

***From One Revolution to Another:
Correspondence Between Guy Debord and Patrick Straram,
followed by Notebook for a Landscape to be Invented
and Other Texts***¹

Introduction
By Sylvano Santini

In 2006, the publication of the letters that Patrick Straram sent to Guy Debord in 1960 went unnoticed in Quebec,² as in France, where they were published.³ It must be admitted that they presented less interest than they might have because they were not accompanied by Debord's responses to them.⁴ Moreover, this correspondence quickly disappeared into the vast body of work concerning the Situationist International (SI)⁵ and Debord himself. Furthermore,

¹ Guy Debord, Patrick Straram, *D'une révolution à l'autre: Correspondance Debord-Straram, suivi de Cahier pour un paysage à inventer et autres textes, présentation et édition critique par Sylvano Santini* (Les Presses de l'Université de Montreal, 2023). Translated by NOT BORED! 7 April 2023. All footnotes by the author, except where noted. All words [in brackets] added by the translator. See the end of this text for the book's Table of Contents, its Chronology and the copy that appears on the book's back cover.

² Other than Maxime Prévost's critical study, "La jeunesse du Bison ravi," published in *@analyses*, Spring 2007, p. 23-25, and the broadcast hosted by Guillaume Lafleur and Sylvano Santini, "La vie quotidienne en mouvement," Radio-Spirale (2009) <https://crilcq.org/mediatheque/items/mondes-contemporains/>, I have found no other coverage of this publication.

³ Patrick Straram, *Lettre à Guy Debord [1960]*, preceded by a *Lettre à Ivan Chtcheglov*, preface by Jean-Marie Apostolidès and Boris Donne (Paris: Sens & Tonka, 2006).

⁴ The letters from Debord to Straram were published in the former's correspondence. See Guy Debord, *Correspondance*, 8 volumes (Paris: Fayard, 1999-2010). The letters to Straram appear in volumes 0, 1 and 2. [Translator: note well that one of the criticisms of Debord's correspondence is that the letters that were sent to him were not included.]

⁵ Hereafter I will use the abbreviation SI to stand for the Situationist International, in conformity with current usage. At the time, the abbreviation included two

the classification of the works of Debord as a “National Treasure” in 2009, which was an action taken in response to the intention of Yale University to purchase the archives of the author,⁶ which were eventually purchased by Bibliothèque nationale de France [BNF],⁷ no doubt contributed to the diversion of attention away from these letters.⁸ Finally, as Straram was never an official member of the SI, despite what he occasionally said,⁹ it isn’t surprising that the publication of his letters didn’t manage to generate greater interest than it did. Nevertheless, we must recognize the efforts of the two publishers who sought to arouse curiosity about Straram by publishing (in the same year) two of his unpublished texts¹⁰ that relate

periods (S.I.). I have retained the periods in the texts from Debord and Straram that are reproduced in this volume, thereby marking the temporality that separates their writings from mine. I have done the same with the abbreviation of Lettrist International (LI). When these abbreviations appear in italics, I am referring to the Bulletin of the Lettrist International [*Internationale lettriste*] (LI) and the Bulletin of the Situationist International [*Internationale situationniste*] (SI). [*Translator*: in June 1954, the LI starting calling its bulletin *Potlatch*.]

⁶ *Translator*: as of this writing, the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University houses the archives of the following ex-members of the SI: Jacqueline de Jong, Asger Jorn, Attila Kotanyi, Raoul Vaneigem, Mustapha Khayati, Gianfranco Sanguinetti, among others.

⁷ *Translator*: for a selection of responses to these events in the French press, see <https://www.notbored.org/debord.html>.

⁸ See Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Guy Debord. Le naufrageur* (Paris: Flammarion, 2015), p. 11-12. [*Translator*: for a response by an ex-Situationist to this book, see Gianfranco Sanguinetti, “Money, Sex and Power: Concerning a Fake Biography of Guy Debord”: <https://www.notbored.org/Apostolides.pdf>.]

⁹ See Pierre Rannou, “Des véritables rapports de Patrick Straram le Bison ravi avec l’Internationale lettriste et l’Internationale situationniste,” *Inter* 93 (2006), p. 40-44.

