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Arts of urban exploration

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This paper addresses ways in which artists and cultural practitioners have recently been using forms of urban exploration as a means of engaging with, and intervening in, cities. It takes its cues from recent events on the streets of New York that involved exploring urban spaces through artistic practices. Walks, games, investigations and mappings are discussed as manifestations of a form of 'psychogeography', and are set in the context of recent increasing international interest in practices associated with this term, following its earlier use by the situationists. The paper argues that experimental modes of exploration can play a vital role in the development of critical approaches to the cultural geographies of cities. In particular, discussion centres on the political significance of these spatial practices, drawing out what they have to say about two interconnected themes: 'rights to the city' and 'writing the city'. Through addressing recent cases of psychogeographical experimentation in terms of these themes, the paper raises broad questions about artistic practices and urban exploration to introduce this theme issue on 'Arts of urban exploration' and to lead into the specific discussions in the papers that follow.

'So what's this about then?' asks the cop as he looks over my shoulder. Behind me, flames leap from a container. In the light figures are dancing, their makeshift instruments from scrap metal beating out the rhythm. Police now surround this gathering in East River Park, New York City. The policeman in front of me is clearly trying to place the event in a category: is this a political protest, a demonstration, a celebration? 'It's about public space,' I tell him. 'No seriously,' he says. 'Yes, it's about public space,' I say. He looks dumbfounded: 'You don't believe in that, do you?' he says. 'There's no such thing as public space. The only public space is your home.' NYPD cars and wagons now surround the party, their headlights up and dazzling. The police move forward. One less amenable to conversation starts to bark orders: 'Get out of the park!' Another tells us we should go to Greenpoint or Brownsville, anywhere out of Manhattan. We are soon on our way.

Earlier this group made its cacophonous route through the streets of the Lower East Side of Manhattan. A festive band is at its heart equipped with an array of sound-making means, with the common link being the scavenged object: 'a tour, a sound riot, a parade, a junk band, a detritus band' is how the instigators describe it. Instruments taken from the daily environment and often carrying traces of their previous geographical locations are now reused for a 'Serenade' (Figure 1). Despite the damp spring night, local residents and people on the streets are drawn towards the action and the group rapidly swells: what's it about, they ask? Initial bewilderment gives way to laughter, enjoying the moment. Cars honk, some in apparent tribute despite the

FIGURES 1 AND 2   Toyshop's Serenade, East River Park, New York City. (Photographs by Tod Seelie.)

blockage of their routes. NYPD officers take a more critical interest as we enter the main thoroughfare of Houston Street, adding a shadow parade of their own, one that consists of cars and wagons, and one that shunts the serenade onto the sidewalk and monitors its progress east towards the river. After negotiations, East River Park becomes for a time a carnivalesque scene (Figure 2). Noise- and fire-making contraptions are wheeled into the site and brought into action as the space is temporarily appropriated. But as flames flicker upwards, the police move forward. They eventually get their way when the core group, after a swoop back through the streets, heads towards Williamsburg Bridge and – with police units obligingly holding up the traffic – disappears towards Brooklyn, taking its noisy party spirit with it.

The catalyst of this event in May 2003 came from a Brooklyn-based artist collective called Toyshop. Numbering around 15 to 20 people mainly with a background in the arts, they have staged a number of street interventions and forms of direct action over the last few years. Centred on the street artist Swoon, the group – previously called Swoon Union or Swoon Squad – is concerned with public space and its democratization through what it calls 'creative forms of productive mischief'. '[R]ooting around the edges of appropriate acts of citizenship', its members say, 'we are using every means at our disposal to make a city that instigates our creative impulses and fosters the feral spirit'.[1] They describe how they work with the city 'as muse and medium'. Criticizing the privatization of public space and the associated passivization of city dwellers, they state: 'We are attempting to, through example, create a participatory model for citizens to take part in the physical and social structure of the environment we live in.'[2] Through street art and other interventions, its members seek to exploit opportunities for play and subversion as they interact with the city's spaces. Swoon's own art particularly involves the creation of life-sized figures on walls from delicate paper cut-outs, carved tape or woodblock prints (Figure 3). They often represent figures from her life or characters associated with particular places. They are an example of how work on streets can give people 'a new, often transient set of landmarks with which to guide themselves', and allow them 'in a concrete way to see the manifestation of a certain kind of vitality in the city'.[3]

The activities of Swoon and Toyshop signal some of the themes at the heart of this essay through which I want to introduce this journal theme issue on 'Arts of urban exploration'. My concern is with how artists and cultural practitioners have recently been using forms of urban exploration as a means of engaging with, and intervening in, cities. The paper sets this within the wider context of critical approaches to urban space which take it seriously as a sensuous realm that is imagined, lived, performed and contested. It argues that experimental arts and modes of exploration can play a vital role in the development of critical approaches to the geographies of cities, where they may challenge norms about how urban space is framed and represented, and where they may help to open up other possibilities. My initial cues come from events staged in New York in May 2003, of which Toyshop's intervention was a part. Entitled Psy-geo-conflux and centred on the politicized arts space of ABC No Rio, in Rivington Street, on the Lower East Side, this festival and conference brought together artists, cultural workers, activists and urban adventurers from North America and Europe

FIGURE 3 Cut-out street figure by Swoon, Rivington Street, New York City, May 2003. (Photograph by the author.)

under the banner of 'psychogeography'. It involved a variety of explorations of 'the physical and psychological landscape of the city'. The press release for the event offered a shortened and unattributed version of the definition of psychogeography by the situationist Guy Debord in 1955 as 'the study of the effects of the geographic environment on the emotions and behaviour of individuals'.[4] Organized by Christina Ray and David Mandl, on behalf of Brooklyn-based arts lab Glowlab and the Brooklyn Psychogeographical Association respectively, it was followed by another conflux based at Participant Inc in the same street, in May 2004, with further meetings in New York planned for the future.

The event can be seen as part of a developing concern within academic, artistic and activist circles with exploring critically the cultural geographies of cities. This includes practices of studying, representing and telling stories about cities; it also involves ways of sensing, feeling and experiencing their spaces differently, and with contesting

'proper' orderings of space to allow something 'other' to emerge. Characterizing this experimentation within academia is not only interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity, in recognition that understanding cities necessarily requires diverse perspectives and cannot be the province of any one discipline alone. Also important is a growing dialogue and interconnection between academia, artists, cultural workers and activists, and between critical and creative practices. The search for tactics, spatial practices and modes of expression with which to explore urban culture is leading to an increasing turn to work traditionally associated with the creative and performing arts and with the inventiveness of activist groups, and now permeating all sorts of critical endeavour. The traffic has not been one-way, with theoretical discourses about cities and the production of urban space in turn feeding into and underpinning much creative practice.[5] Yet practices across this field also owe much to many earlier activities. This is both in the form of writings by the likes of Walter Benjamin, Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, the surrealists and situationists, and in terms of the long histories of attempts to transgress boundaries between art and everyday space, to explore the street and public realm through artistic practice.[6]

This theme issue of the journal seeks to contribute to such developing debates and practices. The following texts take up aspects of the theme of 'arts of urban exploration' in different ways by focusing on particular cases. Whereas much of the literature in this field within geography and urban studies takes its lead from theoretical writings, each paper here instead responds to specific contemporary artistic practices, projects, interventions and urban sites. That is not to say that the papers are not theoretically informed, far from it; rather, they develop their discussions in relation to explorations based on steps through cities and engagements with their social and spatial terrains. In bringing together people from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, the issue also aims to encourage thinking about collaborative possibilities as well as differences in practice and approach. It includes reflections and documentation on 'artistic interventions' that took participants beyond conference halls and gallery spaces into the streets, two of which were staged as part of the conference session from which this theme issue stems, held at the Annual Conference of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (RGS-IBG), in London in September 2003.[7]

While there are common connections between the papers, there are also differences. The approach outlined in this essay is not meant to frame them all, but rather provides a particular way into the theme. Before introducing more fully the texts that follow, I address wider issues about arts of urban exploring, incuding some of the reasons for the current fascination with such practices and associated figures, and the possibilities as well as risks they entail. In the next section I reflect on themes of exploring and walking in cities that will be taken up in what follows. In the following section my attention turns to the New York events introduced above, and in particular to the concept of 'psychogeography' as one means through which such explorations are currently being conducted. This leads me in the rest of the paper to consider the current revival of interest in urban psychogeography in relation to its political dimensions, and to focus on two main themes that I argue are of particular concern in the cases discussed: assertions of 'rights to the city' and forms of 'writing the city'.

