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Space, chance, time: walking backwards through the hours on the left and right banks of Paris

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In connection with cultural geography's current interest in themes of exploring and intervening in the city, this paper narrates an intervention in Paris authored by Jean-Pierre Le Goff. Le Goff is renowned in France for his interventions in both town and country that play with the dictates of chance. The walk takes participants to 12 locations on an imaginary geographical clock that Le Goff has plotted on a map of Paris. Participants are invited to walk anticlockwise the hours on the clock and at the site of each hour to place as many cards as the hour, drawn at random from a deck of tarot. In the progress of the walk the participants find themselves caught up in disclosing a cryptogram that links with individual mythologies while revealing *a city within a city*. The subterranean temporalities of Le Goff's intervention connect with ideas of play and re-enchanting the city; they unearth incidences of *objective chance* and the *uncanny* as well as the city's hidden signs. They enable countercultural practices to evolve that suggest the *lived* moment is significant to thinking about alternative narratives in studies of urban geography.

I invite you to accompany me the length of this journey to trace with our steps the circle of a clock of which the hands turn in reverse. From 12 we will pass to 11, from 11 to 10 and so on until we return to our point of departure.

On the 12, at the foot of the cork tree, will be pulled at the dictates of chance 12 tarot cards; on the 11, 11 cards chosen similarly; on the 10 and the rest the principle will continue. Make the calculation and you will see that the sum of the 12 numbers is 78 as the number of cards of the game of tarot.

I think that we will arrive at our point of departure well before parting there. Therefore, if you would like to regain your youth, be in front of number 10 rue Tiquetonne (métro Étienne-Marcel) Sunday 10 November 2002 at 10 am; the walk will be long, perhaps en route we will stop for lunch.¹

An invitation from Jean-Pierre Le Goff, who is renowned in France for his interventions of place that play with the dictates of chance. Le Goff is drawn to the city's concealed, out-of-the-way, obsolete and banal places that in the course of the everyday go unnoticed. Within these he is fascinated by the plane trees, flora, street names, signs and messages that evoke curiosity: 'If a place emits some sort of vibrations or waves I can feel this and I am able to translate these into words. Always there is a correspondence with places, resonance and correspondence.'² Participants in Le Goff's interventions in the city are exposed to its mysterious layers that connect with individual mythologies, while *uncanny* moments reveal the city's cryptogram.³ Le Goff uses his knowledge of etymology, astronomy, geometry and historical geography to

investigate the innermost of places and he combines this with a natural curiosity: 'I am very receptive, permeable to things going around, and there are some things that fascinate me, for example, anodyne, non-quiet places that disturb me, where I can find interest in the non-immediate and the strange.'⁴

Le Goff is a pataphysician,⁵ banalist⁶ and surrealist who joined the surrealist movement in Paris in the 1960s. Although subsequently he has not been involved in surrealist collective activity, he is intrinsically surrealist, and motivated by the same obsessions about place and individual mythology that inspire surrealists today both to participate in his interventions and to have a unique engagement with the city. It was through my doctoral research on contemporary surrealist utopian practices and knowledges in Paris that I first heard about Le Goff's interventions and arranged to meet him. We talked endlessly of our shared fascination with symbolism and the city, and I was invited by him to participate in an intervention he had organized in Fécamp, Normandy. The importance of Le Goff's interventions to my research became increasingly apparent to me, in that they epitomize contemporary surrealist spatial practices. This has extended to a personal interest: I have joined the vast following of people on Le Goff's mailing list, and from time to time I participate in his interventions.

This paper, in connection with cultural geography's interest in themes of exploring and intervening in the city, is about walking backwards through the hours on the left and right banks of Paris as part of an expedition involving space, chance and time. Spatially, a correspondence occurs between ground level and a mythical subterranean plain, uncovering hidden layers of the city and embracing signs that have an effect of wonderment. Chance is an important element in encountering en route these extraordinary signs that demonstrate both coincidence and the uncanny. Time is experienced both in a linear form and as having momentum connected to ambience, mood and motivation.

The paper opens at the first location of the geographical clock, the 12th hour, and reveals the intervention's subterranean significance. At points around the clock the intervention is examined in terms of play, adventure and the 'speech act of walking'. It is discussed with reference to objective chance and the uncanny. At the location of the 6th hour, the intervention is considered with reference to countercultural practices that challenge the city's visual order and dominant narratives. At the 5th hour, it is discussed in terms of enchantment resisting disenchantment, while at the location of the 4th hour it is examined with reference to the lived moment as an alternative geographical imagination of the city that evokes utopian possibility. The intervention's evoking of secret histories is considered at the 2nd hour, followed by discussion at the 1st hour of narratives that reveal a city other than that portrayed in accounts of urban planning and urban theory. The paper closes reflectively in a café near to our point of departure at the 12th hour.

Return of lost youth

For exploring time in reverse in Paris, Le Goff's inspiration is two passages of Jacques Yonnet's *Enchantements sur Paris*.⁷ In the first passage Yonnet proposes that the true

centre of Paris is located on a north–south axis between two symbols – the sign of a cork oak tree located at 10 rue Tiquetonne, north of the centre of Paris in the 2nd arrondissement, and the ensign of an old oak tree at 69 rue Mouffetard, south of the centre of Paris in the 5th arrondissement. In the second passage, Yonnet makes reference to a clock with hands that turn anticlockwise and permit the return of lost youth. Thus, Le Goff has imagined constructing on this alchemical axis a geographical clock of which the 12th hour corresponds to the sign of the cork tree on the right bank of Paris, and the 6th hour to the sign of the oak tree on the left bank. On a map of Paris, Le Goff has located the central point of the axis – a landmark to the left of Notre-Dame – and he has drawn a circumference on which he has plotted 30° segments representing the hours of a clock (Figure 1).

