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From the "Anamnesis of the Visible" to "Cartographic Anamnesis": Lyotard and the Postmodern Spaces of Representation

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Abstract

In this article, I propose the notion of "cartographic anamnesis" in relation to contemporary practices of militant cartography or counter-cartography. My assumption is that cartography can be used as an epistemological and relational device to visualise and rethink relations between human beings and the world in the contemporary era.

In support of this hypothesis, this article mobilises some Lyotardian notions, such as "anamnesis," "figural," "libidinal set-up," "interworld," in relation to the cartographic device and to issues related to postmodern spatial production in architecture and geography. The aim is to show how these pivotal concepts of Lyotard's aesthetics can be applied to think about a philosophy of technique and culture, which takes cartography as its object of study and investigation, particularly through a reading of *Discourse, Figure* and by using the artistic and theoretical work of artists like Paul Klee and Gianfranco Baruchello, both of whom are central to Lyotardian reflection.

Keywords: Anamnesis, Cartography, Interworld, Baruchello, Architecture, Libidinal set-up, Figural.

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Introduction

Cartography—as a tool for tracking and visualising the earth's surface—is a central object in postmodern debates about space, especially in the context of a critical and Marxist approach to geography.[1] In the wake of postmodern geography, since the 1960s, militant movements have worked on the development of practices and devices of cartographic representation to produce a meta-reflection on cartography. This set of practices, which has developed extensively over the last twenty years, is called "counter-cartography" or "militant cartography." The experiments in this field of research are manifold and concern the artistic panorama as much as contemporary geographical and ecological reflection.[2]

Considered as an epistemological and aesthetic tool, counter-cartography helps people to think about the complexity of the present and can also produce significant effects on a political level.[3] For this reason, its production has been nourished by the theoretical reflection of thinkers from the field of postmodern and French post-structuralist thought.[4] If post-structuralist authors such as Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze are prominent references within the theoretical debates on which contemporary practices of counter-cartography are based, Lyotard's reflection seems to receive no particular attention from this field of studies, despite the philosopher's significant contribution to the postmodern debate. This article intends, therefore, to make a theoretical contribution to postmodern geography and contemporary practices of counter-cartography, applying some Lyotardian categories that can be useful in these debates.

To move in this direction, I intend to develop a "cartographic anamnesis," starting from Lyotard's use of the psychoanalytic notion of "anamnesis of the visible," in relation to painting. I then intend to place this notion in relation to the postmodern debate

1 See: D. Woods, *The Power of Maps* (New York: Guilford Press, 1992); J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps. Essays on the History of Cartography*, eds. P. Laxton (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001); D. Cosgrove, *Mappings* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).

2 Recent publications on these themes are: Frédérique Aït-Touati, Alexandra Arènes, Axelle Grégoire, T*erra Forma: a book of speculative maps*, trans. Amanda DeMarco (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2022); kollektiv Orangotango+, *This is not an Atlas* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2018); Karen O' Rourke, *Walking and Mapping: Artists as Cartographers* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2016).

3 Frederic Jameson has recognized it, considering spatial issues as a fundamental point to face the sense disorientation and the disalienation which characterizes postmodern lifestyles: on this regard, he spoke of an "aesthetic of cognitive mapping" as a " pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system" and that can help people to "invent radically new forms in order to do it justice," Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 54.

4 See the fundamental essay of John Brian Harley, "Deconstructing the map" in *The New Nature of Maps. Essays on the History of Cartography*, eds. P. Laxton (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 149–168.

on cartography, understood in Henri Lefebvre's terms as a "space of representation."[5] Therefore, after an initial comparison of Lyotardian thought with postmodern reflection on space, I will focus on Lyotard's rethinking of "anamnesis," placing it in relation to two other notions of Lyotardian thought: the "libidinal set-up" and the "figural," which belong to earlier phases of the philosopher's production. Through these conceptual categories, I intend to show the continuity of Lyotard's reflections on art and painting, whose discontinuities are usually highlighted. Later, I will try to propose a "cartographic anamnesis," applying these notions to the field of the history of medieval cartography. To conclude, I will use two examples deduced from the artistic practice of the painter Gianfranco Baruchello, friend of Lyotard, to whom he dedicated important reflections. Using Baruchello's "cartographical paintings," I will therefore show how painting as an "anamnesis of the visible" can work, at the same time, also as a "cartographic anamnesis."

1. Spatial Postmodernities

The name of Jean-François Lyotard is generally associated with the publication in 1979 of *The Postmodern Condition*.[6] Lyotard's main thesis was that the entry into the era of computerisation had definitively sanctioned the crisis of the "great narratives" of modernity and its processes of legitimation. This phenomenon had pushed towards a radical decentralisation and rethinking of the ways in which knowledge is acquired and disseminated in the contemporary world. The revolution in information systems and the transformations of the processes of capitalist accumulation since the second half of the twentieth century, had produced a crisis in the space-time continuity of modernity and pushed towards a profound reconsideration of the aesthetic, political and epistemological categories on which the production of knowledge had been based during modernity. To be understood and addressed, the "postmodern" required an openness to a heterogeneity of practices and styles of expression and the coexistence of a plurality of narratives, which bore witness to the ongoing processes of social and cultural transformation. The need to think about tactics of resistance against the absolutizing character of the discourses and practices on which the modern categories of "space" and "time" have settled has emerged.

