

Next on the Left, or: 'What Good is a Map if you Know the Way?'

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For the French curator, critic and art theorist Nicolas Bourriaud geography and cartography are now the most appropriate means of exploring the networks, boundaries and socio-economic formations that constitute and circumscribe human relations in the present day.[1] The complexities of the contemporary world – those of financial markets, information networks, social relations, etc. – are said to be 'unfigurable', opaque and unrepresentable. As noted elsewhere, the means of representing the geographical spaces of everyday life are now more akin to the condition of abstract art in the twentieth century: the map cannot confine itself to some putative physical description, or copy, of the territory, as it must account for the speed, fluidity and ephemerality of contemporary means of transport, communication and media technologies: "Physical description is to geography what anatomy is to sexuality. They no longer suffice to realise the complexities of their 'domains'".[2] Nevertheless, these complexities can still be plotted, surveyed and mapped.

Representations no longer correspond to reality as it is lived – they can no longer be superimposed upon it: hence, cartography becomes a spatial activity, i.e. it is to be *lived through*. In short, it is no longer a matter of describing a surface (such as the *surface* of the globe), but of reconstructing a scene wherein social relations are played out. Accordingly, contemporary art can be described as an 'offshore zone' that attempts both to maintain a distance from, and venture into social realities by shifting the scale of its attention: its critical 'eye' is not panoramic but *varifocal*.

Bourriaud goes on to claim that as a result of the "connectionist" ideology' and 'reticular imagination' that govern contemporary life, and the tendency towards near-instantaneous communications and transportations, accessibility (i.e. making connections) now has more to do with virtual than *spatial* proximity (even though this *virtuality* might result from the logic of capital accumulation), [3] allegedly presenting the possibility of a transnational constituency. Where social relations and encounters have become obscured by their 'spectacular' representation, they can be given form and developed through the 'topocritical' artwork, which serves as a framework for new models of living.

Topocritical art aims to "encourage a 'democracy of viewpoints', a polyculture of the imagination, in other words, the opposite of the monoculture of information".[4] To do this, it must make 'archaeological excavations inside the knowledge, objects and spaces that determine our reality', [5] because within this largely administered reality there remain *terrae incognitae* of living, human spaces; areas standing against the statistical transformation of the mass in market-led civilisation. When investigated and reconstructed in the relational artwork, the products of this research are 're-humanised', so to speak.

In order to test Bourriaud's claims, we must take a brief excursion into the history of Western European cartographic practice. So, I shall begin with a seemingly unrelated question: "Why would the highest mountain in the world be named after one man, whose origins lay thousands of miles away, and who had never in his life set eyes upon the 'great snowy mass' of Mt Everest"? To answer this question fully would require an extensive study of the activities of the British Trigonometrical Survey in the Indian subcontinent.[6] As such historical research is beyond the scope and intention of this essay, I mean to answer the question obliquely, through a consideration of cartography as an instrument of knowledge-as-power, and as an extension of an all-seeing, acquisitive eye/I: in other words, as a prosthesis to the *corpus iuris*.

Cartography and/as power

Broadly speaking, a map is used to clarify the topographical and geographical complexities of a particular area in order to assist navigation across or within it. But more than this, cartographic activity is linked to the designs (in both senses of the word) and purposes of those who carry out this activity. Infused with the socio-economic and cultural values of those who make them, maps play a discursive and rhetorical role; they are "a class of rhetorical images and are bound by rules which govern their codes and modes of social production, exchange, and use just as surely as any other discursive form".[7] Cartography, then, is intimately linked to practices of acquiring geographical and topographical knowledge, but it also binds its object of study within a certain set of rules and thereby facilitates the strategic employment of this knowledge (hence, the original development of the disciplines of geography and cartography in the shadow of the military). The capacity for cartography to do this might be better understood when knowledge is analysed in spatial terms. Rather than privileging the temporal metaphors associated with the experiential model of individual consciousness, knowledge can be thought of spatially, as a dissemination of the depersonalised affects of power. A spatial/strategic analysis 'enables one to grasp precisely the points at which discourses are transformed in, through and on the basis of relations of power'.[8]

If knowledge-as-power has a spatial dimension then it can clearly be seen that the surveyor of the landscape does not simply replicate an environment but, in doing so, reproduces the territorial dictates of particular political interests. Surveying would then be an act of 'surveillance', one might say, somewhat disguised by the *doxa* of accurate measurement as an end in itself.[9] (The accuracy of surveying techniques finds a direct correspondence with the ever more detailed subdivision of land, as a means of extorting maximal returns per area on investment; but these expansive, colonial interests of capital are naturalised when the emphasis is placed upon accuracy as a measure of scientific veracity). Thus, to map a geographical area is to assert sovereignty over it – to claim to *represent* it, pictorially and politically – and to divide the space contained therein "in terms of territorial control and political authority".[10] In this case, the map speaks a rhetoric which asserts and communicates proprietorial and territorial rights. The mapping of certain areas by those groups which claim dominance over them has the effect of reinforcing and reifying the pattern of human spatial relations that are sympathetic to those dominant groups.

