I Map Therefore I Am Modern

Cartography and global modernity in the visual arts

Ferdinand, S.R.

Citation for published version (APA):
Part II

Artists Astride Shifting Mapping Paradigms
Figure 5.1. Jeremy Wood, *My Ghost*, digital giclée image, 33 x 31 cm, 2009.
5. Cartography at Ground Level: Spectrality and Streets in Jeremy Wood’s *My Ghost* and *Meridians*

Previous chapters of this study rest on an implicit model of map art. I have treated cartography as a theme explored in four artistic projects, which manifest meditations on the modernity of mapping but are not primarily instances of mapmaking in themselves. One way of putting this is that I have privileged “mapping in art”. Nikritin’s *The Old and the New*, in which a global map is but one object among others represented in a scenic painting, is the clearest illustration of this. And yet from the beginning the question of how cartography is presented and reflected upon in artworks has been shadowed by an alternative formulation of what constitutes map art, “art as mapping”. Indeed, in exploring cartography thematically, several of the projects I have looked at also undertake forms of mapmaking in their own right. This pertains especially to Hildreth’s series *Forthrights and Meanders*, which develops a heterochronous mode of cartography, and Matoba’s *Utopia*, which reworks formerly closed insular mappings for a counter-national political imagination. By no means do I want to downplay the extent to which these works engage and enrich mapmaking practice. Nevertheless, my analyses of Hildreth’s and Matoba’s interventions in mapping have focused first and foremost on the theoretical reflections they perform or provoke, specifically regarding how maps generate temporalities and spatialise identities.

In the final two chapters of this study, then, I want to bring the subordinate conjugation of map art - “art as mapping” - to the fore. Doing this means posing directly questions that, though present in

---

50 Although these are my own constructions, similar distinctions figure in David Woodward’s relatively early appraisal of relations between art and cartography, in which he discusses “Art in Maps”, “Art as Maps”, “Maps in Art” and “Maps as Art” (1987). Also recall Denis Wood’s definition of map art as “art made as, with, or about maps” (2010, 172).
previous chapters, have been largely subordinated to my overarching thematic and theoretical concerns. What are the implications of artists transgressing the received distinction between cartography and art? To which alternative formations of mapmaking and mapped space do such transgressions give rise? And how do they intersect with the central theme I have been exploring, namely, mapping’s constitutively modern, world-moulding powers? Logically, the import of projects aimed at blurring art with mapmaking can be grasped only with respect to how the two fields have been held apart historically. To address these questions, therefore, it is necessary to cast back to the Introduction to this study, in which I provided a brief genealogy of the discourses through which cartographic and artistic practice have been constructed in relation to one another. There, I took the view that designations of “art” and “science” in cartography, despite their ostensibly descriptive intent, are best understood as performative gestures that invest and distribute authority unevenly among different groups engaged in mapping. I stressed the social and ontological aspects of the art/science distinction that came to prevail in modernity, especially in the mid-twentieth century. The art/science distinction is social in that it performs a distinction between laypeople and mapmaking experts. It elevates professional claims and representations to the status of disinterested and universally binding facts, while other mappings and spatial imaginations circulating in society are recast, through a function of différance, as non-specialist, subjective, parochial, interested, lay, amateur and artistic. The art/science distinction also implies a specific ontology, which justifies and maintains this unequal dispensation of authority among mapmakers. This is what I have described throughout this study as the “ontology of calculability”, which articulates the world as a measurable and monochronous extension that precedes and exists independently of cartographers’ constructions. This ontology provides the basis for institutional and professional authority in mapmaking in that claims to represent geographies scientifically and correctly rest on presumptions that the world is singular and objective, can only be represented accurately through “neutral” procedures of survey and projection, and does not admit a plurality of equally correct mappings.

Having reiterated my account of the historically instituted threshold separating cartography from art, or mapmaking’s supposedly scientific core from its artistic superficialities, it becomes possible to address the implications of artistic incursions across it. In view of the simultaneously social and ontological import of the art/cartography distinction, the final two chapters of this study argue that the practices which transgress this boundary unfold correspondingly social and ontological
challenges to established cartography. This chapter addresses the first of these challenges. It explores the social implications of “art as mapping”, showing how map art might cut against the received concentration of cartographic means and legitimacy in professional domains, and thereby “take back the map” from institutional control (Denis Wood 2010, 156).

To do this, I focus on map-based practices by US-born walking artist Jeremy Wood (b.1976). Given my emphasis on the social concentration of cartographic authority through rhetorics of science and specialism, I am especially interested in how Wood’s artworks reconfigure the relations among mapping, everyday walking and streets through the experimental use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS). Tracing his movements with GPS technology to create personal cartographies, Wood transforms his walking body into what he calls a “geodetic pencil”, inscribing urban landscapes as it traverses them. In many of these mapping performances, Wood wilfully directs his walking so as to trace images, words and street patternings before the solar eye conjured by mapping; others track the ostensibly unmodified movements that make up his daily life. Of the latter, one image in particular encapsulates my concerns: My Ghost, a map presenting accumulated GPS tracks of Wood’s daily mobility through London over seventeen years (2000-2017) (for an image of the work in 2009, see figure 5.1). My Ghost and other works accentuate the social challenge posed by “art as mapping” in an especially strong form. Not only do they transgress the distinction separating supposedly scientific cartography from art; in figuring everyday walking as a medium of mapmaking, they also diminish the distance between expert cartography and lay practice more generally. My analysis shows how Wood’s works, which conflate formerly discrete practices of cartography, art and pedestrianism, embody key problems and possibilities thrown up by the recent diffusion and diversification of mapping beyond institutional domains. I am also concerned to stress how, in enrolling geospatial technologies to do so, Wood’s art encapsulates connections between map art and digital mapping platforms that have arisen in recent decades. The fields converge, here, in contributing towards the emergence of a more distributed and multiple mapping culture than that which has prevailed under institutional cartography.

Characteristically for a walking-cum-mapping artist, Wood articulates the social expansion of cartographic means and legitimacy in an acutely spatial manner. Accordingly, my discussionforegrounds the shifting status of the street in his artworks. The first half of the chapter contrasts Wood’s artistic vision of cartography at ground level with the received relationship between mapping and streets. In the spaces and places produced by modern urbanism, I argue, the street has
been figured largely as a subordinate social site to be ordered by elevated cartographers and planners. Wood’s itinerant mappings, in contrast, take the street and its users as the site and agents of cartographic practice. As such, the works empower pedestrianism: far from being caught in an imposed urban grillwork, walking becomes the reiterative making and remaking of streets through performative acts of mapping.

The second half of the chapter shifts focus from the social to the ontological dimensions of the art/cartography distinction. On this second point, Wood’s mappings are not celebrated uncritically. I have suggested how professional cartography’s unequal apportioning of authority rests on the “ontology of calculability”, which presupposes the world’s basic measurability through exact, objective procedures. In expanding mapping practices to the formerly excluded cluster of people and places conjured by “the street”, does Wood’s work displace the transparent, uniform and objective casting of space inherited from institutional cartography? Or does it entrench this ontology through an enlarged social field? Although Wood’s mappings offer no alternative articulation of mapped space, I invoke the metaphor of spectrality in My Ghost to show how Meridians (2005), another of Wood’s itinerant mappings, playfully exposes the slippages and pretensions of existential security in the GPS worldview of calculated locations. Wood’s art, I conclude, is poised astride shifting mapping paradigms: in reclaiming mapping for its social others, My Ghost and Meridians simultaneously rely upon and undermine the inherited cartographic ontology of calculability.

These conclusions lead into the next and final chapter, which makes a pair with this one in that both foreground the social and ontological significance of overcoming the art/cartography divide. There, I consider how map art might transcend the ontology of calculability by turning to a film made thirty seven years before My Ghost: Peter Greenaway’s A Walk Through H (1978). This film, I will go on to argue, unfolds a peculiar casting of geography that deviates radically from the forms of measurable and monochronous extension examined throughout this study. Taken together, my analyses of Wood’s and Greenaway’s mappings emphasise the far-reaching implications of challenging art’s separation from cartography. More than simply heightening the aesthetic considerations of mapmaking, this part of my study shows how these practices of “art as mapping” not only burst cartography from institutional sequestration, but also displace the ontological assumptions that have rationalised professional control over mapping for much modern history.
Released from the singular and purportedly objective ontology of calculability, diverse mappers might build rich fantastic geographies, beyond received projections of science and art.

Jeremy Wood and the Project of a Personal Cartography
Born in San Francisco and raised in Berlin, Wood currently works in and around Oxfordshire in England. His art encompasses different media, from photography and digital drawing to walking performances, yet thematically it coheres closely around the personal geographies enacted in and through his life. Wood charts these geographies through the experimental use of satellite tracking technology. At the core of his practice, then, are Global Positioning Systems, which allow users to establish longitude, latitude and altitude quickly within a standard global framework. GPS can be simplified to three constituent elements: firstly, a constellation of (at present) thirty satellites orbiting the earth, established by the US Department of Defence and NATO in 1993; secondly, the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS84), an internally coordinated graticular map produced by the US Defence Mapping Agency to represent the earth; and, thirdly, innumerable receivers that detect and triangulate the signals emitted by at least three satellites so as to calculate the device’s position within the WGS84 (for a clear history and analysis of GPS, see Rankin 2015).

The mobility of these receivers, which are often produced as small handheld units or embedded in smartphones, is especially important in Wood’s practice, which explores the limits and possibilities of the GPS infrastructure through the mobile methods of walking art. The impetus behind the burgeoning cultural interest in walking, suggests David Pinder, is to “leave behind fixed or elevated viewpoints in favour of mobile, grounded, and partial perspectives” (2011, 674). In exploring subjective spatialities, the political channelling of mobility and the fortuitous simultaneities to which urban modernity gives rise, Wood’s practice broaches some of the quintessential themes of walking art as it has developed from the early twentieth-century avant-gardes through to the “expanded field” of art today. He is unusual among walking artists, though, in that instead of invoking the partiality and mobility of embodied walking to counter the omniscience perceived in cartography, his practice combines and even conflates the two impulses of walking and mapping such that they no longer represent contraries. By recording his own mobility as GPS “trackpoint data”, Wood transforms walking into a tool of cartographic drawing. The resultant information is then modelled on specially designed software named GPSography, which figures the lines made by Wood’s movement into “sculptural objects” that can be superimposed over maps or aerial
photographs (Wood 2006, 268-269). In this configuration, the artist’s traversal of a landscape constitutes both part of the medium through which his maps are made and the subject matter they represent. Constantly plotting his mobility, Wood’s walking body becomes a “geodetical pencil” as Lauriault puts it (2009, 360). This formulation concentrates what I see as a central gesture of his practice: namely, the merging of grounded mobility with synoptic mapping.

Wood’s works of walking/mapping fall under two broad categories. First come pieces in which the artist directs his mobility wilfully so as to write shapely new streets, images and words into existence. Consider, in this connection, Brighton Boat (2001-2002), in which Wood walked the GPS image of a ship through the city of Brighton. Or Meridians (2005), a long walk through London whose vagaries write out a sentence spoken by Ishmael in Melville’s Moby Dick (1851) to describe Rokovoko, the island home of the harpooner Queequeg: “It is not down in any map; true places never are” (1992, 56). I will return to discuss Meridians and reflect on this anti-cartographic note later in the chapter. The works in the first category take the landscape as a jotting pad or drawing board. Unlike the pristine blankness of these stationer’s equivalents, however, the English landscapes that form the basis for the majority of Wood’s peripatetic jottings are strewn with impediments accumulated over millennia of history. The images are, consequently, humble and dialogic examples of draftsmanship, for in “taking a line for a walk” (Paul Klee’s phrase) across such cluttered countryside-canvases, Wood’s somatic pencil must negotiate and respond creatively to the multiple physical features and human relations that surround his mobile self (Klee 1961, I, 105). This aspect of the artworks comes across strongly in Tracey P. Lauriault’s (2009, 360) reflections on Wood’s GPS art, which, she argues, include “land, water, air and the engineered environment of places” as “protagonists” of the spatial stories told in the works. To show how environments and events altered the walking/drawing of Meridians, Lauriault recounts how Wood had to dodge golf balls and misshape words due to the unforeseen erection of circus tents on the planned route (361). While carefully treading the Greenwich Meridian line, he was also almost thrown off course by a boisterous Labrador (Wood 2006, 275).

The compromises entailed in walking a line through the landscape, in calling attention to the reciprocity of people, environments and animals in quotidian geographies, compare favourably with the forms of modernist street planning discussed in the following section, which take existing settings as empty pages on which to inscribe synoptic street patternings. The contrast with modern urbanism is stronger still in the second category of Wood’s artworks, in which Wood’s mobility is
ostensibly unmodified by being recorded cartographically. Mapped lines unfurl with apparently no regard to the proverbial cartographic “eye in the sky”, turning the function of GPS tracking from that of spectating deliberately staged geographical performances to documenting the spatialities and rhythms enacted in the course of Wood’s everyday activity.