¹⁰ *Les bouteilles se couchent* (Paris: Allia, 2006) and *La veuve blanche et noire un peu détournée* (Paris: Sens & Tonka, 2006). These two publications, which contain unpublished writings that are part of the Patrick Straram Archives, were also published by Jean-Marie Apostolidès and Boris Donné. Those two also helped Allia bring out *Ivan Chtcheglov, profil perdu* that same year. These three works, plus *Lettre à Guy Debord*, offer a portrait of the situation among the three friends during the months in which the principal theses and practices of the LI and the SI were put into place. Debord never hid his nostalgia for that period of time. The ensemble of the books published by Apostolidès and Donné in 2006 reveal the essential aspects of it to us.

to the events that took place when he was personally associated with Debord and Ivan Chtcheglov in Paris, when all three of them were members of the Lettrist International. But despite their efforts, Straram still remains little known in France.

Two things have inspired me to put together all the letters exchanged between Straram and Debord. The first was practical: to publish the entirety of this exchange in a single volume allows us to give it coherence, but without having to flip back and forth between several volumes of Debord's correspondence, on the one hand, and the letters published by Sens & Tonka, on the other. The second reason appears more essential to me, since it concerns the appreciation of the lives and works of these two men: this face-to-face confrontation forces us to consider their epistolary dialogue beyond its brief and circumstantial character. The reader finds within it a sustained conversation between two friends concerning the issues that reveal their agreements and disagreements from the point of view of pivotal moments in their respective lives: Debord founding the SI¹¹ and Straram beginning his life in Montreal. In his letters Debord presents the principal ideas of the SI to his old friend, who can thus appreciate and measure up to them.¹² Which he did not fail to do. At the time of his resignation from the LI in 1954, which he offered in solidarity with Ivan Chtcheglov, one must say that he distrusted Debord, whose authoritarian behavior had distanced him from the two other men. I will return to this episode.

Although Straram's letters indicate that he appreciated the SI's theses as an ensemble, that he wanted to appropriate them and that he wanted to instruct his new friends in Quebec about them, the reader will find in those letters a true dialogue with them. In fact, Straram didn't hesitate to defend his own ideas about

¹¹ *Translator*: in point of fact, Debord was one the SI's co-founders, along with Michèle Bernstein, Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio, Asger Jorn, Walter Olmo, Piero Simondo, Elena Verrone, and Ralph Rumney.

¹² For example, the letter dated 10 October 1960 that Debord sent to Straram explains quite well what lead the SI to lend its solidarity to the original signatories of the Declaration of the 121 (*Déclaration sur le droit de l'insoumission dans la guerre d'Algérie*) following the government's vigorous repression, which was recounted in his collected works. See Guy Debord, *Œuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, "Quarto," 2006), p. 536-538. I will discuss the Declaration of the 121 at greater length in a note. [*Translator*: Debord also wrote to Straram about the Declaration and his interrogation by the police concerning it on 22 November 1960: <https://www.notbored.org/debord-22November1960.html>. For a translation of the SI's statement about the Declaration itself, which was published under the title "Minute of Truth" in *Internationale situationniste* #5, December 1960, see <https://www.notbored.org/minute-of-truth.html>.]

expression, aesthetics, critique and his love of cinema, despite the opinions of his correspondent. Their disagreements in large part were based upon differing theoretical and ideological considerations, but they were also based upon their respective surroundings. Ever since he relocated to Canada in April 1954, Straram inhabited a world that was foreign to that of his old friend, who still lived in Paris: there was nothing to destroy, but, in fact, everything to be constructed in the intellectual, cultural and artistic landscape of Quebec at the end of the 1950s. This was, in a way, the assessment made in the title of the first and only issue of the journal that Straram published at the time of his correspondence with Debord: *Cahier pour un paysage à inventer* [Notebook for a Landscape to be Invented].¹³

Debord would have had to come to Montreal, which is something that Straram said he wanted to happen, for him to grasp the context in which his correspondent lived: a lack of new ideas, a general hostility towards intellectuals and foreigners, and the indifference of his new comrades towards his precarious economic situation.¹⁴ “Valuable conversation partners” were not great in number, as they mutually agreed when they renewed contact with each other in their first letters, but between France and Quebec, this rarity was even more rare in one of the two places in question. The respective situations of these two men made their correspondence similar to a conversation between two deaf people. This distance can surely help to explain why, despite the fact that both of them contributed to the development of the SI, the French people who today are interested in the Situationist movement haven’t been the best readers of the letters by Straram that were published in 2006. This problem of reception has been raised in one of the only critical studies that has been devoted to them. “If the letters that Straram wrote to Chtcheglov and to Debord have a certain historical interest for the adepts of situationism [*sic*], their principal attraction for the Canadian reader nevertheless

¹³ *Cahier pour un paysage à inventer*, under the direction of Louis Portugais and Patrick Straram (Montreal: no publisher listed, 1960), 103 pages.