The primary spatial form of power is *territoriality*. [11] However, the areas identified by mapping are not territories per se, but become so only when the boundaries and divisions that they describe become authoritative, and are used to influence or control the activities of that area, along with movement to and fro across its borders. Territoriality defines and classifies space by area and not by type: it is therefore a means of asserting control if the significant social relationships and groupings of a particular area cannot be fully enumerated or negotiated with directly. The territory can thus divide space into 'neutral' units that, for example, ignore contestations over land-use.

Boundaries, and the maps that articulate and authenticate them, communicate possession, and the control of either already extant boundaries or the means of putting them in place confers a certain control of access to the area that the boundary circumscribes. Territoriality is a relationship, and therefore it is not absolute but differential, occurring as part of a complex hierarchical organisation. Moreover, because it is relational and not directly spatial, it can have influence over and through space, and in this way it is a form of action over distance. The map, as a representation of territoriality, enables this distribution of influence; it is thus that it can be thought of as a 'prosthetic eye'.

When power is inscribed upon the land it becomes reified, and it makes the relationships of power and influence tangible by making them visible. A *corpus iuris* may be taken for

granted when its constitution is displaced from the relationship of control to the territory that carries it; when it becomes, quite literally, 'the law of the land'. The interests of capital would benefit to a large degree from the obfusatory and classificational aspects of territoriality. Capital needs to see space as a framework in which events and the laws which govern them are "contingently and temporally located"[12] rather than irrevocably inscribed across the land, but because of the logic of its accumulation and growth, capital must fix itself within space and make new spaces available in order to absorb its surplus.[13] Of course, the territorial accumulation of power and the accumulation of capital are not reducible to one another, but they are rarely in outright conflict, and, most importantly for us here, the strategies of territoriality enable 'vacant' spaces to become available to capital (the phenomenon of 'squatting' illustrates this point clearly). In order to facilitate its expansive activities, capitalism must perpetually recreate the geographical landscape in its own image. It is aided in this by cartographic practices precisely because they act as instruments of *territorialisation*, creating a knowledge space 'within which certain kinds of understandings and of knowing subjects, material objects and their relations in space and time are authorised and legitimated'.[14] When in the service of imperial expansion, these practices authorise and legitimate the logic of capital accumulation, as well as 'knowing subjects' appropriate to this logic.

Highly privileged amongst these 'knowing subjects' is the cartographer. His eye surveys and maps the landscape, yet in doing so it detaches itself from this territory crossed by power and desire. The cartographer's eye is ascendant, leaving behind its desiring body. In this way, it is similar to those "invisible eyes"[15] that St Augustine turned to God, whilst denouncing the *concupiscentia ocularum*. Yet the cartographer's eye is not transfixed so much by the Divine as by the *lux* of scientific rationality. In light of the above, we begin to see how appropriate it is that the imperial heights of the 'great snowy mass' should be synonymous with the elevated eye/I that once attempted, in the name of science, technology and progress, to survey, and hence colonise and exploit, all of India from atop the 'apex' of triangulation.

The 'walker' and the 'voyeur'

The panoptic eye of cartography in the service of imperial expansion is de-personalised, a detached vision in the service of a mobile, surveying consciousness. It is the eye of Icarus, or the 'voyeur-god':

His elevation transforms him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was "possessed" into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and Gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.[16]

Laid out below, the world becomes a readable picture, a 'human text' – a theoretical fiction and nothing more. The 'voyeur-god' – the "space planner urbanist, city planner or cartographer"[17] – can know, in the rarefied air of his/her alienation, only a world devoid of breath. Unsituated and displaced, the omniscient view of the voyeur is seen from nowhere: its 'space' is impossible to occupy, being that of a timeless present: "[it] is a point of space [from] where no man can see: a no place outside space but nowhere, utopic".[18] Its putative description of a space supposes all to be visually present before the eye/I, and thus comprehensible, but in order to make this description it must construct an abstract and homogeneous space, free of contradiction, division and radical difference. But such a description of the world cannot be ideologically neutral, as it claims to be: the objects that it supposes to be available to description (such as the demarcation of urban 'territories') are hypostatised and isolated from their histories. It thus posits itself as an imaginary solution to real contradictions.