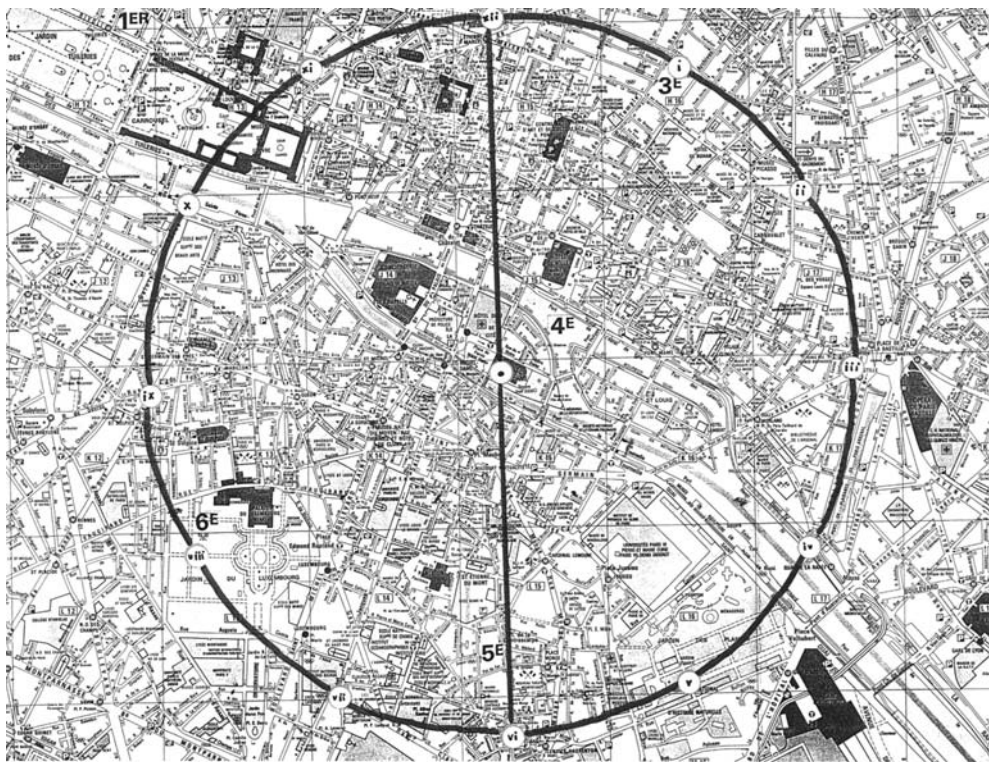


FIGURE 1 Le Goff's map on which he has plotted the centre of Paris and the hours of the geographic clock.

The 12th hour: beneath the roots of the cork oak tree

The ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below', below the thresholds at which visibility begins.⁸ By implication, Le Goff's intervention is marked by a sense that what takes place beneath the roots of two alchemical trees is of a nature that evokes a *city within a city*.

Like tree roots that secretly travel beneath concrete and tarmac, the meanderings of the invisible roots of the cork oak tree at 10 rue Tiquetonne evoke wandering and wonderment as participants, lured into a world in which esoteric forces are at play, amble around a mythical subterranean plain. Here, in a common surrealist analogy, the subterranean is understood in a Dionysian sense, associated with seeking some kind of ultimate truth or reality in the form of primitive oral cultures or mystic telluric forces and in opposition to the rational, one-dimensional society of the Apollonian over-world.⁹ The subterranean terrain in which we are about to travel is thus an urban underworld that evokes the irrational, sublime, mysterious and poetic.

At the location of the 12th hour of the geographical clock, in response to Le Goff's postal invitation and attracted by the possibility of regaining lost youth, eight individuals rendezvous beneath the emblem of the cork oak tree. Apart from the three of us known to each other through the surrealist movement, we are strangers engaging together in an adventure that has an aura of mystery. As is normal with Le Goff's interventions, except for those of us more intimately acquainted, we do not seek to get to know each other nor collectively to share any personal detail that may not be associated with the intervention. As we proceed, we are commonly aroused by its periodic outputs of mystery, our subterranean adventure evoking, as Steve Pile suggests, a counterbalance between surface and depth through the spaces of the city and the body.¹⁰

In the shop window beneath the emblem of the cork oak tree a red sign is displayed on which is printed in large letters the word WONDER. As we gather round to draw randomly 12 cards from a well-shuffled pack of tarot, and Le Goff arranges them on the step of the shop named WONDER (Figure 2), we comment on this sign; it is perhaps coincidence but suggests that the day is instilled with a sense of wonderment or the



FIGURE 2 Twelve cards at the location of the 12th hour beneath the roots of the cork oak tree.

marvellous in which, as Le Goff proposes, ‘all is possible’.¹¹ With expectations raised, we observe that one of the participants, a member of the present-day surrealist movement, mysteriously draws card VI – l’Amoureux, the Lover – significant not only because it is drawn on one half of the geographical axis of the intervention, but also because it represents one part of the vertical axis of the tarot (Figure 3).¹² We are held in a moment of wonderment, and ponder the possible location where card XVII – l’Étoile, translated the star – will be drawn that would constitute the other part of that vertical axis. The element of chance underlines the intervention; as the hours on the map were decided by the geometry of the compass, so whatever we encounter *en route* is unknown. Le Goff is familiar with the symbolism on the north–south axis, but he does not have an intimate knowledge of signs we may encounter at other locations as we walk in a reverse sense around the geographical clock.