Such tracings make up what Wood calls his “cartographic journals”: a publicly visible bank of personal images that record the spatial unfolding of his life and trigger memories of past mobility. Some journal entries recount a single stroll (walking the dog); others narrate more elaborate walks (exploring a maze). Only one of Wood’s GPS tracings, though, boasts a durational stretch of seventeen years. My Ghost concentrates this remarkably protracted accumulation of trackpoint data recording the artist’s movements in, through, over and under central London, whether on foot or by car, bicycle, tube or plane. The title registers the uncanniness Wood felt on seeing the routes taken by his former selves objectified, visually, before him. This chapter discusses My Ghost in detail because its conflation of synoptic cartography with the vagaries and banality of quotidian mobility embodies the blurring of hierarchies in contemporary mapping cultures.

My Ghost presents a stark monochromatic map comprised of brilliant white lines strung out across a black space. Being digital, the work’s dimensions and scale are variable, though Wood has exhibited different prints of 3.3 by 3.1 meters and, more recently, 2.1 by 1.3 meters. On my own estimate, this latter configuration makes a scale of roughly 1:9000. This is relatively large, allowing viewers to follow closely the meanderings of individual paths, while still combining many particulars into a synoptic whole. Even without resort to the explanatory notes that accompany the map both online and in the gallery, it is recognisably London. Recognition is not instantaneous however. By contrast with the cartographic gestalt that centuries of mapmaking have established for the old imperial metropole, Wood’s map is decidedly off-kilter. The usually dominant curls of the river Thames (which appear as a blank between Wood’s clustered paths) figure as but a feint sideshow to a long tangle of intersecting paths extending out over the image. Drawn together into two, perhaps three key nodes north of the river, the pathways shine forth in concentrated white threads.

It is important that the lines traced across My Ghost are not laid over an arial photograph of the region traversed, as they are in other works, but stand isolated against an inexpressive black background. Abstraction from the terrain releases the pathways from immediate referral back to their origins in geographical mobility, allowing viewers to engage them as pure forms or
Rorschachian prompts to association. Loosened up to diverse resonances in this way, the image suggests several visual analogies: a dot-to-dot illustration of some as-yet unnamed constellation; satellite photographs of nocturnal regions in which white indicates densely lit urban nodes, tapering off into a dark surrounding rurality; the rudiments of capillaries visible in radiographic images; or Lichtenberg figures, scientific images in which electrified dust is discharged through metals, plastics or wood to create branching luminescent structures that resemble lighting (see Elkins, 273-277). In view of this uncanny phosphorescence, combined with the work’s phantasmal title, the analogy of ectoplasm also comes to mind. The spirit given shape by the substance, in this case, would belong not to an individual, but a city: the febrile pneuma of London as it is fetishised in Peter Ackroyd’s “biography” of the city (2000), for instance (for a critique, see Luckhurst 2002).

I will pick up on the artwork’s susceptibility to association and analogy, and especially this last theme of spectral geographies, later in the chapter, which considers the ways in which Wood’s works complicate the GPS ontology of fixed location. The idea to take onboard here is that My Ghost offers an imaginative vision of how everyday mobility and cartographic drawing coalesce in the increasingly distributed culture of digital mapping. Indeed, though the map can be read simply as a visual record of Wood’s personal geographies, this straightforward representational function is complicated by the fact that the artist’s mobility is not just the object or subject matter of My Ghost, but also the medium and agency through which the map was made. Wood’s GPS mappings fold closely together the formerly discrete (and I will suggest hierarchically opposed) domains of panoptic mapping and quotidian mobility - so closely, in fact, as to make walking synonymous with mapping.

To explore the implications of this conflation, the following sections set My Ghost in contrast with cartography’s relationship to the street as it has been inherited from modern urbanism. Discussing Michel de Certeau’s account of how elevated cartographers and planners have imposed urban orderings on the street brings into focus the social significance of Wood’s blurring of synoptic mapping with urban walking.

**Setting the Street to Order**

For much of modern urban history the relationship between cartography and the street has been determined by the imperatives of state-backed planning and the (utopian) ideal of a fully calculable and controllable city. In streets received from preindustrial settlement, planners often saw chaotic
meeting places of contrary purposes and moribund remainders of premodern indeterminacy. Viewed as impediments hindering the construction of optimally designed urban machines, the street elicited antipathy and ordering zeal. Baron von Haussmann’s pseudo-medical discourse on the necessity of clearing “clogged arteries” in the medieval city (Ellin 1997, 18), alongside Le Corbusier’s famous moratorium on the street in *The Radiant City* (1935), stand as paradigmatic statements of this animus. To the modernising mind, Zygmunt Bauman writes, old streets become an “incoherent and contingent by-product of uncoordinated and desynchronized building history”, obstructing the “platonic sublimity, mathematical orderliness” and seamless functional division that urban modernity - so it was hoped - would usher in (2012, 42). Bustling premodern streets were to be mapped out, street practices to be disentangled and set to rational order.

Despite the modernist aggressivity towards it, there is something irreducible and intransigent about street sociality. Multiform thoroughfares might be split into discrete communicative modes; street commerce and culture removed to dedicated sites, but no socio-spatial planning project will entirely do away with friction and informality at the thresholds between functional domains. Streets therefore present urban planning with a special difficulty, in that they simultaneously incite and elude ordering energies. City administrations have often navigated this double-bind by remaking the street after the pristine legibility admired in maps. Cartographic rationalities of naming, numbering, tabulating, colouring and demarcating space through conventionally agreed codifications have presented a model for the ordered modern street. Consequently, formerly irregular, informal and inscrutable streets, the shifting complexity of which has so often confounded cartographic attempts to establish transparency (see Scott 1990), have been rearranged or rebuilt entirely.

In the received practices of modern urbanism, then, cartographers and planners have taken the street as an object of not just surveillance and representation, but planned reformation too. One way to summarise this is to say that modern cartography manifests an elevated view in relation to the street. This recalls the prolegomenon to Michel de Certeau’s often excerpted chapter “Walking in the City”, in which the author looks down on Manhattan’s streets from the height of the World Trade Centre, then ten years old (2011, 91-110). Though this analysis is well-known, I want to rehearse the key opposition driving de Certeau’s account because it is precisely this binary that

---

51 For discussions of the power and politics of house and street numbering, see Rose-Redwood (2008); of street naming, see Palonen (1993) and Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu (2010); and of urban semiotics, see Jaworski and Thurlow (2010).
Wood’s mappings collapse. Distance and ocular objectification are leading motifs in de Certeau’s analysis, in which cartography and elevated views more generally are positioned as foils against which to celebrate transitory practices performed in the streets. Elevation, he writes, “transforms [the subject] into a voyeur. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was “possessed” into a text that lies before one’s eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god” (92). Here, the panoptic visuality that surveils the city is epitomised by cartography in the practical sense of establishing distance and legibility. Maps disentangle their users from the sensuous complexity of “grounded” practices, allowing one to grasp urban geographies without being caught up in them. They reduce streets and urban spaces to transparently readable “texts” that allow for rationalised interventions from afar.

Significantly, de Certeau’s characterisation misunderstands cartography insofar as an important distinction obtains between cartography and aerial or heightened perspectives. To think that the visions built through mapping could be attained in embodied experience, however elevated, would be to conceive maps as transparent windows, not culturally relative and politically invested visions (Turchi 2004, 85). Yet the elevation de Certeau ascribes to cartography describes more than the practical illusion of verticality constructed by maps; cartography is also elevated in another, metaphorical sense of belonging to a dominant position in the field of social relations. In speaking of the all-seeing reader of the urban text, he has in mind the “the space planner urbanist, city planner or cartographer” (93). Here, elevation denotes the ruling position enjoyed by legislators and state actors, who, as I have argued in Chapter Two, survey received spaces and populations to “garden” them in accordance with a chosen model, often as executors of corporate rationality. The map and the street represent not just physical spaces and practices, then, but also metaphorical sites denoting diametrically opposed positions within a symbolic topology of social power.

Cartographers grasp space “from above” in the sense of occupying a socially dominant position; subjects traversing streets practice space creatively “from below” in that they act from a site of ostensible weakness. This schema is, I realise, inescapably binary, as well as vitiated by the “denigration of vision” that suffused de Certeau’s intellectual milieu (see Jay, 1993). Yet, his identification of cartography with dominant social agents is borne out, to a degree, by the discursive construction of cartography through modernity, especially in the twentieth century, in which cartographic means and legitimacy were increasingly claimed as the preserve of mapping professionals and legislative institutions. Rhetorics of scientific objectivity and expert distinction,
argues Harley, “enabled cartographers to build a wall around their citadel of the ‘true’ map”, beyond which “there was a ‘not cartography’ land where lurked an army of inaccurate, heretical, subjective, valuative, and ideologically distorted images” (2002, 155). This image of a cartographer’s “citadel” conjugates with de Certeau’s skyscraper in that both represent elevated social sites and symbols of panoptic power, raised above the supposedly partial, blind or distorted spatialities practiced by non-cartographers in the city streets below. I cite these vignettes of elevation and enclosure to stress how discourses of objectivity and professional specialism perform an unequal distribution of cartographic legitimacy among social groups engaged in mapping. Maps produced by dedicated professional institutions are set apart from, indeed above, competing articulations of geography, which, though not condemned to outright illegality, are denigrated as lay and artistic deviations from professional procedures.

In the dispensation inherited from modern urbanism, then, cartographers and planners look down on earthbound streets from heights both practical and social. Practical in that they enrol maps’ distanced legibility to mould street spaces and subjects; social in that discourses of science and specialism have confined cartographic authority to delimited institutional domains while withholding it from the populace at large.

**Descending into the Street**

Having built an image of how, in modern urbanism, cartography and streets are locked into an asymmetrical antinomy that is played out through city spaces, I want to examine how these relations are reconfigured in Wood’s itinerant mappings. The artworks’ central gesture, I have suggested, is to conflate grounded mobility with synoptic mapping. It is only now, in light of the strategies through which institutional cartography has proclaimed itself apart from transient spatial practices, that the larger significance of this conflation becomes clear. My claim is that in blending mapping with walking, Wood collapses the binaries driving de Certeau’s account of urban practice and cuts against cartography’s elevation in relation to the street. In *My Ghost*, walking is mapping, while cartographic inscription, far from signalling distanced ordering, is lived mobility. Mapping thus blurs into the fleeting street-level performances against which it was formerly defined.

Just as institutional cartography’s elevation above the street is both a practical effect of maps’ distanced legibility and the metaphorical expression of dominative social relations, so Wood’s intervention has both technical and social aspects. Enrolling the mobility of geospatial devices as a
drawing method, *My Ghost* brings to focus key developments in cartography’s digital transition. Where print mapmaking was essentially a sedentary undertaking done in dedicated sites (though requiring prior surveys), digital mapping is increasingly peripatetic. Performed on smartphones by diverse users, mapping takes place in and through varied street spaces, with which maps interact in complex reciprocal ways (Verhoeff 2012). Technically, the function of inscribing Wood’s movements through GPS might seem underwhelming by contrast with increasingly sophisticated smartphone-based mapping applications. Yet for me the simplicity of making street-level mobility over into mapmaking distils the social import of shifts towards distributed digital mapping. Indeed, in merging mapping with quotidian practice Wood accentuates what Jeremy Crampton has called the “undisciplining of cartography”: the process through which mapmaking, under prevailing technological and epistemological pressures, is “slipping from the control of the powerful elites that have exercised dominance over it for several hundred years” (2010, 40-41). *My Ghost* presents a spatial imagination of this “undisciplining”, in which the once excluded and subordinate people and places evoked by “the street” become sites and subjects through which mapping is performed.

As such, *My Ghost* transgresses the historically instituted distinctions that set institutional cartography above not only everyday articulations of space, but artistic practice too. In modernity, cartographic professionals came to enact their own scientific authority by defining their practice against the subjectivism, partiality and creativity perceived in art (Cartwright, Gartner and Lehn, 3; Varanka and Krygier, 78). Sometimes cartography as a whole has been positioned in opposition to arts practice; more often, though, the binary runs through cartography, with art being “accorded a cosmetic rather than a central role in cartographic communication” (Harley 2002, 154; for an example, see Robinson 1989). Made by an itinerant artist with no official accreditation in cartography, *My Ghost* pays no heed to the art/science opposition. If legitimacy in mapmaking has traditionally been claimed by the delimited “citadel” of cartography, whose palisades define scientific cartographers from the lay and artistic mappers ranged without, *My Ghost* emblemsaties artistic attempts to “take back the map” from institutional control (Denis Wood 2010, 156).

