of saying that there is no 'getting out' of civilization and back to pure nature through monumental love-deaths and apocalyptic solutions. The city is still there, although it may not be exactly what it once was: an orderly arrangement of things and peoples. Later, it will reassert itself as such; Derrida will say: 'L.A. [Los Angeles] n'est pas "*anywhere*", mais c'est une singulière organisation de l'expérience du "*anywhere*"' (Malabou and Derrida 1999: 115) ['L.A. is not anywhere, but it is a singular organization of the experience of "anywhere"' (Malabou and Derrida 2004: 114)]. The city laid bare is no longer an *order*. The voices, the discourses that issue commands to the citizen have fallen temporarily silent. Behind the layers of symbolic illusion the voice of order once vigorously maintained, the 'other city' shows its spatial unconscious as inhabited not by heroes and villains, but by a more elementary civilization, one *en route* to finding its way, and deprived of the guidance of time-honoured moral templates and heroic leadership. This is civilization as faced with the *real*, against which it must devise new strategies of defence and protection.

But whose commands are its subjects to follow, where no leader exists? One can do nothing but pick someone out, even at random, and follow them. Indeed, turning to a fellow inhabitant for guidance seems to be the only way to discover one's own desire.[14]

2. *À suivre*

Displacement in space, the trace of the other, are suddenly the only way of knowing. The pathway that begins with a zero-level civilization in a city, year zero can dispense with the fantasies of the other-as-menace that incline some civilizations toward excessive law and order. Instead, this city rekindles desire: desire for the other, desire to live, desire for new knowledge, even for the 'something else' that Lacan says is our most elementary desire (Lacan 1994: 303). Desire needs city streets filled with passing strangers to reignite it.

Almost from the beginning of modern French literature we find ourselves following someone. Montaigne: 'pour juger d'un homme, il faut suivre longuement et curieusement sa trace' (Montaigne 1962: 371) ['to judge a man one must follow his tracks for a long time with curiosity']; Rousseau, gaily following his friend Bâcle's lead out of Turin (Rousseau 1964a: III, 99); we see it in Stendhal's promenades through France and Italy pursuing his amours; in Baudelaire's 'À une passante' (Baudelaire 1961: 103–4) ['To a passing woman']. It is there in Duras, whose Riva is 'cured' by her chance encounter with a Japanese engineer, and whose Lol V. Stein follows two men in the street, each leading her to revise her life (Duras 1964). It is there in the French artist Sophie Calle, whose *Suite vénitienne* (Calle 1983) has her relearning to live as a Parisian (after an extended stay in America) by following and photographing strangers in the Paris streets. Her first steps yield to bolder moves that accelerate her learning process to such a degree that she goes clear out of the city to follow one of her Parisian subjects to another city, Venice.

These French artistic journey-pursuits are dominated by the desire for another kind of *knowledge* about things the mastering civilizations of the past were incapable of seeing. Calle, for example, asks blind people about their idea of beauty and then photographs what they describe; and she interviews Palestinians and Israelis in Jerusalem regarding their personal memories of certain sites in the city, the results revealing an unknown knowledge: that the holy city's divisive spaces are already secretly shared by both.

Unknown knowledge is why the late Michel de Certeau forsook the commanding perspective of his perch atop the Twin Towers in Manhattan in favour of the experience of walking through the streets among pedestrians 'dont le corps obéit aux pleins et aux déliés d'un "texte" urbain qu'ils écrivent sans pouvoir le lire' (Certeau 1980: 173–4) ['whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of the urban "text" they write without being able to read it' (1984: 93)].[15] It is perhaps why Jacques Derrida's *Contre-Allée* (Malabou and Derrida 1999) takes such care to list – and takes such pride in so listing – each and every city he has ever visited.