5 The use of the categories of "spatial production," "spatial practice," "representation of space" and "space of representation" openly refers to the theorizations of the French philosopher and geographer Henri Lefebvre. The "spatial practice" encompasses all social activities that enable the creation of a given space; the "representations of space" concern the space theoretically studied as it is generated, conceived, represented; the "space of representation" represents the symbolic dimension of space, the space as it is lived and imagined. According to Lefebvre, these three categories actively co-participate in the social production of space. See Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992).

6 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1984).

As a reflection on the production of knowledge, postmodernism has been developed across many theories and developed in different fields of humanities and social sciences. Among them, the field of "space production", especially in geography and urban design, plays a fundamental role, as it is highlighted in the large body of theories developed in the 1970s–1990s by the "spatial turn"[7]. Nevertheless, this field of studies is not homogeneous, concerning more the co-existence of multiple "spatial postmodernities."

In this paragraph, I would like to show this aspect, placing in tension Lyotard's postmodernism with two different "spatial postmodernities," in architecture theory and geography. In fact, although it does not play a prominent role in *The Postmodern Condition*, the relationship between "space" and "postmodernity" invites us to question the specific way in which the idea of "space" appears in Lyotard's philosophy, who often interfaced with architects and space theorists on the subject.[8]

The first important reference, in this sense, is Charles Jencks' essay *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*[9]: this text decreed the end of compositional rationalism and of the rigid correspondence between form and function, typical of architecture and of urban planning in the first part of the twentieth century and aimed at the introduction of a "pluralistic language which incorporated traditional and modern elements, vernacular and high art meanings."[10] The aim of Jencks was to propose new ways of conceiving space, and to trace a real aesthetic caesura with the modern tradition in architecture. This can be seen, for instance, in Jencks' choice to situate postmodern reflection in architecture along

7 By "spatial turn" I refer to the large number of theories, developed especially by the Marxist tradition, that develop a critical approach to space theories (architecture, geography, sociology, philosophy, urban planning and so on). I refer, for example, to scholars such as Edward Soja, David Harvey, Mike Davis and Frederic Jameson, or architectural theorists as Kenneth Frampton, who played a fundamental role in the genealogy of the "postmodern condition" of "space." See: David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990)*;* Frederic Jameson*, Postmodernism*; Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, eds. Han Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983), 16–30. For an analysis of the relationship between architecture and postmodernism, see: Frank Vermandel, "Postmodernisme, discourse et métadiscours: L'architecture comme paradigme et paradoxe," *Tumultes* 34, (2010): 25–48.

8 Jean-François Lyotard, "Notes on the meaning of post-,"in *The Postmodern Explained,* eds. Julian Pefanis & Morgan Thomas (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 76. This issue can be found all through Lyotard's production and emerges strongly in the essays "Zones," "Domus and Megalopolis" and "Scapeland," Jean-François Lyotard, *Postmodern fables,* trans. G. Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press,1997), 17–32; Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington & Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 182–204. For a deeper analysis of the relationships between Lyotard and architecture, see: Ashley Woodward, "Non-projects for the uninhabitable: Lyotard's architecture philosophy," *Architecture Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (2021) https://ojs.library.okstate.edu/osu/index.php/jispa/article/view/8438.

9 Charles Jencks, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli 1977).

10 Jencks, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*, 96.

a precise spatio-temporal horizon: "Modern Architecture died in St. Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3.32 p.m. (or thereabouts) when the infamous Pruitt-Igoe scheme, or rather several of its slab blocks were given the final *coup de grâce* by dynamite."[11] Jencks' statement suggests two intertwined ideas about his postmodern architecture's theory: 1) the aesthetic caesura between "modern" and "postmodern" can also be considered historical and chronological: postmodern is a new era of urban planning that comes *after* the modern and opens up to a completely new way of conceiving, imagining and living space; 2) for this reason, the idea of "space" that postmodern architecture would seem to legitimise is of a spatiality that, freed from the compositional rigidities of modernity, would truly be able to lead to the free emancipation of the human being's expression and needs. Jencks' theory can be better explained if we look at the design and theoretical practices developed between the late 1970s and 1990s by architects like Robert Venturi or Rem Koolhaas, whose works played a fundamental role in the construction of the postmodern "spaces of representation."[12]

Here we can see the links and the distances between Jencks' and Lyotard's approaches to postmodernism. If from one side, the authors share the critics to modernity and they look for an opening to a plurality of aesthetic and epistemological approaches in space production, they conceive the chronological relationship between "modern" and "postmodern" in two opposite ways: differently from Jencks, in fact, for Lyotard postmodern does not come *after* the modern, but it is already implied *in* it. In addition, Jencks' idea of a "freed" design, "a sort of bricolage," the multiple quotation of elements taken from earlier styles or periods, classical and modern; disregard for the environment,"[13] which attaches no importance to the context or to the need of placing the habitation in a human as well as urban dimension, are all elements that couldn't be accepted by Lyotard. The risk implied in Jencks' reflection could be, in fact, to transform postmodern space's heterogeneity in a great narration of emancipation, capable of freeing the human being simply through the deconstruction and re-constitution of social space, through urban design and planning, without considering its intrinsic complexity. Contrary to "postmodernism" in architecture, the "postmodern condition" is not an unrestrained apologia of the stylistic and "a-cosmic"[14] heterogeneity, typical of architectural postmodernism, but aimed to produce a meta-criticism of modernity itself, to show its unconscious limits.