What distinguishes *My Ghost* both within Wood’s own body of work and the field of map-based art more generally, though, is how it also extends mapping to quotidian practice more generally. Unlike *Meridians*, which “takes back the map” to articulate a carefully executed artistic rendering of space, in *My Ghost* the artist’s routes are not dictated by the need to perform words and images before a satellite gaze. The lines unfold according to the movements and rhythms of daily life. It
may be naive to imagine that Wood’s mobility continued unaltered by being tracked (Lauriault notes how the image does not “tell us when he journeyed with the GPS turned off” 2009, 365), yet My Ghost is not a preconceived artistic vision. It is an accumulation of the kind of commonplace spatial practices that de Certeau valorised for their subaltern creativity. For him, the transient performances through which bodies negotiate cities, requiring neither official training nor dedicated sites, manifested an ineradicable foil to panoptic ordering. What could incarnate unofficial, non-professional, indeed “ordinary” practice more fully than moving through the city? In grounding cartographic inscription in daily meanderings, My Ghost embodies the challenge posed to professional cartography by distributed digital mapping, which intersperses everyday lives with quotidian acts of mapping and makes potential mappers of non-specialist users. Mapping descends into the street, empowering Wood’s pedestrianism, which writes/walks out new shapes and street patternings that are registered, but no longer determined from on high, by cartography.

In stressing how Wood appropriates mapping for the quotidian and artistic fields of practice against which institutional cartography has traditionally asserted its own distinction, I have already presented this descent in terms of democratisation. This would accord with more optimistic valuations of cartography’s digital transition, which draw attention to how current shifts in mapping “blur the traditional boundaries between map user and map maker, the trained professional the map amateur” (della Dora 2012, 8). Yet if Wood’s practice brings into focus the recent expansion of cartographic means and legitimacy beyond institutional domains, it also embodies more disquieting aspects of digital mapping. Indeed, Wood’s GPS-driven conflation of walking with mapping might be linked to the (largely voluntary) proffering of once private geographies through mobile phone signals as commercially and governmentally exploitable data sets (Michael and Clarke 2013); the surveillance of convicts through networked anklets (Crampton 2003, 130) and the potential for “geoslavery” it suggests (Fisher and Dobson 2007); or to the diffusion of military tracking and targeting rationalities into commercial, governmental and ultimately personal practices through the generalisation of GPS technology (Kaplan 2006; for a critique, see Rankin 2015, 556). Adducing these developments serves to dampen celebratory narrations of cartography’s digital transition, balancing my image of mapping’s democratising descent into the street with the sobering realities of how digital mapping regimes are “fuelling new rounds of capital investment, creative destruction, uneven development, and indeed, at times, the ending of life” (Pickles 2004, 152). A fuller appraisal of Wood’s itinerant mappings than is possible within the frame of this chapter would
connect the artworks with the exploitation of personal geometrics, whether by policy makers, surveillance agencies, state militaries or profit-driven geobrowsers.

The critical perspective on Wood’s works I want to explore here, though, focuses on the ontological underpinnings of contemporary mapping and GPS. Artistic interventions in mapping like Wood’s are of little import if they simply expand mapmaking to a larger social field without also challenging the underlying conceptions of mapping and space promulgated by institutional cartography. Professional and scientific claims to possessing privileged access to geographical truth, and therefore superiority over lay and artistic mapping, rest on a particular casting of the world as a calculable, uniformly extended space that exists independently of the observer, can be measured and represented exactly, and does not admit multiple correct interpretations (for fuller descriptions of this ontology, see Harley 2002 154; Pickles 2004, 80-86; and Elden 2005, 15-16). While unfolding shifts in cartography present a quantitative proliferation of mapping practices, qualitative ontological assumptions about what mapped space fundamentally is have persisted untransformed. Mainstream GIS and GPS reproduce values and aims inherited from institutional mapmaking - values like objectivity, accuracy and uniformity; aims like establishing calculability and control. Despite the prevailing rhetorics of discontinuity, then, it may be that current shifts towards an expanded culture of digital mapping only resubmit understandings of geography more completely to the cartographic ontology of calculable extension, all behind the smokescreen of democratisation.

Against this backdrop, it seems to me that the value of artistic interventions in contemporary mapping like Wood’s, beyond “taking back the map” for non-professional mappers (which is in any case occurring, albeit unevenly, through cartography’s digital transition), lies in how they might counter this ontology with qualitatively different, experimental and original visions of mapped space. I will suggest that though Wood’s mappings hold out no alternative to the coordinated and measurable determination of the world articulated in most digital cartographies, neither do they simply repeat and reinforce this ontology; indeed, they playfully undermine the GPS worldview of securely established locations. To show this, the next section takes up the metaphor of haunting in My Ghost to focus on how Meridians renders ostensibly secure GPS locations and measures as spectral, groundless projections.
Spectral Geographies

*My Ghost* may have been produced using GPS technology, but in exhibition it accumulates affective and metaphorical resonances that exceed the coordinated ontology unfolded through digital mapping. Strikingly, the artwork delineates Wood’s mobility against a black background, contravening the convention that maps should postulate a uniformly illuminated, indeed shadowless world. Besides making for a visually distinctive map (the inverted version of *My Ghost* that Wood finished in 2012, which traces dark lines over a white substrate, loses much of its aesthetic impact), Wood’s choice of a dominant dark backcloth releases his pathways from referral back to the traversed geography and opens them up to diverse associations. Given the work’s title, the darkness invests the image with an ominous tone that colours these resonances: as I noted in my initial description, to me *My Ghost* suggests ectoplasm incarnating the city’s *genius loci*. Wood’s performance of urban spectrality repays further discussion here, for the figure of the ghost - or rather of ghostly geographies - calls into question the certainty and fixity surrounding notions of locatedness in current mapping platforms.

Concepts around haunting and spectrality have come into increasing prominence in cultural theory in recent decades. This has been associated, in large part, with Jacques Derrida’s notion of “hauntology”, which counters reductions of existence to full and saturated *presence* with an ontology shot through with *spectrality* (1994). Theories of spectrality do not refer to “literal” ghostly visitations, but invoke spectrality metaphorically to draw attention to phenomena that flicker between absence and presence from particular discursive viewpoints (Peeren 2014, 3). Three basic conditions brought to light by spectrality are: “the persistence of the past in the present”; “present absence” (encompassing a more spatial register); and the unrecognised ulteriority that contaminates all seemingly distilled essences (Peeren 2014, 10). All three are variously at play in *My Ghost*. The possessive title suggests that the spectrality in question resides in Wood’s pathways, which figure forth past selves in the present and disperse his singular subjectivity across distant streets. Here, the image connects with another Derridean term that overlaps with spectrality: “the trace”, which, in marking something absent, ruptures the immanence and plenitude of presence ascribed to existence in received metaphysical discourse (Derrida 2016, 75-77).

To suggest how this artwork queries the cartographic ontology of extended calculable space, though, I want to go beyond the idea that Wood’s traces haunt the city. Instead, I will consider how the city haunts the map, before progressing, in the following section, to show how cartographies

165
haunt the city. Urban streets might be said to be inherently spectral in that they consist of vacant spaces between buildings, which take on their own positive identity and form, like plaster filling gaps in a mould. *My Ghost* extends this hovering between being and non-being to the city at large. Far from presenting an urban texture of obdurate solidities, London figures as a spectral presence in that it comes to visibility only epiphenomenally, implied by the snaking shapes of Wood’s isolated pathways. Indeed, though Wood’s movements ostensibly constitute the map’s sole subject matter, they are shadowed by the noticeable absence of the traversed city. Here, it is the manifold spaces and places of the city, in all their excess variety and unprocessed (unprocessable) specificity, that haunt the digital grids and data-trails traced over them.

“The key conceptual feature of GPS”, writes William Rankin, “is that it replaces lumpy, historical, human space with a globally uniform mathematical system” (2015, 557). This system, the WGS84 mentioned above, constitutes the *a priori* ground of much digital mapping, including the dominant Google applications. On one level, the metaphors and aesthetic of spectrality in *My Ghost* might be taken to envision how calculable GPS are shadowed by manifold unregistered and unverified geographies they neither locate nor coordinate. As digital mapping applications entrench the ontology of calculability through lifeworlds globally, it becomes shadowed by ever more geographical complexities that linger unregistered within its platonic graticular grid. In this way, *My Ghost* brings into focus the latency of what Deborah Dixon calls “extra-geographies” - those “other words that arise beyond the survey and the map” (2007, 204). Interpreting the image as a demonstration of how the WGS84 is haunted by unprocessed geographical excess suggests one way in which Wood’s practices query GPS’s representational powers.

The analysis of *Meridians* that follows reverses this formulation. In it, I want to stress not how the city haunts the map, but how locative media are themselves uncanny assemblages that shadow social reality. Locative media, as Ned Prutzer has argued, are uncanny in that they displace objects to an incongruous digital dimension; fail to firmly place signals, despite the appearance of accuracy; and shape lived geographies while scarcely being visible within them (2015). This identification of spectrality is especially challenging, since it undermines the orientation and existential security offered by GPS, which enrolls an infrastructure costing billions of dollars, as well as the rhetorics of mathematical, atomically-timed precision designed to reassure users as to where they are amid the otherwise disorienting, even frightening forces of globalisation. Martin and Rosello espy a “huge paradox” in a postmodern culture simultaneously riven by disorientation and uncertainty, and...
enthralled by the “hyper-orientation” realised through satellite visuality (2016, 9). Much of the appeal of GPS and GIS derives, perhaps, from how they assuage the existential anxieties endemic to liquid modernity; this links up with my argument in Chapter One that global cartographies establish meaning and order partly to cover over the frightening facticity of the disenchanted earth.

But what if the locating structures projected by digital mapping were perceived not as offering a reassuring grasp of geographical reality, but as themselves spectral? Present insofar as they are communicated and acted upon, sometimes even instantiated concretely, yet for all that largely notable for their absence in the offline world? What if the standards of reference through which spatialities are now pervasively determined were recognised as phantasmal projections that suffuse and direct social practice without ever being fully there? Wood’s *Meridians* shows how adopting such a perspective would have a profoundly disorienting and dislocating effect. Turning a noun into a verb, I will argue that the image “ghosts” seemingly secure locative frameworks - that it loosens their appearance of saturated reality and renders them spectral by playing two discrepant geographical standards off against one another.

**Figure 5.2.** Jeremy Wood, *Meridians*, digital print on cotton, 140 x 850 cm, 2005. Courtesy of the artist. (Continues over the next two pages.)
Meridians is a walking artwork performed discontinuously in central London over forty-four miles and three months in early 2005, the GPS trails of which have been matched with an aerial photograph of the area and exhibited as a long rectangular print (Wood 2006, 274-275) (figure 5.2). Examining this image entails another (lesser) journey on the part of the viewer, who must travel along its 8.5 metre breadth to follow the artist’s path. As I have noted, Wood’s walk traces a quotation from Moby Dick on the landscape. Absorbed in the visual “noise” of the aerial photograph - arterial rail junctions, broccoli trees, shadows cast by inscrutable structures - or in picking out Melville’s sentence from the disconnected sites of walking/writing, it is easy to overlook two millimetre-thin lines that run almost parallel to one another across the breadth of the image. And yet, for calculable cartographic space, these lines, the eponymous Meridians, have a significance that far outweighs the geographical complexities that surround and overshadow them.

Meridians are vertical “lines of longitude” in a graticular structure representing the earth; they intersect with horizontal “parallels” or “lines of latitude” to form a global grid. The lines figured in Wood’s artwork are especially significant; each represents a prime meridian, that is, the one vertical chosen as the key standard in reference to which longitude (temporal and spatial distance to the East

---

52 An abundance of green in the photography indicates that it was not taken in the season Wood walked the same area.
and West) is measured within a particular terrestrial model. A prime meridian marks $0^\circ$ in a system comprising $360^\circ$. The higher of the pair in the artwork is the Greenwich Meridian posited in the “Airy ellipsoid”, the graticule constructed by the astronomer George Airy and internationally recognised by dominant states as the prime meridian at an 1884 conference in Washington D.C. The institution of this meridian as prime represents a well-known instance of how political economy and imperial power impinge on the history of cartography, in that figurations of the earth were henceforth centred on the capital of the British Empire. The second, lower prime meridian in the image was established one hundred years after the Washington conference for the WGS84 reference system used in GPS.

These lines are the most important vectors in two mathematical globes that differ slightly but significantly from one another. Established after satellite geodesy replaced astronomically-established longitudes in the twentieth century, the WGS84 belongs to a larger ellipsoid projection of the uneven terrestrial surface (see Malys et al. 2015). The result is an unnerving incongruity between points of reference that are widely assumed to coincide and often referred to interchangeably: GPS readings taken astride the Greenwich Meridian locate the user not at the great limen between East and West, but one hundred metres inside the Eastern hemisphere. This
Cartography at Ground Level

divergence is too small to make the different systems obvious, while still generating slippages, blind spots and dis- or un-located places in an otherwise calculable geography.

I argue that Meridians builds an unsettling image of how the fundamental standards that ground pervasive assumptions of locatedness are, in fact, phantasmal projections masking our vulnerability amid globalisation and the world’s basic contingency. To show how, my discussion will move through the horizontality, doubling and visual faintness of prime meridians in the artwork, arguing that these gestures complicate the ontology of calculability. Although my stress on mapping’s ghostliness cuts against the prevailing assumption that calculable space corresponds fully with reality as such, I do not mean to imply that locative frameworks are merely illusory deviations from reality proper. To be spectral is not to be unreal or fanciful, but to hover at constructed thresholds separating absence and presence, fact and fiction, life and death, visibility and invisibility. In keeping with my wider argument about cartography’s world-building power, then, I want to insist, as Roberts has written, that “the ghost ‘makes things happen’: it transforms” (2012, 8). Ultimately, the spectrality of the cartographic ontology of calculability derives from how it pervades and determines social practice while seeming to exist as a geometrical realm beyond messy lived geographies.

