



READER, TOURIST, AND PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY TODAY: A CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE OF TRAVEL

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Abstract:

With the death of the author — whose intention is otherwise the chief anchor of the text, according to Knapp and Michaels — reading risks being led into the culture of mere interpretation, instead of reading as a wholesome experience of the rewriting of the spatial text. This gaze of the interpreter can be equated with tourist gaze given the theoretical analogy that the paper draws between reading and travelling. Considering Barthes' notions of *jouissance* and *dérive* in the reading practice is seen as a subversive, even perverse, and a travelling act at once. It must preserve the site of *jouissance* from all forms of reconnaissance and interpretation by another. Given the appropriation of Barthes by architectural thought, particularly Tschumi, and the treatment of the text as a metaphor for the city, the paper goes on to identify the aesthetic of delinquency in the spaces that English writers such as Blake, De Quincey and Conan Doyle have created, thus observing a parallel between the delinquency of the marginal figures occupying this spatial text and the reader's own. In this psychogeographical adoption of the delinquent persona the reader becomes one with the spatial text, thereby acquiring the agency to create his own culture of sociolects based on the text. Psychogeographical practices in reading are thus never far from the corrupting influence of the touristic-gaze — if such a thing could exist in the reading practice — creating a class of its own, based on its appropriation of the space and the architecture of the text, into one's lived experiences. This adoption of delinquency from the spatial text is prone to create a new *other* zone of marginals and delinquents in the lived society, which the reading-traveller should be wary of, and absolutely hospitable towards, while being hospitable to the *other* landscape of the text. The paper concludes thus by posing a situation in which the reader can be a tourist in his own text, and how this can be observed as a categorical imperative of travel.



Keywords:

Psychogeography, Situationism, Flânerie, London, Debord, De Quincey, Barthes, *dérive*, Absolute Hospitality, Categorical Imperative.

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READER, TOURIST, AND PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY TODAY: A CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE OF TRAVEL

Arup K Chatterjee

Consider the approach:

Dear Reader...

Of course it does not imply the reader is alive, or dear. The very purpose of this approach has classically been not to endear but distance the reader, from the centre: the meaning, or the intention. Can there be one without another?¹ And, is the reader alive, in any case? What do I mean by questioning the existence of the reader? I must mean at least

¹ Referring to E.D. Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Conn., 1967), Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels note that meaning without (authorial) intention is a theoretical impossibility:

The fact that what a text means is what its author intends is clearly stated by E. D. Hirsch when he writes that the meaning of a text "is, and can be, nothing other than the author's meaning" and "is determined once and for all by the character of the speaker's intention." Having defined meaning as the author's intended meaning, Hirsch goes on to argue that all literary interpretation "must stress a reconstruction of the author's aims and attitudes in order to evolve guides and norms for construing the meaning of his text" (725).



three things. Firstly, I presume the possibility of his life or death as something either phenomenologically perceivable or scientifically controllable. Secondly, I have already (as imminent always) hinted at the possibility of his locatability, for I have referred to my *approach*. As I approach, he is located, for he that imbibes me — the author — gives up himself to himself. And thirdly, I have conceived his existentiality — living or dead — in situ. Hence, the idea I would like to begin with is, reading is culturally forced to becoming immobile as though it were interpretation. But, is the reader, capable of reading any more than interpreting, or must merely stop at it? The phrase “tourist gaze,” now considerably commonplace, is not left to tourism alone. Tourism does not exist outside of human behaviour and culture. Therefore, that part of culture which responds to the spectacles of tourism must respond with corresponding measures of consumption to institutions even apart from tourism. The purpose of this investigation is to draw a parallel between the tourist and the reader. If the tourist gaze is configured by “representations” digitally proliferated by the tourism industry (Selby, Hayllar and Griffin, 186), can the reader’s gaze said to be manufactured by the publishing industry, or some such social agency? Or, even more sweepingly, pose a thesis in imitation of Roland Barthes’ “Death of the Author”: *the reader enters into his own death, tourism begins...?*² This manner of questioning would however deviate from the seriousness of the issue at hand. So, let us grant this one serious and sustaining question to our digressing minds: can we be the tourist in our own text? This is quite the same as asking can we go so far away from our own world as to come back only to an unfamiliar one, or to transgress the world so much as to lose one’s transgressibility. This notion of transgression is a whole, as whose constituent reading follows. Henceforth, whatever be the deviation in our line of interrogation, we must bear fidelity to the above question.