If Jencks' postmodern theory of architecture seems far from embracing Lyotard's

11 Jencks, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*, 9.

12 See, for example: R. Venturi, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977); R. Koolhas, *Delirious New York: A retroactive manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997).

13 J. F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained,* 76.

14 I use this term in the sense of A. Berque, *Recosmiser la Terre. Quelques leçons péruviennes* (Paris: B2, 2018). Berque uses the term "a-cosmic" to refer to all those urban and architectural structures that do not consider the relationships between human beings and their living habitats or *milieux* in an ecological sense, as it happens, according to Berque, in Koolhaas' architecture.

"postmodern condition" of knowledge, a continuity can be more clearly traced in the processes of "reassertion of space" that, according to Edward Soja, have characterised postmodern epistemologies in geography.

As Soja points out, this "reassertion of space" is not "simply a metaphorical re-composition of social theory, a superficial linguistic spatialisation that makes geography appear to matter theoretically as much as history," but requires "a much deeper deconstruction and reconstitution of critical thought and analysis at every level of abstraction, including ontology."[15] For this reason, Soja suggests "to compose a social ontology in which space matters from the very beginning:"[16] this invitation is also tantamount to intercepting the different levels through which space is socially produced, such as that of its representation and its *crisis*. Such deconstruction and reconstruction, therefore, require the creation of a critical and conceptual apparatus to reflect on the implicit mechanisms that have made the production of modern space possible. Thanks to it, the geographical discourse was constructed in the modern age and the power relations that for centuries recognised European hegemony at a global level were consolidated. Cartographic production is symbol of these relational dynamics and of the related epistemologies.

In recent years, postmodern reflections in geography have developed a very profound critique of the ways in which maps become agents of spatial production and have reflected on the need to deconstruct cartography itself, as a cultural object and as a practice.[17] John Pickles, in this regard, speaks of a veritable "crisis of representation" that has occurred in the field of cartographic production, due to a series of complementary aspects: the "emergence and role of communication models of information," the "subjective nature of maps," and the objective and subjective bias that "frame the understanding of error and distortion in cartography."[18] The historian of cartography John Brian Harley has deeply reflected on these aspects, focusing on the ethical issues hidden by maps. According to Harley, the map possesses an *eloquence* of its own, and it is not a simple instrument of communication, but a "social construction"[19] and "inherently political."[20] For this reason, Harley proposes to read the map as a *text,* or as "graphic language to be decoded" and the product of "both individual minds and the wider cultural values in particular societies."[21] This also means that every map is linked to the social order of a particular period and place, and it is a cultural device because it manifests intellectual processes

15 E. Soja*, Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London-New York: Verso, 1990), 7.

16 Soja*, Postmodern Geographies*, 7.

17 See Harley, "Deconstructing the Map," 149–168.

18 John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-coded World* (London: Routledge, 2004), 28.

19 Harley, "Introduction," *The New Nature of Maps*, 7.

20 Harley, "Text and contexts in the interpretation of early maps," in *The New Nature of Maps,* 35.

21 Harley, "Text and contexts in the interpretation of early maps," 36.

defined as artistic or scientific, as they work to produce a distinctive type of knowledge. In other words, the map, as "a *cultural object* that takes possession of the land,"[22] does not simply reproduce a topographical reality but also interprets it. Harley's reading key of cartography, which invites us to see the map as a "text" and as a "cultural object," helps us to better understand the critical approach developed by contemporary cartography.

In fact, contemporary debates on the "crisis of cartographic reason,"[23] to use an expression by Franco Farinelli, have directed geographical reflection towards a critique of cartographic production systems and their rethinking. This set of practices, largely inspired by the theoretical elaborations of authors such as David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre, is called "radical cartography" or "counter-cartography.[24] At the basis of counter-cartography is the idea of a critique of the chronological and linear view in cartographic development and production, due to the crisis of the "Copernican revolution in map-making," apparently based on the "de-centring of our view of the world accomplished by its navigation through the application of scientific calculation."[25] As Phil Cohen and Mike Duggan argue, modern cartographic systems—like GIS or GPS—hide a lack of objectivity: in fact, "ethnocentrisms and nationalisms" in cartographic production "have continued to flourish and indeed have come to exercise a dominant influence on contemporary geopolitics."[26] In order to develop a critique of the biases implicit in Western systems of cartography, counter-cartography "has emerged to become an important part of the so-called 'anti-colonial' and 'decolonisation' processes that seek social justice from the inequalities produced by colonialism,"[27] making use of techniques and materials that aim to politically and geographically decentralize the mechanisms of cartographic production. In this sense, counter-cartography deconstructs the map as a communication tool, revealing its figural components. This deconstruction operates on the map as a graphic language and as a technical device for orientation. This is also possible because counter-cartography draws extensively from non-Western artistic practices and systems of spatial representation.

Counter-cartography aims, therefore, to deconstruct power relations and related narratives mediated by maps, considering them both as "spatial representations" and "representations

22 Harley, "Text and contexts in the interpretation of early maps," 45.

23 See F. Farinelli, *La Crisi ella Ragione Cartografica* (Torino: Einaudi, 2009).

24 See Nepthys Zwer & Philippe Rekacewicz, *Cartographie Radicale: Explorations* (Paris: La Découverte, 2021); Bracco, Diane & Lucie Genay (dir.), *Contre-cartographier le Monde* (Limoges: Pulim, 2021); Bernard Debarbieux & Irène Hirt (dir.), *Politiques de la carte* (London: ISTE, 2022); Kollektiv Orangotango (dir.) *This is Not an Atlas: A Global Collection of Counter-Cartographies* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag 2018); Phil Cohen & Mike Duggan, *New Directions in Radical Cartography: Why the Map is Never the Territory* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).