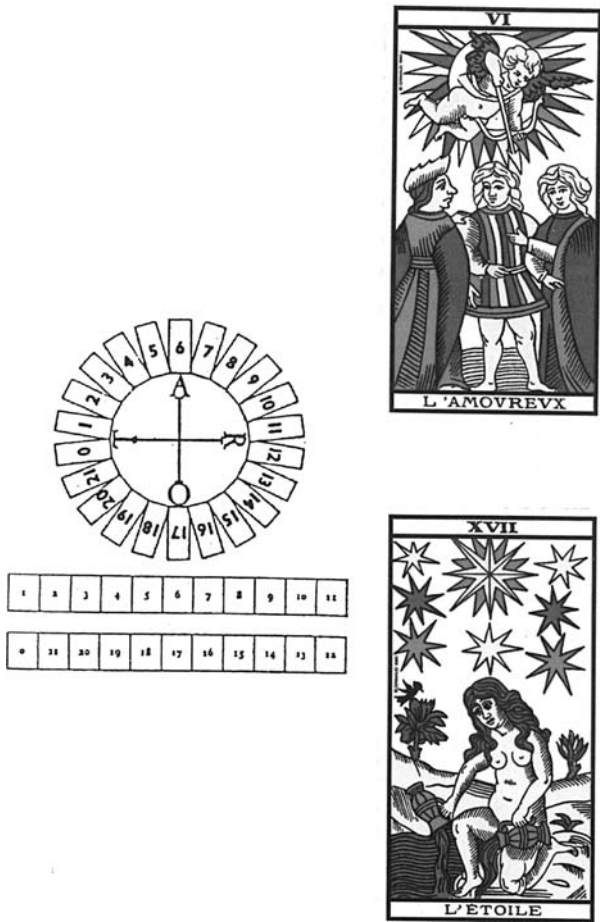


FIGURE 3 The vertical axis of the tarot and cards VI and XVII.

Participation in Le Goff's intervention evokes a sense of playfulness and play's inclination to transform space. We enter spaces with a spirit of intuition and adventure, and in confronting new elements and signs our emotions of childlike surprise and pleasure become appended to the landscape. We are as children; as Alastair Bonnett suggests, we reimagine everyday space, ignite hidden and unused corners with possibility and provocation, enact 'eerie encounters, forbidden games, and ... destructive passions' that evoke the possible transformation of urban life.¹³ Michel de Certeau proposes that making use of space is to repeat childhood experience – 'to be other and to pass to the other' – and that childhood determines the practices of space, defaces its readable surfaces, and creates in the planned city a 'metaphorical' city as in one of Kandinsky's dreams – '[a] great city built in accordance with all the rules of architecture and suddenly shaken by an unpredictable and incalculable force'.¹⁴ Our adventuring is characteristic of play, in being gratuitous fun that we enter into of our own free will and, as Nigel Thrift suggests, configuring a way of being that engages with fantasy, escape and achievement.¹⁵

The 11th hour: at the Café of Time

We arrive at the location of the 11th hour, the entrance to Galerie Véro Dodat, where we draw eleven cards that are arranged on the pavement next to a potted tree outside the Café de l'Époque, the Café of Time. The surprise discovery of this name, both to our master of ceremonies and ourselves, dramatizes the instant in which the cards are placed on the pavement. As Peggy Phelan suggests, we are caught in a moment of presence and absence, of performance occurring over a time that will not be repeated, for whilst it can be performed again the repetition itself marks it as 'different'.¹⁶ We know the eleven cards that testify to this performance will not be a permanent landmark: this episode is unique and, as Phelan comments, 'honors the idea that a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame can have an experience of value which leaves no visible trace afterward'.¹⁷

The 10th hour: the insignia of a wild crabtree

According to the cultural theorist Roger Cardinal, signs exist not only to be decoded but also to be felt. They attend to our irrationality, obscure emotions and unspoken desires.¹⁸ Crossing the Pont du Carrousel, that takes us from the right bank of Paris onto the left bank, we place 10 cards at the Quai Malaquais then walk up rue des Saints Pères. Along this route, one participant directs our attention to the bas-relief of a wild crabtree on the building of Crabtree and Evelyn, causing us to reflect again on the subterranean nature of our journey and to contemplate how the intervention momentarily transforms a symbol of commodification into one of esoteric significance. Rossiter and Gibson comment that this kind of engagement with the city is an invitation to permit 'sudden flashes of illumination and chance stumblings across hidden

treasures', and an 'opportunity to reshape urban knowledge, invigorate pro-urban sentiments and write alternative scripts for the postmodern city'.¹⁹ At the same time there is the discovery of a 'speech act' of walking that entails creating stories, inventing spaces and opening up the city through 'its capacity to produce "anti-texts" within the text'.²⁰ In this ambulatory occupation of urban space, unrealized possibilities surface that give rise to emotions and feelings that may have been dormant. On the pavement, a flow of feelings and speech takes place between participants, coloured by signs of the marvellous, which, as the surrealist Pierre Mabille suggests, go beyond the limits of space and time and evoke a tension that is both passionate and poetic while isolated from the routine and banal.²¹