The question of reading is never divorced from the reading of space. It should therefore be needless to differentiate anymore the reading of a text from the reading of culture, which in turn belongs to a space. There may be

² Barthes’ famous utterance: “...the voice loses its origin, the author enters his own death, writing begins” (1989: 49).



one industry promoting tourism, another cinema, and yet another literature. There is also no need to demarcate one industry from another, not at least in this investigation, as it does not concern the specificities of industrial economics. What is under scrutiny here is what subversive potential, if at all any, is left in the reader. The question presupposes a crisis in the activity or discipline of reading today, by anticipating the possibility of tourist-like features interrupting the relatively immobile and seemingly *individual* act of reading. The idea is not to provide a messianic revelation of — nor an answer to — the perils of the reading community. It is, instead to foreclose a looming symptom of touristic-reading before it reaches a malignant stage. In this endeavour I have no empirical evidence of any kind of declining readership of one or another genre of literature. In fact, I am not even concerned formally with literature alone. I am only concerned with the literary text, the hypothetical Foucauldian text³ that pervades everything, or of which we are a part, which always contains a set of signs referring back to the author, whose role we in turn usurp. With a generation of elders casting moral aspersions on the reading habits of their youngers, more than ever now, it is time — as it always was — to revitalize the literary text with the spatial text, and understand the behavioural responses of the reader to one with reference to another. Anyhow, this series of doubts does not, at any cost, overrule the interjections: *has reading changed at all, or does this culture of touristic-reading belong strictly to our times?*

We must, at the outset, distinguish reading from interpreting. Interpretation is the translation of available codes into a cultural script; reading is the founding of new cultures. In interpretation we decipher the text. The author is very much alive; or, we can never supplant the author while interpreting. It might be argued: interpretation has no author. That is precisely the point. The author, or the intention, is so well concealed that he is never distant. Also, the interpreter can never transgress this immune authorial

³ See Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" in Donald F. Bouchard ed. Michel Foucault's *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Cornell University Press, 1980); 113-38.



spectre, for he is everywhere. He is embodied, and dispersed in the society of interpretation. And, any interpretation then is solidly furnished with the “final signified” (Barthes, 1989: 53). So, interpretation is the upholding of ideology; reading to interpret is passivity towards a pre-existing ideology. The exactitude of interpretation is determined by ideological intentions. It is not the “exactitude” that Barthes talks of, for instance, as an alteration of codes. This exactitude is in fact the very culture that he defines his exactitude against: the painstakingly and increasingly well detailed representation of language to outfit a certain cultural standard (1975: 26). Interpretation is the reaffirmation of what Barthes calls “sociolects.” So, in interpretation, the intention of the discourse apprehends individual intention. In reading this intention is nurtured, contradicted, interspersed or transgressed, but not wielded. There is no centre, or whole; there is no structure of the text, at least none exterior to the reader. The text, or the reader, does not move toward one another. There is no question of the approach towards the reader after he has imbibed the approacher’s sensibility and authority. What I have so unaffectedly called “subversive” is described equally wonderfully by Barthes as *jouissance*, which for problems of translation can only read in English as “bliss”:

If I read this sentence, this story, or this word with pleasure, it is because they were written in pleasure (such pleasure does not contradict the writer’s complaints). But the opposite? Does writing in pleasure guarantee — guarantee me, the writer — my reader’s pleasure? Not at all. I must seek out this reader (must “cruise” him) *without knowing where he is*. A site of bliss is then created. It is not the reader’s “person” that is necessary to me, it is this site: the possibility of a dialectics of desire, of an *unpredictability* of bliss: the bets are not placed, there can still be a game (1975: 4).

The text, or this Barthesian “site,” is the lived experience of the space, which is a product of this reading. The dialectics of desire in reading is also the dialectics of space. The reader must not only adopt the writer, even at the cost of *himself*, but also produce a space outside of an ideology that represses desire. Moreover, this site must be in the realm of the unknowable, a personal, even



perverse discourse, rather than one in the public. The reader, like a nomad, avoids the striated spaces knowable to the sovereign, invigilated by this sovereign's mass, and yet roams those very streets like a character, himself. The reader, the writer, and his (their?) site is all in one complex: it is then not just dialectical, but trialectical. Does the reader still accept this site as his own, and allow the contests of his desire, therein? Does he still travel towards it, daydream within it as though it were his home? Or does he remain on the outside, or at best the fringes and leave after interpreting? Or worse still, leave it after a reconnaissance of this site of pleasure, or the orgy of language?