25 Cohen & Duggan, *New Directions in Radical* Cartography, xii.

26 Cohen & Duggan, *New Directions in Radical Cartography*, xii.

27 Cohen & Duggan, *New Directions in Radical Cartography*, xii.

of space," using artistic practices and alternative systems of visualisation to traditional cartography. Counter-cartography is, in fact, first and foremost a meta-reflection on the techniques and systems of mediating cartographic information and aims to both criticise and deform them. I argue that contemporary counter-cartographic practice, based on the postmodern attempt to "reassert space," can be well connected to Lyotard's postmodern reflection. This connection becomes particularly evident if we consider the analysis, developed by Lyotard in the later part of his thought, of the postmodern as "anamnesis."

2. The Postmodern and its "Anamnesis of the Visible"

"Anamnesis" is a key notion in the entire evolution of Lyotard's thought, marked by apparent discontinuities. But what is its role in postmodern Lyotardian reflection and why is it so important in general? The idea of "postmodern condition" seems to introduce an epistemological caesura in Lyotard's philosophical reflection, which, in the early seventies, was characterised by the elaboration of the notions of "figural" and "libidinal set-up" in a psychoanalytical framework, as the essays *Discourse, Figure* (1971) and *Libidinal Economy* (1973) attest. Contrary to this, I want to argue that a continuity can be traced between these previous stages[28] of Lyotard's philosophical production, and his "postmodern turn." This continuity can be traced through his re-elaboration of the psychoanalytical notion of "anamnesis."

Elaborated by Freud in a 1914 essay,[29] the notion of "anamnesis" (*Durcharbeitung*) refers to the process of re-emergence of experiences, forgotten by the patient, with respect to which the therapist plays a guiding and supporting role. "Anamnesis" is, therefore, the patient's working-through process, thanks to which the awareness of the resistances gradually becomes possible. Lyotard thematises the issue, relating this notion to his reflection on painting:

> Just as the patients try to elaborate their current problems by freely associating apparently inconsequential details with past situations – allowing them to uncover hidden meanings in their lives and their behaviour – so we can think of the work of Cézanne, Picasso, Delaunay, Kandinsky, Klee, Mondrian, Malevich, and finally Duchamp as a *working-through (Durcharbeiten), performed by modernity in its own meaning*.[30]

28 A chronological and thematic division that considers the implicit movements of Lyotard's reflection throughout his life is proposed by Jean-Michel Salanskis in: C. Pagès (dir.), *Lyotard à Nanterre* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2010), 13–19.

29 S. Freud, *Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through*, in *Standard Edition*, vol. 12 (London: Hogarth, 1958).

30 Lyotard, "Notes on the meaning of post-," 79–80, my emphasis.

This working-through process of painting, that Lyotard calls "anamnesis of the visible,"[31] thus concerns the mechanisms of presentation of the work of art itself and, according to Lyotard, is enacted by the artistic experimentations of the avant-gardes:

> This representational or de-representational task, then assigned to the work, acts in fact as a kind of anamnesis, an anamnesis outside of the session perhaps, and in this sense unseemly, but as for its aim related to analysis, in so far as it strives to immerse the scene of the presented in the water of presentation, and to free the object, image, or *readymade* of repetitive imagination, by returning it to the infancy of a frank imagination.[32]

The "anamnesis of the visible" is, then, used by Lyotard to "dramatise the visual work—painting first and foremost—by identifying the search for an unpresentable event, as invisible as the primal scene can be."[33] Nevertheless, it does not aim at discovering something *beyond* what is shown by the work of art itself, but at showing the invisible processes, the conceptual schemes, and aesthetic categories that the work of art performs in its showing. However, for Lyotard, anamnesis is not a hermeneutics of the aesthetic "event": it is not a matter of going back chronologically to its origin, to understand and clarify it, but rather of going through it again, constantly, freely working through the libidinal processes and mechanisms that made it possible. This means that, for the philosopher, every anamnesis has no end:

> Anamnesis is in principle interminable. […] The associative material has no boundaries. The task of passing through the representations as well as the screens (Freud) is never completed. Even the determination of the chain (as a 'language') belongs to the chain and is interminable in principle. It is because the thing that is 'the reason' for the chain is not determinable, because it has never been presented.[34]

The "anamnesis of the visible" concerns, thus, modern painting's attempts to bear witness to the fact that there is something "unpresentable," through the display of the technical, gestural, and material aspects involved in the processes of artistic production. This working-through process, at the same time, is "interminable." From this perspective, "anamnesis" can be easily related to Lyotard's notion of "libidinal set-up."

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31 Jean-François Lyotard, *Que Peindre? Adami, Arakawa, Buren/ What to Paint ? Adami, Arakawa, Buren*, eds. Herman Parret, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), 237.

32 Lyotard, *What to Paint?,* 241.

33 Lyotard, *What to Paint?,* 239.

34 J.-F. Lyotard, "Anamnesis of the visible," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no.1 (2004): 107–119. doi: 10.1177/0263276404040483, 109.