Nonetheless, the objection will be raised that wandering among strangers, with a Montaigne or a Descartes, may once have seemed a proper philosophical trope, but that surely it can no longer be taken seriously, even though our French thinkers and artists appear stubbornly wedded to it. Take Jacques Derrida, resisting the censorious voice of his philosopher-superego, Martin Heidegger who severely judges Derrida's obsessive wandering through cities:

> [J]e voyage dans la honte, rougissant de paraître nu devant tous les 'penseurs', sans parler des amis, qui condamnent cette 'fuite'. Mon alibi, mon confident [*sic*], c'est Montaigne, je joue Montaigne contre Heidegger, le non-voyageur par excellence. Heidegger (Blanchot aussi, mais tout autrement) figure à la fois le procureur implacable et le contre-modèle. Qu'est-ce qu'il aurait pensé de moi! […] Je l'imagine, Heidegger, il voyage toujours avec moi sans le savoir s'il avait su, le pauvre!, je l'entends me prendre à parti ('tu n'as pas honte de voyager tout le temps?') [...]. Comment pouvez-vous *denken* à ce rythme? (Malabou et Derrida 1999: 25)

> [I travel in shame, blushing at the idea of appearing exposed before all those 'thinkers', not to mention (before) my friends who condemn me for 'running away'. My alibi, my confidant, is Montaigne. I play him off against Heidegger, the non-traveler *par excellence*. Heidegger (like Blanchot, but in a completely different way) plays the part of the implacable prosecutor and counter model. What would he have thought of me? (…) I imagine Heidegger, he always travels with me without knowing it – if only he'd known, the poor guy! – I hear him pull me aside ('Aren't you ashamed to travel all the time?') (…). How can you *denken* at such speed? (Malabou et Derrida 2004: 17; translation modified).]

Yet Derrida's comedic treatment of his inner-Heidegger (who censures him for being out of place) need not be taken lightly, if only because it indicates one of the major divides between French and German philosophical methods. Where the former stress an open-ended, unknown *destination* approachable through a *horizon*-tal time, the latter stress an ascent towards a final destiny (*Schicksal*). Heidegger makes his way toward Being [*Be-wegung*] just as Hegel thinks his way to the end of history. Jacques Lacan remarks, wittily but pointedly, that the German philosophical voyage takes place in a vertical time with a base and a top.[16]

> Hegel, c'est le représentant sublime du discours du savoir, et du savoir universitaire.
> Nous autres en France, nous n'avons jamais de philosophes que des gens qui courent les routes, des petits sociétaires de sociétés provinciales, comme Maine de Biran, ou bien des types comme Descartes, qui se baladent à travers l'Europe […]. Chez nous, ce n'est pas dans les universités qu'on trouve les philosophes. On peut mettre cela à notre avantage. Mais en Allemagne, c'est à l'Université. Et on est capable, à un certain niveau de statut universitaire, de penser que les pauvres petits, les chers mignons, ceux qui, en ce moment, ne font qu'entrer dans l'ère industrielle, dans la grande ère du trimage, de l'exploitation à mort, on va les prendre à la révélation de cette vérité, que ce sont eux qui font l'histoire, et que le maître n'est que le sous-fifre qu'il fallait pour faire partir la musique au départ. (Lacan 1991: 200)

> [Hegel is the sublime representative of the discourse of knowledge, and of university knowledge.
> The only philosophers we ever have in France are people who travel the highways and byways, minor members of provincial societies, such as Maine de Biran, or else characters like Descartes, who wander all over Europe (…).
> Here in France, you won't find the philosophers in the universities. We can claim this as an advantage. But in Germany they are in the university. And people are capable, at a certain level of university status, of thinking that these poor fellows, these dear little chaps, the ones who at that time were only just entering the industrial era, the great era of hard labor, of exploitation unto death, will be captivated by the revelation of this

truth that they are the ones who make history, and that the master is only the under-piper, required to get the music going at the start. (Lacan forthcoming; translation here modified)]