Critics, who talk of travel writing today with regard to the paucity of spaces to travel, are mistaken. Or, to be fair to them, they talk of a rather grandiose and masculine form of travel, whereas the Benjaminian *flâneur* has for nearly hundred years been offering — paradoxically (since it is somewhat feminine, and spatially confined) — a *virile* traveller of metropolitan spaces. His (or *her*) spectrum of travel features not only of architecture but also the deluge of extra-architectural features such as advertising boards, traffic rhythms, distribution of commodities, and the city noises gushing past our apertures. They leave us always *ahead* but forced to look behind, after and vacillate. They impose on us the behaviour of the reader with the Oedipal instinct to “denude,” the structure of this arcade: to *know* “the origin and the end” (Barthes, 1975: 10). The city arcade is like a great classic that produces spaces of consumption that are active and passive. Within the arcade, there are passages — like passages in a classic text such as Dickens or the authors that Barthes mentions — which we often skip. The arcade allows for this flexibility wherein we sieve out what is useful to our secret pleasure from that which is useless. And, as Barthes notes: “we never skip the same passages” (*ibid*, 11). In this imposition of delight, bliss is compromised, and apprehended by this self-regulatory structure of the metropolitan spatial-text. What is the function of the culture of speed at which we overtake the huge columns of commodities? Is it to really take us past them, or to circumvent that site of bliss?

Nevertheless, there are so many spaces to travel now: that is, if travel were some kind of interpretation, if space were a text, interpretable and re-writable. Every space that has been discovered, is mapped, and marked by the striations



of human knowability. Without this understanding we have never travelled at all. It is well known that there exists something called literary tourism, but can there exist a way of reading that is touristic? The romanticism — or necromanticism⁴ — over a literary author overflows into the spaces that tourists wish to travel to. Can similarly, the romance of a space overflow into the texts one is made to desire to read? If such a phenomenon is to be real the romance does not remain transcendental, but succumbs to the world of the spectacle. What are we when we take *just* a glance, a peek at a written space, on the worldwideweb or a book at a bookshop, but tourists? And, if we are suddenly, by the landscape of these texts, reminded of a space uncannily familiar or familial, do we not tend to set up a temporary home? We do at least travel back in time to our oneiric home of the past. This going back is purely psychogeographic. Try traversing the exact distance between your ground and that very home it reminded you of. The concrete geographies you cross shall not be the same as your psychogeography. The question is: does the reader have a psychogeography? Or, can reading and/or interpretation be a psychogeographical process? But, first one must understand what psychogeography is.

According to the succinct explanation by Merlin Coverley psychogeography is the intersection of psychology and geography (13). However, it does not merely end there, for this small limit works to merely relegate the idea to just another coinage, stripped entirely of its subversive potential. Psychogeography seeks to free the world of its urban and spectacular banality, by imagining an alternative geography to urban landscape that unconceals the “mystery” (*ibid*) behind its capitalist architecture and monotonous symbolisms of advertism, cosmopolitanism and the multi-storey. Psychogeography is not necessarily a moral idea of reversing the Satanism of the metropolitan mass-consuming city, as it might be misunderstood. It should neither be seen as a rigorous and scholarly inquiry into the makes and

⁴ See Paul Westover's *Necromanticism: Traveling to Meet the Dead, 1750-1860* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).



masks of the capitalist city. No, that it doesn't do; at least that is not the germ it is born out of. In the words of Guy Debord, who claimed psychogeography as his brainchild it is the "study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (5). The rationale behind psychogeography is to create an easier world, where perception and reading does not stop at interpretation, where the world is internal, and at the same time lies outside the geography where the dominant sociolects of the tourist-culture prevail. It is the acknowledgement of the fact that the given metropolitan-geography is too complex to understand. Instead of the rigorously scientific method of making meaning in the lived world psychogeography tries to do something as the following:

Unfold a street map of London, place a glass, rim down, anywhere on the map, and draw round its edge. Pick up the map, go out into the city, and walk the circle, keeping as close as you can to the curve. Record the experience as you go, in whatever medium you favour: film, photograph, manuscript, tape. Catch the textual run-off of the streets; the graffiti, the branded litter, the snatches of conversation. Cut for sign. Log the data-stream. Be alert to the happenstance of metaphors, watch for visual rhymes, coincidences, analogies, family resemblances, the changing moods of the street. Complete the circle, and the record ends. Walking makes for content; footage for footage. (Robert MacFarlane, qtd. in Coverley, 9)