The first connection between the two notions is due to the fact that they both are used by Lyotard in reference to painting, which he defines as both a 'libidinal set-up' and an 'anamnesis of the visible.'[35] However, this connection is also useful to understand the status of technique in Lyotard's postmodernism and to reflect on cartography as a cultural, technical and aesthetic device of mediation and reassertion of space in the context of the "spatial turn."

By "libidinal set-up" [*dispositif libidinal*] Lyotard means a structure through which energetic drives of desire are channelled and blocked, allowing desiring activity to unfold, on the basis of normative criteria sanctioned by these blockages.[36] According to Lyotard, this concerns both the artistic and technical spheres. Perspective, for example, is for Lyotard a "libidinal set-up," [37] since in it the desiring activity manifests itself according to precise compositional rules, which produce limitations in the use of libidinal energy. The same notion can be applied, however, to a man moving with a wagon and a horse or a car: if perspective produces a peculiar way of conceiving and representing space, the "libidinal set-ups" of locomotion structure the drive dimension, according to a certain way of moving through space. In short, since for Lyotard every human activity and production must be grasped in terms of an activity of desire, every cultural, technical, and aesthetic device must be understood as a "libidinal set-up" that, by regulating energy flows in a certain way, enables the metamorphoses of libidinal activity.

These "libidinal set-ups" are, thus, all manifestations of the polymorphic character of libidinal activity and can only be grasped from within a process, a libidinal flow that knows no stabilisation. Anamnesis is, therefore, the conceptual instrument and psychoanalytical technique through which, according to Lyotard, it becomes possible to try to re-cross these drives and libidinal flows, not to stabilise or understand, but to *work through* them. The result of this anamnesis can, in this sense, only be a further opening towards other energetic canalisations that will give rise to new "libidinal set-ups."

The "anamnesis of the visible" can in this sense be understood as the process through which painting bears witness to the metamorphic character of the pictorial "libidinal set-up," showing the processes through which it is deconfigured and reconfigured. However, the notion can also be used to reflect beyond artistic space. Far from being, in fact, merely a peculiarity of the artistic experience, the "anamnesis" is a mechanism applicable to

35 See, in particular: J.-F. Lyotard, "Anamnesis of the visible," J.-F. Lyotard, "Painting as a libidinal set-up," in Jean-François Lyotard, *Textes dispersés I: esthétique et théorie de l'art/ Miscellaneous Texts I: Aesthetics and Theory of Art,* eds. Herman Parret (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), 76–101.

36 The enquiry on the "libidinal set-up" is at the centre of Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

37 I refer to Lyotard, "Painting as a libidinal set-up."

postmodern reflection on space and time in general.[38] For Lyotard, in fact, postmodern is the *anamnesis* of the modern. As Yuk Hui writes:

> The postmodern is the self-negation of the modern. It is not that, at a certain moment of modernity, something happened, and at that point the postmodern arrived; it is rather that, at a certain moment of its development, the logic of modernity turned against itself and transplanted into another context.[39]

Picking up on Hui's reflections and using a language dear to Lyotard, we can understand postmodernity as the "rewriting of modernity" itself, its "working-through" or even its "anamnesis."[40] For this reason, the postmodern cannot be chronologically located *after* the modern, but is already implied *by* and *in* modernity. Unlike remembrance, which seeks to trace back to the primary source of trauma and signify it, the process of anamnesis is purposeless and it is, therefore, interminable.

Even cartographic production can be considered as a "libidinal set-up"[*dispositif libidinal*], as the product of libidinal investments through which both our "spatial representations" or theoretical conceptions about space, as well as our "spaces of representation" or the imaginaries related to these spaces are generated.

On these bases, we can also consider cartography as a "libidinal set-up" and counter-cartography as its "anamnesis," if we look at cartographic production as the mediation device through which both our "spatial representations" (our conceptions of space), as well as our "spaces of representation" (the imaginaries related to these spaces) are generated. Cartographic representation is a "libidinal set-up," insofar as its structure allows for the blocking and unfolding of specific modes of desire production in relation to space: in the case of the map, these variations are the result of the different processes of diagrammatization and organisation of the representations of the territory, that serves as referent. At this point, to clarify how the desire operates through the cartographic production as a "libidinal set-up," I will focus on the reflection about the "figural" developed by Lyotard during the 1970s, which provides us with extremely useful conceptual and methodological tools for thinking up one or more possible "cartographic anamnesis."

38 Lyotard, for example, takes up the Freudian question of working-through, applying it to the field of technique. This is particularly evident in the essays "*Logos* and *Techne*, or *Telegraphy*" and "Rewriting Modernity," contained in Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman*.

39 Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2016), 274.

40 Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, 269–282.

3. "Veduta" on a Fragment of History of Cartography

Cartography, understood as a cultural object that represents and mediates the relationship between humans and social space, also constitutes a point of intersection between technical and artistic practices. Considering the multiple layers (cultural, technical, aesthetic, spatial) through which it is possible to study cartography as a "libidinal set-up," in the following paragraphs I intend to show how the "reassertion of space" can also be mediated through the "anamnesis" of cartographic technique. I call this process "cartographic anamnesis." In this section, I examine how this process of "cartographic anamnesis" operates, drawing on the approach developed by Jean-François Lyotard in his doctoral dissertation *Discourse, Figure* (1971), where questions of artistic and literary space assume a decisive role.