The 9th hour: 'un moment'

On arriving at rue du Sabot, we note that directly opposite the location for the placing of nine tarot cards there is a shop named 'un moment'. When walking towards our destination for depositing eight cards, we pass through rue de Rennes and then rue de Vaugirard, in which we notice the premises of two watch- and clockmakers on opposite sides of the road. We stop to reflect on these significations of time and space and discuss if they can be explained in terms of surrealist *objective chance*. Cardinal suggests that objective chance is 'the recognition of a meaningful relationship between events occurring within the private space of the psyche and events taking place in the world of concrete objects and material circumstance'.²² To illustrate this, Cardinal invokes Hegel's model of the relation of the subject to the outer world, one that supposes the workings of blind chance are conditioned by systematic dialectical processes through which all phenomena pass. Thus, objective chance is a correspondence between subjectivity and objectivity, between internal impulse and external sign, or the encounter of an external causality and an internal finality. Arguably, objective chance could also be described as *magic-circumstantial*.²³ Le Goff seems to have an expectation that *something will happen* along the route, hence confirming this dialectical relation with place that repeatedly manifests itself during the intervention. Alternatively, in making these discoveries *en route* we are, as Jane Bennett suggests, embracing both pleasure and a sense of the uncanny.²⁴

The 8th hour: could one travel in time?

At the jardin du Luxembourg we place eight cards on a bench and cross rue Auguste-Comte, spotting on the facade of the Armand Colin bookshop the bas-relief of an alchemical tree. In passing a Catholic bookshop we notice in the window a book entitled *Peut-on voyager dans le temps?* (Can one travel in time?). We become caught up in this instant of the uncanny that evokes Freud's double feeling of strangeness emerging simultaneously with the familiar. Freud describes the uncanny as '[t]he most

remarkable coincidences of desire and fulfilment, the most mysterious recurrence of similar experiences in a particular place or on a particular date, the most deceptive sights'.²⁵ Pile suggests that such unconscious, emotional life is at the heart of the city and is an intermeshing of desire and fear, of presence and absence.²⁶ Walking away from the bookshop window I become aware of a lingering anxiety yet also an energetic desire to encounter more of these instances that are dreamlike, magical and transitory.²⁷ They are occasions of 'profane illumination', illuminating rupturing, and having the potential for other ways of seeing and experiencing time and space.²⁸ As we proceed around the geographical clock, there is a common desire to witness more of these signs and to grasp at what Pile refers to as a specifically urban and spatial 'disease', and that Pinder describes as 'something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light'.²⁹ We are travelling in a psychic landscape that through mind and body offers other ways of imagining the landscapes of cityness and of evoking its physicalities, juxtapositions, connections and openness.³⁰ As we continue our expedition on the left bank – to the angle of rue Saint-Jacques and rue des Feuillantines – and place seven cards on the pavement adjacent to the brasserie l'Étoile, we wonder why at this location the card XVII, l'Étoile, has not been drawn. Momentarily, our anticipation and sense of magic is suspended.

The 6th hour: beneath the roots of the old oak tree

All day the rain has poured down, and at the point where we are nearly half-way around the clock the downpour intensifies. Time for lunch, but not before arriving at 69 rue Mouffetard, where six cards are randomly drawn and we observe that the one drawn by myself is card XVII. Le Goff arranges the cards on a step beneath the emblem of the old oak tree (Figure 4) while we contemplate the persistence of subterranean magic, for in the same moment that the geographical axis is completed, by pure chance the axis of the tarot is also complete. Even more surprising is the fact that the participants who drew both card VI at the 12th hour and card XVII at the 6th hour are members of the surrealist movement, for whom these two cards have esoteric significance.³¹ Furthermore, according to Chevalier and Gheerbrant's *Dictionnaire des symboles*, card VI represents affectivity and card XVII hope, and these two cards are the pivot around which gravitate all the cards of the tarot.³² I am reminded of my discussion about sidereal geography³³ and astrology with Marie-Dominique Massoni, a member of the surrealist group in Paris, and I recognize that for the individuals who drew cards VI and XVII – and arguably for all the participants to the intervention – the north–south axis of these cards, signified by alchemical and astrological symbols, is one of sacred orientation.³⁴ How in the future this sacred orientation will manifest itself is unknown.

After a two-hour lunch break, *en route* to the location of the 5th hour, we decide to revisit 69 rue Mouffetard, where we observe that the six cards we placed there earlier are undisturbed. Perhaps passers-by are in awe of them or, more likely, they are passed unnoticed in this impersonal quarter of the 5th arrondissement, one dominated by



FIGURE 4 Six tarot cards at the location of the 6th hour beneath the roots of the old oak tree.

commodity tourism and, as Pinder suggests, 'marked by the loss of an outside to capitalism'.³⁵ In this respect Le Goff's intervention produces an alternative narrative of space that is subversive and countercultural; it is completely outside of capitalism and of that commodity culture which appears to hypnotize most the tourists and shoppers frequenting the centre of Paris. This resistant element of the intervention seemingly entangles it with relations of power. However, in constructing his interventions, Le Goff is not impelled by social or political concerns but by curiosity of place and creativity. Le Goff acquaints capitalism with a sense of the real that, he comments, 'is not to be rejected even if it hurts. I like to be in the real, not in a materialistic sense, but because I believe that dream is utterly linked to reality. I don't submit to reality but I try to model or moderate it'.³⁶ He is oblivious to the fact that his intervention challenges dominant models, perceiving it as offering a way of being in the world that is poetic and engages

with virtual 'as if' worlds, thus evoking an other city which, as Andy Merrifield suggests, gives central place to

passion, striving, dreaming ... a social and psychological space in which the possibilities for adventure and intrigue could intensify, and where our senses – seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling, tasting, wanting, acting and loving – could blossom.³⁷

