

## Correspondence with a film programmer concerning a screening of Guy Debord's *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*

On 14 February 2017, Bill Not Bored was contacted by Steve Macfarlane, who identified himself as “a film programmer at *Spectacle* in Williamsburg.” (*Spectacle* is the Spectacle Theater, which, according to its website, is “a collectively run screening space,” “established and staffed entirely by volunteers,” located at 124 S. 3rd Street in Brooklyn, New York. Its “programming runs seven days a week and encompasses overlooked works, offbeat gems, contemporary art, radical polemics, live performance and more.”)

In his email, Steve said, “A colleague recommended contacting you after I mentioned interest in screening our namesake-giver Guy Debord's *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* for our March program. (To my knowledge the last public screening in NYC was in 2009 - not sure if you were involved there.) Thanks for taking the time to read this, and please let me know if this is something you'd be interested in discussing.”

Bill's response was as follows: “Hello, Steve. Nice to meet you. I would be happy to help out. Only screening I was involved in was this one, back in 2006: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-screening.html>.”

“Thanks for this,” Steve said. “Nice meeting you too. So, there is no US rightsholder/distributor for *in girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* ? Is it still true that there are no subtitles? I found some online but they (and the copy of the film) but might be old/fanmade. Hopefully we can get more than five people out at this late juncture! let me know when you find a moment - thx!”

“That is right,” Bill replied. “There is no official distributor in the USA. I have a fan-made subtitled version of *Spectacle* but not *in girum*. Note: I have all 6 films on DVD.”

“What is the source of the DVD?” Steve wanted to know. “Could be worth meeting up to see if its any higher quality than the one I DL'd - happy to send screengrabs when back at a computer.”

Bill replied: “Its the original edition, not a copy, not a download.”

“I'd love to take a look,” Steve said. “When are you free to meet up?”

Before Bill could respond, Steve sent another message.

“Also here are the subs I found,” he wrote. “You might notice they don't translate key passages (citations, clips from movies, etc).”

“Best source for this in English is Ken Knabb, *Guy Debord: Complete Cinematic Works* (AK Press),” Bill pointed out.

“I got in touch with Ken,” Steve said a day or two later, “and he pointed me to a version in English that’s crucially helpful in restoring the missing spots. Thank you!”

“You are welcome.”

These exchanges took place between 14 and 18 February. On 27 February, having heard nothing about the screening, Bill emailed Steve to ask, “any developments?”

Steve’s answer was a URL ([www.spectacletheater.com/in-girum-imus-nocte](http://www.spectacletheater.com/in-girum-imus-nocte)) and nothing more.

If the reader follows that link, he or she will see that Debord’s film is entitled *We Turn in the Night, Consumed by Fire*, instead of the commonly accepted translation of the original title, which is a Latin palindrome: *We Go Round in the Night and Are Consumed by Fire*. The reader will be told that “many of its images were culled from the ostensibly benign bourgeois French and American movies Debord so hated,” when Debord was in fact a great lover of the films he détourned. And the reader will be invited to read the following passages about Debord in Alain Badiou’s book *Le Perroquet* (1981).

“Has the time come to challenge this unscathed interlocutor? I could do so, inasmuch as his nostalgia blinds Debord, in spite of himself, to the current context of what all his perseverance derives from. You can’t just have thirty years of history end on a shot of the high waters of the Venice lagoon and expect to get away with it....

“But we also need to understand poetry’s protective function. Why was it in the resource of art that twice – first with the Surrealists after October 1917 and then with the Situationists in the early 1960s – new historical circumstances produced, in France, a true break, unprecedented intensity, tremendous repercussions with regard to an ossified political Marxism? Marxism should learn from such amazing cunning! We won’t miss the opportunity this time.

“This Marxism – of which Debord, in terms of the ethics of the subject, would be the interlocutor and, in his own way, the equal – I could call a living Marxism.”

It so happens that Debord himself was aware of Alain Badiou and his comments about *In girum* and “living Marxism.” On 15 November 1982, Debord sent a copy of his latest book, entitled *Rubbish and debris displayed upon the release of the film “In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni,”* by different authorized sources and published in October, 1982 by Editions Gérard Lebovici to his long-time friend Jacques Le Glou. “Enclosed is a beautiful example of the

supercession of polemics,” Debord wrote. “There is actually nothing to say by way of response to these cunts; they quite demolish themselves and reciprocally (to really taste the salt in this mezcal, I believe that you cannot overlook the fact that [Alain] Badiou was and remains Maoist carrion).”

Imitating Macfarlane, who’d sent me a URL with no further comment, I sent him nothing but the URL at which an English translation of this scathing letter has “lived” ever since 2007. There was no response.

I didn’t attend any of the five screenings of *In girum* and don’t know anyone who did.

Bill Not Bored  
1 April 2017