Explorations: critically engaging with urban space

The term 'urban exploration' is freighted with politically charged connotations. As with the concept of exploration more generally, which has been the subject of much critical attention, it is associated with voyages of discovery and the construction of geographical knowledge, but it also has a disturbing history in terms of the power relations through which it has been conducted. Of particular concern are the colonial discourses and power structures that have framed much venturing into cities in both past and present. This is in terms not only of colonizers discovering and 'taming' distant lands and peoples, but also of intrepid social explorers and reformers seeking to shed light on the 'dark' and 'undiscovered' urban geographies in the heart of empire. Through the language of imperial exploration, spaces such as those of nineteenth-century east London became scripted as part of 'darkest England' and its inhabitants as an 'exotic race apart', in ways that had powerful material effects for mappings and constructions of the city and for projects of colonization and civilization.[8] The power of such scripting in the production of imaginative urban geographies remains evident in the colonial present.[9] Aspects of a related discourse also continue elsewhere, for example in presentations of urban 'pioneers' exploring prospects in the 'Wild West' and on the 'frontiers' of the inner city, as in New York's Lower East Side.[10]

Discourses of urban exploration are not monolithic, however, with imperial cases themselves being heterogeneous and contested. The term 'exploration' may also be appropriated for other ends. The radical geographer Bill Bunge provided different perspectives through his attempts to turn around the capitalist and colonialist language of exploration during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Through his 'expeditions' in inner city areas of Detroit and Toronto, he showed how progressive forms of exploring urban areas could be developed in collaboration with urban residents. These expeditionary practices brought into focus the daily problems, inequalities and structural conditions affecting the lives of residents. Techniques included community mapping that addressed spaces of violence and safety, of poverty and wealth, and of starvation and abundance. This was a practice of exploration based on an 'intimate sensing' in contradistinction to abstract ways of knowing then promoted by advocates of spatial science, and was meant 'to help the human species most directly'.[11]

Other radical traditions of urban exploration are also found within the European avant-garde. The Situationist International (SI), on its foundation by activists, artists and writers in 1957, gave a central role to contesting powerful interests and exploring the possibilities of urban spaces. This was particularly through the practice of 'psychogeography', which was from the beginning a highly politicized endeavour, one that was committed not only to studying urbanism and socio-spatial relations but also to changing them. Its roots lay in the activities of the group's immediate forerunners, the Letterist International, based in Paris from the early 1950s. The letterists coined the term as they explored cities on foot through *dérives* (drifts), and outlined a revolutionary project for overturning dominant social and spatial structures. In so doing, they drew on elements of earlier avant-garde urban practices, especially associated with the dadaists and surrealists in the same city some decades before.

Through psychogeography, the letterists and situationists combined playful-constructive behaviour with a conscious and politically driven analysis of urban ambiences and the relationships between cities and behaviour. But they also sought out a better city, one that was more intense, more open and more liberating. This led to reimaginings and remappings of urban space, where cities were mapped according to paths, movements, desires and senses of ambience.[12]

The influence of situationist activities is particularly apparent in much recent interest in critical urban exploration. On founding the journal *Transgressions: a journal of urban exploration* in 1995, for example, Alastair Bonnett explained how the reference to 'exploration' in the title came out of a shared concern among those involved with 'the critical re-evaluation of the politics and potentialities of urban space'. Traditions of anarchism and socialism were important, but inspiration came in particular from the situationists: 'it is the ludic qualities of the situationists' vision, their affirmation of, and fascination with, the *pleasures* and *adventures* of urban life, that have, more than anything else, inspired the inclusion of the term "exploration" in our title.'[13] In a subsequent editorial he stressed the political nature of exploration as used within processes of capitalist colonization. But he insisted on its potential role for the socialist imagination too, as 'we seek to take the notion of exploration and turn it back on its progenitors'.[14] Published until 2001, the five issues of the journal contained both activist and scholarly work, and deliberately positioned themselves in an ambiguous place between the two so that they might call into question aspects of both roles. While having roots in situationist ideas and practices, the journal insisted on the need to engage with them critically alongside other traditions. Its own lively and creative interventions in the field were guided by attempts to connect with the political life of cities, and 'to seek out and identify already existing non-authoritarian and properly democratic moments of urban living'.[15]

Related endeavours include other journals, such as now regrettably defunct *Journal of psychogeography and urban research*.[16] These have been part of a wider growth of interest in urban exploring specifically through the concept of psychogeography in recent years. As a mode of exploration, psychogeography has typically had a marginal and underground air, not least through its focus on the hidden, forgotten and obscure. Its basis lies in the settings and practices of the streets, in their fragments, everyday materials and detritus. Yet if psychogeographical explorations retain associations of the marginal and even illicit, their significance for developing critical understandings of cities has been increasingly recognized. Alongside the surge of interest in the situationists has been the prominence given to a number of artistic practices engaging with urban space, as well as the literary explorations and wanderings of the writer Iain Sinclair, who came to exploit the term 'psychogeography' in the 1990s as a way to write about London and especially the 'hidden' geographies of its East End.[17] Also significant have been the activities of a range of groups such as the London Psychogeographical Association, active during the early and mid-1990s, and other organizations in Manchester, Nottingham, Bologna, New York, Washington, DC, Milwaukee and elsewhere. Much current practice in Europe and North America is further developing along more high-tech lines, with practitioners exploring the potential for mobile

wireless technologies to interact with and represent urban environments. They are interested in how psychogeographical practices are being reworked at a time when, so it is said, 'the paper maps used in early dérives have been supplemented by mobile phones, GPS [Global Positioning Systems], and advanced field-recording techniques'.[18] Many of these projects are committed to open source and exhibit an inventive attitude to potential uses of technology, although the relationship of some to systems of surveillance, control or techniques of marketing requires critical scrutiny.

Psychogeographical practices of exploration are additionally feeding into, and resonating with, wider current concerns with rethinking cities and urban space. The attention to mood, ambience and the possibilities of the urban are proving conducive for those seeking to develop critical understandings of urban experience and life. In his recent account of 'real cities', Steve Pile thus takes as starting points urban explorations by Sinclair and the situationists for his arguments about the need for more emphasis on the 'forms of *emotional work* that comprise urban experiences', and for attending to 'the imaginative, fantastic, emotional – the phantasmagoric – aspects of city life'.[19] He describes his approach in the book as coming out of the 'broad intellectual heritage' of psychogeography, which he brings into contact with more traditionally academic references such as those by Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin and Sigmund Freud. Much psychogeographical exploration also speaks to the kind of geographical imaginary advocated by Doreen Massey in her book *For space*. She gives particular importance to the potential surprise of space and to the encounter with the unforeseen, arguing for an understanding of the spatial that resists closure and stasis. It is an approach that emphasizes dynamic simultaneity, where space is in process and incomplete, where it eludes final determination and representation. Among experiments from art, architecture and cartography that she finds productive in this regard are those of situationist mappings. These not only defamiliarize standard representations of space through disrupting the coherent and continuous order of maps, but also reveal the fractures and incoherences of socially produced space through their basis in urban explorations, and leave 'openings for something new'.[20] What is behind this renewed interest in exploratory and psychogeographical approaches to urban space? Providing an answer would require much fuller historical and geographical contextualization than is possible here. Nevertheless, Massey makes an interesting connection between such experiments and what she sees as the significance being given to an element of chance in the current Zeitgeist. And certainly an interest in chance, and in cultivating an openness to surprise and the possibilities of space, provide interesting ways into addressing the conflux events in New York that I introduced earlier.