As clear in the above, there is more work to do in psychogeography; yet it is a short cut. It is not a study of a work that is the city-space but a replacement of its geography, often operating as a complete mockery of it, both comical and grave. So, when I talk of the absence of rigour in psychogeography as a discipline, I do so to avoid already sounding like a prejudiced author, taken in by the versatility of the project. In fact, Situationism, or the 1960s *avant garde* urban movement of creating urban situations, is indeed rigorous and very *queerly* so. According to Adrian Forty, Situationism was "an opposition to the process of reification, of the tendency of capitalist culture to turn ideas and



relationships into things whose fixity obscures reality.” Therefore, in its critique and re-envisioning of space Situationism sought to penetrate the hidden forms of social stratification built into urban geography. Jonathan Hill in his book *Actions of Architecture* retells a situationist scenario as described by the NATO architect Villanueva Brandt.

A situation was set up consisting of a 24-hour intervention in a public space, Leicester Square. The author inhabited the square with chair and table, creating his own space, and communicated exclusively by means of a typewriter. All social exchanges were carried out through writing, all institutional exchanges and confrontations were also carried out through writing. Observations, narratives and the author’s dialogue were typed in lower case and all external dialogues or contributions were typed in the upper case. The beginning and end of the text was determined by the 24-hour cycle (68)

However, this queer experimentality of psychogeography is not as new as the global sixties. It has shaped a lot of the Dickensian squalor of London, although not with as modern methods as the situationists used. In literary history this subversive element of psychogeography is best observed in the nocturnal trysts of William Blake, Thomas De Quincey, or Sherlock Holmes with the vagrants of London. While Blake is described by Iain Sinclair as the “Godfather of Psychogeography,” (Coverley, 39-40) De Quincey, supplies the finest experiments in the psychogeography of the marginalized and criminalized sections of London in his opiated revelries, accumulating the mysteries of the “urban Gothic”; in this De Quincey behaves as a prototype of the modern situationist, (Coverley, 17) in his *Confessions*. Phil Baker associates this psychogeographical history of London closely with “the deviant, and sordid, or antiquarianism with crime and lowlife” (325). He also goes on to trace Situationism back to de Quincey (326), who sought to provide a grotesque urban counterpart to the otherwise idyllic countryside of William Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* (Coverley, 43). The *Confessions* available to most reader-tourists as a book on addiction and drugs has a misleading title. The



book only “nominally concerned with addiction” and even then without any legal violation at the time it was published (*ibid*). The opiated de Quincey is instead a metaphor for the psychogeographer taking an remarkably imaginary route towards order, in the throes of physical and intellectual hunger (de Quincey, 15; 38). For instance, note the following description of his rambles:

Some of these rambles led me to great distances: for an opium-eater is too happy to observe the motion of time. And sometimes in my attempts to steer homewards, upon nautical principles, by fixing my eye on the polestar, and seeking ambitiously for a north-west passage, instead of circumnavigating all the capes and headlands I had doubled in my outward voyage, I came suddenly upon such knotty problems of alleys, such enigmatical entries, and such sphinx's riddles of streets without thoroughfares, as must, I conceive, baffle the audacity of porters, and confound the intellects of hackney-coachmen. I could almost have believed, at times, that I must be the first discoverer of some of these *terrae incognitae*, and doubted, whether they had yet been laid down in the modern charts of London. For all this, however, I paid a heavy price in distant years, when the human face tyrannized over my dreams, and the perplexities of my steps in London came back and haunted my sleep, with the feeling of perplexities moral or intellectual, that brought confusion to the reason, or anguish and remorse to the conscience (111).

But even psychogeography is not free of travel writing's novelty-seeking approach; nevertheless, its novelties lie frequently among the low-lives, not in an exotic but a derisory capacity. Especially in the case of Holmes, the most powerful reason for his popularity was the repugantly Gothic geography of London — its *noir*-styled vigilant streets — which is still a delight in erstwhile colonies of the Empire. For delight, strictly read consumption. So, what was, even partially, subversive when Arthur Conan Doyle wrote in the late 1800s, remains as delightful today owing to those terrors having being tamed or made picturesque over time. One does not fall for the land that is England but the



landscape “as landscape rather than land is all the rage” (Urry, 21). What the most recent TV series of Sherlock does is to consume the detective into its modern geography. The very idea of making a character ‘sleek’ is to treat him like a device — not unlike the cell-phone that Sherlock uses frequently to send texts — that must follow the updated codes of the generation. Neither the text, nor the landscape it represents subverts anything anymore except what *was* subversive.