Meridians’ first intervention in smoothly calculable space concerns the orientation of the two lines, the identity of which may surprise viewers who know that meridians are vertical: like gaps separating the pieces of an orange, they gore the globe before meeting at its poles. And yet Wood’s lines run not top-to-bottom, but horizontally through the image. Although the whole artwork is oriented such that its topmost edge faces West, this would scarcely be noticeable in a large-scale aerial photograph did it not contradict the verticality basic to meridians. This orientation was probably chosen pragmatically, to ease the viewing of such an elongated print and allow space to walk the long quotation from Melville, but it has interpretive consequences. In contradicting maps’ normative Northward orientation, Wood’s horizontal meridians are existentially disorienting. North is not upward; moreover, the very notion that there is an “upward” is exposed as a figment of the cultural imagination.

The contingency of longitude lines and other conventions on which digital calculable space is built is further emphasised by the doubling of prime meridians in Wood’s artwork. Primality denotes indivisibility and preeminence; to posit a pair of prime meridians within a single reference system is oxymoronic. In having two prime meridians bisecting London’s landscape, then,
Meridians dramatises the plurality of mutually contradictory frames of reference and their common groundlessness. Both systems evoked in the artwork hold up their prime meridian as an absolute standard in space-time, and yet they unwittingly indicate, by their non-convergence, the confected and contingent character of such standards. The two lines relativise one another.

This doubling and relativising of cartographic standards fissures open an uncanny space in the otherwise uniformly coded global surface. “The two meridian lines”, Wood writes, “are the edges of maps that don’t meet up; between them are places that don’t exist. Within this area of adjustment, the east-west hemispheres cannot be straddled” (2006, 274). Beyond juxtaposing discrepant standards to expose their common contingency, Wood also explores the physical sites of their divergence on foot. Traversing this crepuscular zone of contradictory placements, in which things are not where they are located, he exploits the incongruence between calculative frameworks. Here, people, places and objects might subtly elude codings imposed by one locative system by identifying with the other, or even take on a renewed specificity as the two geodetic ellipsoids cancel each other out. This groundswell of geographical difference is prominent in Meridians, where the contradictory lines are overwhelmed visually by the photographed geographies. And, in a final turn of the screw, Wood writes/walks Ishmael’s statement on cartography’s essential falsity in this ontologically fraught gap between paradigms.

Given my stress on cartography’s world-shaping agency throughout this study, I find the distinction between maps and extant places expressed in the quotation from Melville dubious - not to mention its rhetoric of authenticity. That said, the point I want to make here is that by highlighting incongruences among different cartographic standards and between maps and the walkable world, Meridians opens up a zone riven by a spectrality of two distinct sorts. Ghostliness attaches, firstly, to the aforementioned geographical specificities, which, though prominent in the aerial photograph, are filtered out by the quantitative calculative grids projected over them. Secondly, ghostliness attends the meridians themselves, which I take as synecdoches of calculative extension more generally. Here, locative frameworks are characterised by “noticeable absence”: existent insofar as they are incessantly communicated and practiced, yet scarcely observable in the landscape they claim to grasp so exactly (Roberts 2012, 2).

The spectrality of cartographic standards and projections is reinforced, finally, in Wood’s graphic presentation of the longitude lines, which are so easily missed on first viewing the artwork. Instead, the gaze is immediately drawn along Wood’s meandering course into the alluring complexities of
Cartography at Ground Level

the aerial photograph. It is unsettling, then, to suddenly become aware that the landscape has been lanced through by implacably straight lines, which little belong to the city’s uneven accretion below (figure 5.3). Amid so much messy specificity, their Platonic rigidity suggests the unseen influence of a homogeneous geometry working beneath or behind this otherwise heterogeneous geography. The meridians are inconspicuous because of their minute width and colouration. Whereas Wood has chosen a slightly thicker white line to pick his pathways out from the surrounding landscape, the meridians are figured in pale green, as if for camouflage against the abundant foliage and river murk behind. The continuing socio-historical importance of prime meridians, to which questions of “where are we?” and “when are we?” are referred globally, goes unregistered in this lacklustre presentation, where they command less attention than the wastelands or warehouses ranged around them. Indeed, while Wood’s walking occasionally aligns itself with the meridians (“TRUE PLACES” has been traced above and below them as if guided by ruled paper), at others he simply writes across them, disregarding their bearing (figures 5.4). So barely perceptible are the meridians as to set their being in doubt, especially against an aerial photograph that conjures the authority of indexical realism, however dubiously. Here, prime meridians are not the taken-for-granted universals of mainstream mapping, but phantasmal projections: flickering between absence and presence, their spectral grillwork encapsulates both the modern need to realise calculability and orientation amid contingency, and the arbitrariness of confected notions of locatedness.

Nigel Thrift asserts that the generalisation of locative media has entrenched calculable forms of “address” so pervasively as to constitute a new “technological unconscious” (2004). I have argued that Meridians “ghosts” the cartographic frames that are precognitively identified with reality. The
three gestures of presenting traditionally vertical longitude lines horizontally, having two equally absolute prime meridians relativise one another, and reducing reference lines to faint tracings that are alien to lived geographies, all combine to render the GPS ontology of calculable extension spectral and strange. Thus, the artwork not only queries the extent to which our being-in-space coincides with the global positions attributed to it in locative media. More fundamentally, *Meridians* asserts the arbitrariness of all such articulations of location, which play out as spectres over a disjointed terrestrial surface in which they scarcely inhere.

As social reality is rendered ever more calculable, Thrift argues that: “Getting lost will increasingly become a challenging and difficult task” (2004, 188). *Meridians* upends the terms of this statement, building an unsettling vision of how the framings and orientations articulated through locative media, though apparently certain, are ultimately groundless. Social existence may feel ubiquitously coded and channelled by locative media, yet we are adrift nonetheless - all the more completely for submitting ourselves to geospatial devices. Weaving between discrepant standards, Wood calls upon us not to rest securely in the phantom security of digital mapping. As Lauriault puts it, “we believe the instruments while really we are lost in space” (2009, 363).
This chapter has explored shifting relations among mapping, the street and pedestrianism in Wood’s mapping performances, contrasting them with the binary opposition between synoptic cartography and subversive walking in de Certeau’s account of modern urbanism. I have argued that in blurring cartographic drawing with grounded mobility, Wood expands formerly elevated and esoteric mapping practices to the people and places conjured by “the street”. Blurring received hierarchies among maps and mappers, My Ghost accentuates how map art connects with contemporary shifts toward a distributed digital mapping culture and contributes to the “undisciplining of cartography”.

Yet I have also cautioned that opening mapping to an enlarged social/spatial field might further entrench the ontology of calculability inherited from institutional cartography. While Wood’s mappings hold out no alternative to the GIS worldview of securely calculated locations, they do query and complicate it. In Meridians, seemingly solid and secure coordinated structures are rendered ghostly; despite prevailing rhetorics of precision and objectivity, figures of location and orientation are exposed as stray projections in a universe without essential orientation. Performing the absence and arbitrariness of locative grids in the midst of a culture that automatically assumes their reality, Wood’s mappings provoke disorientation, even vertigo.

In the context of this study, My Ghost and Meridians rest on a knife’s edge between expanding mapping to a broader social site, repeating an inherited ontology of coordinated global positions, and exposing slippages and pretentions in this ontology. In effect, Wood’s work stands poised between mapping paradigms. A fuller transformation of established cartography would not only quantitatively expand and query its assumptions, but unfold a qualitatively different determination of geography. To provide a counterpoint to the expansion of mapping to the street and the “ghosting” of calculable space seen in Wood, then, in the final chapter of this study I turn to Greenaway’s A Walk Through H. This film, I argue, goes beyond querying calculable space to articulate a wholly ulterior determination of geography in its own right.
Figure 6.1. Antilope. Detail screenshot from Peter Greenaway, *A Walk Through H* (1978).
6. Another Chorien: Alternative Ontologies in Peter Greenaway’s *A Walk Through H*

Each chapter of this study has thematised aspects of what I have termed the “ontology of calculable extension”. This constitutively modern casting of geography grasps the world as a singular, measurable and monochronous space, allowing diverse terrains to be quantified, rendered legible and thereby purposefully remade. The previous chapter explored how cartography’s excluded social others might “take back the map” from professional institutions through an analysis of Jeremy Wood’s artistic GPS mappings. However, I also stressed that the emergence of a more distributed digital mapping culture does not necessarily displace the ontological presumptions that underpinned rhetorics of cartographic science and specialism in the first place. In this concluding chapter, then, I want to both reflect back on the vision of modern calculable space built up over previous case studies and gesture beyond it. Specifically, I want to suggest how map art, beyond reclaiming the means of mapping from institutional control, might also transcend the ontology of calculable extension, and thereby articulate geographical reality in fundamentally different ways.

To explore these ontological ramifications of map art, I shall return to the film that first piqued my interest in the field, drew me to see its director perform as a video jockey in the Netherlands (where I now live) and incited me to write this study. *A Walk Through H: The Reincarnation of an Ornithologist* was written and directed by the British artist and filmmaker Peter Greenaway. The film is forty-one minutes long, was funded by the British Film Institute and released in 1978. Its narrative relates the posthumous travels and travails of an unnamed ornithologist on his journey into the afterlife, which is represented in ninety-two maps. Almost all of the film’s footage focuses on these cartographies, which depict diverse imagined geographies. Before describing *A Walk Through
Another Chorien

In detail, I want to convey why I was so taken by the film. Drawn into the fantastic terrains Greenaway sets forth, I was struck by the sheer strangeness of this mapping practice in relation to cartography as I had known it. Through the film’s fluid, rich and explicitly creative cartographies, I came to reflect on how prevailing conceptions of geographical space, despite their being taken-for-granted in contemporary culture, are neither natural nor neutral. *A Walk Through H*, in other words, relativised my sense of geography’s ontology. I do not mean by this that Greenaway imagines specific spaces that differed radically from those familiar to me (though he does) - ontology, after all, refers not to what exists but instead to how what exists exists. It indicates the general mode in and through which particular beings become present and intelligible. What the obscure mapping practice presented in the film brought home for me, then, was how the underlying grasp of “space” through which modern cultures apprehend specific sites is a contingent construction, one of many historically and culturally relative ways in which the world has been grasped, unfolded and related to. Other, very different castings of geography became possible. And mapping - that practice through which cultural worldviews are concentrated, codified and articulated graphically - seemed the place to search these “other ontologies” out.

For me, the constructedness and relativity of geographical ontologies remains the most challenging and fertile idea explored by map artists. Although this theme has been taken up in geographical theory (see Elden 2001), approaching the topic through map art brings into focus how historical ontologies are not transcendent abstractions, but are constructed and contested aesthetically, through specific forms and mediations. Through writing this study, I have found that cartography has been bound up historically with one geographical ontology in particular - the ontology of calculable extension. In disclosing the world as a measurable, malleable and monochronous extension without inherent meaning, this casting of existence encapsulates what is meant by “modernity” or “modern conditions”. Accordingly, the previous chapters have focused on map artworks that explore (and critically contest) aspects of this ontology - namely its disenchantment, legibility, simultaneity, divisibility and objectivity. Notwithstanding my sustained analysis of cartography’s historical entwinement with modern calculable space, mapping is not bound essentially to this one delineation of being. Indeed, this chapter concludes my study of map art with Greenaway’s film, *A Walk Through H*, because it gestures towards an alternative ontology, unfolding a shifting, multiple and performative casting of geography that cuts against reigning conceptions of calculable space.
In demonstrating this, I will take up the argument begun in the previous chapter, in which Wood’s walking performances are shown as enacting cartography’s expansion beyond scientific and institutional domains, but without quite transcending the coordinated space assumed by GPS. *A Walk Through H* can be seen as continuing Wood’s challenge to institutional cartography in that, beyond reclaiming mapping from disciplinary control, it also displaces the ontological assumptions which legitimated that control. Presenting Greenaway’s 1978 film as furthering and even fulfilling Wood’s contemporary mapping projects, I realise, entails breaking with linear chronology. Tracking three decades back from Wood’s *My Ghost* and *Meridians* to explore *A Walk Through H* has several advantages. It puts otherwise disparate map artists in dialogue with one another and underlines how alternative mapping practices do not reduce to, or depend on, cartography’s digital transition.