¹⁴ One can also find information about Straram’s life at the time of his correspondence with Debord in “Tea for one” [English in original], *Écrits du Canada français*, vol. 6 (1960), p. 125-154, which was reprinted in *Blues clair, tea for one/no more tea* [English in original] (Montreal: Les Herbes rouges, 1983), and in the column “La vie quotidienne d’un néocanadien. . .,” which, between 1960 and 1961, he contributed to the broadcast “Partage du matin,” hosted by Lorenzo Godin on Radio-Canada. Five texts from this column are preserved at the Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec, Patrick Straram Archives, MSS391,S1,SS5,D29.

resides in the portrait they paint of Quebec during the Great Darkness.”¹⁵ And this “portrait” isn’t lacking interest, even if it borrows from a dialectical materialism (particularly attractive to Straram himself) that might appear dated to certain readers today. According to it, French Canadian society has to find a way of surmounting the contradictions between the austere spirit that characterized the Middle Ages and continues to affect ideas in the modern period and the [hedonism of] frenetic American capitalism that is transforming the modes of production. Its diagnosis is all the more interesting in that it is accompanied by portraits of intellectuals, authors and artists who had still not yet attained notoriety, such as Jacques Godbout, Gilles Carle and Arthur Lamothe.¹⁶ Thus Straram’s letters appear to offer such a singular point of view that their contribution to the intellectual and cultural history of Quebec is undeniable, at least to me. This is, in itself, a very good reason to publish them. If I have insisted on adding those of Debord to them, it is because I believe that they help us understand the motivations and conditions that led Straram to examine the intellectual and cultural situation of French Canada.

Their appearance in a single volume also helps us understand the inspirations that led Straram to publish *Notebook for a Landscape to be Invented*, which was one of the first and one of the few publications that disseminated the SI’s theses in Quebec. The correspondence included herein allows us to understand that the preparation of this journal fit in with Debord’s desire to create a branch of the SI in Canada, which was an idea that Straram seems to have abandoned after the publication of the *Notebook* in May 1960, when the disagreements between the two men became manifest. It should also be understood that this publication was also a way for Straram to stand out. If its contents are split between a first part that is almost exclusively devoted to texts by Quebecois authors and a second part to texts by the SI, we must not jump to the conclusion that this was necessarily a slapdash effort. No doubt Straram was slightly mistaken about the repercussions of the SI’s theses in an intellectual context that wasn’t particularly favorable to the avant-garde spirit.¹⁷ That said, his motivation was something else and was quite well illustrated by the fact that he managed to gather so many “local” contributions

¹⁵ Maxime Prévost, “La jeunesse du Bisonravi,” *@analyses*, Spring 2007, p. 24. [Translator: *La grande noirceur* refers to the condition of the people of Quebec while Premier Maurice Duplessis was in power (1936-1939, 1944-1959).]

¹⁶ Translator: Jacques Godbout (born 1933) is a Canadian novelist, poet and film director. Gilles Carle (1928-2009) was a Canadian scriptwriter, director and painter. Arthur Lamothe (1928-2013) was a Canadian film director and producer.

¹⁷ See Jacques Godbout, “À propos de paysage à inventer!”, *Liberté*, vol. 2, #3-4 (1960), p. 224-225.

to the journal less than two years after his arrival in Montreal in June 1958.¹⁸ His plainly minimal editorial work allows one to believe that it is not very likely that he forced the other authors to digest the SI's theses and integrate them into their texts. If it is true that the *Notebook* communicates the SI's theses in the journal's second part, its lack of unity allows one to think that, beyond the informational dimension, there is another one, which I characterize as performative. Straram was seeking to unite people around himself, to break his isolation by finding valuable conversational partners whom he could confront with ideas that came from somewhere else. He's a part of French Canadian society, he's interested in it and he wants to speak out about it.