Navigating new routes

Toyshop's Serenade through Manhattan's Lower East Side, with which I began this paper, was one of a number of events during the Psy-geo-confluxes in 2003 and 2004 in New York that brought a playful, festive spirit into public space, and that sought to open up different pathways and possibilities in the city. The organizers, Christina Ray

and David Mandl, underlined the inventive and critical aims of the events in asserting that psychogeography involves 'exploring or experiencing the physical landscape in new ways'. It is about 'trying to find what's marvellous, life-affirming, or at least exciting about seemingly mundane places – or transforming them to make them more marvellous, life-affirming, or exciting.'[21] Exemplifying this spirit, many activities encouraged different uses of spaces, and sought to divert or subvert routinized spatial practices. Encouragement to convene in public places and interact with strangers at the first conflux came in the form of a Nomadic Café, a mobile minimalist cube that was wheeled to different parts of town and opened out into a kitchen. Constructed by the Providence Initiative for Psychogeographical Studies and informed by that group's interest in strategies for participatory sculpture, it created temporary gatherings through serving free food and coffee (Figures 4 and 5).

Meanwhile the nearby streets witnessed the passage of a giant chess match between two international masters, Jennifer Shahade and Gregory Shahade. As the players sat at the gallery and moved their pieces across the board, each move was relayed by the organiser Sharilyn Niedhardt via cell phone to participants at street corners beyond who performed the role of the chess pieces (Figure 6). The actions of the game were thus mirrored by movements through the streets, with the grid arrangement of city blocks acting as the squares on the board. While many pawns were in for a quiet afternoon, those playing high-ranked pieces were typically equipped with bikes or roller blades to enable swift passage. The game was thus not only experienced as a system as it appeared to the two chess players themselves, and as it was monitored
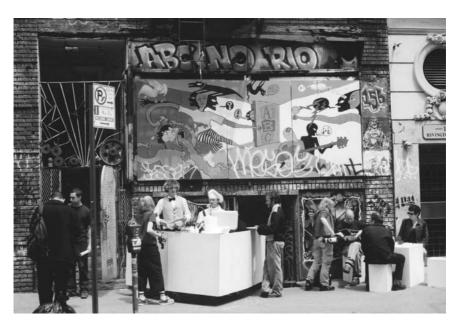

FIGURE 4   ABC No Rio, venue for the Psy-geo-conflux in May 2003, with mobile Nomadic Café by the Providence Initiative for Psychogeographical Studies. (Photograph by the author.)

FIGURE 5 Nomadic Café serving free coffee and French toast, by the Providence Initiative for Psychogeographical Studies. (Photograph by the author.)

centrally by the organizers through a totalizing perspective that viewed players positioned on a map. It was also experienced from the perspective of individual pieces, immersed in the action and gaining only partial senses of events (Figure 7). Moments of insight as well as confusion, frustration and even recalcitrant behaviour were common. As Zack, playing black queenside knight recounts, 'The Black Queen rushes by on her way to c7 [Stanton and Orchard]. She ignores my attempts to initiate conversation.' Later: 'A Black pawn wanders by, eating an ice cream cone. He has yet to be given a single move, and questions his purpose.' Another pawn's static afternoon and mounting boredom later turned out to be caused by a faulty mobile phone, rather than the lack of attempts to move the piece.[22]

Other forms of immersion in the city involved attempts to investigate the urban everyday, and to sense urban moods and ambiences. Many projects involved listening to the city, listening to the multiple stories and memories that make up urban spaces, and finding means of responding to or recounting the tales. Stories were elicited from

FIGURE 6 Gregory Shahade and Jennifer Shahade in contest at ABC No Rio gallery at the human-sized chess match in New York City, May 2003. (Photograph by the author.)

inhabitants and from their movements, and also from the very fabric of the city in the forms of street art, wall markings and graffiti. The clamour of the city's walls became the subject of careful attention. In a project called 'Write on this' in 2004, media artist Jean Hester encouraged interaction with walls and the atmosphere of places by entering into dialogue with voices already there. She placed nine posters in public spaces in Lower Manhattan, each featuring a question above a blank space, and each with a black marker pen attached on a string. These posters invited people to engage with the particular spaces and respond to their feelings at that moment, through questions that included: 'What is beautiful here?', 'Where do you want to be right now?', 'Do you feel safe here?', 'What would you change about this place?', and 'Where were you the last time you smiled at a stranger?' The project came out of her more general aim in her work, based on her belief that '[a]wareness, being nudged slightly more awake, is the first step towards changing our culture. Using my art as a device to stimulate us toward

FIGURE 7   Receiving instructions on Houston Street during the human-sized chess match in New York City. (Photograph by the author.)

a more active stance is a primary focus for me.'[23] Another investigative project dispatched small groups of participants to explore and document the service entrances and backspaces of famous buildings. Organized by Margrethe Lauber, these groups focused on iconic structures such as One Times Square, the Empire State, the Rockefeller centre and the United Nations, but from angles that circumvented their well-known and much-photographed faces. Participants found themselves considering everyday routes that sustain the structures and yet are normally rendered invisible to 'ordinary' visitors. They were also confronted by architectural fortifications and security apparatuses – already well known, of course, to those who frequently find their movements deemed 'inappropriate', such as the homeless – through which the buildings channel 'appropriate' movements and otherwise repel the outside (Figures 8 and 9).

FIGURE 8   One Times Square, New York City, May 2003. (Photograph by the author.)

Acccording to Ray, what connected the diverse events of the conflux was a shared concern with what she referred to broadly as 'the meaning of living in a city'.[24] But as the above projects suggest, this wide remit should be understood not only as referring to meanings as currently understood but also to questioning those meanings, to displacing habitual modes bound up with work and leisure so as to rediscover the spaces, situations and activities that constitute urban living. Games, walks and events encouraged participants to adopt different routes, or sought to defamiliarize routine paths and practices. Standard components of the day such as the time spent on the commute could, as in Karen O'Rourke's project 'New York body 'n' soul map' in 2003, take on new meaning through becoming the focus of story-telling and through the accumulation and mapping of details. Her project called out to local residents: 'Send us your tiresome commutes, your everyday errands, your shopping sprees and secret shortcuts, your wrong turns, bike rides and bus routes. Write your paths through the city and we'll map them for you.' Mapping and
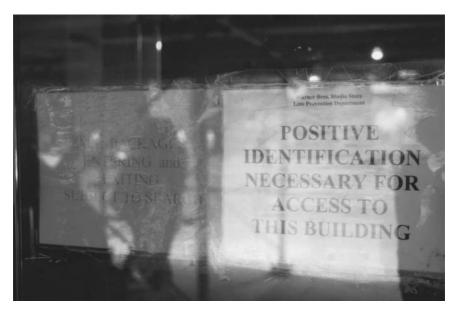
FIGURE 9   One Times Square, New York City. (Photograph by the author.)

thinking about routes and routines in this way aimed to bring into focus larger political, economic and cultural questions. It led to questioning of the social construction of routines and spatial practices, and to challenging of apparent inevitabilities.[25]

Most activities involved immersion in the city specifically through walking. This was in keeping with other forms of urban exploring and psychogeography that typically emphasize pedestrianism as the prime means for experiencing and tracing out urban geographies. As Iain Sinclair emphatically puts it in a frequently quoted statement: 'Walking is the best way to explore and exploit the city .... Drifting purposefully is the recommended mode.'[26] The situationists were also insistent on contrasting the potentialities of walking with what they called 'the organization of universal isolation' represented by traffic circulation in automobiles.[27] In the New York events 'ordinary' walking was itself problematized. It became the subject of experimentation and heightened reflection as an embodied and sensuous engagement with the environment and with fellow pedestrians. In particular, common strategies to displace everyday routines and habit in navigating the city were to open walks to chance events and encounters. Many projects facilitated this through instituting frameworks or rule systems for walking. In Lee Walton's 'The city system: New York', one of a range of experimental walks at the conflux in 2003, wanderers were supplied with a navigational device in the form of a book that directed them through a series of instructions and options. These allowed chance events to direct and interrupt steps. The honk of a horn; the detritus on the sidewalk; the appearance of pigeons; the attire, demeanour or actions of passers-by; the size of one's shadow – they

all became means of directing passage through the city. A group drift organized by Walton the following year shifted the source of directions to a live broadcast of a New York Yankees baseball game. Each group carried a radio and a list of instructions to translate events of the game into movements in the streets for a specified period.