As an instance of the ‘microphysics of power’, the imposition of rational order upon space is “the minuscule and ubiquitously reproduced move of ‘gridding’ (*quadriller*) a visible space in such a way as to make its occupants available for observation and ‘information’”.^[19] However, society does not only function according to its dominant types of procedures (those that have become discourse), there are other practices that remain minor: beneath the ‘monotheistic’ dominance of ‘panoptic apparatuses’ (Foucault) there might subsist a ‘polytheism’ of divergent and fragmented practices.^[20] The privileging of one practice over others diminishes the former’s previously ‘silent’ functioning, thus compromising its efficacy, and in turn the dominant practice will become ‘vampirised’ by other practices. As the patterns of consumption that capital dictates in order to reproduce itself can never be exhaustive or final, these other, under-privileged patterns might become operational in society as ‘tactical’ practices of consumption.^[21]

In contrast to the ‘voyeur’, de Certeau talks of the ‘walker’, who knows space bodily, not visually, following and inscribing a ‘text’ of which he/she is not the author, and therefore cannot read. The strangeness (the *terrae incognitae*) of the everyday eludes representation – it is obscure to the clear-sighted ‘voyeur’ – and it is this opacity which lends the space of the ‘walker’ a Baroque character. The visual culture of the Baroque had a fascination with opacity, ambiguity, indecipherability and the rather melancholy desire to represent the unrepresentable. It refused an ascendant, panoramic vision, and realised the necessity of accommodating itself to the distorting and overwhelming excess of appearances that constituted a “madness of vision”.^[22] As Martin Jay notes, this “explosive power of the baroque vision ... is seen as the most significant alternative to the hegemonic visual style [of] Cartesian perspectivalism”^[23] (and, we might add, the Northern tradition of painting the description of the world’s surface that found its ideal accompaniment in cartography, and which similarly posits a non-situated observer).^[24]

Historically, it was a time when the assertion of a multitude of relatively positioned, individual viewpoints, and the social instability this produced, constituted a threat to the hegemonic aspirations of an absolutist monarchy (in seventeenth century Spain). As a response to this threat, and aware of the limitations of the previous tactic of occasional violent repression, a ‘culture of guidance’ was established by the monarchic state: a culture of reaction and redemption that sought to correct the erosion of social hierarchy through the very potentialities that threatened it. So we can see that the phantasmagoria of Baroque vision was originally used to repress-by-seducing the possibly disruptive social forces of the multiplicities of newly formed urban masses. The propagandist intentions of the monarchic state were focused upon the mediation and direction of the agency of the masses: “What we might call a simple *static guidance controlling by presence* had to give way before a *dynamic guidance controlling by activity*”.^[25]

Most important to us here is José Antonio Maravall’s notion of the *resorte*, which translates variously as a ‘motivation’, ‘expedient’ and ‘movement’ acting upon the consciousness of the subject. The *resorte* is that figure which binds the agency of the subject to the state, not only mediating the expenditure of activity but predisposing that agency towards a particular course of action *before* it can be thought of as the effect of an agent, so that every action on the part of the agent is always-already a reaction.^[26] The movement of the mass would be affected through the interrelated mechanisms of ‘suspense’ and ‘wonder:’ the former as a means of arresting “one’s attention in a state of anxious instability so as to reinforce the consequence of emotional effects”^[27] and of propelling the plot of a particular narrative; the latter, as a mechanism of retrospective causality that (re)introduces the ‘changed’ subject to a pre-configured social space. Maravall’s study shows that these two mechanisms find their ideal medium in Baroque theatre, wherein a *causal* narrative is developed, so that the ‘wondrous action’ and the final return of the forces of contemplation and admiration previously in suspension are seen to converge and follow on from previous actions in the narrative. Needless to say, there is a particular interest for the state in this performance of change and

development in the activity of the subject which yet does not affect the underlying social hierarchy from which the state derives its power. Thus, the subversive plurality of Baroque vision and the emergent masses, and the ‘moment of unease’[28] inherent to its daily experience that might so easily spill over into acts of sedition, comes undone when the (ecstatic) body is seduced by the *corpus iuris*, when it recognises itself within a preconfigured narrative which is that of those who would dominate it.

As noted above, Bourriaud claims that the role of the topocritical cartographer is not to describe a surface but to construct a scene in which the cartographer takes part. In order to remain critical – indeed, in order to map the social relations played out in the scene – the topocritical cartographer must both venture into *and* maintain a distance from this scene. This is what Bourriaud calls “varifocal” attention. Yet upon closer inspection, whether occupying the position of an impossibly clear-sighted ‘voyeur’ or being blindly guided by others as a ‘walker’, there seem to be critical deficiencies at these two extensions of the topocritical cartographer’s ‘focal length’. Bearing this in mind, we can now move on to a more detailed discussion of contemporary practices of the cartographer as a ‘walker’.