Atop the university's ivory tower as atop the erstwhile Twin Towers: from such commanding philosophical heights it is easy to dream of a final reconciliation of oppositions and of conflicts muted by their ontological implication in a higher being (for example Hegel's universalizing principle that annuls all divisions of class from class and master from slave). Yet Lacan's mention of Hegel's contemporary, Maine de Biran, is not casual or innocent. Biran was the philosopher who sought out the opinions of the man in the street; who insisted (against the reigning rationalist and sensualist philosophies of his time) that sense impressions were simply not enough to explain human behaviour: one had to be aware of psychological depth. Thus Biran credited the masses, the 'little people' with having a relation to their own desires – a postulate that goes against the grain of even contemporary theories of hegemony (the top-down shaping of everyday practices). The belief that the know-how residing in the masses must be mastered and guided from above is largely foreign to a considerable tradition in French letters.[17] Indeed, the turn to the streets for guidance seems a peculiarly French – and in one instance, an American – thing to do (for instance, Edgar Poe's 'Man of the crowd' which inspired Baudelaire). Group life is treated as the precondition for any 'full' experience of the subject, and not the distant aim of the some harmonious time after – or before.

By taking the standpoint of the spatial unconscious I see French arts and letters as having produced a remarkable number of literary and philosophical works that resist the idea of an apocalyptic end to civilization and the city, and that direct us toward an elementary form of human relation (self-to-group) whose claims are not to be gainsaid. Cities are valued less for being sites of political rule and accumulated wealth than for being the engines of a vast, unknown collective power (Baudelaire's '*électricité*') that draws a crucial knowledge from the unconscious: 'Il n'est pas donné à chacun de prendre un bain de multitude' (Baudelaire 1962: 57–8) ['It is not granted to each to take a bath in the multitude'].

In fact, the inaugural dilemma of the human whose ego is born to be subjected by civilization, Rousseau's theme, is very often present in the French tradition in *reverse*: even, I will argue, in Rousseau himself. The real question is whether civilization (the recognition of the interdependence of subjects) can survive the return of a primitive, mastering and aggressive ego who responds to, and is responsible for, the catastrophic shape of civil order. Is the primitivist 'solution' to civilization (in the form of a return to the point before civilization or 'the city' began) really credible as a remedy for culture's destruction and destructiveness, when indeed it may be its very source? The answer for the French thinkers seems to be 'no'. Death-driven dreams of ending, once and for all, civilization and its discontents must be opposed by the stronger counter-dream of a city that *never* did *not* exist (and will *never not* exist) for us.

For Deleuze this is clear in postwar cinema. But the French authors I have mentioned already allow us to see civilization's basic principles as more mysterious and more deeply held than that veneer of consensus enforced by official rules and regulations. From the Paris of Baudelaire, recovering itself from the revolutions of the previous half-century, to the Hiroshima of Duras, fifteen years after the atomic blast that was supposed to annihilate it, to the watery Venice in which Sophie Calle immerses herself to find herself, the thematic of *the city* is the thematic of 'knowing thyself' staged as being linked inextricably to the desire to know others; a desire acted upon by following or even imitating those who are fundamentally as lost as we are.

This street-level, horizon-tal perspective acknowledges the inherent misalignment between ego and group, but it takes the intrinsic misfires of civilization less as irrecoverable wounds to the ego than as an opportunity for new knowing. In 'Les foules' for example, Baudelaire presents his encounter with others not as a tragic loss of independence but as a magnetic attraction in its own right:

> Le promeneur solitaire et pensif tire une singulière ivresse de cette universelle communion. Celui-là qui épouse facilement la foule connaît des jouissances fiévreuses, dont seront éternellement privées l'égoïste, fermé comme un coffre […] (Baudelaire 1962: 59–60).
>
> [The pensive and solitary walker draws a singular intoxication from this universal communion. He who easily weds the crowd knows feverish enjoyments of which the egoist, shut up like a strongbox, will be eternally deprived.]

The misanthropic repulsion that the primitive ego is presumed to feel on being suddenly plunged into civilization is precisely what energizes, rather than enervates the Baudelairean self, whose *bain de multitude* supports the original work of civilization (of transforming drives into desires and creating surplus libidinal energy) by making visible what *the city* looks like when this energy is released from the grip of old metaphors and deceptive masteries.[18] What Baudelaire added to the physiologists' *feuilleton* sketches of street life was the street's unnameable erotic energy, its role as creator and creature of countless human desires. It is not the sheer mass or the calculable energy to be exploited and drawn off from the crowd that counts, but rather the value of the 'man of the crowd' as being a crucial counterweight to the narrow, narcissistic ego.