Yet, the question persists: can reading or interpreting the character and its geography, in all its varying degrees be akin to psychogeography? It can be when one houses within oneself a culture that does not severely overlap with the culture without. This is to say we *can* have a culture within so that we are already always different from the cultural space we inhabit; we are agonistic or antagonistic to this inhabited culture. However, the certainty, or even optimism, of this agonism or antagonism seems hugely suspect when one encounters the example: “‘Wow, that’s so postcard’ (visitor seeing Victoria Falls)” (qtd. in Osborne, 79). The culture within, therefore, while always in cultivation, is always endangered of being an image — the image of the spectacle. When this happens one stops housing, or even being part of a culture; one becomes a tourist of it.⁵ Consciousness of the written or real landscape is seen through the lens of the camera, focussed from the balcony looking comfortably *down* upon the terrific and the sublime (Urry, 20). The spectacle belonging to an external agency mediates between us and the interpretation. The Victoria Falls belongs elsewhere even when one is right in front of it; it belongs in the postcard. Its legitimacy, and certitude of interpretation, is drawn from the spectacle of the postcard that has the potential to unite masses across continents. It has already been consumed visually by the reader, whose persona is dead by the time of visiting the actual landscape; this is when the tourist has already taken over. Contrary to this example of controllable interpretation, reading is uncontrollable and

⁵ Buzard in his *The Beaten Track* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) talks of the possibility when “the beginning of modernity ... (is) a time when one stops belonging to a culture and can only tour it” (27).



immediate. It is an act of penetrating into the “inhospitable” *land* (ibid), and waging a war (Barthes calls language a “warrior *topos*”) ⁶ instead of consuming the readily available *landscape*. This drifting or *dérive* has undergone a greater rarefaction with the death of the author, or so it would seem. I say this in utmost consistency with Barthes. He makes room amply for the *dériveur*:

My pleasure can very well take the form of a drift. *Drifting* occurs whenever *I do not respect the whole*, and whenever, by dint of seeming driven about by language's illusions, seductions, and intimidations, like a cork on the waves, I remain motionless, pivoting on the *intractable* bliss that binds me to the text (to the world). Drifting occurs whenever social language, the sociolect, fails me (as we say: my courage fails me). Thus another name for drifting would be: the *Intractable* ... (1975, 18-19)

While Barthes argues for the *dérive* by dislodging the author, my basic difference of articulation with him is that the death of the author of the city is like imposing a very foreign book upon a xenophobic reader. That is to say, while it is possible for us to pay no heed to the author in the reading of a text, the *dérive* is not as surely liberating and pleasure causing when one is drifting within the confines of city architecture. As Hill remarks: “cities are different from books. It is possible, but not necessary, to physically rearrange a book” (69). In the same vein, it is necessary but not as possible to rearrange the city, unless one draws a more purposive method. Purportedly, book is *supposed* to be read, a city is not. It is especially not supposed to be read so as to keep

⁶ According to Barthes language is infinitely divisible into power-playing rival units, fighting for “hegemony”:

...if power is on its side, it spreads everywhere in the general and daily occurrences of social life, it becomes *doxa*, nature ... but even out of power, even when power is against it, the rivalry is reborn, the jargons split and struggle among themselves. A ruthless *topic* rules the life of language (Barthes, 1975: 28).



concealed the ideologies of social hierarchy and the disproportion of consumability. Of course, Barthes never specified the city while talking of language, nor does he use the text as a metaphor for the city. But arguably his intention is not consequential. We might as well talk of the city as the text, even in Barthesian terms. Not only that, but also *authorizing* us is the fact that Barthes did present a paper on the spatial-counterpart of the author/text titled “Semiology and Urbanism.” In this, Ben Highmore sees the possibility of the analogies between the reader and the urban user, and the author and the planner: “the birth of the urban reader must be at the cost of the Planner” (157). Yet, the text that really brings Barthes into the realm of the space and, more specifically the city, is Bernard Tschumi’s “The Pleasure of Architecture” modelled on Barthes’ *The Pleasure of the Text*, which has hitherto served as the one of the bedrocks of this paper. According to Tschumi, historically pleasure has risked being called the decadent architect’s vice (81). But, space corresponds to the unconscious, and the pleasure in both of these realms inclines towards “the edge of madness” (84). Space is seen as the absent presence, a void that the user must inevitably rush in to complete, or reconfigure. When Tschumi talks of “architecture” he refers not to the touristic landscape — that is always interpreted as an imitation of the postcard — but to a more usable and re-writable form of space. “The ultimate pleasure of architecture is that impossible moment when an architectural act, brought to excess, reveals both the traces of reason and the immediate experience of space... The architecture of pleasure lies where concept and experience of space abruptly coincide” (89). What Tschumi is trying to represent is a scenario where there is both the immediate invocation of desire and its fulfilment in the reader’s bliss, not within a concealment of the ideology of architecture, but precisely in its unconcealment.