Mapping narratives / walking in the city

The ‘walker’ traces a *trajectory* rather than plots a point or connects co-ordinates upon a longitudinal/latitudinal grid. The French artist Pierre Joseph’s ‘memory maps’ of Japan and the Paris *métro* trace an accumulation of trajectories through time, remembered in the practice of map-making. For Joseph, maps are “the world lost and the world found”, [29] a way of realising the world and forming a plan (in both senses of the word). His journeys as a ‘walker’ compare to the “spiritual itineraries” of Matthew Paris, which allow “human interpretation to enter into the cartographic text”; they are “exegetical maps [that] treat nature negatively as a space of discontinuity between sites of civilisation”. [30] In other words, these ‘itineraries’ treat the natural world as a ‘non-space’, open to human imagination. Matthew Paris’ maps might be better described as *historia* rather than *geographia*: they are not maps to be followed literally, but, in common with contemporary *mappaemundi* of the thirteenth century, they are an aid to “self-distancing from the world in preparation for the contemplative ascent” [31] and ultimately to the contemplation of the spiritual unity to be found in God’s plan, beyond the vicissitudes of history and geography. These ‘itineraries’ engage the viewer’s interpretive faculties in a way that the naturalised framework of instrumental rationality never can: they are discursive and open to historical exegesis.

Interpretation enters by way of the ‘empty sign’ of the parallel lines that connect the ‘sites of civilisation’, showing the natural world beyond as unread and unwritten – again, a ‘non-space’, or gap – known in total only by God, and knowable in part only by the spiritually enlightened traveller of the imagination. Being wholly dependent upon the contingencies of viewing and reading, these ‘itineraries’ “literally reverse modern habits of map reading: instead of moving from the map to an objective world, we move from the map to a deeper textuality”. [32] The natural world is personalised, established through reading, interpretation, and presumably, dialogue concerning its nature and extension. Similarly, Joseph’s maps personalise the environment of the traveller through the function of subjective interpretation, whilst recognising the necessary deficiencies of such an account: they also posit the natural world beyond as a ‘non-space’. Knowledge of this totality is accessible only to one who is omnipotent and to whose masterplan the ‘walker’ must remain subordinate: in Paris’ case this is, of course, God; in Joseph’s, as we shall see, it seems to be Capital.

For Joseph, maps make the world familiar again, allowing one to chart a ‘possible itinerary’. They correspond to the reality of one’s surroundings in such an assuring way that it is enough just to have a map in one’s pocket and not consult it. To follow a map is to place oneself under a benign authority; to follow a strategy dictated by a world already “thought out by others”, that then allows for play with that given environment:

In a way, you place yourself under a guardianship and you start with the principle that the world has already been thought out by others and that you can play around with that capital'[33]

In creating his own maps, constructed without prior consultation of other maps of the area, Joseph claims to replace his own "murky" experience of an area in the structure of the conventional cartographic plan: to produce a perfect replication of the area would be to make himself "invisible", and so his personalised versions aim to show his visibility, i.e. his *resistance*, within an urban milieu. To do this he must make the imaginative leap of thinking the world no longer there, that there is a world to be retraced, eventually rediscovering himself in the singular experience of personal map-making. His posture is that of a "fake pioneer".

Whilst this practice might be welcomed in response to the neutral and reified descriptions of cartographic survey, asserting instead the contingencies and vicissitudes of personal urban experience, and the activity of mapping that considers space not in absolute but in relational terms, still it naturalises the political and ideological forces that bear upon this experience. Following Maravall's figure of the *resorte*, we can see how rediscovering oneself thus – recognising oneself in 'a world thought out by others' – might be to reintroduce oneself as subject, according to the retrospectively causal narrative that preconfigures social space: or, in other words, to affect the completion of ideological interpellation even at the moment of its denial. Need it be said that insofar as the subject imagines itself autonomous, and the sum of his/her experiences as irreducible to the discourse of ideology, 'this imaginary distance towards ideological identification is the very sign of its success'.[34] In short, although Joseph returns a necessary, *active* subjectivity to cartographic practices, he neither adequately investigates the complexity of contexts and goals that constitute this subjectivity, nor draws out the specific politics of that constitution.