Other authors require the alibi of utopia, of a primitive bliss, or the late, great (future) proletarian revolution, to grant a positive value to the 'men of the crowd'. Victor Hugo and Karl Marx, for example, both looked on the energized urban masses as a revolutionary resource. Dehumanized, alienated city crowds could be shaped into the stuff of revolt if they were properly galvanized by leaders, poet-heroes or avant-garde intellectuals. Baudelaire saw them instead as a resource for desire. (Benjamin will call 'À une passante' 'the shock of an imperious desire [that] suddenly overcomes a lonely man'; he says that for Baudelaire, *la foule* is essential in the life of the erotic person (Benjamin 1983: 45).

It seems, however, unfair of me to burden a mere poet with the task of devising a new model of the relation of self to group. But bear with me a moment as I contrast the images that flow from him with those that come from his contemporaries in the vertical-hierarchical vein (where the organization of 'past-present-future' is needed to master what lies below).[19] Friedrich Engels, for example, seems unable to appreciate the city as made out of a collective power of its people that remains inaudible and invisible under the vertical regime. Listen to Engels's assessment of London in his *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* (1848) [*The Condition of the Working Class in England*] where he confuses the sheer quantity of its inhabitants with their city's essence. For him, such huge numbers of people, concentrated into so a limited space, constitute a human disaster:

> A town such as London, where a man might wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach, is a strange thing. This colossal centralization, this heaping together of two and half millions of human beings at one point, has multiplied the power of this two and half millions a hundredfold […]. But the sacrifices which all this has cost become apparent later. After roaming the streets of the capital a day or two, making headway with difficulty thorough the human turmoil and the endless lines of their vehicles, after visiting the slums of the metropolis, one realizes for the first time that these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature, to bring to pass all the marvels of civilization which crowd their city […]. The very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other, are they not all human beings with same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy? […] And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one, that each keep to his own side of the pavement, so as not to delay the opposing stream of the crowd, while it occurs to no man to honour another with so much as a glance. The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest, becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space. (Engels 1892: 22; cited in Benjamin 1983: 121)

Class conflict and revolutionary masses, on which Engels and others have long since pinned their political hopes, claim to be opposed to the 'individual' ego; yet they give themselves away. They clearly long for 'the beginning of the end' of the city and they still conceive the city from above, where the multitudes in the streets are looked on as raw material to be shaped.[20] A vertical perspective on the city calls forth the ego's dream of mastery to describe a defensive circle around its goods; thus its rulers at the top will forever suspect that their wealth is threatened from the one side they cannot *see*: beneath the base. What lies 'below' in some sinister underground is pursued as the last of what remains 'invisible' from the top.

But the city year zero is no simple matter of class conflict, or of changing one master for another, nor of infernal forces, rising from below to alter civilization's course. Baudelaire's city, with its community of strangers, was perhaps the first to comprehend the crowd's true secret: that the city's *multitude* has no need to masquerade as a heaven or a hell because its power lies in the immense *possibility* that the moving and mingling of its peoples opens before the solitary self.

Baudelaire's attachment to the city is mirrored in Derrida's 'city of refuge', which Catherine Malabou describes as 'l'invention d'un être-ensemble à partir d'un arrachement ou d'un exil originaires' (Malabou and Derrida 1999: 111) ['a being together based on an originary uprooting, or exile' (Malabou and Derrida 2004: 110)]. Derrida calls this city a *point of non-arrival* that is a *new departure*, one that renounces the dream of the heavenward-oriented city:

> Ce qui rend possible la communauté vivante des générations qui vivent et construisent la ville, qui se tendent en permanence dans la projection même d'une ville à dé-re-construire, c'est le renoncement paradoxal à la tour absolue, à la ville totale et qui touche au ciel […] Une ville est un ensemble qui doit rester indéfiniment, structurellement non saturable, ouvert sur sa propre transformation […]. Une ville doit rester ouverte sur ce qu'elle sait qu'elle ne sait pas encore qu'elle sera: il faut inscrire et comme un thème, le respect de ce *non-savoir* […]. (Malabou and Derrida 1999: 110)