Nick Couldry’s essay “On the Actual Street” explores how tourist landscapes have turned from being non-symbolic to over-symbolic spaces. This means, a certain architecture is not confined within its city limits but acts as a “capital of symbolism” as in the case of Disney World (Zutkin, 232). With the extreme inflation in media attention over tourist landscapes it is possible for the architectural desire to be mediated. So, desire is fulfilled at the cost of a



mass-fulfilment of the same. The spectacle of the landscapes of “shopping malls and theme parks... which are sites of current or historical media production” (Couldry, 60) unites us all as interpreters of a global culture. The instantaneous interpretability of the global landscape on television and the web reduces manifold the consciousness of space outside these media. In fact, our space cannot be outside the mediatized space; as said earlier, no space can be conceived anymore without reference to the urban city. So, something is touristic and produces desire only in *difference* from the space of the tourist’s home, not as an immediate phenomenon: “we travel abroad to discover in distant lands something whose presence at home has become unrecognizable” (de Certeau, 50). Any case of a lack of literary responsiveness to the local space is the means to the psychological binarization of spaces, domestic and touristic. It also a case of boredom in the Barthesian, sense whereby the state of boredom is the domestic space is also the state of pleasure that has fallen short of its excess; or that which is short of bliss: “Boredom is not far from bliss: it is bliss seen from the shores of pleasure” (Barthes, 1975: 26). This controlled distinction between pleasure and bliss is what makes a tourist out of the reader who is unable to respond to the demands of the domicile, and falls prey to an external agency of desire that unites the world of tourism. In simpler terms, this is what also happens in urban alienation.

When the Parisian *flâneur* came on the stage of the urban city, much before the Situationists, s/he was the symptom of the modern cosmopolis and the death of the provincial home (Coverley, 20). Xavier de Maistre’s *A Journey Around my Room* (Fr. *Voyage autour de ma chambre*) written as early as 1794 foregrounds a withdrawal from the world of the grand travels of Crusoe and Gulliver into the shelter of his oneiric home. De Maistre’s invitation to the reader to take a tour around his room, comprising six weeks, is what consolidates the idea of the “voyage immobile” proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. It calls for a topophilia absent in the practice of our everyday short-term travels, a greater awareness and perception of streets that we take, instead of allowing ideological space to invade us. De Maistre does not talk about a utopia out of the world; his belongings and his furniture is replete with constant references to the socio-political space, but his bed acts as his anchor.



With the coming of the *flâneur* this armchair method of travelling or tourism became more and more *the* way to cope with the demonic pace of the city. It can be seen as politically radical owing to its passivity in the process of consumption. It helps neither the economy nor the history of capitalism; it is an aristocracy in defiance of capitalism. A strange nauseating sense of freedom exudes from the revelation of de Certeau: "In modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called *metaphorai*. To go to work or come home, one takes a 'metaphor'" (115). Our tales, the text of our daily lives, could also take the form of a metaphor which must hereby be considered as "noble" as the vehicles of Athens. Travel becomes the central code of the text of our lives, and our spatial consciousness, in all its vicissitudes, the determinant of its ideology. We are suddenly so free to travel that anything we do cannot stop us from perceiving it as though we were travelling, and legitimizing the entire agency that the practice accumulates. Not only are we so free, we are condemned to travel, or to be tourists — left to us to draw an anthropological space of our own, or thoughtlessly crowd the geometric space of the street.