It would be pointless to want to ignore those to whom I owe the most. But the new and exciting element for a New Canadian is precisely the need to bring face to face a cultural background that comes from somewhere else with what goes on here, in the everyday life in which he now participates. Let's not kid ourselves: a Frenchman who lives in Paris will not quickly discover Canadian writers. A New Canadian, if he hasn't come here solely to appropriate a comfort that is quite practical for the powerless, wants to understand the writers of the society that he has chosen.¹⁹

Other than meeting places such as bistros, what could be better for this than a collective? This is why it seems unsatisfying to evaluate the publication of the *Notebook* in terms of its success or failure in disseminating the SI's theses in Quebec.²⁰ Straram was eager to have meetings, discussions, and friendships, which is easily understandable after years of a lack of intellectual exchanges in British Columbia. This avidity wasn't at all episodic; it would inhabit him until his death [in 1988, at the age of 54]. As André Breton (whom he loved to quote) said in *Les pas perdus*, "From day to day I am more and more interested in discovering what

¹⁸ With respect to this fact, Jean-Marc Pottle said that "He was in Montreal for barely two years and he already knew everyone: it is enough to read the *Notebook's* Table of Contents [to see that]." Quoted by Véronique Dassas, "Le blues du bison. Évocation de Patrick Straram," *Conjonctures*, # 38 (2004), p. 129.

¹⁹ Straram, "La vie d'un néo-canadien," a text written for the *Partage du matin* broadcast on Radio-Canada, 8-9 December 1960, f. 1. Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec, Patrick Straram Archives, MSS391,S1,SS5,D29.

²⁰ A failure according to the other authors, as Marc Vachon contends in *L'arpenteur de la ville. L'utopie urbaine situationniste et Patrick Straram* (Montreal: Tryptique, 2003), p. 16.

men are all about.”²¹ Straram in fact spent his whole life in search of such discoveries. Thus it would be more pertinent to envision the *Notebook* from this angle than from that of the success or failure of implanting the SI’s theses in Quebec at the beginning of the 1960s. This quest also helps us grasp a fundamental distinction between Straram’s avant-garde spirit and that of Debord: the former did not want to subsume the expression of each person under the rule of collective theses. He explained his intention in the introduction to his journal: “This *Notebook* will depend on the number of men determined to express themselves and to take responsibility for what they live as they interpret it.”²² The enunciatory difference is obvious between the two parts of the *Notebook*: the articles are signed in the first part, but anonymous [that is to say, collective] in the second, as was the practice in the Situationist information bulletins from which they came.²³

If this work is essentially motivated by the opportunity to publish both of their letters, it also offers the ideal opportunity to reprint the *Notebook* in its entirety. In fact, as their conversation in part concerns the texts that were published in two parts, we can now appreciate the content and accuracy of their exchange. For example, the text by Gilles Leclerc²⁴ that was published in the *Notebook* particularly held their attention and led them to take positions concerning it. Straram defended the text criticized by Debord, who could hardly appreciate its vocabulary, which was borrowed from spiritualist humanism and its condemnation of violence, sexual desires and alcohol. One must say that the members of the SI didn’t like those who didn’t speak like they did, and they judged it better to break

²¹ André Breton, *Les pas perdus. Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, “La Pléiade,” 1988 [1924]), p. 194.

²² Straram, “Avertissements,” *Notebook*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²³ This is how the principal rule of the *Internationale situationniste* bulletin was presented, starting from the second issue: “The rule in this bulletin is collective redaction. The articles that have been written and personally signed must also be considered as of interest to the ensemble of our comrades, and as particular points of their collective research.” *IS*, #2, December 1958, p. 36.

²⁴ “Prometheus or Schweitzer,” *Notebook*, *op. cit.*, p. 10-18. Leclerc’s text appears in his collection of essays titled *Journal d’un inquisiteur*, also published in 1960, but which was ignored by both Debord’s critique and Straram’s defense. It is interesting to note that, in the *Notebook*, “Prometheus or Schweitzer” is placed right before the text “Note d’un homme d’ici” by Gaston Miron, to whom Leclerc had dedicated his collection. Did Straram want to suggest a kind of continuity between the two by setting the texts in this order? He couldn’t have done any better to make that continuity clear.

with a friend than to accept speech that didn't accord with theirs.²⁵ Debord followed this principle rigorously by rejecting Straram several years later,²⁶ as he often did with his friends. That said, Leclerc's humanist and spiritual alienation appeared to Debord to be quite simply incurable. Straram did not share his opinion and let him know by defending an individual who wanted to express himself, rather than evaluate the pertinence of Leclerc's remarks, the responsibility for which only fell upon the author himself. Debord would never have accepted such a text for publication in a bulletin of the SI: in his eyes, the responsibility for its contents was collective, not individual. This was somewhat the meaning of the reproach that he addressed to Gaston Miron's text: he doesn't shout loud enough for his remarks to go beyond his own personality. Debord's critique finds its pertinence in his exhortation to reconsider "Note d'un homme d'ici" in the original context of the *Notebook*, which was much more favorable to individual expression than to the collective one of an avant-garde.²⁷ The cases of Leclerc and Miron are in fact representative of all the other texts in the *Notebook*, which – from Louis Portugais to Marcel Dube, by way of Gilles Hénault and Paul-Marie Lapointe – have their original sources of inspiration in the SI's texts, though they are unlike them in their vocabulary, tone and style. For Straram, the most important thing was