In the textual "space" interposed by Lyotard between the first and second parts of this book, there is a fundamental section, entitled "*Veduta* on a Fragment of the "History" of Desire," where Lyotard shows how the "figural" operates in the history of Western art and culture. The notion of the "figural" designates both the deconstructive capacity of artistic practice and the drive imparted to human expression by the incessant, transformative work of desire. In *Discourse, Figure* Lyotard shows how this metamorphosis takes place in the sphere of art, in both textual and visual space, thanks to the transgressions that a third space, that of desire-libido, produces through free artistic expression and the dilution of the compositional rules imposed by the stylistic canons inherited from tradition. With respect to these canons, figural expression plays the role of their rewriting: "The critical function of the figural, its work of truth, comes to fruition in relation to a 'script' [*écriture*] and consists above all in the deconstruction of this script."[41] Lyotard himself shows this, through the interpretation of two illuminated manuscripts of the 11th century, through which he particularly problematizes the articulation of the relationship between textual and figural: the first page of the book of Numbers in the Bible of Saint Martial in Limoges and the beginning of the Book of Generations according to Matthew in the Bible of the Moissac monastery.[42] In both cases, the illuminated manuscript is not merely decorative, but functions as an inscription: a technological instrument for the transmission of knowledge and the organisation of power relations, opening up specific imaginaries and forms of life. Within the illuminated codes, painting gradually takes on a pedagogical function and the figure becomes a text, a message: "To see will be to hear, like reading—the 'reading' of those who cannot read," [43] writes Lyotard. In the case of Moissac, this is the result of the pedagogical method and theoretical approach proposed in those years by

41 Jean-François Lyotard, "*Veduta* on a Fragment of the 'History' of Desire," in: Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, trans. Hudek, Anthony & Lidon, Mary (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 160.

42 Lyotard, "*Veduta* on a Fragment of the 'History' of Desire," 164–174.

43 Lyotard, "*Veduta* on a Fragment of the 'History' of Desire," 170.

the doctrine of Hugh of St. Victor and his school. Lyotard shows how the basic idea was that the image should be integrated into the biblical text, solely to increase its readability: in this sense, the textual dimension progressively absorbed the visual dimension, to fulfil the indoctrination function.

This oscillation between textual and figural dimensions, central within medieval cultural production, can also be found in different ways in medieval cartography. David Woodward points out that "in the Middle Ages, the word (especially the oral word) was predominant over the image and was prescribed as such by the nature of the biblical narrative and the views of the early church fathers."[44] A significant example in this regard is the Munich "Isidore" world map, probably inspired by the thought of Hugh of St. Victor.[45] In the *Descriptio mappe mundi* (1130–1135), the theologian, in fact, provided a detailed description of the geographical knowledge of the time, which followed the same course as the map of Isidore of Munich. In this context, the map performs a pedagogical function markedly different from that of modern cartography and is intended to be read rather than seen, much like the miniature. At the same time, according to Woodward, it is very difficult to provide an unambiguous definition of the "mappamundi," as the term rather referred to a plurality of different devices, that could serve a pedagogical and doctrinal function or be used for navigation—like the so-called "portolans." This means that, as "libidinal set-up," the "mappamundi" could be metamorphosed into different energetic stabilisations, which are also dependent on the social and spatial practices through which it is materialized. We can better understand this aspect if we consider two maps, both dating back to the 13th century, which had extremely different functions and structures: the *Hereford mappamundi* (Fig. 1, 1276–1284) and the *Carte Pisane* (Fig. 2, 1275).[46] In the "cartographic anamnesis" these maps must be studied not only for their technical value, but also for their aesthetic and cultural aspects.

44 Daniel Woodward, "Medieval *Mappaemundi*" in *History of Cartography* 1, eds. J.B. Harley & D. Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 286.

45 Jeremy Brotton, *A History of the World in Twelve Maps* (New York: Viking, 2013), 111–112.

46 Woodward, "Medieval *Mappaemundi*," 290.

Fig. 1: *Hereford mappamundi* (1276–1284)

Fig. 2: *Carte Pisane* (1258–1291) - Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France

The Hereford map—as Brotton points out—follows the pattern of the Munich map and shows no fidelity to the representation of the territory. Its purpose was, rather, to provide an encyclopaedic view of what the geographical and symbolic knowledge of a man of the Middle Ages must have been.[47]

Represented according to the T-O diagram, with the East at the top and Asia occupying three quarters of the surface, Hereford's map incorporates the most heterogeneous elements and knowledges, which do not, however, follow any orientation criteria in physical terms. Hereford is, in fact, not merely a topological device, but an encyclopaedic,

47 Brotton, *A History of the World in Twelve Maps*, 99–101.

mythical tale, and the result of temporal and local multi-layering that coexists across the surface of the map. The textual dimension and the figurative dimension—which plays a preponderant role—seem to constantly encroach upon each other, giving rise to a device that wants to be read, but still requires the eye to learn to inhabit it. Figural activity is found, in this case, in the way the map diagram produces the synthesis between figures and text: their juxtaposition follows, in fact, the logic of faith and the beliefs of the time, shaping a surface of coexistence of heterogeneous narratives, which the cartographic synthesis aims to multiply.

Medieval *mappaemundi* such as Hereford—of monastic origin—did not so much have a practical purpose as a pedagogical and narrative one. This function allows us to differentiate Hereford widely from the Pisan map. This map is classified as a "portolan:" a cartographic device of mercantile origin, mainly functional for navigation. For this reason, the meticulousness in the drawing of the coasts and in the naming of places is counterbalanced by the lack of details, and the total absence of figurative elements. In the *Carte Pisane*, in fact, the textual dimension plays a leading role, in structuring the balance between textual space and figural space: the efficacy of this "libidinal set-up" is the result of the way, extremely innovative for the time, in which the diagram rationalises and facilitates the understanding of the space of navigation, emancipating the user from the religious, cosmological dimension, to which Hereford instead referred.