Our texts are born under the supposition that their author is dead. Not only is this an idea, but also one must have to *suppose* that the author is really dead in order to play an important role in the reading of the text. Else, we shall be perennially subjugated to the author. How far can one go in the reading of the text so it does not ostracize the reader? There is an intractable socio-economic solidarity between the touristic-readers of the text. These readers are the ones driven by sales of commodities. The stories are constantly driven by a labour that transforms a geometric space to a functional space. *This is the drawing room of our apartment*: would be conforming to certain geometric parameters of the given culture; *between this wall and sofa is a trolley that contains the poems I have written in this year*: would be to make that space functional. De Certeau points out that general descriptions of domestic spaces follow codes of the map or the tour. They are either follow knowable static codes of vectors (*to the left... or the right...*), or imaginable and conditional dynamic codes (*if you take that corridor...*). The narrator of these spaces overtly follows the touristic persona, according to de Certeau, in the study by C. Linde and W. Labov that he cites. Only three per cent of the corpus of these descriptions



matched the mapping technique (scientific), while the rest were in the order of the tourist (119). There is a certain imposition of an order of knowledge that separates our quotidian geographical practices as a world outside that of scientific exhibits. The industry of tourism — including those spaces of consumption that are the pedestrian hawker-zones or the promenades and shopping malls (since we are talking of practically any space as tourable) — works by mapping desire in the tourist, while these maps as de Certeau says:

The map, a totalizing stage on which elements of diverse origin are brought together to form the tableau of a “state” of geographical knowledge, pushes away into its prehistory or into its posterity, as if into the wings, the operations of which it is the result or the necessary condition. It remains alone on the stage. The tour describers have disappeared (121).

It would not be an exaggeration to state that in case of the mapping of space, or desire (in tourism) the routes are always predescribed (de Certeau, 119-121). Any map is an inversion of the “organization” and participation we see in our everyday relations with space, or our “spatial stories,” as de Certeau calls them. These stories are not only of a conflicting or disputable nature, they are also legislative. The history of court proceedings contains a lot of this valuable travel literature as the stories of parties involved in disputes are always of a spatial kind, involving a marking of boundaries around the sites of conflict. Here de Certeau adds:

Mr. Mulatier declares that his grandfather planted this apple tree on the edge of his field... Jeanpierre reminds us that Mr. Bouvet maintains a dungheap on a piece of land of which he is supposed to be the joint owner with his brother Andre... “Genealogies of places, legends about territories. Like a critical edition, the judge's narration reconciles these versions. The narration is “established” on the basis of “primary” stories (those of Mr. Mulatier, Jeanpierre, and so many others), stories that already have the function of *spatial legislation* since they determine rights and divide up lands by



“acts “ or discourses about actions (planting a tree, maintaining a dungheap, etc.) (122).

Owing to this very classical association of spatial stories with disputes the foundation of this essay calls for serious consideration. The subversion of a grand design of travel and tourism can be amply seen in our daily geographies, or psychogeography, if you will. But subversion is not all one wants. In fact the question of the subversive potential in the examples of De Quincey and the Baker Street Irregulars (or helpers of Holmes) is also the question of the home. There is the primordial weakness of the human heart to reach out for these figures ridden with hunger and homelessness; this weakness is not just for the sentimental and nostalgic elements of history — the clothes they wore, or the tower clocks that kept their hours but also for their unlocatability. This sheer quality is what makes them so exotic. The London that we see in Blake’s heart-rending, or politically radical poem is also exotic because it marks out the space of that which is a foreigner to the bloody “Palace walls.” It marks out the space of the delinquent, that has nowhere to dwell, and that which dwells everywhere. Simultaneously, Blake places the “Marriage hearse” in a no man’s land, outside of legal boundaries. The harlot’s infant is marked out into this nowhere space (Blake, 65); it is provided the endless divergence of space to practice its spatial story, read it and live it at once. The *flâneur’s* female counterpart, the *flâneuse*, therefore was often the prostitute, who was the primary source of this intellectual desertification of space. She was not only the source of physical but also geographical pleasure, with the Parisian arcades “repeatedly identified as the haunts of both prostitutes and their clients, amongst them Benjamin and Baudelaire” (Coverley, 72). Typically, by detouring the process of reproduction, the prostituting *flâneuse* sublimated her potential into the reproduction of space. The codes of fashion have also swung towards the costumes of this performance of prostitution and its clientele. The reader, not only taken in by this inconceivable fantasy of belonging to this nowhere, begins to adopt the lifestyle of the delinquent. For de Certeau delinquency is the form of the God which lives in the desert, or the forest and our homes (129). The reader becomes this wanton God swaying the rules of



space, reproducing the space of the world in his remote locale, then walking the streets of a the outer world, creating the noise of Europe's bazaars on every oriental gravel beneath his feet. Knowing not whence and why comes this attitude of irreverence to the native, and hospitality to the foreign, the reader and the psychogeographer moves blindly towards an "increasing banalisation of... (the) urban environment (Coverley, 111). The foreign object of desire — seen above as homelessly orphaned — to which the reader's hospitality is aroused, is itself foreign to the foreigner. This hospitality takes the form of hospitality from which the reader derives the agency of marking his own boundaries. In travel, not only does the traveller receive hospitality, he also provides it to the host. The *boundary* between the host and the traveller are blurred in "absolute hospitality," in the way Jacques Derrida describes the concept in *Of Hospitality*:

absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names. The law of absolute hospitality commands a break with hospitality by right, with law or justice as rights (25).