Another approach commonly adopted elsewhere was 'algorithmic walking'. This is associated especially with the 'generative psychogeography' and '.walk' projects developed by Wilfred Hou Je Bek and the Dutch group Social Fiction, and used by him in New York in 2003. The classic version directs walking according to a pattern of turns such as 'first street right, second street left, first street left and repeat'. Developed by Social Fiction over the preceding two years and described as enabling 'a pleasant state of displacement' and as a 'city-space cut-up', this has recently involved more complex attempts to incorporate ideas from computer science and open source programming although the premise remains similar: namely, that the generative logic removes questions of goals, choice and habit in terms of route and in so doing opens space for surprise and the discovery of hidden significance.[28] Participants frequently report the feeling that the smallest details and moments acquire new meaning as if in accordance to some strange pattern. Social Fiction intends such psychogeographical walks to be 'systematic approaches directed against preconceived and unquestioned mental images of landscapes'. They 'actively create situations for serendipity to occur: ideas, marvellous views, strange situations, savage transvaluations, human psychology served as permanent vaudeville ... inventions and invitations.'[29] In such cases, explorations are not simply random or chaotic. Rather, they employ structures and game rules – whether from computer programming, external instructions or events elsewhere – in a manner that displaces taken-for-granted orderings and works with both order and free play.

Such devices to encourage *dérives* might recall aspects of situationist practice, and in particular Debord's criticism of the limitations of surrealist strolls that relied on chance alone.[30] In the case of the situationists, the break with habit and chains of work and leisure came through the conscious assertion of revolutionary desire in the effort to overturn dominant sociospatial relations. It also led to the assertion of what their sometime associate Henri Lefebvre later termed in 1968 'the right to the city', by which he meant the right to dwell in and to inhabit the city, the right to urban life and encounter, to the use of moments and places, to participation and socialization.[31] Traces of situationist language and ideas were present at both Psy-geo-confluxes in New York, finding their way into presentations and conceptualizations of a variety of activities. However, the same political aspirations were less evident. Nor have they been so apparent in many activities that currently go under the sign of psychogeography. This is not to say that politicized elements are absent from such psychogeographical activities, though, and in the next sections I argue that much of their critical value comes from what they say about 'rights to the city' and practices of 'writing the city'.

Psychogeography and rights to the city

To intervene through creative practice in public space today in New York and other cities is to enter into a crucial struggle over the meanings, values and potentialities of that space at a time when its democracy is highly contested. Encouragement of vitality and openness in that space is not an innocent demand. On the one hand, it confronts the commercialized and commodified blandness of urban space – what Adrian Rifkin terms as the 'comfortized city' – something that is often associated in many American cities and Manhattan in particular with the creation of pseudo-public spaces of malls, plazas and 'theme park urbanism' through processes of 'disneyfication'.[32] On the other hand, it is located within a tightening of surveillance measures and a hardening of the city's surface, both in terms of security procedures heightened in the wake of 11 September 2001 and in relation to a landscape pitted against the already marginalized and poor. Familiar components include the proliferation of surveillance cameras and the construction of walls, embattlements and other signs to warn off and issue orders to users of space. Policies and practices of 'zero tolerance', the moving on of homeless people and the 'purification' of public space are all aspects of what, in the New York context as well as further afield, Neil Smith has termed the 'revanchist city'.[33] These practices have been bound up with wider urban restructuring, where the redevelopment of central city areas through the power of capital and real estate interests has also resulted in evictions and exclusions. The Lower East Side of New York, which provided the location for the Psy-geo-confluxes, has seen particularly dramatic processes of disinvestment and subsequent reinvestment, with gentrification sweeping through neighbourhoods since the 1980s.

Toyshop's infectuously joyous Serenade and other psychogeographical explorations of cities discussed above, occupy an awkward position in this context. The games and gift economy underlying them cut against the prevailing emphasis on commercialized and controlled activity with associated demands of passivity, where the commodity is the measure of worth. From a hard-nosed political perspective, though, such activities may be easy to dismiss as irrelevant to the 'real' business of political struggle, even trivial. Real estate interests can also sleep easy, with the cachet of more artistic gatherings even rubbing off on their marketing schemes. How can artists criticize and resist the remaking of public spaces by powerful interests? How can they question the complicity of the arts in socially divisive urban development programmes, where they are often used merely to add gloss to urban 'renewal' projects through aestheticization in the form of sculptures or individual art objects? These questions have been at the heart of much important critical public art over the last two decades. They have led activist strands of creative practice to engage with communities and existing social struggles, to develop collaboration and dialogue with residents, and to employ different modes of address. They have also questioned the art scene's own role in urban change where it is argued that, in areas such as the Lower East Side, 'art galleries, dance clubs and studios have been the shock troops of neighbourhood reinvestment', and have been bound up with community displacement.[34] A well-known case of critical public arts in New York was 'If you lived here . . .', co-ordinated by Matha Rosler in 1987–9.

Located in the recently created arts district in Soho, the project brought together artists, academics, and housing and community activists to confront questions about housing, homelessness, the real estate industry and urban planning and to reflect on its own location within these processes. Exhibitions, events and discussion panels sought to puncture the myths of urban development then being promoted – 'New York *ascendant*' went the marketing slogans – and to uncover other stories. 'What variety of means *is* available in the effort to persuade and convince?' asked Rosler in relation to this project. 'How can one represent a city's "buried" life, the lives in fact of most city residents? How can one show the conditions of tenants' struggles, homelessness, alternatives to city planning as currently practised . . .?'[35]

The psychogeographical activities discussed above are mostly far removed from such co-ordinated and self-questioning art-activist strategies. Their political strategy is usually much less overt, and they rarely involve such sustained collaborations with communities beyond their own relatively narrow constituencies. As such they are relatively detached from the kinds of day-to-day struggles of poorer local residents, whose limited choices are the result, not simply of subjective and imaginative factors but, as Rosalyn Deutsche and Cara Gendel Ryan point out, 'of the formidable economic forces arrayed against them'.[36] At the same time, however, exploring 'the meaning of living in a city' at this time *is* crucial politically. It is not a trivial matter to find different ways of attending to the 'quality of life' in the city, especially when that phrase has become hijacked by authoritarian modes of policing public space in the US and used invidiously to construct public space in exclusionary ways. Nor is it insignificant to explore critically the qualities of streets, squares, parks and other aspects of the public realm in terms of how they are used, imagined and lived. Indeed, doing so is vital given the significance of these spaces for sustaining a vibrant and democratic urban culture, and for defending rights to the city. So too is provoking debate about how they might be different, *better*. Many explorative activities indeed become politizised through the opposition they encounter. This is noted by Swoon Union with reference to how its members have been harassed by the authorities for their street art activities. 'We do not consider ourselves a political group,' they state, 'but when you do the kind of work that we have been doing, you discover pretty quickly that you are working in direct opposition to American capitalism, and that has a politics all its own.'[37]

Interpreting the first Psy-geo-conflux against the backdrop of post-September 11th discussions about urban futures, one journalist thus argued that the psychogeographers were 'making fresh, if underground, contributions to pedestrian life in New York City, and upping the ante on today's fight for the soul of high-density metropolises'.[38] Psychogeography directs attention in particular to spatial practices, undercutting assumptions that public space can be understood in static terms as a 'thing' whose status is fixed in advance. It can open to interrogation the means through which public space is socially produced and contested. This can also help to undermine pronouncements, directed at the restructuring of urban areas in recent years and often associated with commentators and writers on the left, about the 'end of public space'. Such declarations of 'endings' have undoubtedly been significant for highlighting dangerous trends in the remaking of urban space, including the privatization of space

and the institution of geographies of control, segregation and even militarization. But the apocalypticism of some of these critiques is also problematic. It is at times underpinned by a romanticized and mythic notion of a past public space that was somehow once inclusive, neglecting those exclusions through which prior notions of the public were constructed.[39] Its blanket approach can further serve a disempowering function, apparently dismissing other opportunities, openings and practices, and making resistance seem hopeless from the beginning. For all the increasing forms of privatization and control in cities today, they do not exhaust the stories that can be told about public space. In opposition to these restrictions it becomes ever more important to consider the practices through which public space continues to be imagined and used in other ways, and to be worked with, struggled over or 'détourned' (a term used by the situationists for tactics of diversion, appropriation and hijacking).