> [What makes possible the living community of the generations who live in and construct the city, who are permanently exposed to the stress of even projecting a city to be de- or re-constructed, is the paradoxical renunciation of the absolute tower, of the total city which reaches the sky (…). A city is a set which must remain indefinitely and structurally non-saturable, open to its own transformation (…). A city must remain open to what it knows about what it doesn't yet know about what it will be. It is necessary to inscribe, and to thematize, the respect for this *non-knowledge* (…). (Malabou and Derrida 2004: 109)]

3. Rousseau *encore*

One could say that the question of the city has been with French thought ever since Rousseau left theocratic Geneva to hit the open road and thereupon invented a new way of thinking society. Imposing self-exile from his theopolis, Rousseau took off for just *anywhere*, forsaking the security of the gated city and a predictably comfortable life there. At the close of Book I of *Les Confessions,* Rousseau carefully frames as completely personal the significance of his *envoyage* (as Derrida calls it – a coinage combining *envoi* [sending off/the last stanza of a poem] and *voyage* [travel]). His description, however, bears the mark of a larger event: the passing away of the medieval ideal of the city, and of a life lived within the bounds of the 'godly' city that protected us from the barbarous strangers beyond its walls. Rousseau writes:

> Avant de m'abandonner à la fatalité de ma destinée, qu'on me permet de tourner un moment les yeux sur celle qui m'attendoit naturellement, si j'étois tombé dans les mains d'un meilleur maitre [*sic*]. Rien n'étoit plus convenable à mon humeur ni plus propre à me rendre heureux que l'état tranquille et obscur d'un bon artisan dans certaines classes surtout, telles qu'est à Genève celle des graveurs. Cet état, assez lucrative pour donner une subsistance aisée, et pas assez pour mener à la fortune, eut [*sic*] borné mon ambition pour le reste de mes jours, et me laissant un loisir honnête […] il m'eut [*sic*] contenu dans ma sphére [*sic*] sans m'offrir aucun moyen d'en sortir […]. J'aurois passé dans le sein de ma religion, de ma patrie, de ma famille et de mes amis, une vie paisible et douce, telle qu'il la falloit à mon caractère, dans l'uniformité d'un travail de mon gout, et d'une société selon mon cœur. J'aurois été bon Chrétien, bon citoyen, bon pere [*sic*] de famille, bon ami, bon ouvrier, bon homme en toute chose. J'aurois aimé mon état; je l'aurois honoré peutêtre [*sic*], et après avoir passé une vie obscure et simple, mais égale et douce, je serois mort paisiblement dans le sein des miens. Bientôt oublié, sans doute, j'aurois été regretté du moins aussi longtems qu'on se seroit souvenu de moi. Au lieu de cela …

> [*sic*] Quel tableau vais-je faire? (Rousseau 1964a: 43–4; orthography established from original manuscripts by B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond)
>
> [Before I abandon myself to my fatal destiny, let me turn for a moment to the prospect that would normally have awaited me had I fallen into the hands of a better master. Nothing suited my character better, nor was more likely to make me happy than the calm and obscure life of a good craftsman, particularly in a superior trade like that of an engraver at Geneva. This work (*état*), which was lucrative enough to yield a man an easy subsistence, but not sufficiently rewarding to lead to fortune would have limited my ambition till the end of my days and have left me honest leisure wherein to cultivate simple tastes. It would have kept me in my sphere, and offered me no means of escaping from it (…). I should have passed a calm and peaceful life in the security of my faith, in my own country, among my family and friends. That was what my peculiar character required, a life spent in the uniform pursuit of a trade I had chosen, and in a society after my own heart. I should have been a good Christian, a good citizen, a good friend, a good workman, a good man in every way. I should have been happy in my condition, and should perhaps have been respected. Then, after a life – simple and obscure, but also mild and uneventful – I should have died peacefully in the bosom of my family. Soon, no doubt, I should have been forgotten, but at least I should have been mourned for as long as I was remembered.
>
> But instead … What a picture I have to paint! (Rousseau 1953: 50–1)]

The problem with my general thesis should by now, however, be apparent: how could Rousseau, the 'misanthrope' who fled the company of his fellows for the woods of Ermenonville, be marshalled to support Derrida's, Deleuze's, Baudelaire's, Duras's and Calle's 'other city' – the city of the elementary spatial unconscious, the city as a point of non-arrival of a civilization ever on the eve of departure? The solution of the puzzle requires a critical rereading of Rousseau.

