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The spaces of 'Deep Mapping': A partial account

ABSTRACT

This article sets out an understanding of the emergent practices collectively referred to as 'deep mapping'. It adopts Mike Pearson's view that the optimal deep mapping takes 'region as its optic' (2006), while also recognizing the value of smaller-scale approaches. It draws on Kenneth Frampton's Critical Regionalism to underpin deep mapping's environmental and social dimensions and provide a productive counterpoint to its ethno-autographic element and its focus on a 'militant particularism' able to facilitate 'the passage from memory to hope, from past to future' (Harvey 1996). Critical Regionalism is taken here as a 'post-disciplinary' poetics that interweaves a multiplicity of 'creative' and 'scientific' material to enact, in the socio-geographical domain, John Wylie's understanding that 'landscape is tension' (2007). Deep mapping is presented as offering a multidimensional understanding of place that enacts these tensions through our engagement with a second, specifically cultural, space-between, understood here as a metaxy. It is only in this space that we are able to put into practice Geraldine Finn's insight that, while we cannot do without categorical thinking, 'we are always both more and less than the categories that name and divide us' (1996). The argument put forward here locates this active social space between the institutional worlds of art and of the university as that with which deep mapping specifically engages as a discrete practice. It posits that an 'open' deep mapping draws on the resources 'managed' by each institutional world so as to maintain a critical solicitude towards both professional worlds while remaining non-aligned with the presuppositions of either.

KEYWORDS

deep mapping
Critical Regionalism
metaxy
place
institutions
essayng

1. The understanding of ecological order assumed in this article is broadly that set out by Thomas Princen in his *Treading Softly: Paths to Ecological Order* (2010).

The first half of the article consists of a discussion of the contexts and contingencies that frame the position adopted, and then offers a necessarily partial account of the emergence of deep mapping. The second part locates deep mapping in relation to a variety of cultural positions and social concerns, drawing on feminist critiques of what Geraldine Finn refers to as 'high-altitude thinking' to configure it as a post-disciplinary, multi-media approach analogous to that of the feminist reconfiguration of the essay.

PART ONE: A PARTIAL ACCOUNT

It might even be a good idea to stir up competition between conceptual and imaginative activity. In any case, all efforts to make them cooperate are doomed to disappointment. The image cannot give matter to the concept; the concept, by giving stability to the image, would stifle its existence.

Gaston Bachelard (in Gaudin 1994: 6)

INTRODUCTION

This article is intended to generate discussion of deep mapping, which I believe to be particularly able to contribute to effecting the social, economic and cultural transformations necessary for a new ecological order.¹ As such, it seeks to promote a critical poetics that addresses the relationship between image and concept in a non-hierarchical manner, and in terms of the social and environmental context implicit in Critical Regionalism. As a consequence of doing so, it draws attention to the increasingly negative effects of certain fundamental presuppositions underpinning the institutions of art and the university. I will proceed by clarifying the emergence, particularities and cultural position of deep mapping.

In the arts, humanities and in the various academic disciplines linked by landscape studies, the term deep mapping refers to two fairly distinct types of place-based practice. While both aim to creatively blend or weave together a diverse range of material generated by fieldwork and scholarly research, they differ in drawing on distinct combinations of traditions in literary, performance-based or visual arts, and by privileging different research approaches. However, deep mapping aims, broadly speaking, to engage with, narrate and evoke 'place' in temporal depth by bringing together a multiplicity of voices, information, impressions and perspectives as a basis for a new connectivity. I will argue here that 'open' deep mapping interweaves image and concept to work in and with the 'curious space between wonder and thought', recognizing this space as vital to 'a knowledgeable and impassioned engagement with the world', and, in turn, that this requires an approach in which 'there is no single Disciplinary (in an academic sense) voice' (Harrison et al. 2004: 7). In addition to beginning the task of providing a more adequate account of deep mapping, the article speculatively indicates what such mapping might do.