Such practices may range from large-scale protests and political struggles to the kinds of tactics and modes of operating that are the focus of much psychogeography. What characterizes the latter, however, is the emphasis on an active engagement with urban space where importance is attached to the act itself: to creating games in the city, to experimenting with behaviour, to experiencing urban spaces directly as an actor rather than as a passive spectator. They include forms of play in the streets, whose presence is testament to how space remains open to the potential for surprise and encounter, and whose actions may 'subvert, loosen, or transform presupposed rules of social conduct'.[40] They may also involve evocations of the ghosts of place, the traces of those people that have been evicted or excluded. In the project 'Bandshell ghost' in May 2004, for example, ghosts were conjured up at the site of the old bandstand that was the scene of performances and political struggles in Tompkins Square Park in the 1980s until the structure was removed by the authorities. The project, organized by Lex Bhagat, involved the broadcast by Brooklyn Information Outreach Network of a sound collage from recordings of earlier riots, works and performances from the park, using a transmitter nearby and receivers arranged to suggest the ghostly presence of the bandstand. Such projects raise significant questions about how hopes, dreams and desires for a different city might be drawn out from everyday moments and events. Also important is the difficult question, less often addressed by psychogeographical practices, of how resulting momentary incursions and shifts of perspective can lead to longer lasting social and spatial change. Demands for rights to the city, as Lefebvre made clear, require the production of an appropriate space; this signals a limitation of psychogeographical incursions and remains an issue in need of further address.

Spatial inventions and writing the city

Part of the significance of psychogeography and walking practices is nevertheless the way in which they allow encounters with apparently 'ordinary' and 'unimportant' activities in the city, against the grain of powerful discourses of the urban. As Benjamin Rossiter and Katherine Gibson acknowledge in the course of their discussion of a performance project in Melbourne, 'in the face of apocalyptic pronouncements on the

state of cities and city life "under late or postmodern capitalism" the transformative potential of walking and performing appears weak, powerless, and foolish.' They suggest, however, that this calls for the critical analysis of those discourses that would so easily discard the experiences and treasures unearthed through walking. For them, a poetics of walking can unsettle grand stories precisely by allowing the consideration of 'practices of urbanism that are not neatly folded into forceful stories of capitalist urbanization, social polarization, urban consolidation, and dead city syndrome'.[41] Wandering through the city and attending to such everyday practices means operating in a realm that, for urbanistic, planning and geographical discourses, is, to use Michel de Certeau's phrase, 'below the thresholds at which visibility begins'.[42] It is from this street-level perspective that such practices open up detours and rework understandings of cities along different lines from those scripted according to the dominant terms of the 'Concept City'. 'The speech act of walking creates stories, invents spaces, and opens up the city through its capacity to produce "anti-texts" within the text,' write Rossiter and Gibson. 'The ambulatory occupation of urban space permits a myriad of unrealized possibilities to surface, triggering emotions and feelings that may lie dormant in many people.'[43]

A key influence for such optimistic accounts of urban pedestrianism is Certeau, and especially his much-cited chapter 'Walking in the city', originally published in the first volume of *The practice of everyday life* in 1974. He emphasizes the endless creativity of ordinary users and walkers in cities, their tactical operations and errant movements on foot. He likens practices of walking to the speech act whereby pedestrians 'enunciate' spaces. They operate within spatial organizations but they do not conform to them. They compose their own paths in the manner of turning phrases; their detours and 'poems' of walking manipulate spaces and create 'shadows and ambiguities within them'. His account is based on a famous contrast between the view from on high, providing a perspective that is administrative, surveillant and voyeuristic, and an immersion 'down below' in the street, alongside the ordinary walkers and practitioners, whose operations are in effect 'blind', like two lovers in each other's arms.[44] The influence exerted by Certeau's account has in many ways been highly productive. In particular it encourages close attention to minor ways of going on, to the myriad of creative tactics through which people make do in their environments. It is suggestive of ways in which these might be studied to complicate the cruder lines of opposition to the commodification of space and the passification of urban dwellers discussed above. At the same time, though, there are problems associated with his position.

As a number of commentators have pointed out, Certeau's dichotomous formulations – high versus low view, space versus time, strategies of power versus tactical incursions by the weak – lead to among other things a romanticized version of 'resistance'.[45] This is particularly problematic when the celebration of everyday creativity is presented as apparently limitless and paradoxically aspatial. Such a move relates to a tendency familiar in some brands of cultural studies that profess to find resistance and subversion in all forms of popular consumption and practice, leaving those terms devoid of analytical and political edge. Spatial transgression and urban resistance can come to seem so pervasive, and moments of subversion so alluring, that structural conditions

and the need for fundamental and sustained social and spatial change recede from view.[46] This partly stems from Certeau's own account, which lacks a sense of the urban context at the time. In the chapter 'Walking in the city' he makes no mention of early 1970s Paris in which he was based, despite the ways in which pedestrian activities had been profoundly affected by the rapid modernization of that city over the preceding 20 years, with the expulsion of much of the population from the centre along class and ethnic lines, and the institution of new forms of segregation. The figures he conjures up appear in terms of a 'popular' opposition to administrative rationality as their bodies follow 'the thicks and thins of an urban "text" they write without being able to read it'. They create within the planned city a 'metaphorical' or 'mobile' city, but they are seemingly 'blind' to more strategic forms of political struggle and to a critique of the social production of urban space.[47] As Andrew Rigby comments, Certeau's approach here can be seen historically as part of a positive legacy of the 1968 revolts in France, with its expansion of interest in different fields of power and resistance, but in other respects it can also be understood in terms of a depoliticization in the years that followed.[48] Bonnett also criticizes what he sees as a depoliticization of everyday life in Certeau's analysis where 'spatial actions are construed in a social vacuum; their ability to make sense confined to the terrain of locutionary principle'.[49]

The emphasis on an anonymous and generic type of 'ordinary hero' and 'walker' neglects the specific identities through which people negotiate their passage in the city. Yet an important outcome of much discussion of urban exploration has been to attend to how spatial practices are constrained as well as enabled by the particular identities of the explorers involved and the context with which they are engaged. The relative ease with which some explorers move through terrains is bound up with axes of power that involve complex articulations of class, gender, 'race', sexuality, disability and so on. It is therefore necessary to consider how ostensibly 'radical' explorations may themselves depend on privileges of power. This is something that Bonnett points out in relation to the colonial connotations in certain accounts of explorations and urban drifts by members of the avant-garde, specifically in Paris during the 1950s by Debord and fellow letterists.[50] It importantly tempers some of the enthusiasm with which walking has been embraced by many critics and cultural practitioners in recent years for enabling critical analysis, discovery and thought. As I discussed earlier, walking has often been favoured, within theory as well as arts practice, as a means of exploring the geographies of cities. It has also been the basis for much innovative writing of cities, from the likes of Sinclair to more academic texts. Part of its appeal has been the way it apparently renounces the centred, the panoptic and the hierarchical. It provides a means of engaging with urban spaces and experiences in ways that move beyond specialized arenas, whether those of art or academic institutions. The enduring influence of Certeau's account of walking owes much here to the way that it encapsulates this concern to relinquish the 'view from on high', the all-seeing and totalizing perspective, and to embed claims to know the city within partial perspectives offered by movements through the streets. In recognition of the multiplicity of stories of the city and the impossibility of ever knowing them completely from a single

overarching position, the street has become cherished for offering a location that is embodied, situated, mobile, with multiple and clashing viewpoints.