To show how *A Walk Through H* unfolds an alternative grasp of geography to that disclosed through the ontology of calculability, the remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. After describing the aesthetic and narrative complexities of Greenaway’s film, my discussion invokes the ancient Greek word *chora*, or rather Bernhard Siegert’s contemporary reworking of it as a verb, *chorien*. Getting away from the pervasive, taken-for-granted concept of “space”, *chorien* denotes the articulation of historical ontologies in specific technical media, including maps. Through a close analysis of *A Walk Through H*, I describe how the *chorien* performed in Greenaway’s film deviates markedly from the ontology of calculable extension - not least because the latter is premised on separating supposedly scientific cartographies from the plurality, partiality and creativity attributed to art. Whereas the prevailing ontology assumes the world’s singularity, objectivity and uniform calculability, I will show how Greenaway’s *chorien* sets up shifting infungible geographies, whose multiplicity cannot be brought under a common measure. Crucially for my argument, *A Walk Through H* develops an eminently performative understanding of mapping. If maps have largely been conceived of as epiphenomenal representations meant to correspond with a reality that is singular and preexists them, in the film they are progressively seen to produce and perform multiple geographies. This displacement of representational correspondence as cartography’s essential function, I claim, annuls the ontological basis on which institutional cartography has claimed special authority in mapping.

In emphasising the ontological performativity at the core of this *chorien*, I do not mean to present Greenaway as a singular genius who, through concentrated individual imagination, leaps free of the inherited ontological assumptions in which cultural discourses at large remain enmeshed. Not only
have many other map artists also deviated from extended measurable space, whether through heterogeneous graphic procedures (think of Qiu Zhijie’s multiform globes and landscapes) or placed-based experiential encounters (think of Philip Huges’ layered landscapes), but *A Walk Through H* also participates in a much wider critical reconsideration of cartography, as my close discussion of the film will show. Greenaway does not conjure a new ontology out of the ether, then, but focuses accumulating artistic and theoretical reconsiderations of cartography into a sustained alternative imagination of what mapping is and means. This is what warrants my extended analysis of the film in concluding this study. For in projecting “another chorien” - an articulation of the world in which essentialised distinctions between art and science, reality and representation, have no purchase - *A Walk Through H* throws into relief the ontology of calculable extension that Nikritin, Hildreth, Kocken, Matoba and Wood have each explored and tested in different ways.

**Journeying Through Maps**

*A Walk Through H: The Reincarnation of an Ornithologist* is comprised almost exclusively of maps of imagined terrains painted and collaged by Greenaway himself, who was trained in visual art and has long exhibited painting alongside his filmmaking activity. Nearly every shot shows the camera crabbing or booming closely across the surface of map after map, some drawn in pencil and pastel, others in pen and ink; some laid out straightly with a ruler, others built up out of blotched fabrics or encrusted paint; some framed totalities, others fragments imprinted on the unlikely substrates of a shirt collar, sandpaper or letters. The maps are neither geometrically arranged and consistently realised cartographies, nor simply result from formal free-play. The overall impression is of rationalistically conceived graphics that have ramified outwards into vibrant new geographies, or else decomposed back into some pre- or non-geometrical cauldron of elements that consumes their previous purity. Greenaway elaborates on geometrical cartographies in fantastic digressions; mechanically reproducible graphics are rendered unique through tears or stains (even bloodstains, in one case), while the rigorous clarity of scientific mappings has been sullied by incongruous decontextualisations or unanticipated layers of lettering and pigment, which relativise and multiply meanings through adventitious additions.

The ninety-two maps presented in the film could stand in their own right as a body of conventionally static artworks. Many have been exhibited as such, notably in a 2003 show named *The Map is Not the Territory iii*, in which Greenaway’s maps hung alongside Matoba’s *Shores of a*
Another Chorien

River and Utopia, examined in Chapter Four. Indeed, the film opens with the maps displayed in a small, apparently first-floor gallery, the camera tracking along walls on which the maps are framed and numbered. But although they are self-sufficient as visual artworks, in A Walk Through H the maps immediately become involved in a first-person narrative conveyed through a voiceover. Read in deadpan, faux documentary style by actor Colin Cantlie, it relates the largely posthumous travels and travails of an unnamed ornithologist, who has succumbed to an unspecified sickness. Having “finally left” for the afterlife “on the Tuesday morning early at about a quarter to two” the ornithologist travels towards “H”, his ambiguous destination. In interviews, Greenaway has suggested that H might signal heaven or hell (Gras and Gras 2001, 103), although the titular reference to reincarnation implies that H might also represent a new life. The narration tells of how the ornithologist’s journey is hindered by a rival, Van Hoyten the bird-counter, and guided by Tulse Luper, a map collector and the ornithologist’s arcane mentor, who counsels him that “the time to decide what H stood for was at the end of the journey, and by that time it scarcely mattered”. The route passes through numerous fictional waypoints, cities and landscapes, which increasingly deviate from what, conventionally, would be designated geography. To get a sense of these varied terrains, the strangeness of which is rendered humorous by Cantlie’s flat narration, consider some of the topographical features encountered: Hestergard, the “first measuring place”, after which it is “impossible to go back”; Canterlupis; Hesgadin, a city “in two parts, both of them silent”; Manephia; Balladrome; Dormis, “a sedate place”; two unnamed cities, one of which “reminded me of a seaport, though it was far from the sea”; Antilipe (figure 6.1), as distinct from the Syrian town of the same name; Contorpis; not Anascol (which the narrator discovers does not exist); a path traced in the blood - “type A” - of a woman who “said her name was Correlegiano”; a “playing field marked out for an abandoned game and scattered with obstacles that made the game unplayable”; the “Owl Gate”, which passes into The Amsterdam Map; a maze, drawn by an inspector of mazes; a territory inscribed on yellow hospital paper by a radiologist “suffering from too much exposure to the X-ray machine”; “a lonely road”; “the floor plan of a gallery”; South-East Australia; “the plumage of a Red-legged Partridge”; several dry river-beds; and lastly, as the ornithologist approaches H, a series of paths taken first by sheep, the wind and finally the routes of shadows made by flying birds.

This geographical voyage from deathbed to H is complexly entwined with two other narrative threads. One is the protagonist’s struggle in life to gather the maps required for his upcoming
passage beyond it. Trucking over diverse mappings, we hear how the ornithologist bought, stole, inherited, traded or simply stumbled across the necessary cartographies, receiving some as presents, others anonymously - all under the often cajoling, sometimes stern steersmanship of Tulse Luper. This plot, which gathers momentum as the ornithologist’s “last illness” sets in, spills into a third narrative strand: the antagonism between the ornithologist and Van Hoyten. The two never meet face-to-face, yet they persistently obstruct one another’s projects, the ornithologist sabotaging Van Hoyten’s bird counting by clouding the sky with wood fires, Van Hoyten usurping the ornithologist’s position as “keeper of the owls at the Amsterdam Zoo”. Yet it is in Van Hoyten’s office that the ornithologist discovers - and purloins - “perhaps the most significant map” for his journey: The Amsterdam Map, which I discuss below.

The configuration of time built through these interlocking plots is shifting and multiple: these too are polychronous mappings. The vagaries of gathering maps and the battle with Van Hoyten would seem to occur during the ornithologist’s lifetime, while the voyage with and through the maps appear to commence only with his death. Nevertheless, as the film progresses temporal linearity - in which map collection precedes map use and life precedes death - is replaced by the overlapping of mutually shaping temporal orders. Interleaving three narrative strands, the film unfolds an experience in which the ornithologist’s conflict with Van Hoyten seems to impact his journey through the maps, while the fraught process of tracing and pilfering obscure cartographies directly expands and forecloses the terrains available to the posthumous itinerant. Despite this rhizomatic heterochrony, the walk through (or is it to?) H increasingly becomes the predominant narrative thread. However frustrated the ornithologist’s journey, whether because of Van Hoyten’s schemes or stranger interruptions, like the maps’ tendency to fade upon traversal, the momentum of travel builds implacably through the film’s final third. This is largely down to the musical score, which was written by Michael Nyman (an important minimalist composer who was Greenaway’s close collaborator until 1991) and performed by the Campiello Band. Greenaway has long argued that the predominance of dramatic narrative in conventional cinema subordinates film’s potentialities to those inherited from literature, proposing music as an alternative means of structuring film. Music plays a leading role in A Walk Through H, then: a rare example of a soundtrack devised specifically to accompany map reading. In rapid structural repetitions, which occasionally break off into wavering, sometimes discordant digressions, the music cues speedy travel or marks out adversity and disoriented wandering, before returning to shunting repetitions that hurtle the ornithologist
through barer and barer maps on the approach to H. Finally, the ornithologist reaches his destination: “I had arrived. It was Tuesday morning early at about a quarter to two”. This is exactly when he departed - the journey through H, though arduous and thick with incident, has occupied no time at all in the living world.

Two prominent aspects of the film warrant attention here. First is the allegory of birds and flight. Accompanied by the ornithologist’s outlandish but internally consistent narrative, Greenaway’s distinctive cartographies would form a sealed totality - a universe unto itself - were it not that the film has been intercut with footage of various birds - from owls to ostriches. Beyond relieving the closure of the maps, these shots connect with the characters’ ornithological pursuits, along with numerous other references to avian flight, the film’s core metaphor. Here, Greenaway’s biography is relevant: his father, an amateur ornithologist, died shortly before A Walk Through H was made. On this basis, the birds and their migration can be understood as surrogates for spiritual travel through and beyond life. This reading is supported by the fact that, once the ornithologist has reached H, the camera pulls back from the final map and settles on a copy of Tulse Luper’s book. The cover displays a title, Some Migratory Birds of the Northern Hemisphere, and promotes 92 maps and 1,418 birds in colour (matching the narrator’s tally of 1,418 miles covered in reaching H), leaving the audience with a closing image of the ornithologist’s spiritual journey into heaven or hell as an avian migration through diverse cartographies. Crucial in grasping the film’s thematic unity, the idea that maps and migrating birds stand in for the soul’s traversal of an obscure hereafter also becomes important in my argument. Not for its biographical or theological substance, but because exploring the “undiscovered country” of the afterlife allows Greenaway to imaginatively map a parallel reality with a logic and spatiality all its own. For the insistently atheist Greenaway, notions of the hereafter have no mandated content (its indeterminacy is emphasised by the abbreviation “H”). Rather, he takes H as a blankness on which to project an imagined spatiality: a metaphysical terra incognita to be mapped in ways that need not conform to the calculable world articulated in most cartographies.

---

53 Alongside this structuring function, music also figures visually in the cartographies themselves, one of which was “made by an exiled pianist as a directive to the members of his band”.” As a cartographer”, the narrator goes on, “he was not appreciated in his own country”. Inscribed into a musical score sheet, this map recalls drawings by the schizophrenic Swiss artist Adolf Wölfl, in that both collapse the discrete “countries” of geography and musical notation (for discussions of Wölfl and mapping, see Harmon 2004, 42-43 and Park, Simpson-Housely and de Man 1994).
Second is a recurrent visual motif: a vertical line intersected by two crossed slats (figure 6.2). The narrator first draws attention to this sign in a map inherited from his aunt, which faded, leaving only “a mark that could have been a signpost or the skeleton of a windmill”. These signs appear throughout the film - one sector of The Amsterdam Map is littered with them. Following this reference to Amsterdam, the windmill-cipher seems bound up with Greenaway’s more general fascination with Dutch culture and painting (see Pascoe 2008). The more obvious interpretation, though, follows the suggestion that this is a signpost directing the ornithological wayfarer through H. Indeed, as the narrator nears H, the maps increasingly distill into faint scraps and traces punctuated by this motif of a signpost. Construed through my concern with differing ontologies in this chapter, however, the ciphers can also be taken to signal a deviant spatiality to that unfolded through the maps in which they are embedded. As erect signposts or windmills they recall another film that Greenaway made the same year, the satirical Vertical Features Remake (1978), in which the fictional Institute of Reclamation and Restoration strives to capture the essence of the English landscape cinematically by attending to its vertical features. Viewed as an emblem for the embodied

54 Van Hoyten appears as a Dutch landscape designer in Greenaway’s next film, The Draughtsman’s Contract (1982), “waving his arms about” as if “homesick for windmills”.

184
spatiality of landscape experience, in which viewers stand amid surrounding verticals, these windmills or signposts obliquely counter the elevated gaze built through maps, which collapse verticals into a legible text laid out below the viewer.

This plurality of spatialities in the maps is significant in exploring how *A Walk Through H* unfolds an ontology that diverges from calculable cartographic space. Before reading this theme closely through the film, though, I will situate the film within the theoretical reflections on truth and representation offered in Greenaway’s wider work, which will feed into the ontological reading staged in this chapter.

**Greenaway, Modern Ocularcentrism and Cartography’s *Chorien***

Many critical accounts position Greenaway’s *oeuvre* as exemplary of postmodern cinema, if not postmodern culture more generally.\(^{55}\) Certainly, many themes and strategies associated with postmodernism can be traced through his work, from the skepticism and irony he directs towards modernist assertions of truth as correctness or essence; his persistent restaging of historical cultural forms, especially from the seventeenth century, in the present; and his merging of influences derived from both “high” and “low” cultural fields; to his omnivorous intertextual poaching. Although Greenaway’s films came to prominence at a time when modernist and postmodernist positions were often quite distinguished quite sharply, these divisions have since largely evaporated, replaced more nuanced theories submitting to neither modernist certainty nor postmodern relativity.