In each of these cartographic devices, libidinal activity is, therefore, channelled according to certain energy blockages, which produce different ways of articulating the relationship between textual space and visual space. In all cases, the "figural" space is in the interstice between the two dimensions, and acts constantly, but indirectly, on the way the map displaces the established "space of representation," generating its own. This figural dimension, which we see at work on the surfaces of the two medieval maps with different results, can, however, never be directly visualised or signified. The third space of the figural is, in fact, located in the folds of the map as an "interworld," through which desire moves freely. This means that, to better understand how the two cartographies as libidinal set-ups work, we cannot just trace their historical framework: we need to question the way in which the libidinal activity as "figural," that de-construct and re-construct the relationship between texts and figures, works. Questioning the figural means trying to trace its paths or trying to map the "interworld" between them. In other words, if we want to produce a "cartographic anamnesis," we cannot just study the maps as cultural objects, but we must map the work of desire on them, working through the generative processes of the "interworld" itself. But how can we map this "interworld," to map the work of the "figural?"

4. Mapping "Interworlds": Klee, Baruchello and the "Cartographic Anamnesis"

We argued earlier that within the postmodern programme of the "reassertion of space," counter-cartographic practices can be studied as "cartographic anamneses." These cartographic anamneses can deconstruct established discourses on space and time as they become interested in the way libidinal activity invests the cartographic "libidinal set-up." This cartographic anamnesis, however, cannot simply be a study of desire's activity, but as a working-through process, it is itself a libidinal activity. In other words, to be realised, the "cartographic anamnesis" cannot merely map the libidinal flows that affect cartography as libidinal set-up, but must work through these flows, deconstructing and reconfiguring them in its own way. It must, in other words, provide us with a key to access desire as work, to the "figural" dimension, the "interworld," that lurks between the meshes of the cartographic libidinal set-up. This is, of course, a process that can never be fully accomplished.

The "interworld" is a term that Lyotard borrows from a dialogue between Paul Klee and the artist Lothar Schreyer, both Bauhaus lecturers.[48] In this regard, Lyotard writes:

> Klee's interworld is not an imaginary world: it is the displayed workshop of the primary process. Here one does not speak or "see", one works. In this space, the line records neither the signifiers of a discourse nor the outlines of a silhouette; it is the trace of a condensing, displacing, figuring, elaborating energy, with no regard for the recognizable. […] Here the invisible is not the verso of the visible, its flip side. It is the unconscious capsized: the potential of plasticity.[49]

The "interworld" is an intermediate, phantasmatic dimension between what is visible and what is sayable and is at the same time a place where plastic possibilities are generated. The process of "mapmaking" of this third space concerns the construction of a work without reference models, which aims at producing a vision that is "not seen by any eye,"[50] and from which different visual experiences can arise, whose possibilities of signification always remain partial. The vision of the interworld, in fact, is never returned in its entirety,

48 Lyotard reports Klee's passage: "I have in mind the realm of the unborn and the already dead which one day might fulfil its promise, but which then again might not – an intermediate world, an interworld. To my eyes, at least, an interworld; I name it so because I detect its existence between those exterior worlds to which our senses are attuned while at the same time, I can introject it enough to be able to project it outside of myself as symbol. It is by following this course that children, the mad, and primitive peoples have remained faithful to have discovered again—the power of seeing." Lothar Schreyer, *Souvenirs: Erinnerungen am Sturm und Bauhaus* (Munich: Langen und Muller, 1956). Cited by Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 446–447 (n. 32).

49 Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 232.

50 Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 348.

but only in the form of a *trace*. If the artist's aim is to return these traces through the work of art, the viewer has the task of learning to observe the painting, always identifying new possible paths of fruition, possible trajectories of vision:

> To look at a painting is to draw paths across it, or at least to collaboratively draw paths, since in executing it, the painter laid down, imperiously (albeit tangentially), paths to follow, and his or her work is this trembling, trapped within four wooden slats, that an eye will remobilize, bring back to life.[51]

Painting and seeing are, in this sense, two cartographic operations. In the first case, the operation consists in the invention of the diagram—or diagrams—that reveal possible paths of fruition of the work. The painting of Klee, painter of "interworlds", aims at the plastic production of a multiplicity of diagrammatic possibilities. In the case of the spectator, the cartographic operation consists in the multiplication of the mapping strategies of the painting, through the tracing of possible paths to follow during fruition. Any interpretation of the work, in this sense, is destined to remain partial.

To paint (and see) the space of the "interworld" is thus tantamount to deconstructing both the systems of spatial representation (the rules of composition) and the spaces of representation (the imaginaries connected to these) that are implicated in them, not so much to canonise new ones, but to open a glimpse of the dimension through which these spaces and these representations are generated, as a testimony to their compossibility.