Undoubtedly, there is a need for cognitive mapping (such as Joseph makes) to represent the multinational network of late capitalism[35] – that space of spectacular immediacy, perceptual saturation and discontinuity – so as to forestall the alienation of the urban citizen from their environment. The identity of the subject is, in part, determined by its position in space and its relation to other bodies: there is a "cartographic consciousness"[36] that defies easy representation, and therefore demands a broadened resource of representative means. The significance of research into cognitive mapping – how the subject visualises their environment in map-like form so as to be able to orient his/herself – is to be found in the relation between these visualisations and behaviour, and to what extent this behaviour distorts, or is distorted by, the environment.[37] In particular, this cognitive mapping might disclose those patterns by which the subject is guided in its behaviour (see Maravall above), and conversely, those points of convergence that might found a collective visualisation of the urban psycho-milieu. Following this train of thought, we might now look at the Situationist maps that Guy Debord based upon the tactic of the *dérive*, to which Joseph's work has some affinity.

Debord's *The Naked City* (1957), as a map of the *dérive*, is said to bring out those differences that are suppressed by the abstract and homogeneous descriptions of the 'voyeur', by fragmenting and re-connecting the *Plan de Paris*. In the *dérive*, the city is experienced as a cluster of events, never fully seen and always contingent:[38] there are spaces where experiences coalesce or resonate, so-called 'unities of atmosphere', between which red arrows marking trajectories of 'impassioned attraction' trace an open narrative. Space is shown to be inhabited, i.e. it is not some contextual container which social relations somehow fill, but a product of the performance of inhabiting. As such, space is incorporated into social practice. As a practice of inhabiting space, the *dérive* was an attempt to contest the reification of lived

experience as it becomes representation, and so contest the 'society of the spectacle':[39] in other words, to re-entangle the detached eye/I in the densely opaque daily behaviours of urban experience.[40] It was also an attempt to transgress the naturalised territories and causal narratives inscribed upon social space, in order to reconstruct them in terms of libidinal and sensual pleasures. Ultimately, it was to unearth the possibilities for a new organisation of urban life that were hidden in the reified structure of the city.[41]

The function of Joseph's works as cognitive maps is ultimately normative: they seek to attain a command of a particular terrain and to determine its character, but in order to obtain a coherent position for the subject and for his/her view, they must sacrifice the contingency of subject positions and relations. The *Naked City*, however, resists the regulative ideal of the cognitive map when it becomes the site (not the scene) of a social geography that lives out the discontinuities and divisions of the urban environment: "[it] openly acknowledges itself as the trace of practices of inhabiting rather than as the imaginary resolution of real contradictions'. [42] In contrast to Joseph's habit-forming wanderings, psychogeographic cartography expresses a 'complete insubordination to habitual influences'.[43]

The *dérive* is somewhat akin to the nineteenth-century practice of *flânerie* as developed by Baudelaire. The persons active in both are out of place,[44] ambivalent towards the crowd that surrounds them: the former through affecting an aristocratic detachment, the latter by suspending class allegiances. However, the difference between them is in their attitude towards the "hegemonic scope of modernity":[45] unlike the *dériveur*, the *flâneur* makes no criticism of the gendered and class-based "gaze of modernity which is both covetous and erotic".[46] Instead, he embodies that gaze. He maunders through the *Parisian passages*, both voyeuristic and aloof, the city surrounding him as spectacle offering itself up to his discerning eye. He considers the city to be immediately present (already "thought out by others") to his aestheticising gaze, rather than under continuous social construction. In addition, according to his ambivalent situation as bohemian rebel and producer of commodities, he becomes

... the observer of the marketplace. His knowledge is akin to the occult science of industrial fluctuations. He is a spy for the capitalists, on assignment in the realm of consumers.

And further:

Empathy with the commodity is fundamentally empathy with exchange value itself. The *flâneur* is the virtuoso of this empathy. He takes the concept of marketability itself for a stroll. Just as his final ambit is the department store, his last incarnation is the sandwich-man.[47]

That is to say, by virtue of his bondage to them, the *flâneur* comes to embody the fluid commodity forms of the marketplace: as a producer of cultural commodities, he peddles ideological fashions; as a 'sandwich-man', he advertises for the capitalist state.

Certainly, Walter Benjamin recognised the ambiguous status of the commodity itself, and in the outdated commodities of the arcades that were the habitual stamping ground of the *flâneur* he found the promise of a new sensory world – a world where the commodity died and became a sign of history, to be deciphered. But for this to happen, for this promise to be kept, the arcade had to be closed, its goods made unavailable; it is only then that 'archaeological excavations' can be made 'inside the knowledge, objects and spaces that determine our reality'. By contrast, Joseph's *flânerie* does not sink to the depths of the social in order to disclose its enigmas and fantasies,[48] and inasmuch as it deciphers at all the signs that surround it, these signs feature only within an autobiographical poetics. As such, it is antithetical to the tactical activities of the 'walker' and the *dériveur*.