Jane Rendell thus notes the increasing obsession within contemporary urban and architectural discourse with 'figures that traverse space: the flâneur, the spy, the detective, the prostitute, the rambler, the cyprian'. She refers to how these 'all represent urban explorations, passages of revelation, journeys of discovery – they are "spatial stories".' She further adds: 'We are all spatial story-tellers, explorers, navigators, and discoverers, exchanging narratives of, and in, the city.'[51] Her own account highlights some of the dangers of uncritically adopting Certeau's 'street-level' perspective, in that her list of figures is an important reminder of the need to address difference. The figures to which she refers have vastly differing freedoms and abilities to move through space, and the potential for adopting different positions is also circumscribed, an argument that has long been central to feminist debates about the flâneur. In addition, it might be noted that Certeau's dichotomous account, with its advocacy of the 'view from below' in opposition to the 'high view', can settle into an unhelpful fixed antagonism with its own simplifications and distortions. As Edward Soja argues, an exclusive focus on the former closes off understandings made available by studies of the processes producing urban space, and limits critical analysis and the potential for radical spatial politics concerned with changing those processes.[52] The problem with the high view, as Massey also remarks, 'only comes if you fall into thinking that that vertical distance lends you truth'.[53] There is a further potential danger that such critiques slide into another claim, which Certeau did *not* entertain, that practices in the city are necessarily indecipherable and unintelligible and that, instead of being a problem to work with, this state should be welcomed. On this basis, critical analysis of urban space might as well be abandoned, a turn that Christopher Prendergast cuttingly describes as 'simply booking one's trip on the exhilarating flight of the signifier'.[54] The political dangers of this turn are evident in that, while it might renounce fantasies of omnipotence, it also leaves unexamined and free from critique the processes and outcomes of urban restructuring that are so dramatically transforming cities in the interests of powerful social groups.

Against this last point it is therefore important still to confront the challenge of knowing and writing the city without giving up on the idea as essentially impossible. This is while recognizing that the city can never be known in its entirety, and that representing space is in some senses an inevitably doomed task due to its very openness. Experimenting with ways of writing the city is indeed vital for developing critical studies of the urban as well as this sense of its openness. 'Writing' here is understood in a wide sense as involving all kinds of media, registers and modes of performance, and may include adopting different textual strategies and voices as well as modes of (counter)mapping in an effort to find forms conducive to addressing the complexities of the urban. Such experimentation is not for its own sake but in recognition of the politics as well as poetics of representation. As such it can contribute to what Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift call an 'expanded politics of representation', where 'ethico-aesthetic invention' is understood to be 'a key moment in a revitalized urban politics'.[55] Such creative invention is also bound up with the crucial task discussed

earlier of intervening in public space against its narrow definition around powerful interests, so as to reassert the significance of encounter, sociality, playfulness and to consider how these might be sustained. There is much to learn in this regard from a range of current exploratory and psychogeographical practices that includes the work of contemporary artists, urban adventurers and explorers. It is not simply an issue of asking what artists can do in a narrow instrumental sense to bring about progressive urban change, but rather of opening up through such practices the potential for collaborations, interventions, reimaginings that disrupt and expand senses of both the city and the self. This necessitates working within particular contexts, and negotiating and constructing paths through what exists. It also requires inventing different ways to address 'the meaning of living in a city' and associated rights, with a continual emphasis on what is possible.

Route map for the papers

Artistic practices of walking, investigating, story-telling, mapping and performing all feature in the following papers, which develop their own takes on the theme of exploring cities, and demonstrate in varied ways how the concept exceeds narrowly colonialist and capitalist associations. Jill Fenton addresses a rich tradition of urban exploration associated with the surrealist movement. Early surrealists based around André Breton in Paris were fascinated with the possibilities opened up by immersing themselves in the streets and strolling, where chance encounters and uncanny resonances could disrupt dominant ways of seeing and potentially reveal the marvellous buried within the everyday. Fenton follows a recent walk through Paris led by the contemporary surrealist Jean-Pierre Le Goff, who gives particular emphasis to chance and uncovering hidden connections in Paris. In Le Goff's intervention and his employment of tarot, Fenton finds a productive exploration of ambience, place and the prospects for re-enchantment that she argues can awaken dormant possibilities in urban space.

The following collaborative essay also demonstrates a fascination with exploring fragments and materials in the city on foot, and with engaging with its dreamlike and ghostly traces. This addresses a project in the King's Cross area of central London that was based around a map and tour or 'treasure hunt', produced in response to an exhibition held there by the artist Richard Wentworth in autumn 2002. The area is currently undergoing rapid change through vast construction works and gentrification, and the project sought to enable people to take 'another look' at its geographies and histories. Entitled 'The pleasure of treasure', it brought together curator and writer Kathy Battista, then working with the arts agency Artangel, with sound artist Brandon LaBelle, architectural historian Barbara Penner, geographer Steve Pile, and art and architectural writer Jane Rendell. In their paper they reflect on the project, the varied interests behind it and different responses to it. They also raises interesting issues about collaboration that are of pertinence to this issue as a whole, and about how the map and other figures – such as detectives and ghosts – provided different paths into the

project for each of them. But the paper is more than a report on the project, for it enacts and takes further the aims of looking differently at King's Cross as multiple voices emerge, mingle and at times contradict one another through a series of fragmentary texts and images, with each section taking off from clues on the map and ideas behind it. Refusing to smooth away contradictions and uncertainties, the paper is like the map in intending insights to be found along the way.

Walking, chance and play are at the heart of Janet Hand's discussion of works by the French artist Sophie Calle. Hand focuses on what she calls Calle's 'art of following and seduction', in a discussion that centres on the artist's 'following projects' since the 1980s. These include instances when Calle arranged to be followed by a detective, or when she pursued a randomly chosen subject herself to and through Venice in her well-known performance piece *Suite vénitienne* (1980/ 83). Hand shows how Calle's work can be positioned in relation to legacies of conceptual art in terms of nominal propositions and 'game-rules' that are carried out in the course of the work. She explores in particular how the performances work with rules and regulated rituals to constitute a 'being-in-the-world', drawing out the complexity of Calle's engagement with walking and photography as she '[l]ives her art as a life and fabricates a life for her art'. In Hand's essay, the *arts* of exploration come into sharp focus through a close interest in the regulated artifices of pedestrian locales and protocols in a manner that contrasts with more utopian conceptions of the pedestrian. From a different angle, Bryonie Reid's paper similarly and importantly questions universalist celebrations of free and arbitary movement by attending to forms of regulation, order and control that constrain as well as enable in the case of the politically conflictual territories of Belfast. Through a focus on two performative pieces in the city by the visual artist Sandra Johnson, Reid brings out issues of threat, terror, restriction and vulnerability that are differentially experienced within the geographies of Belfast, especially in terms of gender. The possibilities for emotional engagements with urban spaces, for bodily expression and for disrupting sectarian geographies is also explored, however, as Reid argues that the artistic performances by Johnston provide means for other politically significant negotiations of space. These are negotiations that, despite routine sociospatial constraints and restrictions, explore the potential openness of space through the articulation of what she calls 'a subtle, thoughtful and radical alternative geography, one with quiet political meaning'.