We have always assumed that Rousseau's figure of '*l'homme naturel*', a paragon of pure narcissism, is intended to lure us away from the discontents of civilization and back to the pastoral state of nature. I am, however, perhaps the first to have argued the reverse: that Rousseau's *Deuxième discours* demonstrates instead the parallelism between the seductive savage and the ferocious tyrant who, in the form of a monstrous mouth, appears at the end of the *Discours*, eating up all that is good in the state: 'Despotisme élevant par degrés sa tête hideuse et dévorant tout ce qu'il auroit apperçu [*sic*] de bon et de sain dans toutes les parties de l'Etat […]. À la fin tout seroit englouti par le Monstre' (1964b: 190–1; again, these citations employ the orthography established by Gagnebin and Raymond) ['gradually raising its hideous head (to) devour everything it had seen to be good and healthy in every part of the state (…). In the end everything would be swallowed up by the monster' (1953: 159; and see MacCannell 2004: 244–5)].

The following logic supports my thesis. Rousseau claims, in the *Second Discourse* that all civil orders believe they were instituted to suppress an original *dis*order (the Hobbesian war of all against all). However, Rousseau finds that, given sufficient time, such states fail to supplant permanently the disorder on which they rest. Like Benjamin's angel of history, Rousseau piles up the wreckage of all historical civil orders and, after escorting us through their circles of Hell, he confronts us dramatically with that history's perpetual 'end' – the apocalyptic monster that has secretly menaced it throughout and whose spectral horror rises from the very depths of even 'do-good' societies founded on the principle of creating order. Why? Order requires hierarchy which in turn inevitably becomes oppressive, bringing us back to the deadly rivalry between unequals that 'just' laws claimed they would neutralize. Rousseau sees such social aggregates as little more than a search for safety in numbers, whose repressive social laws are secretly driven by the fear (or hope) that someone, somewhere (natural man or despot, infant or tyrant) enjoys the absolute satisfactions that being-in-society denies you. Laws demanding order thus lead inevitably to a political economy in which the many starve so the few can enjoy to excess. With every narrative of a ravening tyrant's demise, the cycle recommences: each 'new' city will end in collapse and witness the reappearance of the gluttonous tyrant. The *Second Discourse* shows that civilization's apocalyptic 'end' is only society's primal scene repeated: the return of egoistic, narcissistic natural man.

In *Du contrat social*, Rousseau offers his alternative. To avoid the monster-apocalypse we must remodel the concept of Law by refusing to define it as a call to order. The law should instead be founded on the principle that no single person will hold direct power over any other individual (Rousseau 1964c: 191ff). But in his *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* (1964b) Rousseau was still searching for the *cause* of the eternal return of the same: the predictable re-emergence of a figure of pure enjoyment (the savage, the despot) – and he was also still searching for the way to defy its powers of seduction.

So now let me once more try to put to rest the confusion over the real function of Rousseau's fantasmatic *homme naturel*, which is not to provide a 'pure' alternative to the discontents of civilization; on the contrary, Rousseau's natural man is the functional equivalent of the tyrannical gluttonous monster. Rousseau creates both *le sauvage* and the despot as fantasies of a total enjoyment framed in order to dismiss the claims of intersubjective desire. True, his natural man is painted in a seemingly 'positive' light compared to the gluttonous monster; yet should we set *le sauvage* into society, each and every one of his seductive 'natural' traits would be a despotic menace to his fellows. You do not have the one without the other: *le sauvage* is the structural double of the tyrannical monster that erupts from society's bosom to attack it, its mirror image.[21]