This disentangling of Le Goff's intervention from relations of domination arguably suggests that it falls into a middle ground between two perspectives:³⁸

... like awakening from a dream. All around are the structures of corporate and financial power ... Yet, while still in their shadows, thoughts turn to other map-makers and tale-tellers with their own stories to relate, with their own narratives and interventions that insinuate different meanings into, or directly contest, dominant scriptings of urban space.³⁹

The 5th hour: the rotting enchanter

At the Jardin des Plantes we draw five cards and Le Goff places these on an antiquated stone table, la Table de Plaisanterie, that stands on a lawn littered with rotting autumnal leaves. We notice that one of the cards is XIII, a card that in the tarot is without name and depicts death. We recall that in 1947, when surrealists were assigning titles to the major arcane of the tarot, they named this card 'The rotting enchanter', the title of a work by Apollinaire⁴⁰ in which he states: 'When the fruit is ripe, it drops and doesn't wait for the gardener to come and pick it up. Let man, that fruit ripening freely on the tree of light, do the same'.⁴¹ The symbolism of this card is not about death but connected to change, transformation and passage from lower to higher. We realize that this analogy is also evoked in the origins of la Table de Plaisanterie. For many years a circular stone hidden underground in the forest of Chantilly, it was discovered, taken to the Jardin des Plantes and placed overground, where it has since been understood to represent a table.⁴² Jane Bennett suggests: 'To be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday. ... enchantment entails a state of wonder. ... to be enchanted, then, is to participate in a momentarily immobilizing encounter; it is to be transfixed, spellbound'.⁴³ The connections between card XIII, Apollinaire's poem, the rotting leaves and the table in the Jardin des Plantes hold us in an ephemeral time during which we are both immobilized and enchanted, while aware of the dialectical nature of our journey that transports us between overground and a mythical underground. In the Jardin des Plantes we are moved by this 'alter-tale' and its inclination to resist disenchantment, its enabling of spaces to 'live' or to be 'aroused' while we 'live' and are 'aroused' both by these spaces and within them. As Jacques Réda suggests, we are absorbed into the city 'like one of the leaves on a tree shivering in the breeze, or ... "reflective antenna", becoming a small part of spaces ... to provide a kind of imaginative resonance'.⁴⁴ As we explore hours on the geographical clock, we are actively immersed in the evolving of new spatial identities that are enchanting because of their dreamlike, theatrical, dark and inventive characteristics.⁴⁵

The 4th hour: *The Best of Times*

We have walked for several hours in the pouring rain, and our enthusiasm to continue in such conditions begins to fall away. In a moment of reverie we imagine drying out and enjoying a glass of hot wine, but we have three more destinations on the geographical clock before returning to the 12th hour. We draw four cards and place them on the step of the lock-keeper's house at the Pont Morland, then, walking along the banks of the canal, we catch sight of a boat moored in the lock and named *The Best of Times*. We are seized by an interval of recognition and sudden insight that is beyond the merely empirical routine of the walk.⁴⁶ Our simple pleasure in perceiving the magic of a name contrasts with the luxurious representations of pleasure that are moored in the canal. We are held in a moment that, as David Harvey suggests, is 'revelatory of the totality of possibilities contained in daily existence'.⁴⁷

We return to the right bank, cross the place de la Bastille and enter rue Jacques-Coeur, where we stop at the location of the 3rd hour, a boutique for changing money signified by the words *Change Or Achat*, 'Exchange Gold Purchase'. Recalling André Breton's description of surrealism as 'the gold of time', we contemplate this sign. In the everyday it symbolizes merchandise, during the intervention it evokes a poetic alchemy of name and place. We turn into rue du Poitou *en route* to the location for placing the final card, and we enter a street where all around us are signs of time and measurement: an anvil and two pairs of iron pliers permanently set in a metal grill that protects the window of an ironmongers shop; nailed to a wall, a translucent, rectangular plastic container, reminiscent of a casket, in which are packed numerous small plastic toys that appear frozen in time; on another wall, a cabinet containing three instruments – thermometer, hygrometer and barometer – each apparently signifying changes in the elements, though at this moment their hands are static, as if caught in time. Joël Gayraud, a participant in the walk, refers to moments like this as 'making life more interesting, more intense, another use not only of space but of relation between people that escapes the moments of alienation we are obliged to have in the present society'.⁴⁸ These are moments of pure presence in which there is a sense of difference and uniqueness, so striking that it is not reminiscent of anything else: 'Thoughts, but also limbs ... are brought to rest, even as the senses continue to operate ... You notice new colours, discern details previously ignored, hear extraordinary sounds, as familiar landscapes of sense sharpen and intensify'.⁴⁹ Within such moments the world comes alive; there is exhilaration and the feeling of being 'both caught up and carried away'.⁵⁰ Utopian yearnings emerge that glimpse other possibilities while, as Pinder suggests, they 'maintain a creative game with current conditions in order to figure alternatives'.⁵¹