At the original RGS-IBG conference session from which this theme issue stems, 'The pleasure of treasure' project found continued life in being distributed to delegates as an invitation to explore part of London outside of 'expert-led' field trips that are more common at such events. Another invitation to walk came in the form of an event conducted by artist Tim Brennan and art historian Andrea Phillips that is documented in the 'Cultural geographies in practice' section of this issue. Their collaboration, entitled 'Mercator manoeuvre', addressed histories of exploration directly as they critically explored dominant notions of expedition and empire through a guided tour, starting from the site of the Royal Geographical Society and its monument to Shackleton. Over the last decade Brennan has been developing a

practice of guided walks that he calls 'manoeuvres', which he describes as existing 'in a region between traditions of performance art, the historical tour, loco-descriptive poetry, pilgrimage, expanded notions of sculpture and plain old pedestrianism'.[56] His walks/works are constructed entirely through quotations read aloud to the group, and chosen for their lateral rather than illustrative connections with the route. These unearth materials from the city, and conjure or release voices inhabiting places, with the resulting clashes and often surprising or puzzling juxtapositions provoking the emergence of a different awareness of space and time. 'Through walking,' he states, 'one can come to understand place as a built environment of texts, and within this context each walk I produce exists as a manoeuvring through the politics of space and time as language.'[57] He does not see the events as 'interventions' so much as being open to found objects, places, events and the engagement of the participating group. Guidebooks or documentation are also an important part of the process, and here Brennan publishes instructions and quotations from the RGS event as 'Mercator manoeuvre'. His text is prefaced by an essay by Andrea Phillips, who has long worked on walking and art. She originally performed a reading underneath the Albert Memorial as part of the event, and here she reflects on arts of walking and on themes raised in this issue as a whole. Brennan's text is followed by a response by Steve Pile to another manoeuvre by that artist, this time a walk in the summer of 2003 exploring the presence of angels in the collection of the British Museum that was a result of Brennan's artistic residency at the museum that year.[58] Collectively, the different routes taken by these authors and artists speak of some of the diversity as well as inventiveness of current artistic explorations of urban space. They also reveal their significance for addressing the cultural geographies of cities.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] Swoon Union, *finger* 11 (n.d.), at http://www.fingerweb.org/finger8_12/finger11/swoon.html (accessed Mar. 2004).

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] Interview with Caledonia Curry, at http://www.fingerweb.org/finger8_12/finger11/swoon.html (accessed Mar. 2004).

[4] Press release, May 2003, at http://www.glowlab.com/psygeocon/pgc_pressrel.html. The original quotation from Debord defines psychogeography as 'the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographic environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals'; in his 'Introduction à une critique de la géographie urbaine', *Les lèvres nues* **6** (1955), reproduced in G. Berreby, ed., *Documents relatifs à la fondation de l'Internationale situationniste, 1948–1957* (Paris, Allia, 1985), pp. 288–92; trans. as 'Introduction to a critique of urban geography', in K. Knabb, ed. and trans., *Situationist International anthology* (Berkeley, CA, Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p. 5.

[5] The results include attempts to find new ways of writing cities, a theme to which I return later. For interesting examples, see S. Pile and N. Thrift, eds, *City A–Z* (London, Routledge, 2000); I. Borden, J. Kerr, J. Rendell with A. Pivaro, eds, *The unknown city: contesting architecture and social space* (Cambridge, MA., MIT Press, 2001); and the Reaktion Books series Topographics that features 'new writing about place', and seeks to 'mingle analysis with anecdote, criticism with original expressive writing' (from http://www.reaktionbooks.co.uk/list_topographics.html).

[6] For a discussion from within geography, see e.g. A. Bonnett, 'Art, ideology and everyday space: subversive tendencies from Dada to postmodernism', *Environment and planning D: society and space* **10** (1992), pp. 69–86.

[7] The session was convened by Loretta Lees and myself under the title of 'Geographical expeditions in the city'. The first part, organized by Loretta, focused on the use of geographical expeditions as a research practice within the social sciences. The second part, which I organized, took up artistic themes and forms the basis for this theme issue, with an additional paper by Bryonie Reid. Three related 'artistic interventions' ran as part of the session, two of which are presented here ('The pleasure of treasure' and 'Mercator manoeuvre'). The third specially commissioned event, organized by the social practice art group PLATFORM, led participants on a walk around the oil-influenced landscape of 'Albertopolis', an area of London incorporating the Royal Geographical Society, Imperial College, the Natural History Museum and other sites. Entitled 'Expro', this used the walk to explore the connections between these sites and institutions and 'big oil'. It came out of PLATFORM's long-term project called *90% CRUDE*, through which its members have been investigating the culture and impact of transnational corporations, with particular reference to the oil industry, since 1996.

[8] See F. Driver, 'Exploring "darkest England": mapping the heart of empire', in his *Geography militant: cultures of exploration and empire* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2001), pp. 170–98; and J. Walkowitz, *City of dreadful delight: narratives of sexual danger in late-Victorian London* (London, Virago, 1992), pp. 15–39.

[9] See D. Gregory, *The colonial present* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2004).

[10] N. Smith, *The new urban frontier: gentrification and the revanchist city* (New York, Routledge, 1996).

[11] B. Bunge, 'The first years of the Detroit Geographical Expedition', in R. Peet, ed., *Radical geography* (Chicago, Maaroufa Press, 1977), p. 35.

[12] For a collection of situationist writings on this theme in translation, see L. Andreotti and X. Costa, eds, *Theory of the dérive and other situationist writings on the city* (Barcelona, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona/ACTAR, 1996). See also D. Pinder, *Visions of the city: utopianism, power and politics in twentieth-century urbanism* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2005), ch. 5; and S. Sadler, *The situationist city* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1998), ch. 2.

[13] A. Bonnett, 'Editorial', *Transgressions* **1** (1995), pp. 5–8 (pp. 5, 6) (emphasis original). The title and prospectus for the journal came out of discussions in the early 1990s between Alastair Bonnett, Fabian Tompsett and myself. Alastair became editor of the journal, and Fabian production and reviews editor. I'd like to acknowledge the importance in particular of Alastair's enthusiasm and encouragement, for my own early thinking in this area.

[14] A. Bonnett, 'Editorial', *Transgressions* **2/3** (1996), p. 7.

[15] *Ibid*., p. 8. See also A. Bonnett, 'The transgressive geographies of daily life: socialist pathways within everyday urban spatial creativity', *Transgressions* **2/3** (1996), pp. 20–37.

[16] This on-line journal was established in 2001 and is edited by Ian McKay.

[17] Iain Sinclair's books on London include *Downriver* (London, Paladin, 1991) and *Lights out for the territory* (London, Granta, 1997). For related artistic projects in the same city during the 1990s, see e.g. 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. 203–16; and D. Pinder, 'Ghostly footsteps: voices, memories and walks in the city', *Ecumene* **8** (2001), pp. 1–19.

[18] From a press release outlining the aims of the second Psy-geo-conflux in New York City, May 2004, at http://glowlab.blogs.com/psygeocon/2004/02/overview.html >. An example is London-based group Proboscis, whose members are developing their 'Urban tapestries' software platform to enable people to author their own virtual annotations of the city through mobile phones and PDAs, and to embed memories and knowledge into a wireless urban fabric.

[19] S. Pile, *Real cities: modernity, space and the phantasmagorias of city life* (London, Sage, 2005), p. 3 (emphasis original). See also J. Donald, *Imagining the modern city* (London, Athlone, 1999).

[20] D. Massey, *For space* (London, Sage, 2005), p. 109. For further discussions of the maps, see D. Pinder, 'Subverting cartography: the situationists and maps of the city', *Environment and planning A* **28**, (1996), pp. 405–27; and Sadler, *The situationist city*, pp. 82–91.

[21] C. Ray and D. Mandl, interview in *Gothamist* (10 May 2004), at http://www.gothamist.com/interview/archives/2004/05/10/christina_ray_dave_mandl_psygeoconflux.php

[22] The game was a draw. Quotations taken from a report on the game by Zack, at http://www.bossanova.com/lasell/humanchess/chessmain.htm (accessed 8 July 2003). Niedhardt has continued to arrange giant chess games since this event. Six more followed by May 2005: two in San Francisco, and one each in Vancouver, Austin, Seattle, Williamsburg in New York, and Providence on Rhode Island. The grid system of New York has hosted other 'big games' recently, such as a version of the computer game Pac-Man; see W. St John, 'Quick, get him: Pac-Man went thataway', *New York Times* (9 May 2004).