Yet Greenaway’s typically postmodernist preoccupations remain significant for this chapter, for they give rise to his intensely skeptical attitude towards the positivist ontology of calculability. Indeed, in line with what I have argued throughout this study, the cartography is important in the context of Greenaway’s “fundamentally postmodern sensibility” (Lawrence 1997, 4) in that it figures a totalising device through which modern cultures have sought to grasp and remake geographical reality. Maps exemplify a wider cluster of tools and techniques of the modern ocularcentrism that Greenaway’s films persistently thematise, parody, but also celebrate.\(^{56}\) The maps of *A Walk Through H* should be understood, then, in tandem with the perspectival framing

---

\(^{55}\) Willoquet-Maricondi and Aleman-Galway write that Greenaway is “one of the most challenging dissident postmodernists of our time” (2008, xxiv); Elliot and Purdy note that his art constitutes a “postmodern Gesamtkunstwerk” (1997, 7).

\(^{56}\) On the preeminence of visuality in modernity, see Jay 1988; Heidegger, 2002.
apparatus (figure 6.3) enrolled in *The Draughtsman’s Contract*; the grids and cameras through which the twin zoologists of *A Zed & Two Noughts* measure organic decay; and the twenty four encyclopaedic volumes that allow the Baconian conjurer of *Prospero’s Books* to comprehensively grasp and control his world; not to mention the lists, tables and charts that populate Greenaway’s early films. *A Walk Through H*’s cartographies can therefore be positioned as part of a wider exploration of the visual drive to discern order, dispel illusion and establish meaning in a contingent universe. In their quixotic impulse to “fix a path made by the wind, or a path made across the grass by the shadow of flying birds”, the maps evoke, as Elliott and Purdy eloquently put, “the pathos of human failure to contain and circumscribe the natural world in cultural codes and scientific systems” (2006, 270).

This stress on the relativity and hubris of modern knowledge systems is echoed in most critical writing on the film. Human attempts to establish meaning and order, writes Alan Woods, are “always linked to absurdity and human vanity” in Greenaway’s work, which foregrounds “their arbitrary and whimsical nature” (1996, 22). In mimicking the procedures, exaggerating the inner logic and forcing the contradictions of modern knowledge techniques, suggest Willoquet-Maricondi and Aleman-Galway, Greenaway “puts all constructions of reality into question” (xv). Undeniably, these statements capture a dominant thematic strand in Greenaway’s work, and an important aspect of *A Walk Through H* in particular. This is borne out by the artist’s own comments on the film:

Maps and catalogues and systems fascinate me. They are all attempts to classify chaos. They try to demonstrate that there is an order and an objectivity in the world. … My starting idea for *A Walk Through H* came when I found a collection of Ordnance Survey maps that had mistakes … Here we are, it seemed, trying to define and circumscribe nature, and it’s as if nature were sabotaging or satirising our attempts. (Quoted in Andrews 2000, 4)

Yet despite Greenaway’s explicit focus on the arbitrariness of modern truth constructions, as embodied in maps, I do not think that this is where the originality of *A Walk Through H* lies. The reason I turn to the film here is not because it foregrounds the partiality and artificiality of cartographic visions. Not only have I explored that theme throughout this study, from the inscrutable facticity of Nikritin’s bare globe to the clashing double standards of Wood’s *Meridians*, more significantly, in stressing the limitations and hubris of cartographically representing an
ungraspable "nature", Greenaway’s ostensibly postmodernist film scarcely deviates from the epistemology of most modern mapping practice. Stressing cartography’s failure to match up with its geographical objects, even interminably so, subtly perpetuates the inherited conception of cartography as a representation distanced from a surrounding reality that it struggles to capture graphically. This strand of the film, in other words, amounts to little more than a pessimistic recasting of modernist representationalism, in which the map fails to grasp the territories in relation to which it is still little more than an epiphenomenal mimetic construction.

Instead, my argument espies a more challenging practice of mapping in *A Walk Through H*, which both coexists with Greenaway’s pessimistic representationalism and gestures beyond it. This aspect of the film, I argue, reverses the assumed relations between maps and geographies, setting forth an imaginative ontology in which rich realities are performed through mapping practices that are neither hierarchised as “artistic” or “scientific”, nor separated out as mere representations of objective, preexisting realities. Rather, categories of art and science merge in the common project of building fantastic cultural worlds. In presenting this vision, *A Walk Through H* not only anticipates several subsequent developments in mapping theory. Crucially for my claims in closing this study, it holds out a reimagined cartographic ontology - a determination of how geography *is*, and of mapping’s role in articulating this mode of existence - that breaks away from prevailing notions of

---

*Figure 6.3. Framing apparatus. Screenshot from Peter Greenaway, *The Draughtsman’s Contract* (1982).*
Another Chorien

objective calculable space. Indeed, notwithstanding the apparent marginality of *A Walk Through H*, which Greenaway counts among his “juvenilia”, when assessed with respect to this continuity of modern calculable space the film takes on a greater significance. I argue that Greenaway’s mappings construct an alternative ontology to that which has prevailed in modernity, thereby fulfilling a transition between paradigms that was enacted only incompletely in Wood’s *My Ghost* and *Meridians*.

How to capture the vivid, fluid and multiple ontology unfolded through *A Walk Through H*? Certainly not through reference to “space”, however experimentally conceived, for my argument is precisely that Greenaway’s film diverges from the identification of the world with objective measurable extension. This distance from established notions of space indicates a peculiar difficulty in grasping Greenaway’s alternative ontology, in that any new or other articulation of reality, cartographic or otherwise, necessarily falls outside the vocabulary available to describe it within the prevailing horizon of intelligibility. To avoid reducing Greenaway’s obscure and peripheral ontology to received understandings of space, the terminology I use to explore it here is correspondingly oblique in referring to the term *chora* (also spelled *khôra*). Originally an ancient Greek noun (*χώρα*), which has been translated as the “land surrounding” a *polis*, *chora* has been taken up by numerous modern philosophers, not least Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida, for whom it signalled the ontological spacing or disclosure within which particular beings “take place”. In doing so, they build on Plato’s *Timaeus*, in which *chora* is defined as that which “provides a fixed site for all things that come to be” (quoted in Siegert 2015, 69). *Chora* offers a suitably unfamiliar foil to taken-for-granted conceptions of “space”, since, as Heidegger makes clear:

The Greeks had no word for “space”. This is no accident; for they experienced the spatial on the basis not of place (*topos*); they experienced it as *chora*, which signifies neither space nor place but that which is occupied by what stands there. The place belongs to the thing itself. (quoted in Siegert 2014, 8)

Understood, in this way, as the situated disclosure within which particular beings come to presence, *chora* has the value of relativising long-naturalised intuitions of space as objective extension, independent of the beings that pass through it. This is perhaps most explicit in Julia Kristeva’s argument that the *chora*, as an “essentially mobile and extremely provisional” articulation of the
world, precedes “a disposition that already depends on representation, lends itself to phenomenological, spatial intuition, and gives rise to geometry” (25, quoted in West-Pavlov, 44).

However, this in itself is insufficient to grasp the ontological dimensions of *A Walk Through H.* Heidegger, like Foucault after him, argues that empirical knowledge of particular beings, such as the geographies envisioned in cartography, constitute “ontic” knowledge (Foucault calls this *connaissance*), whereas the “ontological” signals the more fundamental ways in which particular beings are able to appear within a particular historical horizon of intelligibility (*savoir* in Foucault).

Put reductively, the ontic refers to the “what” of existence - specific entities and their attributes - while the ontological denotes the “how” of existence - the culturally plural modes in which it is possible for things to exist, preconditioning particular “ontic” experiences. Greek *chora* belongs to this second, ontological category in that it constitutes sites of disclosure within which things presence intelligibly. However, I find the ontic/ontological distinction behind Heidegger’s thinking of *chora* disabling when considering cartography, since it positions mappings as all-too specific encounters that are epiphenomenal to a prior, fundamental and ultimately mysterious revelation of Being that precedes and conditions them. Moreover, returning to an ancient Greek concept for an alternative to the modern determination of space risks building a characteristically “Western” genealogy of historical ontologies, of which Greenaway’s film contains little suggestion.

Thankfully, the media theorist Bernhard Siegert has negotiated both of these reservations. Elaborating a theory of pervasive “cultural techniques” through which reality is articulated, Siegert (2013, 57) collapses Heidegger’s division between ontology and the ontic:

Thus the concept of cultural techniques clearly and unequivocally repudiates the ontology of philosophical concepts. Humans *as such* do not exist independently of cultural techniques of hominization, time *as such* does not exist independently of cultural techniques of time measurement, and space *as such* does not exist independently of cultural techniques of spatial control. This does not mean that the theory of cultural techniques is anti-ontological; rather, it moves ontology into the domain of ontic operations.

---

57 In Kristeva’s work, *chora* is also connected to an early stage of psychological development, which is tactile, pre-semiotic and essentially maternal (for a discussion, see West-Pavlov 2009, 37-61).

58 In Heidegger studies, Being (capitalised) signals not ontic beings, but an ontological disclosure.
In this revision of ontological thought, the way in which a culture grasps existence is instantiated in and through particular technical operations, including varied mapping practices. Against this backdrop, Siegert invokes the *chora*. He begins with Sophocles’ *Antigone*, in which *chora* figures as *chorien*, the verb form, meaning “to make place”, “give room” and “traverse successfully”. Building on the polyvalent Greek, Siegert defines *chorien* as an “act of setting up space [sic], which precedes place and founds the capability-to-be-at-a-place” (2014, 8). Though I would qualify this definition by insisting that *space* as extension - as Siegert himself recognises (2015, 70) - represents but one possible casting of geography, this grasp of *chorien* has several methodological merits. Not only does it ground the disclosure of otherwise portentous and mysterious ontologies in specific, “ontic” mediations like maps, with traceable media histories; it also extrapolates creatively from the Greek, opening *chorien* up for use in other historical moments. Rather than referring various ontologies back to some foundational Hellenistic *chora*, the obscurity and contested legacies of which are emphasised by Stuart Elden (2013, 39), Siegert wields the term widely, tracking the technical determination of geographies in diverse contexts without containing them within constructed lineages leading back to Greek roots.59

Siegert’s version of *chorien* conjugates closely with what I termed mapping’s “ontological performativity” in Chapter Three, yet the phonetic obscurity of the Greek has the further value, in this chapter, of relativising “space” as only one among many ways of naming (and conceiving) geography. It is in terms of this methodological rethinking of *chorien* that I see Greenaway’s film as moving beyond previous case studies. Phrased in Siegert’s terms, each of the artworks I have examined has explored and challenged the prevailing cartographic *chorien* of calculability, through which world has been articulated as a measurable, monochronous and malleable extension. *A Walk Through H* offers a counter or alternative *chorien*, unfolded in and through the technical media of painted maps, moving film cameras and recorded narration. This *chorien* differs from the received ontology of calculability in three crucial respects. First, the separation of maps from the geographies they are conventionally taken to represent is annulled: in the world of *A Walk Through H*, maps do not reflect or represent geographical reality, but make it. This is bound up, secondly, with a dissolution of the art/science distinction, which no longer divides mappings as more or less

59 Specifically, Siegert examines the emergence of the maritime space established by the United Provinces of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century as a “spatial revolution” achieved in “heterogeneous media”, through which the nascent state won the Eighty Years’ War and built a global trading empire (2014, 8).
“correct” or “incorrect” representations. Thirdly, these two facets condition a profoundly performative ontology, in which rich fantastic geographies are enacted through multiple mapping performances, none of which are isolated as especially authoritative and objectively binding.

The following sections undertake a detailed analysis of key moments in Greenaway’s cinematic mappings, focusing on how these three features combine to form a *chorien* in which maps no longer mimetically measure a reality that pre-exists them, but rather build and perform a rich multiplicity of geographies.

**Creating Territories as You Walk Through Them**

This section attends to perhaps the key theoretical statement on the nature of cartography in *A Walk Through H*. Essentially I am referring to a single sentence, in which Greenaway asserts the performative agency of mapping significantly in advance of critical scholarship: “Perhaps the country only existed in its maps, in which case the traveller created the territory as he walked through it.”. In suggesting the theoretical importance of this line for the film’s alternative vision of mapping, however, I do not mean to overlook a crucial twist in Siegert’s theory that I have just elaborated: namely, that a *chorien* should specifically not be understood as an abstract, theoretical casting of existence that precedes specific encounters with the world. As I have explained, in Siegert’s theory, *chorien* rather means the articulation of a historical ontology in specific cultural mediations. Accordingly, I want to indicate now that the next section will go on to examine how Greenaway’s performative grasp of mapping is manifested aesthetically through the medium of film. If the film’s *chorien* is encapsulated verbally in the sentence I unpack here, it is primarily articulated in and through the ninety-two filmed maps, which differ qualitatively from the *chorien* of mainstream, calculable and representational cartography.

Over the course of *A Walk Through H*, the maps used by the narrator in his eccentric expedition into the afterlife become progressively less representational and more performative. There are statements, especially towards the beginning of the film, that suggest the cartographies are being used conventionally to navigate external terrains. At one point the itinerant ornithologist says he “left the territory it [a map] represented without regret. It smelled of guano”. At another, he becomes lost and slowly meanders as narrative momentum dips, implying that his map fails to adequately depict an effective path:
On the map I continued to follow what I thought might be a sensible route. If there had been cardinal points I was walking North, South, East, and West indiscriminately, and I kept coming across the same places and the same events. I slowed my pace, knowing that I was lost.