Although this "cartographic anamnesis" is not directly proposed or practiced by Lyotard in his reflection on postmodern paintings and spaces, I think this proposal may fit well with the artistic practice of one of the contemporary artists most appreciate by the philosopher: the Italian painter Gianfranco Baruchello, to whom Lyotard has dedicated several essays.[52] Baruchello's pictorial aesthetics can, in fact, be considered as a counter-cartographic practice that opens alternative ways of producing knowledges and relations about space. His paintings are very often conceived as large, libidinal surfaces, where the coexistence of figures, words, and heterogeneous materials, defined by Lyotard as "monograms,"[53] is seamlessly given: the relationship between the textual dimension and the figurative one does not present any kind of hierarchy and the painting is as much to be seen as it is to be read, while failing to suggest an unambiguous interpretation of what is shown.

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51 Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 9.

52 See: J.-F. Lyotard, *Pour faire de ton fils un Baruchello,* in *L'Altra casa*, eds. G. Baruchello (Paris: Galilée, 1982); J.-F. Lyotard, "Essay on the Secret in Baruchello's work," in J. -F. Lyotard, *Miscellaneous Texts II: Contemporary Artists* (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 2012), 210–249.

53 J. F. Lyotard, *"Essay on the Secret in Baruchello's work,"* 217.

In this way, the "anamnesis of the visible," that takes place in Baruchello's works becomes also a "cartographic anamnesis:" this double anamnesis deconstructs and produces a meta-reflection on both the mechanisms of pictorial representation and the methods and rules of composition of the cartographic image. This discourse, which can be articulated in different ways to Baruchello's entire production as artist, is corroborated in this case by two particularly significant works in this regard: *La presqu'île intérieure* (*The interior paeninsula* Fig. 5, 1963) and *Rilievo ideale* (*Ideal relief* Fig. 6, 1965).

Fig. 3 *Gianfranco Baruchello, La presqu'île intérieure* (1963), Courtesy of Fondazione Baruchello (Rome)

Fig. 4 *Gianfranco Baruchello, Rilievo ideale* (1965), Courtesy of Fondazione Baruchello (Rome)

In the first case, the painting is a veritable map of a "peninsula" of interiority, whose diagrams, rather than clarifying the horizon of signification, multiply the possible senses. *The interior paeninsula* is a map of the oneiric work – of the painter, as well as of the viewer – which, however, does not attempt to signify this work unambiguously, but to show its irreducible equivocalness. This is a map that disorients and, as such, completely overturns the purpose of the cartographic device itself.

A similar discourse can be made in the case of *Ideal relief*: in this case, the base on which the monograms are represented is an actual model, representing a real relief. The deconstruction of the functions of mapping and control of space generally attributed to these spatial models is made possible by the introduction of "ideal" figures and signs on the surfaces of the relief that completely undermine its initial "space of representation." The model ceases to be a simple detector of the morphology of the territory, to become the theatre of the artist's and his interlocutors' unconscious. In both cases, the cartographies stop referring to real spatial referents, to turn towards potential spaces and relations, yet to be made, yet to be discovered.

Baruchello's works can then be seen as cartographies in two senses of the term: 1) because through the creation of these libidinal surfaces they open possible ways of inhabiting the world; 2) because the free mapping of these surfaces does not only create space, but also time: the viewers, in fact, freely establish their own paths, creating their own memories and stories. As libidinal set-ups, Baruchello's cartographies are also figural surfaces, through which the mapping impulse, as "cartographic anamnesis," becomes a creative, libidinal process, contingent and free. In this sense, as stated by the art critic Dore Ashton, Baruchello, "who is once again being consulted both in his capacity as thinker and his capacity as shaper,"[54] can be seen as a "new Mercator," which also invites his spectators to become "new Mercators" on their turn. It is cartography, this time, to be overturned and to become something else. The working-through process of the space of representation Baruchello also inherits from Mercator's cartography is the result of the anamnesis that invests at the same time the pictorial object *and* the cartographical device: it does not only put into question the world, through the instruments and the devices thanks to it is conceived and thought, but it invites also to the creation of alternative models of acquisition of knowledges and thoughts: in other words, working through our ways of seeing and conceptualizing the world, *it creates worlds*.

54 D. Ashton, "Gianfranco Baruchello," in *Baruchello: Certain ideas*, eds. A. B. Oliva, C. Subrizi, D. Luckow, P. Weibel & H. Falckenberg (Milan: Electa, 2014), 345.

5. Conclusions

In this contribution, I have highlighted the importance of reflection on spatiality in Lyotard. I then showed how, in postmodern geography, Soja's proposal for a "reassertion of space" includes among its objectives the critique and rethinking of modern cartographic production systems. I went on to show how, in the contemporary practice, it has been counter-cartographic practices that have developed this project, following a process interpretable through Lyotard's notion of "anamnesis." Seeking to show the continuity between the various phases of Lyotardian thought and highlighting the points of contact between this notion and those of "libidinal set-up" and "figural," I introduced the notion of "cartographic anamnesis." Using Lyotardian methods and categories, I have shown how the notion of "cartographic anamnesis" works, first using two examples drawn from the history of medieval cartography, then two "cartographic paintings" by the artist Gianfranco Baruchello.

The cartographic anamnesis concern first and foremost the relationship between the visible and readable dimensions of the map, then between the space that serves as its referent and the user, and finally between the plurality of actors involved in its use. "Cartographic anamnesis" does not therefore take place only from an aesthetic or visual point of view, but also from a technical, historical, and spatial point of view.

In conclusion, in the infinite ways in which cartographic anamnesis allows us to deconstruct our "spaces of representation," we can discover and invent new ones, not only to imagine our living spaces differently, but also to inhabit them.

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