²⁵ "In fact, finding ourselves led to take positions on almost all the aspects of life that present themselves to us, we hold precious the accord that we have with some other people on the ensemble of these stances, for example certain avenues of research. All other models of friendship, of everyday relationships or even of polite interactions leave us indifferent or even disgust us. Objective breaches of this kind of agreement can only be punished by rupture. It is better to change friends than ideas." Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman, *Potlatch*, # 22, 9 September 1955, p. 8. [Translator: see "Why Lettrism?" slightly modified translation: <https://www.notbored.org/whylettrism.html>.]

²⁶ "His Canadian evolution appears to me to have finally ended up (after a good sudden start in 1960, marked by his almost-situationist journal) in a respectful rallying to a 'Parisian culture' that we totally scorn here." Guy Debord, *Lettres à Ivan Chtcheglov*, 12 mai 1963. The contents of this letter are reproduced in the section of this volume titled "Other Texts." [Translator: as the reader will see, Debord's letter isn't completely unforgiving or hostile. Its paragraph on Straram concludes with this question: "Perhaps he will be, all the same, happy to receive your letters"? See <https://www.notbored.org/Debord-13May1963.html>.]

²⁷ Such is the opinion of Jacques Godbout in his review of the *Notebook* when it first appeared. "À propos de paysage à inventer!" *art. cit.*, p. 225. Guillaume Bellehumeur comments on Godbout's critique in the postface to this volume.

surely that he brought together the “valuable conversation partners” that he sought in French Canada. Finally, we must not forget that, if the *Notebook* is not completely unknown in the cultural history of Quebec, it wasn’t widely read. Published in a small print run thanks to the contributions of friends, it was never reprinted. One can certainly find it in the Collection nationale or even in the Patrick Straram Archives at the Bibliothèque et archives nationales du Québec, but this availability doesn’t at all help its distribution to the public at large. Its publication in this work remedies this gap.

I have also decided to publish in the “Other Texts” section of this volume two other texts by Straram that preceded the correspondence at the beginning of the 1960s by several years and that constituted the essential documents that Debord read and used to justify Straram’s membership in the LI. I speak of “Post-scriptum harmonical,” a short text that appeared in December 1953 in the bulletin of the mental patients at the Ville-Évrard hospital (annex, fig. 1 et 2),²⁸ and *Quelque part Salt Spring*, a long text that was never published.²⁹

The importance that Debord gave Straram in the LI’s activities might appear excessive, as has been remarked by Jean-Marie Apostolidès and Boris Donné in their edition of Straram’s letters.³⁰ We must recognize that, except for several brief texts, a few signed tracts and a photograph of him that appeared in *Potlatch* and the bulletins of the LI and the SI (annex, fig. 3, 4 and 5),³¹ the contributions of Straram remain essentially tied to the dérives that he undertook in the company of Chtcheglov and Debord in 1953-1954.³² Even if Debord didn’t feel the necessity of publishing those two early texts by Straram, he gave them a special place in the histories of the LI and the SI. Nevertheless, everything leads one to believe that he didn’t want them to be read as much as he wanted to use them to enrich his own

²⁸ At the request of his father, Straram was confined at Ville-Évrard for two months at the end of 1953 for having threatened passers-by in the street with a knife.

²⁹ The only copy of this text can be found in the Guy Debord Archives at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. BNF (Paris), Manuscripts, Guy Debord Archives, NAF 28603.

³⁰ Straram, *Lettre à Debord*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

³¹ We can add to this list Straram’s response to the questionnaire “Quel est votre but dans la vie ?... et que faites-vous pour l’atteindre?” which appeared in the journal *Lèvres nues* under the name Patrick Elcano. *Les Lèvres nues*, #10-12, September 1958, p. XIX.