Perhaps a more appropriate comparison would be the Surrealist street adventures of André Breton, in which the city becomes a succession of impressions that leave their traces across the subjectivity of the walker. To experience the city in such a way is to formulate, describe and articulate a renewed subjectivity; it is to once again ‘find one’s way,’ to recreate and display oneself in a familiar environment, *à la* Joseph. As we have seen, the problem here is that to ‘find one’s way’ seems to be to configure a subjectivity by aligning one’s path with those already inscribed upon the urban landscape by those who maintain, through the authority of their accumulated capital, the capacity to structure it. Furthermore, it might be more a case of re-territorialising rather than *de*-territorialising (see above): certainly, the boundaries of power are remapped according to a more fluid rationale, but the authority of those boundaries and the spaces of power they delineate are not subverted. Again, it is a matter of establishing a solid base in the present from which to project the fantasy of future possibilities rather than losing one’s way in order to find those potentialities already inherent to the world as it is currently perceived.

The *dérive*, however, is a way of walking that does not allow for autobiographical representation: it is a collective activity that attempts “an impersonal objectivity of impression” by affecting the “enunciatory and ambulatory disappearance of the walker”.[49] It is an activity devoid of territorial ambition, as it follows desire into the labyrinth wherein it loses its way without any intention to find itself again in a description (a map) of an itinerary, or the retrospective composition of a coherent narrative. Whereas the Situationists attempt a ‘living critique’ that would lead to “revolutions in individual everyday life”, [50] Joseph’s pseudo-tourist itineraries offer a simple recuperation of the *status quo*. The construction of situations, as a prelude to the non-alienated (artistic) reconstruction of life, was not to be a spectacular performance, nor was it to result in consumable property. To paraphrase Vincent Kaufman (see note 49, above), the real game of reconfiguring the experience of the urban environment commences once it foregoes the possibility of describing or determining its actions.

In conclusion, we will return to Bourriaud’s original statements concerning the necessity of cartographic art practice. The representation of social encounters is, of course, necessary for numerous reasons, but when these representations become a substitute for encounters *per se* then something has been lost: cartography functions as an aid to knowledge of social relations, not as their replacement. What is more, in becoming art, the ‘subversive plurality’ of marginal groups, situations or experiences falls under the gaze of a contemplative subject that reduces them to a play of “relational forms”, [51] and, in doing so, disavows the positioning of that subject within the world by playing out the illusion of disconnection.

It must be stressed here that this essay is by no means an exhaustive analysis of ‘topocritical’ art. Nevertheless, I believe that Pierre Joseph’s work exemplifies a tendency in some ‘topocritical’ art to superimpose upon the urban environment a recreated yet still sovereign subjectivity; a subjectivity that is highly theatrical, driven yet constrained by the projective and invasive power of a forward narrative movement. Insofar as it does this, ‘topocritical’ art still harbours territorial ambitions and cannot therefore offer a model of a dispersed, relational subjectivity made possible by an increasingly reticular imaginary. Similar in nature to the *dérive*, the latter subjectivity follows a non-purposive and circular movement which allows it to be receptive and to see itself inaccurately replicated throughout its environment: a multiplication that would at once make the boundaries of any reconstructed self superfluous, and therefore impossible to preserve, and thereby allow the forms of the world to constitute its anonymous identity. [52] This dispersed form of subjectivity is crucial to the development of the alternative, relational forms of living that Bourriaud seeks to encourage.

On a more mundane level, the very mobility and fluidity of *some* contemporary art and its practitioners – as Bourriaud claims: “the majority of artists today are globetrotters” [53] – only

further embeds art practice within the ideology and circulation of global capital. It is uncritically assumed that the privileges of globetrotting artists are ubiquitous or universally representative. But is it either a "connectionist ideology" or "reticular imagination" that governs contemporary life? Not necessarily. This way of life presupposes a level of material support that goes unacknowledged, or is assumed to be 'friction-free', by much allegedly critical art practice: hypermobility is most often considered as a simple corollary to digital technology and telematics, and not another instance of the erosion of space by time that accords with the accumulation of capital. To claim that "accessibility has more to do with *virtual* rather than *spatial proximity*" is, as Saskia Sassen has noted, to privilege "the fact of instantaneous global transmissions over the concentrations of built infrastructure that make transmission possible".[54] That is to say, this mobility, as fluid as it may seem, is wholly imbricated in fixed areas of production that have a spatial extension – a space where the local and the global engage.