Rousseau demonstrates that the irrationality of civil *order* goes far deeper than its surface orderliness suggests. He first walks us through alluring scenes of egalitarian, if isolated, presocial but free humanity to the successive political formations that legally rob it of that liberty: the pastoral, the agricultural, the rural, the urban; small town, republic, dictatorship, monarchy. He then dialectically restores its liberty to humanity in civil form. But if it seems we are now at the height of liberty, Rousseau snatches this prize away immediately as, one by one, our civic utopias dissolve into self-parody. Rousseau demystifies the idea of progress as vertically oriented – bottom to top, high to low and back – the Roman goddess Fortuna that makes eternity the only (provisional) solution to the problem of human time.[22]

Rousseau, of course, wants to put an end to the eternal return of this monstrosity which gives birth to itself over and over again. As he makes the *Second Discourse* into a virtual phenomenology of the spirit of the laws before the (Hegelian) letter, he marks a new difference. Rousseau's dialectic anchors the deep engine of social drive in the destructive fantasy of full enjoyment itself, outside the constraints of the law, and he does so well before Freud and Lacan. His *sauvage/tyran* is the functional equivalent of Freud's *Ur-Vater* (the totemic father in *Totem and Taboo* [1995b: 1–162]), the figure of total enjoyment by the One at the expense of the many. But Freud's primal father is from the time *before* time – the mythic time that institutes social order. Rousseau's monster of unfettered enjoyment has a specific historicity that both predates and postdates the organization of society modelled on the ego. This monstrous ego is the timeless/eternal unconscious fantasy that attends our historical events and undermines our laws. Rousseau infers its monstrous existence from the repetitive failures in social discourse, in a pattern discernible only at the 'end of history' as it is about to become prehistory again. The point, for Rousseau, is not to disrupt the cycle of that eternal return.

4. Conclusion

We have reached a new understanding of the time-image as deliberately undoing the vertical time of Hegel's interpreters from Engels to Fukuyama. It recognizes the dynamic conflict between the self and civilization, but reframes it by setting the 'primitivist view' of civilization against a view that posits civilization as what comes *before* the ego and thereby 'makes visible what is concealed even from recollection'. When successful, it forces us to look differently at the prospect before us by revealing the fantasies inscribed over it. It is only the 'non-arrival' of civilization and its city at their final destination that permits departures in new directions, rather than the destructive return to the same.

* 'The city, year zero: memory and the spatial unconscious' was originally given as the Cassal Lecture at the Institute of Germanic & Romance Studies, University of London, on 19 June 2006

Notes

1. See Francis Fukuyama (1992), who received wide acceptance of his neo-Hegelian-Kojevian thesis that we who are now living at the 'the end of history' are the privileged residents of a post-scarcity economy and a post-conflictual new order. Earlier, from a completely different discipline, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1967: 49) expressed his hope that technological advances would soon permit human society to overcome the exploitative and sacrificial structures that have traditionally powered it.
2. Rousseau's 'natural man' has been in my view deeply misread, especially where his subtle analyses of the work of fantasy are not taken into account.
3. Freud (1995c: 18): 'the processes of the system Ucs are timeless; i.e., they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all'.
4. Slavoj Žižek's phrase (1997: 30). He says resigning oneself to the fact of the eternal nature of this closure, while 'unbearable', becomes the ultimate in enjoyment.
5. See Jacques Lacan (l976–7: 14) seminar of 18 November ('Le sinthome'): 'une droite, pour peu qu'elle soit infinie […] est parente d'un cercle' ['a straight line, so long as it is infinite is related to the circle'].