The 2nd hour: secret histories

As we walk away after placing two of the remaining three cards at the entrance of a large door in rue Villehardouin in the 3rd arrondissement, we notice a woman approaching the cards, removing one of them and advancing speedily past us towards the church of

Saint-Denys du Saint-Sacrement in rue de Turenne, to which she enters. She appears to be in a kind of delirium, oblivious to our gaze and engrossed in what we imagine is a vital mission. We are curious as to why she took only one card. Perhaps it has a personal significance. Momentarily, we fantasize that with the flame of a church candle she sets light to this emanation of magic. Instances like these are part of the city's hidden fabric; only we explorers on Le Goff's intervention pay attention to this woman; she is seemingly invisible to the rest of the world, while contributing her layer to the city's secret history. She too is an explorer, but of a different kind. According to Borden, Kerr, Rendell and Pivaro, it is by noting the dialectical relation between the mundane and the significant in the urban landscape that it is possible to evoke its 'secret history'.⁵² Le Goff's interventions are attentive to such histories, geographies and mythologies and how they layer ambience over the city's mood.⁵³ Existing outside modern urban processes, such ambience is located in poetic signs and latent spaces that form part of the city's palimpsest. In the process of deciphering these signs, Le Goff and his fellow explorers become the immediate archive of the intervention, unearthing other signs that are new markers of time and space. As Pile suggests, they are like free association that leads to other trains of thought, and are the clues for future exploration.⁵⁴ Descending into the gaps or cracks in the urban landscape, Le Goff's interventions evoke a crisis of mood that embraces the dreamlike quality of space. They dig deep beneath surfaces and layers in order to excavate its spectral traces, and the poetry and magic of place.

Invariably, Le Goff's interventions encompass the discovery and leaving of objects as signs in their own right, and these become traces of what has taken place. Frequently, because they are subjected to the elements or are taken as found objects by passers-by or collectors, such objects have a transient life. Sometimes they remain, evoking another kind of visible/invisible layer on the city. I recall during the year following this intervention attending another in the 20th arrondissement, and several months after that observing the traces of scotch tape remaining on the door. To passers-by these traces have no significance, but for me and the other participants and onlookers of that intervention, each time we see them they recall a happening that is retained in memory. Le Goff's interventions weave in and around such tokens, unearthing the poetry that lingers within the shadows and is revealed in signs that, like ghosts, are both visible and invisible.

The 1st hour: an *other* axis?

We arrive at rue Pastourelle, the location of the 1st hour of the geographical clock, and Le Goff enters a telephone box, where he slips the final card into the entry point for credit and telephone cards (Figure 5). On the opposite side of the road there is a shop that sells weather-vanes. We notice that there are two weather-vanes displayed in the shop window, and that one of them is pointing in an easterly direction, the other in a westerly direction. They disclose an axis that is opposite to that in which we travel, and we contemplate whether they are signalling to Le Goff another geographical clock and a possible further intervention of subterranean time.



FIGURE 5 Le Goff placing the final card at the location of the 1st hour, rue Pastourelle.

The intervention's interrogation of city space has initiated possible new spatial meanings that contrast with the repeated, unimaginative journeys located in tourist guide books. Arguably, such emerging spatializations offer alternative perspectives to both historicist voices that allude to restructuring and postmodern decay in the city and to urban theory that highlights diminishing privacy in public space and increased technological surveillance of contemporary urban life.⁵⁵ Le Goff's intervention represents, as Pile and Pinder emphasize, a formulation of urban space that disrupts the visual order by attending to the fragments or tiniest details, the repressed elements and ghosts.⁵⁶ The intervention evokes a vision of city space as the site of potential and unselfish narratives, while Le Goff's indifference to this fact illustrates the capacity of the intervention to slide around hegemonic processes.

The 12th hour: a wine of rekindled youth

The final part of our walk around the geographical clock returns us to our point of origin, the 12th hour in rue Tiquetonne. Here we discover that only 7 cards remain of

the 12 that were placed, seemingly confirming connections between people and place, between ourselves and passers-by. We speculate on the significance to passers-by of the cards that have been removed and we question why other cards remain, especially card VI, l'Amoureux, that we suppose might strike a personal chord, perhaps through the desire to give the card to a lover or to keep it as a positive signification. We discuss the possible impact of our intervention on passers-by and on each of the spaces we have frequented that day, and we conclude that in many respects this is a mystery.

Before going our separate ways we decide to stop at a café, but all the cafés are closing, except a bar, le Rocher de Cancale, in which there is only one available table that is positioned directly opposite an old station clock whose hands are obstinately stopped at the 5th hour. We observe that the time on our watches is 4.10 p.m.; for six hours we have journeyed through time in reverse, so that the time for us is 4.10 a.m. The hot wine that we drink together is therefore one of rekindled youth.

Conclusion

This paper proposes that Le Goff's intervention of walking backwards through the hours in Paris is an engagement with *subterranean temporalities*, of ordinary people practicing de Certeau's description of 'the long poem of walking' that illustrates a spatial narrative revealing and confusing of all that urban theory conceals and clarifies.⁵⁷ Barthes suggests that the city can only be known ethnographically – by walking, sight, habit, experience; by intense and fragile discovery that is repeatable or recoverable solely by memory of the traces that it leaves; by the feel of the pavement and orientation of objects in space, smells and tastes – and, as Rossiter and Gibson comment, the city's 'writing on/in you'.⁵⁸ Le Goff's intervention embraces these ethnographic engagements that evoke the characteristics of play and are revealing of new spatial identities and ways of experiencing the city. Similarly, the intervention's exploration of space and time arouses objective chance and the uncanny both within the surfaces of the city and in participants who journey in a psychic landscape in which stories that sleep are awakened.