[23] D. J. Hester at http://www.divestudio.org/projects/index.php (accessed July 2004). The transformation of the posters in the project is documented at http://www.divestudio.org/projects/writeonthis_about.php

[24] C. Ray, cited in B. Zimmerman, 'Public notice: psychogeographers navigate New York's changing landscape', *Village Voice* (7–13 May 2003).

[25] K. O'Rourke, '[A map larger than the territory] New York body 'n' soul map', at http://perso.wanadoo.fr/korourke/map/ny.en.html (accessed July 2004).

[26] Sinclair, *Lights out for the territory*, p. 4.

[27] A. Kotányi and R. Vaneigem, 'Programme élémentaire du bureau d'urbanisme unitaire', *Internationale situationniste* **6** (Aug. 1961), pp. 16–19, trans. as 'Elementary program of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism', in Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 65. For a contrasting perspective, see N. Thrift, 'Driving in the city', *Theory, culture and society* **21** (2004), pp. 41–59.

[28] 'Algorithmic noise as free culture: the hot summer of generative psychogeography 2002' (Oct. 2002), at http://www.socialfiction.org/psychogeography/newbies.html (accessed Aug. 2004). Details of New York event 'can.walk will compute', in May 2003, are at http://www.socialfiction.org/psychogeography/canwalk.html

[29] 'Do-it-yourself urbanism: psychogeography, generosity, serependity and turriphilia', to be published in the Archilab catalogue, at http://www.socialfiction.org/diy_urbanism.html (accessed Aug. 2004).

[30] See G. Debord, 'Théorie de la dérive', *Internationale situationniste* **2** (Dec. 1958), pp. 19–23, trans. in Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 50–4; and Massey, *For space*, pp. 116–17. See also D. Pinder, 'Urban encounters: *dérives* from surrealism', in E. Adamowicz, ed., *Surrealism: borders/crossings* (London, Peter Land, in press).

[31] H. Lefebvre, 'The right to the city', trans. E. Kofman and E. Lebas, in his *Writings on cities* (Oxford, Basil, Blackwell, 1996), pp. 61–181; the book was originally published in 1968.

[32] See esp. the collection of essays edited by Michael Sorkin, *Variations on a theme park: the new American city and the end of public space* (New York, Hill & Wang, 1992). Adrian Rifkin's term comes from 'Gay Paris: trace and ruin', in N. Leach, ed., *The hieroglyphics of space: reading and experiencing the modern metropolis* (New York, Routledge, 2002), pp. 125–36.

[33] Smith, *The new urban frontier*. The classic account of the hardening of the city's surface against the poor, and the development of the fortress city, is M. Davis, *City of quartz: excavating the future in Los Angeles* (London, Verso, 1990).

[34] Smith, *The new urban frontier*, p. 198. See also R. Deutsche and C. Gendel Ryan, 'The fine art of gentrification', *October* **31** (1984), pp. 91–111.

[35] M. Rosler, 'Fragments of a metropolitan viewpoint', in B. Wallis, ed., *If you lived here: the city in art, theory, and social activism, a project by Martha Rosler* (Seattle, Bay Press, 1991), p. 31, (emphasis original). See also Rosalyn Deutsche's essay 'Alternative space' in the same volume, pp. 44–66. Bonnett refers to the result as 'an agitational sociology of everyday creativity', where participants sought imaginatively to 'engage, and otherwise involve themselves, with the existent transgressive struggles of New York's homeless population'; in his 'The transgressive geographies of daily life', p. 25.

[36] Deutsche and Ryan, 'The fine art of gentrification'.

[37] Swoon Union, *finger* 11.

[38] Zimmerman, 'Public notice'. This might be compared with Anthony Vidler's defence of public space in the wake of the 11 Sept. attacks in response to calls for ever tighter security: 'The street as a site of interaction, encounter and the support of strangers for each other; the square as a place of gathering and vigil; the corner store as a communicator of information and interchange. These spaces, without romanticism or nostalgia, still define an urban culture, one that resists all effort to "secure" it out of existence'; in 'Aftermath: a city transformed: designing "defensible space"', *New York Times* (23 Sept. 2001), cited in D. Mitchell, *The right to the city: social justice and the fight for public space* (New York, Guilford Press, 2003), p. 3.

[39] For discussions, see R. Deutsche, 'Agoraphobia', in her *Evictions: art and spatial politics* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1997), pp. 269–327; and Mitchell, *The right to the city*, esp. pp. 118–60.

[40] See Q. Stevens, 'Urban escapades: play in Melbourne's public spaces', in L. Lees, ed., *The emancipatory city? Paradoxes and possibilities* (London, Sage, 2004), p. 155. See also Iain Borden's important discussions of urban spatial practices in his *Skateboarding, space and the city: architecture and the body* (London, Berg, 2001).

[41] 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), pp. 446, 445–6.

[42] M. de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, trans. S. Randall (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984), p. 93. The book was originally published in 1974.

[43] Rossiter and Gibson, 'Walking and performing "the city"', p. 440.

[44] Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, pp. 91–110.

[45] Important critical discussions include Massey, *For space*, pp. 45–8.

[46] See e.g. the critical points made by Michael Gardiner about John Fiske's *Understanding popular culture* (Boston, Unwin Hyman, 1989) in his *Critiques of everyday life* (London, Routledge, 2000), pp. 85–6.

[47] Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, p. 93. It should be noted that this is more of an issue with the first theoretical volume of the study, which was intended as a tentative statement to enable further research. The empirical studies originally published in French as vol. II in 1980, although not translated into English until 1998, are more geographically and historically located; see M. de Certeau, L. Giard and P. Mayol, *The practice of everyday life, II: Living and cooking*, trans. T. J. Tomasik (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

[48] A. Rigby, *Popular culture in modern France: a study of cultural discourse* (London, Routledge, 1991), p. 21. Kristin Ross develops this point in an interesting discussion that contrasts Certeau's approach to the street and everyday life with those of Althusser and Lefebvre, in her 'Streetwise: the French invention of everyday life', *Parallax* **2** (1996), pp. 67–75.

[49] Bonnett, 'The transgressive geographies of daily life', p. 31.

[50] *Ibid*., p. 24. He is referring to G. Debord, 'Deux comptes rendus de dérive', *Les lèvres nues* **9** (November 1956), trans. T. Y. Levin as 'Two accounts of the dérive', in E. Sussman, ed. *On the passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time: the Situationist International, 1957–1972* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1989), pp. 135–9.

[51] J. Rendell, '"Bazaar beauties" or "pleasure is our pursuit": a spatial story of exchange', in Borden *et al.*, eds, *The unknown city*, p. 105. She takes the term 'spatial stories' from Certeau's *The practice of everyday life*, esp. pp. 115–30.

[52] E. Soja, *Thirdspace: journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1996), pp. 313–14. In saying this, though, it should also be remembered that in Certeau's terms only the elevated perspective constitutes the city *as a view*. The contrast made by Certeau is not between 'two views', as Soja suggests, but between two kinds of spatial activities.

[53] Massey, *For space*, p. 107.

[54] C. Prendergast, *Paris and the nineteenth century* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1992), p. 213.

[55] A. Amin and N. Thrift, *Cities: reimagining the urban* (Cambridge, Polity, 2002), p. 158. In relation to the latter term, they cite Félix Guattari's book *Chaosmosis* (Sydney, Feral, 1995). See also N. Thrift, 'With child to see any strange thing: everyday life in the city', in Bridge and Watson, *A companion to the city*, pp. 398–409.

56 T. Brennan, 'Manoeuvre: discursive performance', in I. Borden and S. McCreery, eds, 'New Babylonians', *Architectural design* **71** (2001), p. 49. Brennan's practice has led to walks in, among other places, east London, Leeds, Bradford, Manchester and Compton Verney, as well as along the 298-mile route from Jarrow to London in response to the 60th anniversary of the Jarrow Crusade in 1996, and activities with the Radical Ramblers of Northumbria.

57 *Ibid*.

58 This walk is published as T. Brennan, *Museum of angels: guide to the winged creatures in the collection with texts, illustrations and instructions* (London, Gli Ori, 2003).