Nothing here contradicts the conventional notion that maps represent a geography that precedes them, and in this case eludes their mimetic grasp. Yet the reasons for the ornithologist’s disorientation become increasingly peculiar. Although all maps eventually become redundant in relation to the geographies they figure forth, this process is accelerated metaphysically in *A Walk Through H*, in which maps fade rapidly during use, leaving only ambiguous traces. One map “began to fade before I had crossed two thirds on the territory it represented”, as a result of which the ornithologist “hurried till I was sure that I had reached the territory of the next map”. Although the narrator rushes, here, to navigate terrains before his guiding representation fades, this seems less and less the cause for his flight. Notice how, when running through the next fading map, the traveller refers not to crossing the terrain it represents, but only to “a third of its territory”, as if the land is bound up directly in the figuration. The next map fades “as I reached its furthest edge”. By this point, reference to a represented terrain has dropped away entirely, replaced by the bordered graphic space manifested by the maps themselves. Indeed, the film presents the viewer with footage of neither the terrains being traversed, nor scenes of map-reading: only map after fading map appears. The camera’s travel along the maps replaces the ornithologist’s travel through the terrain, steadily building the impression that no represented geography exists outside these cartographies, only the worlds that they themselves materialise and unfold.

This is confirmed by the ornithologist’s own dawning suspicion not only that his maps and the terrain are one and the same thing, but that maps (or rather using maps) actively makes reality:

Perhaps it was not impossible that other travellers had different maps of this territory, simpler and more straightforward maps. Perhaps the country only existed in its maps, in which case the traveller created the territory as he walked through it. If he should stand still, so would the landscape.
Here, the narrator suggests the performativity of mapping: the idea that maps are not just epiphenomenal representations of reality, but shape and even constitute it. Admittedly, this thought remains undeveloped in the film, and the narrative swiftly resumes (“I kept moving” is the very next line). Yet the idea that maps make or indeed are the terrains they appear to represent encapsulates, theoretically, the larger vision unfurled aesthetically in *A Walk Through H*, in which mappings manifest rich worlds that do not seem to exist independently of them. The film is pervaded by a sense of the world as a map that has been enacted and materialised, and of the map as a basis or paradigm for not only a cultural worldview, but physical geography itself, a cultural world. The idea that a terrain exists only in and through maps not only sums up the character of Greenaway’s *chorien*; as I will show at the end of this section, it also fundamentally contradicts the ontology that has justified rhetorics of objectivity and professionalism in cartography.

Before doing this, though, I want to frame the ornithologist’s idea that geographies exist only in maps in relation to two contemporaneous writings, which help to situate, unpack and underline the significance of its view of mapping. The first is by the Argentinian writer Jorges Luis Borges; the second by the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard. Greenaway has repeatedly named Borges as an intellectual influence, especially on his early filmmaking. Borges turns to the theme of mapping in several writings, and is frequently cited in discussions around cartography in cultural theory, not to mention in several accounts of map art. Notably, there is the vertiginous map-within-a-map staged in the essay “Partial Magic in the Quixote” (see Peters 2008) and - most pertinent in this discussion - the maps made at increasingly large scales in the short story “On Exactitude in Science”. Although first written in 1948, this fiction was published in English in 1970, as Greenaway’s independent filmmaking was gathering pace. In its faux factual presentation, concern with obscure systems of reference and representation, arcane ironies and playful blurring of fiction with reality, the tone of *A Walk Through H* is thoroughly Borgesian. The ornithologist’s remark that “the country only existed in its maps” chimes with “On Exactitude in Science” especially closely. Borges’ story, which is introduced as the fragment of an early modern travelogue, parodies notions of representational correctness and correspondence. One might call it a fable illustrating the folly of giving mimesis free rein. The fragment reports on an Empire in which mapmaking became so developed, and maps so large and meticulous, as to produce a map coextensive with the Empire it was made to depict.

---

60 As part of the collection *A Universal History of Infamy* (E.P. Dutton, 1970).
This vision resembles Greenaway’s in that it brings map and territory closely together, which Borges does to parody the self-defeating impulse toward complete representation. However, the story does not take the further step of conflating or switching the two categories. The map “coincided point for point” with the territory, but map and territory remain distinct. The secondariness of Borges’ quixotic cartography is underlined by the fact that it is abandoned by the next political generation, which little values cartography: “In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars”.

As is well known, the philosopher Jean Baudrillard repurposes “On Exactitude in Science” for his own ends in Simulation and Simulacra. The book opens by recapitulating Borges’ story as a beautiful but quaint fable parodying the “discrete charm” of representation; quaint because, for Baudrillard, the reality/representation distinction has been progressively collapsed as pervasive representations reconstitute reality. A fundamental revision is therefore proposed:

The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory - precession of simulacra - that engenders the territory, and if one must return to the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. (1981, 1)

Baudrillard continues:

But it is no longer a question of either maps or territories. Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference, between one and the other, that constituted the charm of abstraction. Because it is difference that constitutes the poetry of the map and the charm of the territory, the magic of the concept and the charm of the real. This imaginary of representation, which simultaneously culminates in and is engulfed by the cartographers’ mad project of the ideal coextensivity of map and territory, disappears in the simulation whose operation is nuclear and genetic, no longer at all specular or discursive. (2)

---

61 In this, Borges is following Lewis Carroll’s precedent in “Sylvie and Bruno Concluded”, in which a cartographer boasts of having made a map at a scale of 1:1: “It has never been spread out, yet … the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well” (1982, 727).
This formulation of the relations between maps and territories approximates Greenaway’s statement much more closely than “On Exactitude in Science” in its unrevised form, which remains bound within what Baudrillard calls the “imaginary of representation”, however critically. Although towards the end of the next section I will tease out the differences between Baudrillard and Greenaway’s conceptions of mapping, here Baudrillard’s reversal of the assumed relationship between reality and representation brings the peculiarities of *A Walk Through H’s* chorien into focus. Both diverge from the conception of maps as epiphenomenal representations implied in prevailing discourses of accuracy, science and measurement in mapping. Like Baudrillard, Greenaway’s narrator entertains the idea that maps shape and generate geographies (“the traveller created the territory as he walked through it”), and that the “sovereign difference” between them might be overcome (such that “the country only existed in its maps”). Indeed, as the next section demonstrates concretely through close visual analysis, Greenaway’s chorien unfolds a vision that transcends the binary between map and territory.

These passages from Borges and Baudrillard have been much debated in critical scholarship, as has their import for map studies (for a discussion, see Pickles 2004, 94-96). I cite them here, first, to expound the theoretical implications of this passage in Greenaway’s narration, showing how it tilts against the representationalist view of mapping; second, to situate *A Walk Through H* in a larger critical lineage that queries received norms in cartography; and, thirdly, to assert the farsightedness of Greenaway’s performative vision of maps. Indeed, his artistic rendition of how cartographies constitute territories not only preceded Baudrillard’s philosophical discussion of the theme by three years, but anticipated fundamental revisions that have subsequently come to define critical mapping theory, which now holds “that maps make reality as much as they represent it” (Crampton 2010, 18). The film’s prescience is important here not because it establishes Greenaway’s originality in some (constructed) intellectual lineage, but because it provides a clear instance at which map art not only contributes to theoretical debates in mapping, but attains critical insights into mapping that would predominate in scholarship only later, and then against much resistance.

---

62 This point is underscored by the fact that Corner (1999) was still arguing that map studies had yet to fully come to terms with Baudrillard’s suggestion that maps generate geographies two decades after Greenaway’s film was released.
The performative casting of mapping projected in Greenaway’s *chorien* links up with my analysis of Jeremy Wood’s walking art in the previous chapter in that it further undermines the authority of institutional cartography. In the Introduction I suggested that professional cartographic institutions have constructed their distinction in relation to lay and artistic mapping by projecting a notional ability to represent geographies with a disinterestedness unattainable by other mappers. A grasp of the world as not only representable, but so singular and objective that there is only one (scientific) way it may be mapped is therefore indispensable to received separations between professional and lay mapmaking, between correct and incorrect cartographies, and between science and art in mapping. In shifting from a representational to a performative casting of mapping, Greenaway’s *chorien* removes the basis of these divisions. In the world constructed in the film, essentialised distinctions between art and science in cartography fall away in the face of multiple mapping performances that enact and build rich fantastic geographies that cannot be divided between art and science, or separated out as especially correct or objectively binding. In this way Greenaway’s film can be seen as complementing or even completing Wood’s social expansion of mapping practices: whereas *My Ghost* and *Meridians* extend cartographic practice to formerly excluded people and places, *A Walk Through H* displaces the ontological assumptions that justified their exclusion in the first place.

Having unpacked the narrator’s key statement on the performativity of mapping, situated it in relation to contemporaneous discourse and asserted its implications for received distinctions in cartography, in the next section I turn to Greenaway’s maps themselves. Following Siegert’s rethinking of *chorien*, which insists that historical ontologies, far from being ethereal abstractions, are articulated materially through mediations, I explore how the film’s performative ontology is manifested aesthetically. Attending to the rich geographies unfolded through Greenaway’s practice of “art as mapping”, I stress how *A Walk Through H* transcends many (though not all) of the constraints of the measurable and malleable modern space I have studied so far.

**Incalculable Geographies**

Midway through his journey into H, the ornithologist approaches a gate - “Tulse Luper called it the owl gate”. In fact, the gate has long since broken and been removed, leaving only two austere gateposts jutting into the map’s blank border (**figure 6.4**). Through the gate, we enter The Amsterdam Map, which is significant for the film’s narrative, its aesthetic and my argument in this
chapter. For the narrative, because in stealing this map the ornithologist scores a triumph over Van Hoyten and learns to look for maps in ever new places. For the film’s aesthetic, because these liberated collecting habits lead to the film’s construction of increasingly eccentric terrains and because the map is among the most elaborate of Greenaway’s cartographies, drawing together many of their notable styles and motifs. For my argument, because its flaccid geometrical structure, multiple focalisations and plural graphic strategies combine to parody and counter the measurable extension projected in cartographic practices at large. Indeed, the contrast between Greenaway’s chorien and the received ontology of mapping I am setting up here is only heightened by the work’s allusion to the city of Amsterdam, which, as a historical centre of map production, was key to the development of modern calculable space.

For the moment, I will explore The Amsterdam Map (figure 6.5) in isolation from its narrative and visual framing in the film, treating it as an autonomous artwork, which it also is. The image has the dimensions of a rectangular portrait. Numerous paths are gridded together to make up a
rectangle of lines, which roughly align with the picture edge. In seven columns by twelve rows, these paths divide up a plane which, though shadowy, teems with complexity. Rarely simply black, the darkness enshrouding this terrain is a deep indigo that glitters with meteorite blue, not to mention the white and turquoise paths that cross through it. The schematised image of a signpost or windmill is repeated throughout the image, whether as isolated icons, small groupings lined up soldier-like along a path as if for inspection, or the large cluster that takes up around six fields in the centre-left of the image.

In the ontology of calculable extension, the grid represents a quintessential device of measurement and a symbol of uniformity and structure. Greenaway’s rectangle of pathways, in contrast, deforms and even satirises the rational grid, which it renders incalculable and turns to aesthetic, not functional ends. Consider the horizontal lines linking the topmost edge of Greenaway’s block of pathways. Unlike most connecting grid lines, which assure regular distances between the points they unite, these paths veer into asymmetrical curves between each column, making seven differently sized arches. The third semi-circle from the left glows orange, making an

incongruous sunset against which five signposts or windmills stand silhouetted. This suggestion of a crepuscular horizon ruptures the totalised vertical space conjured by the cartographic grids - the perspective through which, as previous chapters have stressed, modern legislators have surveyed and ordered social space. Paths are drawn loosely throughout the image, apparently without a straight edge. Dividing a formerly continuous terrain, they produce irregular and idiosyncratic bounded zones. Indeed, these quirky enclosures are each qualitatively distinct in both their shape and graphic media: far from being fungible block-filled units, they are manifested in a variety of different hatchings and washes done in pencil, ink, pastel and other materials. Even the signposts or windmills, the number and graphic simplicity of which might first suggest a standardised icon, scorn regularity: many vary in size and proportion, lots have different colours to neighbouring signs and some contain several colours faded together. Given the unique rendition of each signpost, I hesitate to call them map icons. Each could potentially stand alone as a tall object seen against the horizon, in which case these too would break up the unified focal “view from above” evoked by the grid. This plurality of viewpoints is epitomised in another map, this one made up of ink washes on fabric, named Whither Shall I Wander (figure 6.6). Two different views are made to cohere within a common frame and palette: the lower two-thirds of the central geography are clearly cartographic: fields interlock without the foreshortening that would suggest a grounded perspective. The higher third, though, is seen horizontally, with humped hills, or perhaps rather islands, silhouetted against a white sky behind.

