

# Everyday Life and Urban Space in Postwar France: Henri Lefebvre, the Situationist International and Georges Perec

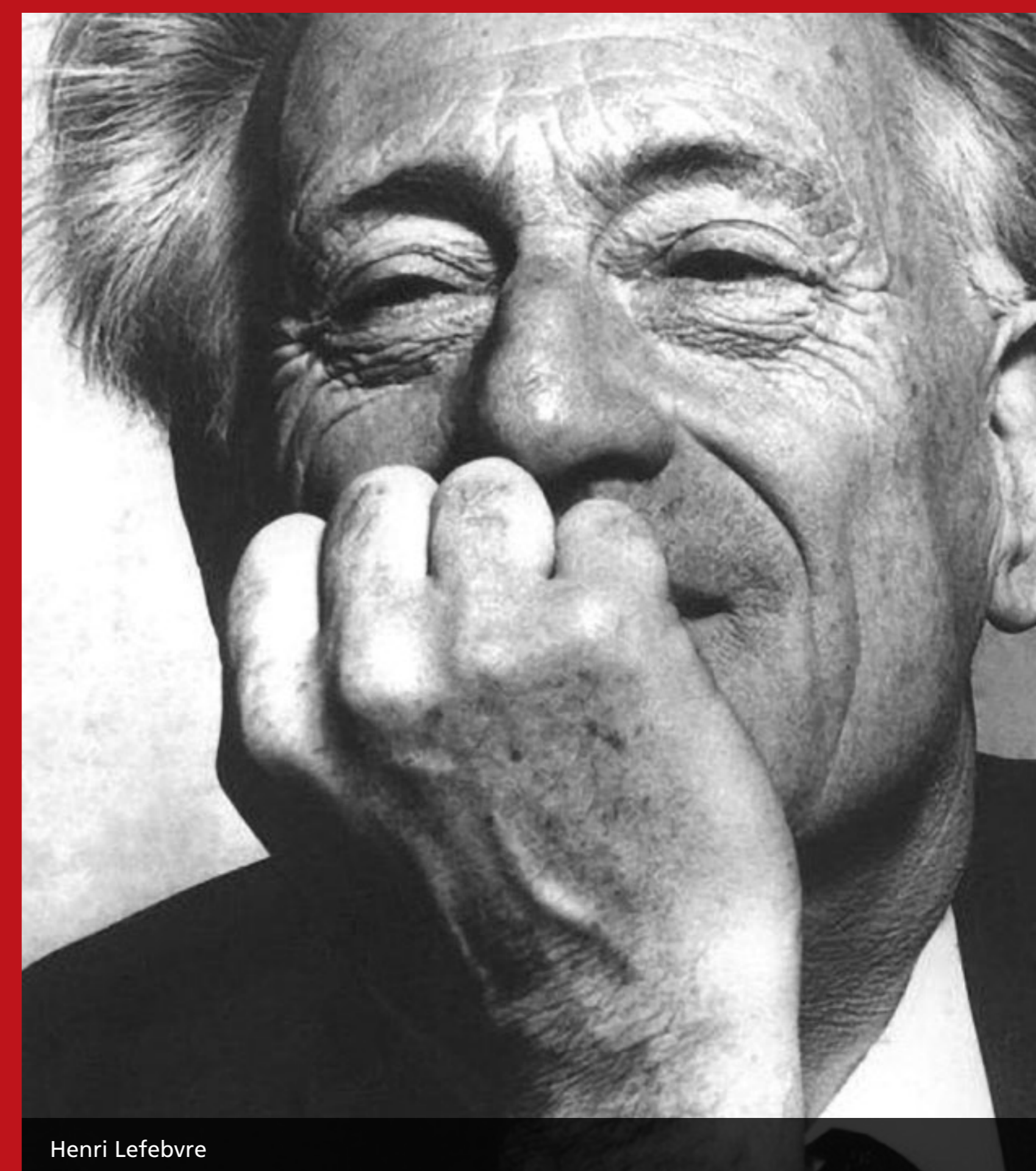
Karl Whitney – UCD Humanities Institute of Ireland



Guy Debord, 'Guide Psychogéographique de Paris' (1957)



Georges Perec



Henri Lefebvre

This project examines the central role of literature and art in the articulation of a critique of politics and society, and investigates the artistic and political networks which, during this period, translated and transformed a number of key ideas about everyday life and urban space.

From 1947 onwards, Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) articulated his Critique of Everyday Life in a series of philosophical texts. This Critique had its roots in a reading of the concept of alienation in Marx's early works, and in Lefebvre's own involvement with the Surrealist group.

A number of European avant-garde groups were drawn to Lefebvre's Everyday Life texts. One of these groups was the Situationist International (1957–1972), led by Guy Debord (1931–1994). In the late 1950s, they undertook a number of urban experiments, which included the *dérive* (drift) and psychogeography (the psychological effect of urban environments on the individual).

After the failure of the Paris events of 1968, the novelist Georges Perec (1936–1982) focused on the everyday life of the city. Perec began a 12-year long project, *Lieux*, which would consist of his own memories and descriptions of 12 particular locations in Paris. In this, Perec was drawing on the legacy of Lefebvre and the Situationists' urban and everyday ideas.

The interlinked concepts of everyday life and urban space have recently been returned to in a series of critical texts that aim to re-examine the questions raised by Lefebvre, the Situationists and Perec. The question, for me, is how these ideas can be usefully adapted and applied to the everyday life of the contemporary European city.

Perec's Lieux plan



Dublin 2009



UCD Humanities Institute of Ireland  
Instiitiúid na hÉireann don Léann Daonna UCD

The UCD Humanities Institute of Ireland (HII) works to enhance critical mass and international visibility for interdisciplinary research in the humanities. It acts as a laboratory for the study of cultures and human experience.

tel: +353 1 716 4690 mail: hii@ucd.ie web: www.ucd.ie/hii