The intervention responds to the call for new spatial practices, rewriting conventional maps, and uncovering in secret histories and geographies. It reveals a counterculture that destabilizes fantasies of commodity and opens the way to pleasures that are unfamiliar. The intervention evokes the *lived* moment as revealing of possibilities within the present; its enchanting nature is a challenge to theory that places emphasis on crushing systems of power and dominance and their impact on 'everydayness'. Nigel Thrift comments, 'Of course, there are some awful things afoot in the world. But, if you are sensitive to them, there are other things too'.⁵⁹ Le Goff's walk around the geographical clock is illustrative of these other things that re-enchant the present and offer potential for thinking about alternative spatial futures.

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Notes

- ¹ Extract of undated invitation of Jean-Pierre Le Goff entitled 'Le temps à rebours'.
- ² Interview with Jean-Pierre Le Goff, Sept. 2002.
- ³ 'Cryptogram' meaning codes that are a symbolic text of the city.
- ⁴ Discussion with Le Goff, 7 May 2003.
- ⁵ A term invented by Alfred Jarry, who wrote *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll*. The term 'pataphysics' derives from 'metaphysics'; pataphysics is to metaphysics what metaphysics is to physics. More precisely, it is the science of imaginary solutions or science of exceptions. It is a kind of humour. Influenced by the legacy of Jarry, the Society of the College of Pataphysicians was created in France, its membership having included some prominent surrealists such as Jacques Prévert, situationists such as Asger Jorn, and famous writers like Boris Vian, Ionesco and Arrabel, and some lesser-known academics.
- ⁶ 'Banalist' implies people fascinated by the banal, commonplace or trivial. More specifically, it refers to a group of persons who meet together once a year to make a congress in the disused station of a village called Fade in the centre of France, at which they constantly have nothing interesting to say to each other. They are not surrealist but very close to surrealism in terms of their orientation to the poetry of the banal. They make some comments on pseudo- events and are attracted to non-places. Yves Helias and Michel Guet maintain these activities through the Bureau des Investigations Banalytiques.
- ⁷ J. Yonnet, *Enchantements sur Paris* (Paris, Denoël, 1990), repr. as *Rue des malefices: chronique d'une ville secrète* (Paris, Phebus, 2004).
- ⁸ M. de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, trans. S. Rendell (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984) p. 93.
- ⁹ In discussing the analogy of overworld and underworld I draw on Simon Rycroft's discussion of underground rebellion and the fusing of science with mysticism in 'Mapping underground London: the cultural politics of nature, technology and humanity', *Cultural geographies* **10** (2003), pp. 96–7.
- ¹⁰ S. Pile, 'The un(known) city ... or, an urban geography of what lies buried below the surface', in I. Borden, J. Kerr, J. Rendell and A. Pivaro, eds, *The unknown city: contesting architecture and social space* (Cambridge, MASS., MIT Press, 2001), p. 267.
- ¹¹ Discussion with Jean-Pierre Le Goff, 7 May 2003.
- ¹² J. Chevalier and A. Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaires des symboles: mythes, rêves, coutumes, gestes, formes, figures, couleurs, nombres* (Paris, Robert Laffont/Jupiter, 1969), p. 927.
- ¹³ A. Bonnett, 'The transgressive geographies of daily life: socialist pathways within everyday urban spatial creativity', *Transgressions: journal of urban exploration* **2/3** (Aug. 1996), p. 32. Bonnett bases his discussion on a reading of Colin Ward's *The child in the city* (1978).