³² We can also say that the three publications of texts by Patrick Straram in 2006 by Jean-Marie Apostolidès and Boris Donné contributed *a posteriori* to the history of the LI.

personal history as he was living it.³³ André Breton and Isidore Isou had shown him the way by appropriating and recording the events of surrealism and lettrism at the very moments at which they occurred. In “Histoire de l’Internationale lettriste,” a text that he recorded and played in December 1956 at the Tonneau d’or,³⁴ a bar in which the group had its headquarters, he mentions Straram’s two texts, one of which celebrated the construction of situations; the other resulted from an intense metagraphic activity to which he and Chtcheglov had devoted themselves. I have decided to publish this “Historie” because it is thanks to it that we have not forgotten these texts; it also allowed Straram to legitimize his participation within the heart of Debord’s avant-garde group. Even if these texts appear quite unlike Straram’s correspondence with Debord and the *Notebook*, they are haloed with a prestige that makes the esteem in which Debord held his friend at the end of the 1950s seem less surprising. And if this prestige has kept its staying power because these texts have until now remained inaccessible to the general public, it isn’t to deconstruct them that I have published them here, but to show Straram as he was before he took on the pseudonym “Bison ravi” [Delighted Bison] and became an icon of the counter-culture in Quebec in the 1970s, in part in spite himself. His texts are much closer to the poetic imagination and cultural references of his friend Chtcheglov³⁵ than to the theoretical and critical rigor of Debord. Nevertheless, their most surprising aspect to the reader isn’t so much that they lay down the first milestones of the LI, but that they reveal the singular precocity of Straram’s work: they are the first examples of his writing that contributed to his “illegitimacy” [*bâtardise*].³⁶ They announce this fact so eloquently that we must say, under the

³³ In his biography, Apostolidès tries to show how Debord took extraordinary care in managing the traces that he wanted to leave behind in order to bequeath to posterity a myth rather than a [true] history.

³⁴ *Translator*: see Debord’s letter to Piero Simondo dated 3 December 1956, which refers to “a recording about an hour long.” <https://www.notbored.org/debord-3December1956.html>.

³⁵ See the beginning of his letter to Chtcheglov that marks their friendship with the seal of the imaginary. This letter can be found in the “Other Texts” section of this volume.

³⁶ “The marginality (my illegitimacy) that ‘differentiates’ me, here and now, Quebec [19]73 (a marginality that dates from well before now and will last a longtime afterwards), comes from the production of ‘carefully chosen’ writings and an alleged non-readability (and even when there are other reasons for this marginality, such as social etiquette and legend, as much as the actual fact that, since the age of 40, I have been a ‘welfare recipient’.” Patrick Straram,

amused form of plagiarism in advance, that Straram was a lettrist until his death, having copied the ensemble of his work even before he settled down in Canada. As off-the-wall as it is, this hypothesis nevertheless gives a good idea of the fact that he turned his life in all directions, from the beginning until the end.

In the “Other Texts” section, I have also reprinted the entirety of the article that supported the criminal prosecution of Georges Arnaud³⁷ that Straram published in the 2 July 1960 issue of *La Presse* and that comes up in his correspondence with Debord. I have also added certain other letters from Debord in which Straram is the subject of discussion after the end of their correspondence.

The history of the reception of the *Notebook* and Situationist ideas in Quebec [in general] remains to be written. It has appeared useful to me to end this work with a postface that attempts to write one. I have entrusted its redaction to Guillaume Bellehumeur, whose doctoral thesis concerns that reception in Québécoise literature. At my request, this postface considers this collection in the wider context of Canadian culture and abandons the critical analysis that relates to the success or failure of the *Notebook*. There have indeed been responses to that publication, but in the main they have been indirect, veiled, even détourned [diverted]. It goes without saying that the reception of the SI’s theses in France and elsewhere in the world haven’t been recounted in histories in which the landmarks are laid out in a clear and linear fashion. Those histories have combined in a plurality and have taken the form of a rhizome in which explicit acknowledgments have rubbed shoulders with implicit and potential references in domains that do not necessarily have links between them. The title of Guillaume Bellehumeur’s doctoral thesis (submitted to McGill University), which détourns a passage from a text by the SI, evokes this subterranean plurality: ““In the catacombs of visible culture’:³⁸ Situationist thought and Québécoise literature (1958-1982).” We must note that the SI’s radical theory and critique of the modern society of the spectacle, its appeals to the autonomous Left and to the youth, and its impassioned relations with the city were so well articulated, coherent and targeted, that their spin-offs, as

Questionnement socra/critique (Montreal: Éditions de L’Aurore, 1974), p. 42-43.
[Translator: unclosed parenthesis in original.]