Any endorsement of the deconstructionist dissemination of the Self into the open field of contingent social interaction and the *bricolage* of relational forms, if it is not also to endorse the hallucinations of a radically subjectivised environment, must be countered by an acknowledgement that these forms eventually 'come down to earth' in fixed localities – in the decay and inertia of material reality.[55] It is (usually) in the space of the city that the global 'comes down to earth' in the local, and the decentred subject is made palpable: it is here that resistance is felt. Thus, the city emerges as a strategic site for a "place-specific politics with a global span",[56] but this strategic potential is obviated if the 'non-place' of conventional cartographic practice is established, as this would deny political engagement with the local in 'street-level' politics. Bourriaud says elsewhere that, "the model [of contemporary art] is not necessarily reduced in size but is quite capable of functioning on a scale of 1:1 ... Reality is imposed as the sole instance of legitimisation of artistic activity",[57] but scale is not just a matter of *size*, it is also a matter of position and assumed distance; that distance which is a traditional requirement of cartographic practice. This necessary distance of the contemplative eye leads us back toward that position of putative neutrality and coherence, one which does not allow for the contestatory nature of the represented terrain, rehearsing the various conceits of naming mountains after men.

FOOTNOTES

- [1] Nicholas Bourriaud, 'Topocritic: contemporary art and geographic enquiry', in exhibition catalogue for GNS, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 5 June-7 September 2003, pp 9-40.
- [2] Bernard Marcadé, 'GNS: Leçon de Géo au Palais de Tokyo', *Beaux Arts Magazine* 230, July 2003, pp 68-73, p 72 (my translation). See also Bourriaud, 'Topocritic ...' pp 18-21.
- [3] That virtuality might be structurally correlative to economic growth and the 'annihilation of space by time' (Marx) is rarely addressed by Bourriaud, yet it would seem to complicate the critical aspects of 'relational' or 'topocritical' art, based as it is upon such a logic of temporal and mobile connections.
- [4] Bourriaud, "Topocritique ...", p 32.
- [5] Ibid, p 34.
- [6] Briefly put, its project – begun in 1806 and finally discontinued after the Great Rebellion of 1857 – was to map a 20' arc of the longitudinal meridian using basic trigonometry, advanced surveying equipment, and prodigiously complex mathematics to gain an unprecedented degree of cartographic accuracy. The hero of this expedition was one Sir George Everest (by all accounts a pedant to the point of tyranny). A comprehensive historical account of this expedition is significant by its absence, the only account on offer being John Keay's *The Great Arc: The Tale of How India Was Mapped and Everest Was Named*, HarperCollins, London, 2000, which reads more like a Boy's Own adventure than historical research.
- [7] J.B. Harley, 'Maps, Knowledge, and Power', *The Iconography of Landscape*, Daniel Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp 217-312 and pp 278-9. See Alfred Gell, *The Anthropology of Time: Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images*, Berg Publishers, Oxford, 1992, especially chapters 23 and 24; also Jorge Luis Borges, 'A New Refutation of Time', *The Total Library: Non-Fiction 1922-1986*, Eliot Weinberger et al., eds., trans., Penguin Press, London, 1999, pp 317-332.