- ¹⁴ M. de Certeau, 'Walking in the city', in G. Ward, ed., *The Certeau reader* (Oxford, Blackwell 2000), p. 116. De Certeau quotes from Kandinsky's *Du spirituel dans l'art*.
- ¹⁵ N. Thrift, 'The still point: resistance, expressive embodiment and dance', in M. Keith and S. Pile, eds, *Geographies of resistance* (London, Routledge, 1997), p. 146.
- ¹⁶ P. Phelan, *Unmarked the politics of performance* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 146.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- ¹⁸ R. Cardinal, 'Soluble city: the surrealist perception of Paris', *Architectural design magazine* 2–3 (1978), p. 149.
- ¹⁹ B. Rossiter and K. Gibson, 'Walking and performing "the city": a Melbourne chronicle', in G. Bridge and S. Watson, eds, *A companion to the city* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000), p. 440.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ P. Mabilie, *Le merveilleux* (Paris, Pierre Jean Oswald, 1977), p. 69.
- ²² 'Objective chance' is discussed by Roger Cardinal in *Breton Nadja* (London, Grant & Cutler, 1986), pp. 21–2.
- ²³ H. Foster, *Compulsive beauty* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1995), pp. 29–48.
- ²⁴ J. Bennett, *The enchantment of modern life: attachments, crossings, and ethics* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 5.
- ²⁵ S. Freud, 'The uncanny', cited in Foster, *Compulsive beauty*, p. 7.
- ²⁶ Bennett, *The enchantment of modern life*, p. 106; and Pile, 'The un(known) city', pp. 275–6.
- ²⁷ In D. Pinder, 'Ghostly footsteps: voices, memories and walks in the city', *Ecumene* 8 (2001), p. 11. Pinder discusses these qualities in relation to the audio walks of Janet Cardiff, and draws on Elizabeth Wilson's description of the modern city.
- ²⁸ D. Pinder, "'Old Paris is no more": geographies of spectacle and anti-spectacle', *Antipode* 32 (2000), p. 378. Pinder refers to Walter Benjamin's notion of 'profane illumination' from 'Surrealism: the last snapshot of the European intelligentsia' (first published in 1929), repr. in W. Benjamin, *One-way street and other writings*, trans. E. Jephcott and K. Shorter (London, Verso, 1979), pp. 225–39.
- ²⁹ Pile, 'The un(known) city', p. 266. In fact, Pile uses the word 'dis-ease' to emphasize the 'uncanny' of the interior of the mind as described by Anthony Vidler; Pinder, "'Old Paris is no more'", p. 378. Pinder quotes and references the German philosopher Schelling.
- ³⁰ See S. Pile, "'The problem of London'", or, how to explore the moods of the city', in N. Leach, ed., *The hieroglyphics of space: reading and experiencing the modern metropolis* (London, Routledge, 2002), pp. 208, 213.
- ³¹ Since the beginning of the surrealist movement there has been an interest in the occult traditions of hermetics, alchemy and astrology. Hence André Breton's reference to surrealism as *l'âge d'or*, the age of gold.
- ³² Chevalier and Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des symboles*, p. 927.
- ³³ Sidereal or sacred geography is a geography of the people of ancient Greece whose study of astrology induced them to create their temples on sites chosen in accord with a system or projection on the earth of zodiacal constellations. This is examined by Guy Doumayrou, a member of the surrealist movement, in *Géographie sidérale* (Paris, Union Générale d'Éditions, 1975). Other important works of reference are Jean Richer's work *Géographie sacrée du monde grec* (Paris, Guy Trédaniel Éditions de la Maisnie, 1983) and G.-R. Doumayrou's *Évocation de l'esprit des lieux* (Béziers, Centre International de Documentation Occitane, 1987).
- ³⁴ Massoni suggests that the area on the map of Paris on which this line is situated is important in terms of wellbeing, happiness and affinity to the cosmos.

- ³⁵ Pinder, “‘Old Paris is no more’” p. 368; D. Pinder, ‘Utopian spaces of the avant-garde’ (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1999), p. 270.
- ³⁶ Interview with Jean-Pierre Le Goff, Sept. 2002.
- ³⁷ A. Merrifield, *Dialectical urbanism: social struggles in the capitalist city* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 2002), p. 169.
- ³⁸ Rycroft, ‘Mapping underground London’, p. 87.
- ³⁹ Pinder, ‘Ghostly footsteps’, p. 16. Pinder is discussing his personal reflection at the end of making the Janet Cardiff walk in Bishopsgate and Whitechapel, London.
- ⁴⁰ The 20 cards of the major arcane (the card of the fool was excepted) were renamed as part of a surrealist exhibition in 1947 that is discussed in C. Giles, *Tarot: the complete guide* (London, Robert Hale, 1993), pp. 175–82.
- ⁴¹ G. Apollinaire, *L’enchanteur pourissant* (Paris, Henri Kahnweiler, 1909), translated as *The rotting enchanter*, quoted in Giles, *Tarot*, p. 179.
- ⁴² F. Caradec and J.-R. Masson, *Guide de Paris mystérieux* (Paris, Tchou, 1985), p. 722.
- ⁴³ Bennett, *The enchantment of modern life*, p. 5. Bennett is invoking Philip Fisher’s description of a ‘moment of pure presence’.
- ⁴⁴ N. Thrift, ‘With child to see any strange thing: everyday life in the city’, in Bridge and Watson, *A companion to the city*, p. 404. Thrift is quoting and referencing here the writing of Jacques Réda, who wrote the preface to Jean-Pierre Le Goff’s *Le cachet de la poste* (Paris, Gallimard, 2000).
- ⁴⁵ Bennett, *The enchantment of modern life*, p. 4.
- ⁴⁶ R. Shields, *Lefebvre, love and struggle: spatial dialectics* (London, Routledge, 1999), p. 58.
- ⁴⁷ D. Harvey, ‘Afterword’, in H. Lefebvre, *The production of space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 429.
- ⁴⁸ Recorded discussion with Joël Gayraud, 16 July 2003.
- ⁴⁹ Bennett, *The enchantment of modern life*, p. 5.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ⁵¹ D. Pinder, ‘Utopian transfiguration: the other spaces of New Babylon’, *Architectural design* (special issue, *New Babylonians*) **71** (June 2001), p. 19.
- ⁵² I. Borden, J. Kerr, J. Rendell and A. Pivaró, ‘Things, flows, filters, tactics’, in Borden, *et al.*, *The unknown city*, p. 19.
- ⁵³ Pile, ‘The problem of London’, p. 214.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ B. Rossiter and K. Gibson, ‘Walking and performing, “the city”: a Melbourne chronicle’, in Bridge and Watson, *A companion to the city*, p. 443.
- ⁵⁶ Pile, ‘The problem of London’, p. 209.
- ⁵⁷ Rossiter and Gibson, ‘Walking and performing’, p. 439.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Rossiter and Gibson invoke Barthes.