³⁷ *Translator*: Henri Girard, also known as Georges Arnaud (1917-1987), was a French writer and investigative journalist who co-authored a groundbreaking anti-torture manifesto titled *Pour Djamilia Bouhired* (1957) with Ms. Bouhired’s lawyer, Jacques Vergès. In 1960, Girard was charged and jailed for refusing to inform the military authorities about alleged terrorist activities by pro-independence forces during the Algerian War.

³⁸ *Translator*: see “La aventure,” *Internationale situationniste* #5 (December 1960).

vague and vaporous as they have been, have nothing ambiguous about them: from punk culture to the Invisible Committee, there is no shortage of works that clearly identify these references in the research into the SI.³⁹ But what about in Quebec? And to what extent are Straram and the *Notebook* responsible for the reception of the SI's theses here? Bellehumeur's postface offers excellent leads for answering these questions. Finally, the reader will find in the Appendix reproductions of several texts and documents that are mentioned in the different sections of this volume.

To conclude, I would like to thank Alice Debord for authorizing the reproduction of Guy Debord's texts, as well as Jackie DeBelle, who did the same for the texts of Patrick Straram. I also thank Laurence Le Bras of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, who gave me access to the Guy Debord Archives, and Anne-Pascale Salious, who allowed me to consult the Patrick Straram Archives at the EPS of Ville-Évrard. I thank Guillaume Bellehumeur for writing the postface, François David Prud'homme and Laurence Perron for their contributions to the project, and Laurence Olivier his eagle eye. I warmly thank Éric Straram for having agreed to receive me in Paris in order to discuss his brother at length and for sending me the correspondence between Straram and Jacques Blot. Finally, I thank the Faculty of Arts of the UQAM [Université du Québec à Montréal], which supported the publication of this work, as well as Guy Champagne, editor at the Presses de l'Université de Montreal, who followed me step by step in the last stages of this voyage.

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³⁹ Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces. A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Andrew Hussey, *The Game of War: The Life and Death of Guy Debord* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2001); McKenzie Wark, *50 Years of Recuperation of the Situationist International* (New York: Buell Center and Princeton Architectural Press, 2008) and *The Spectacle of Disintegration. Situationist Passages Out of The 20th Century* (New York: Verso, 2013); and Patrick Marcolini, *Le mouvement situationniste: une histoire intellectuelle* (Montreuil: L'Échappée, 2012). [Translator: since, with the exception of Patrick Marcolini's book, all of these volumes originally appeared in English, I have cited their original titles and bibliographic information.]

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⁴⁰ *Translator*: Asger Jorn’s “Les situationnistes et l’automation” was first published in *Internationale situationniste* #1 (June 1958).

⁴¹ *Translator*: the pseudonym of Ivan Chtcheglov.

⁴² *Translator*: “Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau” was written in 1953. An abridged version was published in *Internationale situationniste* #1 (June 1958).

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Patrick Straram – “Harmonical Post-script,” *Le tremplin*, 6th year,
#63, December 1953
Patrick Straram – “Salt Spring Somewhere” (28 February 1954),
previously unpublished (BNF, Guy Debord Archives)
Guy Debord – “History of the Lettrist International” (6 December
1956)
Patrick Straram – “So as Not to Be an Accomplice,” *La Presse*, 2 July
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Chronology⁴⁸

⁴³ *Translator*: “Le bruit et la fureur” was first published in *Internationale situationniste* #1 (June 1958).

⁴⁴ *Translator*: “La lutte pour le contrôle des nouvelles techniques de conditionnement” was first published in *Internationale situationniste* #1 (June 1958).

⁴⁵ *Translator*: “Thèses sur la révolution culturelle” was first published in *Internationale situationniste* #1 (June 1958).

⁴⁶ *Translator*: “L’effondrement des intellectuels révolutionnaires” was first published in *Internationale situationniste* #2 (December 1958).

⁴⁷ *Translator*: “Contribution à une définition situationniste du jeu” was first published in *Internationale situationniste* #1 (June 1958).