- [8] Michel Foucault, 'Questions on Geography', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-7*, Colin Gordon, ed., Brighton, 1980, pp 63-77, p 70.
- [9] See David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2001, especially 'Cartographic Identities: geographical knowledge under globalisation', pp 208-233.
- [10] Jeremy Black, *Maps and Politics*, Reaktion Books, London, 1997, p 12.
- [11] Robert David Sack, *Human Territoriality: its Theory and History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p 26.
- [12] Robert David Sack, 'Human Territoriality: a theory', in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, volume 73, 1983, pp 55-74; p 67.
- [13] David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, Oxford, 2003, pp 98-9 and 109-12.
- [14] David Turnbull, 'Cartography and Science in Early Modern Europe: Mapping the Construction of Knowledge Spaces', *Imago Mundi* 48, 1996, p 7.
- [15] See St Augustine, *Confessions*, Henry Chadwick, trans., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991, pp 209-212.
- [16] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven Rendall, trans., University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984, p 92.
- [17] *Ibid*, p 93.
- [18] Louis Marin, *Utopics: Spatial Play*, Robert A. Vollrath, trans., Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1984, p 207.
- [19] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice ...* pp 46-7.
- [20] Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, Brian Massumi, trans., Minneapolis University Press, Minneapolis, 1986.
- [21] On the difference between 'tactics' – as creative appropriation of the dictates of consumption, based upon the notion of consumption as constitutive of identity and self-actualisation – and 'strategies' – as inherently colonial, in that they seek to secure bases from which to exercise power and domination, see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice ...* "Making Do": Uses and Tactics", pp 29-42; XII, 'Reading as Poaching', pp 165-176 and xix. Furthermore, the operational logic of 'tactics' is structural and collective; it does fall back upon the 'private language' of the individual.
- [22] See Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La folie du voir: de l'esthétique baroque*, Editions Galilée, Paris, 1986.
- [23] Martin Jay, 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity' in *Vision and Visuality*, Hal Foster, ed., New Press, New York, 1999, pp 3-23; p 16.
- [24] Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1983.
- [25] José Antonio Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure*, translated by Terry Cochran, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1986, p 68.
- [26] *Resorte* translates literally into English as 'spring' (in the mechanical sense of the word), and it retains this meaning in Spanish. Following the mechanic (Newtonian) model should clarify the operation of the state/agent relationship: in its 'natural' state, the spring is inert; it is only when it is acted upon (extended) that the spring re-, or counter-acts with an opposing force. Thus we see the inherent reciprocity and tension between hegemony and counter-hegemony, for instance: 'Translator's Introduction' in Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque*, pp xxvii-xxviii.
- [27] *Ibid*, p 216.
- [28] Jacqueline Rose., *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, Verso, London, 1986, p 233.
- [29] GNS, p 124.
- [30] Michael Gaudio, 'Matthew Paris and the Cartography of the Margins', *Gesta* XXXIX/1, 2000, pp 50-7; p 50. On the performative relation between the viewer/'traveller' and the map, see Daniel K. Connolly, 'Imagined Pilgrimage in the Itinerary Maps of Matthew Paris', *AB* LXXXI, 1999, pp 598-622.
- [31] Marcia Kupfer, 'Medieval world maps: embedded images, interpretive frames', *W&I*, X, 1994, p 270.
- [32] Michael Gaudio., 'Matthew Paris...' p 53.
- [33] Pierre Joseph, GNS, p 125.
- [34] Slavoj Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject: the Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, Verso, London, 1999, p 259.
- [35] Frederic Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping", in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited and with an introduction by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, MacMillan Press, London, 1988, pp 347-357.
- [36] David Harvey *Spaces of Capital*, p 221.
- [37] Robert David Sack, *Conceptions of Space in Social Thought*, MacMillan Press, London, 1980, especially pp 95-105.

- [38] Guy Debord, "The Theory of the Dérive", in *The Theory of the Dérive and Other Situationist Writings on the City*, Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa, eds., published to coincide with the exhibition Situationists, Art, Politics, Urbanism, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 3 November 1996 -6 January 1997, Actar, Barcelona, 1996, pp 22-7.
- [39] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Donald Nicholson-Smith, trans., Zone Books, New York, 1994.
- [40] The influence of such activities upon de Certeau's 'walker' is here made clear, cf Michel de Certeau, *The Practice...* pp 92-3.
- [41] Guy Debord, 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography', *Les Lèvres Nues* # 6, 1955, in *Theory of the Dérive and other...* pp 18-21.
- [42] Thomas F. McDonough, 'Situationist Space', *October* 67, Winter 1994, pp 59-77; p 69.
- [43] Guy Debord, 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography', op. cit, p 20.
- [44] Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', *Illuminations*, edited and introduced by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, Fontana/Collins, London, 1973, pp 157-202; p 174.
- [45] Thomas F. McDonough 'Situationist Space', p 73.
- [46] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, Routledge, London, 1988, p 67; cited in Thomas F. McDonough, op. cit., p 74.
- [47] Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', as previous.
- [48] Jacques Rancière, 'The Aesthetic Revolution and Its Outcomes', *New Left Review* 14, March-April 2002.
- [49] Vincent Kaufmann, 'Angels of Purity', translated by John Goodman, *October* 79, Winter 1997, pp 49-68.
- [50] 'The Theory of Moments and Construction of Situations', (unsigned), *Internationale Situationiste* # 4, June 1960, pp 10-11; reproduced in *Theory of the Dérive ...* p 101.
- [51] Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, trans., Les Presses du Réel, Paris, 2002, pp 11-21.
- [52] "One big soul' (The Thin Red Line)', Leo Bersani, and Ulysse Dutoit, eds., *Forms of Being*, BFI Publishing, London, 2004, pp 124-179.
- [53] Nicholas Bourriaud 'Topocritique...' p 32.
- [54] Saskia Sassen 'The City: Between Topographic Representation and Spatialised Power Projects' in *Art Journal*, 60, 3, Summer 2001, pp 12-20; p 13.
- [55] Slavoj Žižek, 'Against the Digital Heresy', in *On Belief*, Routledge, London, 2001.
- [56] Saskia Sassen, op. cit., p 19.
- [57] Nicholas Bourriaud, 'Modelised Politics', in *Flash Art XXVI*, no 171, Summer 1993, p 142.

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