Although these individual maps deviate from the ontology of calculability, though, it is important not to lose sight of their place within the flow of A Walk Through H. Indeed, the incalculable and performative character of Greenaway’s cartographies derives not just from the narrator’s speculations on cartography and the formal presentation of individual maps, but also from the fact that these are moving, partial images, unfolding according to a temporality co-constructed by the camera’s mobility, editing and accompanying soundtrack. Conventionally, modern mapping attempts to schematise shifting variables and offer synoptic overviews of otherwise ungraspable terrains. As the single film explored in this study, though, A Walk Through H is especially well placed to contravene the impulse to stasis and totalisation. Only rarely in A Walk Through H do we

---

63 This title refers to the English nursery rhyme “goosey, goosey, gander, whither shall I wander?”, which is printed below the pictured landscape. The maps’ titles often cite bird lore, developing the film’s central metaphor of spiritual migration.
see a map statically and as a whole: for the most part, the camera rather tracks along the course of a path, or offers a vignette of this or that topographical feature. Thus the film’s mapping out of an alternative *chorien* should be seen as stemming, in part, from its media specificity.

The aggregated moments of disparity, irregularity and flow I have described all combine to produce an incalculable geography. Along his journey the ornithologist tries to time the fading of the maps, calculate the proper walking pace and establish the distance separating cities and himself from his final destination. However, this impulse to establish regularity and control, presumably nurtured by a lifetime lived within the horizon of calculability, is confounded by the geographies of H. Around halfway through the film the narrator feels he has “discovered the correct walking pace” to avoid the fading terrain, and takes comfort from his impression, but this could well be down to some chance or fiat of the maps and not his calculative procedures, which seem not only anal but ultimately futile when projected onto the shifting terrain. Indeed, by the end of the film even the
ornithologist admits that the “usual intentions of cartography were now collapsing”. Much of this has to do with the heterogeneity of the terrain. Measurability presumes the comparability of all that must be measured: if a geography cannot be expressed or brought under common terms and standards, it slips beyond calculation. Any terrain with a composition as plural as Whither Shall I Wander or The Amsterdam Map therefore eludes the total calculability striven for by modern mapping, and thus also the social-spatial interventions calculability makes possible. This is brought home by comparing the map with Kocken’s *Depictions of Amsterdam*, in which the projection of uniform calculable frameworks onto the city conditioned numerous ordering projects, from military campaigns to racial purges. No such gardening could arise from the *chorien* unfolded by Greenaway’s mappings, nor could the single, totalised global temporality that Hildreth deconstructed in *Forthrights and Meanders*. Indeed, in The Amsterdam Map, no distances are so regular as to allow the synchronisation of times among its different parts. No prime meridian exists for all determinations of time to refer to - not even the white path running centrally down The Amsterdam Map could provide such a standard, since it weaves between latitudes that are not consistent in any case. The world of *A Walk Through H*, then, consists of infungible, even clashing graphics, shapes and spaces; by unrepeatable improvisations and intermingled colours that cannot be separated out into a tabulated key or legend. That the very grid organising the map is multicoloured, irregular and built up in disparate materials signals that incalculability has taken root even in the paradigmatic instrument of measurement itself.

If these maps do not figure geographies in terms of the uniformity that marks cartographic space as it has developed in modernity, it is important to remember that this uniformity is bound up with the project of representation. Once geography is conceived as a regular and therefore calculable extension, its measurements can be converted and plotted into graphics. Greenaway’s *chorien* differs from the ontology of mainstream mapping most fundamentally, then, in its reversal of the presumption that maps represent geographies, as discussed in the previous section. To show how the film’s shift from a representational to a performative casting of mapping is manifested aesthetically in its maps, I now turn to some of the stranger cartographies presented in *A Walk Through H*. When the narrator wonders whether he is creating the terrain as he walks through it, he is using The Amsterdam Map, which could still plausibly be taken to represent a prior geography (perhaps a Dutch landscape scattered with windmills and split into *polders*). The performativity entertained by the narrator is rather more evident as the maps become progressively more unusual through the
Another Chorien film. The path curling around a speckled egg shell (figure 6.7) figures one example, the map drawn on an illustration to a book of French history another. A further map shows “a journey on the plumage of a Red-legged Partridge” (figure 6.8), a path extending along the bird’s left breast and into an eye. There are no physical geographies to which these maps might plausibly correspond. Rather, these odd images themselves become the terrains that the ornithologist traverses. This capacity to function as material landscapes unites these otherwise disparate images, many of which do not approximate conventional notions of maps at all (indeed, the narrator refers to many of them as drawings). Yet the egg shell, book illustration and partridge, much like the plan for a flying machine and musical score, become geographies through their being collected and travelled over by the ornithologist in his journey through H. No longer judged by whether they correspond with an external territory (according to received definitions of mapping), all these images are taken as so many terrains - their different graphic forms serving not to classify them as maps or otherwise, but as manifesting varied geomorphologies. Understood this way, the maps, or rather drawings, recall George Perec’s essay “Species of Spaces”, which opens by describing how a written page does not stand in for some other space it describes, but itself constitutes an existential space: “I write: I inhabit my sheet of paper, I invest it, I travel across it” (1997, 11).

The idea that maps and other documents do not depict but rather constitute spaces stands at odds with the representationalist conception of maps as transparencies, in which mediating graphics disappear into the viewer’s imagination of the terrain. In A Walk Through H, however, the materiality of the maps becomes increasingly prominent. Material marks - like the obscure numbers
and dotted lines scattered across the partridge, “details of French history” on the book illustration and “Figure 58” printed below the speckled egg - substitute for nothing, represent nothing: all simply make up part of the graphic terrain. This is taken to extremes in maps like that reproduced as figure 6.9, which proclaims its materiality in its title: Sandpaper. Greenaway’s maps make no pretence of representational transparency: they glory in their own opacity, which can be traversed as landscapes themselves. Abrasions and annotations, coordinates and contours, not to mention stranger graphic forms, become elements in a geomorphology all their own. It is therefore appropriate to approach these ninety-two maps as physical geographies. Some are remarkably vivid. Sweet Bag (figure 6.10), for instance, presents a many-coloured world, framed against a containing black background in an image resembling a Polaroid photograph. Numerous paths cross and jar with one another, some almost completely erased, others standing out over them, freshly in white. The site is a palimpsest, perhaps where old trading routes meet. This, like the ninety-one other geographies, belongs to a chorien in which maps manifest worlds, rather than represent them from a distance. They produce effects; they create and embody realities; they are performative.

Maps and Modernity

This theme of performative world-making complicates my comparison of Greenaway’s chorien with the calculable cartographic space explored through this study. The film might confound the measurability and representationalism of established cartographic space; as regards the modernity of
mapping, however, *A Walk Through H* resonates closely with received practice. Previous case studies have built a definition of modernity as denoting conditions in which social formations and environments are grasped not as constants whose character unfolds from some essential or metaphysical order, but as contingent and thus malleable. Cartography is modern, I have proposed, in that it lays out a disenchanted earth that is amenable to fundamental reconstitution through wilful practice. This argument is encapsulated by Nikritin’s *The Old and the New*. In it, a blank globe is surrounded by moderns who variously confront the Nietzschean task of projecting value and order onto the facticity of a meaningless world.

At one level, this view of modern world-making pertains equally to the *chorien* articulated in *A Walk Through H*. Indeed, in overcoming representationalism and calculable space, the film hardly imagines a return to some absolute and unchangeable pre- or non-modern ontology. To the contrary: like the modern ontology of calculable extension, it too defies any assumption that geographies manifest essential or metaphysical identities. Like the ontology of calculable extension, it too presupposes the world’s basic malleability through mapping practice. Yet the two ontologies differ in how they imagine the world’s transformation through cartography. Previous chapters have shown that in the received ontology of cartography, mapping provides the legibility and knowledge on the

---

**Figure 6.10.** Peter Greenaway, *Sweet Bag*. From *A Walk Through H* (1978).
basis of which society and space are transformed programatically. It is therefore the instrumentality of cartography that matters in most projects of modern ordering. In contrast to this, Greenaway’s chorien emphasises not those transformative practices that merely use cartographic legibility, but the performativity immanent to maps themselves. The power of maps in the film is similar to the performativity explored by Matoba’s Utopia, which I analysed in Chapter Four. There, I stressed how otherwise abstract imaginations of community have not only taken form, but have been realised socially and ultimately physically through performative acts of mapping. This is clear in Matoba’s treatment of the geographical figure of the island, which historically provided the model through with the modern nation-state was imagined, enacted and concretely instantiated. Matoba remaps the social space of the island, affirming its internal difference: her Utopia performs a pluralist polity, no longer cartographically enclosed against others outside as an insular community.

Matoba’s performative conception of cartography comes close to Greenaway’s grasp of mapping in A Walk Through H. It must be noted, though, that the film’s vision of cartographic performativity is amplified to the point of being almost outlandish. Maps can be treated as terrains in their own right - they even unfold cultural geographies that users inhabit mentally. But they do not spontaneously produce physical geographies from themselves as they seem to in Greenway’s artistic vision. As my framing of Matoba’s insular mappings in Chapter Four explains, maps rather create specific conceptions of and relations to existing physical and social geographies, inciting viewers to practice in and manage those terrains in certain ways that ultimately alter them physically. This accounts for the lag in Baudrillard’s description of how representations reconstitute reality: since simulations are realised incrementally and unevenly through practice, it takes time for maps to supplant the real, which rots across the map only slowly. Here it becomes possible to pinpoint the divergences between Greenaway’s chorien and Baudrillard’s theory. For the philosopher, maps precede and provide a template for the territory, eventually forcing the disappearance of pregiven “realities” as cultural and physical geographies are reconstituted through

---

64 Although Chapter Three stresses that in doing so, maps also performatively disclose geographies as extended measurable spaces, this is rarely recognised. Indeed, I have argued that the established conception of space must see maps as transparent representations, for to admit their performativity would undermine the authority of official cartography.

65 Henri Lefebvre stresses the coexistence of both mental and material production in his account of the production of social space (for a discussion, see Elden 2004, 181-185).
the proliferation of maps and mapping. The map reconstitutes the real only gradually, through successive stages. In the film, by contrast, the distinction between maps and territories is annulled immediately. True, the narrator’s suggestion that “the traveller created the territory as he walked through it” certainly hints at a more drawn out process, in which maps make worlds through shaping conceptions. For the most part, however, Greenaway’s cartographies unfold territories without the intermediary stages expressed metaphorically by the gradual rotting of the real across the map in Baudrillard’s revision of Borges’ fable. In *A Walk Through H*, there is no process of substitution.

Foregrounding cartography’s constitution of worlds in this especially direct way, *A Walk Through H* both ties back into the mutually constitutive connections between maps and modern world-making explored through previous chapters and radicalises them. These maps do not present the legibility through which existing conditions are consciously transformed (Bauman’s concept of socio-spatial “gardening”), nor do they unfold underlying conceptions of the world that are steadily realised through social practice (what I have called mapping’s “ontological performativity”). Rather, Greenaway’s mapping practice radicalises these instrumental and performative conceptions of cartography’s capacity to shape and build realities. Indeed, *A Walk Through H* imagines the agency of mapping in perhaps the most unfettered manner conceivable, presenting a vision in which cartography directly manifests new worlds, which exist nowhere save in the maps themselves.

*A Walk Through H* should therefore be seen as simultaneously negating and consummating the connections between maps and modernity explored in previous chapters. As negating them, in that my argument in this chapter has been that Greenaway’s mapping practice is so oblique in relation to the modern geographical ontology of measurable and malleable extension as to justify its designation as performing a separate *chorien*. Indeed, I have argued that this *chorien* discloses irregular and infungible geographies that cannot be brought under a common measure; that it displaces representation as cartography’s essential function, annulling received distinctions between professional and lay mapping, cartography and art, and science and art in mapping; and that this affirms a racially performative conception in which maps manifest rich and multiple worlds. As consummating them, because while Greenaway’s *chorien* denies the calculability and representationalism of modern space, this extrapolated imagination of cartographic performativity realises the essence of modern world-making in a distilled form unseen in previous case studies. Not even in the total instrumentality portrayed in Kocken’s *Depictions*, in which mapping strives to
render societies wholly legible for transformative intervention, or the performative construction of
insularity in Matoba’s *Utopia*, in which maps project alternative imaginations of social space, does
cartography directly unfold and constitute worlds.

In Greenaway’s vividly intensified imagination of modernity, maps do not represent ulterior
realities, but manifest rich geographies in their own presence and form - so much so that, in the
universe of the film, there is no reality save for the worlds set forth in maps (admitting the
infrequent shots of birds). Inherited notions of art and science, representation and reality, collapse
into this practice of unfolding diverse worlds through mapping. Between Antilipe and the Owl Gate,
as terrains fade with their maps and winds trace a path towards heaven or hell, *A Walk Through H*
affirms cartography’s constitutively modern power to make geographies. Although on every other
point Greenaway’s *chorien* stands at odds with modern calculable extension, this unfettered world-
building power does not transcend - but rather fully realises - the essence of modernity.