What this implies is an interchangeability between hospitality and absolute hospitality. Nicola J. Watson in the *Literary Tourist* describes the now regular ordinary phenomenon of thanatourism in a whole new light. Thanatourism coined by Graham M.S. Dann and A.V. Seaton, is the form of tourism that is concerned with death, and in many cases with the death of the (literary) author. Although thanatourism is a very broad spectrum, it often features tourists travelling to witness spaces where authors (and important personalities) have either died or been buried. It also involves places where legends of hauntings and spectrality are known to prevail. So, in Watson's



book we have the case of the literary tourist travelling to Poet's Corner in Westminster abbey of London to hunt for relics from the author's graves. Watson explains:

The touristic impulse to take relics — whether pieces chipped off the monument, artefacts made from the mulberry tree that Shakespeare was supposed to have planted with his own hands or from the crab apple tree under which he was supposed to have slept off a drinking binge, bits of 'Shakespeare's chair,' or, a Victorian preference, sprigs of ivy from the churchyard and elsewhere — marks the emergence of a new model of tourism driven by a desire on the part of the tourist to construct a more intimate and exclusive relationship with the writer than is supposed to be available through mere reading (34).

With the death of the author — commemorated over and over again in this form of thanatourism — not only a very intimate but also a completely new text produced by the reader. And, not only is the author's grave and its discourse hospitable to the tourist, the latter too provides hospitality to the author's body, and its relics. This unique case of absolute hospitality as a result of the death of the author reveals the phenomenon of hospitality in the (touristic) reading. In our examples, the bleak poetic image of an orphaned London is what makes it so exotic for the reader; and also, what weakens him towards it, in an effort to adopt it, to be hospitable towards it insofar as making the text his own story. But, this is how the reader desires to himself belong — belong not to the nowhere from which he has adopted his persona, but the London that has created the boundary of the native and the foreign within its own space. So, having received this absolute hospitality by the orphan, having belonged to space of the text, the reader turns his back, creating on his way another wasteland, another foreign space that is a leftover of his desires.

Then, to finally take up the question again: can we be the tourist in our own text? I shall answer this by means of answering the other subsequent doubts that I had raised in the beginning of this essay. Does tourism begin with



the death of the reader? It certainly begins with the mapping of the reader's desire to be guided forth into the author's realm. And, the reader should always be prepared to die, for the very cause behind the death of the author is that the text belongs to no one. Then what is it that belongs at all? The answer is the notion of home, and its space of private rationality, which is constantly invaded, and quite blissfully so, by the desire to experience the *jouissance* of the text. The reader desirous of adopting this *jouissance* hastens towards the end of the Barthesian striptease. We all desire to tame this beast, to home it to *our* domicile. According to de Certeau the reader is the traveller, and is the first one at that. It is not the reader who imitates the traveller, but the other way round. In this scenario the reader should always be prepared to be the tourist in his own text. That is to say, in spite of adopting the homeless De Quincey, in spite of practising Blake's psychogeography of exposing the un-chartered streets of London, in spite of guarding the Baker Street Irregulars, the reader must be prepared not to be the Londoner. In spite of being the *flâneur* he must be prepared not to walk the Parisian arcades, as all those realms never belonged to the rationale behind London or Paris, or any such establishment. In fact, those spaces were the very oppositions of such a rationale. The condition of absolute hospitality the travelling reader should provide to the text, should be such that does not seize away a home from it; it should be such that bliss does not become a discourse for further travel and readership; it should be such that the reader does not start mapping, as an agent, for himself and for the other the site of his *jouissance*. The reader should ignore the invocation "Dear reader" lest it accomplish the task of locating him, pinning him down and marking this as a conquest of desire over the reader. Finally, the reader should be prepared to be a tourist—as an *other* — in his own text, to know how it feels to be the toured. To conclude I would like to draw a parallel with Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law" (30). The categorical imperative that this essay proposes is: *read to travel where no one has travelled, at the same time, will that it is another's home.*



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