6. Lacan (1986: 256) speaks of the 'économie des biens' [the 'economy of goods'] as a limit opening on to but blocking 'ce champs d'accès à ce dont il s'agit quant au désir' [*sic*] (255) ['the field which opens on to what is involved relative to desire' (1992: 216)].
7. The short preface to the English translation has no French original, as it was composed specifically for the English publication. Deleuze continues: 'Why is the Second World War taken as a break? The fact is that, in Europe, the post-war period has greatly increased the situations which we no longer know how to describe [...]. And in these any-spaces-whatever a new race of characters was stirring, kind of mutant: [...] they were seers' (Deleuze 1989: xi).
8. Freud (1995d: 6) says wealth is the representative of the 'amount of instinctual satisfaction' obtainable by its means. Communities amass wealth via individual sacrifices to and for the common good. Complicating the picture, Freud notes, is the fact that even though civilization should be of universal human interest, every individual is virtually an enemy of civilization.
9. Freud uses this phrase twice in *The Interpretation of Dreams* to designate the staging area of the unconscious as the 'other scene'. He attributes the term to Fechner.
10. Interestingly, forty-three years later, Jean-Luc Godard's (1991) *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* repeats the Rossellini film's gestures: an aimless and disoriented East German spy, Lemy Caution, stumbles through the reunified city of Berlin as he tries to fathom the consequences of the 1989 fall of the wall.
11. Deleuze values 'beginnings'. He says, 'If cinema does not die a violent death, it retains the power of a beginning' (1989: xiii).
12. The actress Emmanuelle Riva played the part of 'La Française' but Duras used the name 'Riva' in the appendices of the screenplay when she is describing the film character's life.
13. The thesis of Rougemont (1939).
14. Deleuze: 'C'est comme si le réel et l'imaginaire courraient l'un derrière l'autre [...] autour d'un point d'indiscernabilité' (Deleuze 1985: 15) ['It is as if the real and the imaginary were running after each other (...) around a point of indiscernibility' (1989: 7)]
15. See also Certeau (1980: 157–9) for his remarkable insights on the inverse proportion of conscious knowledge to memory and time. Certeau's perspective, like my own, is influenced by Jacques Lacan's important seventeenth seminar which is devoted to the relation of accumulated knowledge (the dream of '*savoir-totalité*' [Lacan 1991: 35]) to stagnating social and political discourses.
16. Ariella Azoulay (2001: 145) sees Foucault caught in the same 'logic of the site' he theorizes about. She calls the reassuring belief in an overarching eye that keeps you in view from above 'theological'.
17. With the great exception, of course, of Michel Foucault. See Azoulay (2001), note 16.
18. Baudelaire renders the *flâneur*'s experience as the physical and verbal torsion the individual undergoes in joining in with the city's multitudes, economically expressed in the grammatical quirkiness of the opening line of 'Les foules'. The line apparently irritated Sainte-Beuve to whom Baudelaire writes: 'J'ai besoin de ce fameux *bain de multitude* dont l'incorrection vous avait justement choqué' (Baudelaire 1962: 58 n.1; letter of 4 May 1865) ['I need that famous *bath in the multitude*, the impropriety of which rightly shocked you']. Dumas, Balzac and even Eugène Sue pictured the *flâneur* as a solitary savage 'Mohican' transported to an alien civilization to critique it from a position of innocence. Baudelaire was (like Flaubert) too much one of Rousseau's *enfants illégitimes* to make this mistake. Rousseau's 'natural man' and Baudelaire's man of the crowd touch on what Freud later discovers in the emergence of a real group psychology with specific links to the *ego* including its demand for pseudo-innocence by idealistically remodeling the primal moment of entering into group psychology as willing submission to a loving leader figure. We are here interested in the moment that actually situates the ego in relation to a group life that necessarily precedes it.

19. Walter Benjamin recognized Baudelaire's grasp of the *foule*'s power surge, but remained true to the Marxist-Hegelian vision of an upward path to revolution: Baudelaire's 'crowd does not stand for classes or any sort of collective: rather, they are nothing but the amorphous crowd of passersby [*sic*], the people in the street' (Benjamin 1983: 120).
20. 'The people are for him what the stone is to the sculptor. Leader and masses are as little of a problem to each other as color is a problem for the painter. Politics are the plastic arts of the state as painting is the plastic art of color. Therefore politics without the people or against the people are nonsense. To transform a mass into a people and a people into a state that has always been the deepest sense of a genuine political task': Joseph Goebbels, from his 1929 novel, *Michael* (Goebbels 1987), cited in Paul de Man (Man 1996: 155).
21. I elaborate on this argument about natural man in a recent essay (MacCannell 2004: 246) as follows: 'Two conjoined figures of unlimited *jouissance*, monster and natural man end up increasing the privative powers and destructive forces at work in iniquitous social orders. They are catastrophic figures […]'.
22. See MacCannell (2006: 102) for a discussion of the apocalyptic time still evident in modern critics like Slavoj Žižek.

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