1931

December: birth of Guy Debord

1934

January: birth of Patrick Straram

1951

Debord and Isidore Isou meet each other at Cannes on the occasion of the screening of Isou's film *Traité de bave et d'éternité*

1952

Debord moves to Paris and participates in the Lettrist movement

June: screening of Debord's film *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* and split within the Lettrist movement

December: birth of the Lettrist International and publication of the first issue of the Bulletin of the Lettrist International (4 issues between December 1952 and June 1954) (Appendix fig. 3)

1953

Debord and Straram meet each other; Straram joins the LI; dérives and metagraphic experiments by Debord, Ivan Chtcheglov and Straram

November and December: confinement of Straram at the Ville-Évrard asylum

December: publication Straram's "Post-scriptum harmonical" in *Le tremplin*, the bulletin of the patients at Ville-Évrard

1954

April: departure of Straram for Vancouver in the company of his wife Lucille Dewhirsh

June: exclusion of Chtcheglov and resignation of Patrick Straram from the LI

June: publication of the first issue *Potlatch*, information bulletin of the French group of the Lettrist International (29 issues between June 1954 and November 1957) (Appendix fig. 4)

1956

⁴⁸ This chronology only covers the dates and events that are relevant to the texts published in this volume.

December: *History of the LI* read by Debord⁴⁹ at the Le Tonneau d'Or bar

1957

June: publication of Debord's *Rapport sur la Construction des Situations et sur Les Conditions de l'Organisation et de l'Action dans la Tendance Situationniste Internationale*

July: birth of the Situationist International (SI)

1958

Private publication of *Mémoires* by Debord and Asger Jorn; Debord sends a copy of it to Straram

June: Straram arrives in Montreal; publication of the first issue of *Internationale situationniste* (12 issues between 1958 and September 1969) (Appendix 5)

June-July: renewal of the correspondence between Debord and Straram

October: Straram obtains a job as a clerk at Radio-Canada

December: producers go on strike Radio-Canada, Straram is an active participant in it (December 1958 to March 1959)

1959

April: dismissal of Straram from Radio-Canada

August: at Straram's request, Pierre Elliott Trudeau meets his friend Chtcheglov in Paris

1960

May: publication of *Notebook for a Landscape to be Invented*

Summer and fall: important exchange of letters between Debord and Straram

1962

End of the correspondence between Debord and Straram

1972

Dissolution of the SI

1988

⁴⁹ *Translator*: as previously noted, a tape recording of Debord reading this text was played at the bar.

March: death of Straram

1994

November: death of Debord

Copy on the Book's Back Cover

“It’s your move.” It was with these words that, in 1958, Guy Debord invited Patrick Straram to participate in the adventure of the Situationist International, which he had just founded in Paris.⁵⁰ He recalled the memorable years 1953-1954, in which they drifted together in Paris and created metagraphics, which were the principal activities of the Lettrist International. Straram responded to the invitation from his old friend in order to break his isolation in Montreal, where he’d recently moved. Their epistolary relationship lasted barely two years: their disagreements became too important for it to go on. But it was during the course of those years that Straram brought out the only Situationist publication ever published in Montreal, the *Notebook for a Landscape to be Invented*, which marked the beginning of his original contributions to Québécoise culture.

This input has finally been brought to light by Sylvano Santini, who has gathered together in these pages the *Notebook*, as well as the correspondence between Straram and Debord and several previously unpublished documents that are relevant to their exchanges. Copious annotations and a rich contextualization make it possible to show the importance of these materials.

Born in Paris in 1934, Patrick Straram left behind his bourgeois family and school very early in order to frequent the bohemia of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where he met Ivan Chtcheglov and Guy Debord. He left France in 1954, spent several years in British Columbia, and eventually settled in Montreal. He published the majority of his books in the 1970s and early 1980s. He died in Montreal in 1988.

Born in Paris in 1931, Guy Debord founded the Lettrist International in 1952⁵¹ and the Situationist International in 1957, whose ideas enjoyed such success during the events of May 1968. His book and film *The Society of the Spectacle* ensured his celebrity.⁵² He committed suicide in 1994, after having prepared a film for television that concerned “his art and his times.”

⁵⁰ *Translator*: in point of fact, the SI was founded in Cosio d’Arroscia, Italy (July 1957) and Debord was one its co-founders, along with Michèle Bernstein, Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio, Asger Jorn, Walter Olmo, Piero Simondo, Elena Verrone, and Ralph Rumney.

⁵¹ *Translator*: Debord joined Isidore Isou’s Lettrist movement in October 1951 and went on to co-found the Lettrist International with Serge Berna, Jean-Louis Brau and Gil J. Wolman in June 1952.

⁵² *Translator*: though Debord was never a “celebrity,” such a statement might be true for his book, which was published in 1967 and went on to receive a great deal

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of acclaim, but not for his cinematic presentation of it, which was virtually ignored when it was released in 1973 and has been rarely screened or adequately appreciated for its qualities *as a film*.