That deep mapping has potentialities that extend beyond its immediate practice has been demonstrated by the impact of exchanges undertaken at the University of Minnesota in 2007 that explored parallels between it

and ethno-geographical work on 'spectral traces' (Jonker and Till 2009; Till 2008). The immediate impetus for this article is, however, the need to clarify for myself, for co-investigators and graduate students issues relating to two current deep mapping projects. The first is an Economic and Social Research Council-funded deep mapping project concerned with older people's 'connectivity' to rural north Cornwall, located within the research programme: *A Grey and Pleasant Land? An Interdisciplinary Exploration of the Connectivity of Older People in Rural Civic Society*. The second is an incipient deep mapping of the specific social and physical spaces inhabited by my chronically sick daughter and by our family as her carers, as located within an informal network of others in similar situations. I am particularly indebted in what follows to Jane Bailey, an artist and doctoral student working on the north Cornwall project, and to Antony Lyons, Victoria Walters and the PLaCE reading group who have debated with me the topics under consideration here.

2. My use of 'discipline' here relates to institutional orientations, and I am aware that the term has very different connotations for different people (see Princen 2010: 95–96).

AN INITIAL CONTEXT

There is currently no overview of the various strands of deep mapping, no consensus as to the processes it involves, and no substantive body of critical reflection upon it. In addition to its relatively recent emergence, this situation appears to stem in large part from two factors: that it engages with the region and the local at a time when the 'quality' of cultural and academic output is measured in international or global terms; and because of uncertainty about the term in different geographical, creative and intellectual contexts.

In North America and in environmental circles deep mapping usually refers to an environmentally oriented literature (which may extend into radio or the photo essay) dealing exhaustively with a local or regional site and often linked to 'vertical' or 'deep' travel writing. In Britain, and in performance and archaeological circles internationally, the term refers to a site-based performance practice – also known as 'theatre/archaeology' or 'performance archaeology' – originating with Mike Pearson, Michael Shanks, Clifford McLucas and the radical Welsh performance group *Brith Gof*. The work of members of this group developed different trajectories after McLucas' untimely death. Pearson continues to develop site-based performances that work 'horizontally across the terrain and simultaneously vertically through time', becoming 'a topographical phenomenon of both natural history and local history' (Pearson 2006: 3), while Shanks engages in an expanded archaeology. The term is also used by a variety of visual and digital artists to describe their own landscape or place-oriented work and concerns. Arguably then, we now need a more nuanced and reflexive account of deep mapping so as to develop a clearer understanding of its internal dynamics and limitations. Some of the issues at stake here can be illustrated as follows.

Michael Shanks, now the Omar and Althea Hoskins Professor of Classical Archaeology at Stanford University, is best known for his development, with Christopher Tilley, of 'post-processualism' and interpretive archaeology. This development chimed closely with that of deep mapping. However, his approach to deep mapping appears predicated on, and intended to privilege, the discipline of archaeology – albeit often conceptualized 'as a mode of cultural production' or 'cultural poetics' (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 50). The 'disciplinary'² foundation of Shanks' thinking is apparent in his claim that 'we are all archaeologists now' and his characterization of the arts and humanities

3. From Shanks (2006). For an analysis of the 'disciplinary politics' involved in an Apollonian location of the arts as 'a laboratory', see Biggs (2009: 25).
4. I do not doubt that archaeologists such as Michael Shanks 'listen to landscapes' and test the boundaries between their discipline, geography and anthropology in diverse ways (Hicks et al. 2007: 13). They nonetheless listen and test as *archaeologists*, rather than as 'complex nucleic entities' (De Ville 1994: 101).
5. Helen Douglas' *Wild Wood* offers a visual deep mapping based on the Carrifan wildwood renewal project and the ancient woods at Deuchar and Tinnis Stiel in Yarrow, remnants of the original Ettrick forest region in which she grew up. She engages with the landscape of the Borders ballads as a site 'of imagination writhing with memories, creatures, villains, and half-buried cultural shards awaiting discovery' (Hillman 2004: 78). For further discussion of this book, see Biggs (2007).
6. The term *metaxy* is understood here as the *between-space* of 'imagining, of image-making, of bottomless speculation and reverie' that Peter Bishop proposes is common to both geography 'after modernism' and to psychoanalysis (Bishop 1992: 9).
7. This initiative led to Situationism. Two implications of the overlap between this and deep mapping Situationism are worth mentioning here. The first is the adoption of

as a 'fascinating research laboratory'.³ The Apollonian presuppositions underpinning this 'disciplinary' approach to deep mapping⁴ are, in my view, finally incompatible with 'open' deep mapping as a knowledgeable, passionate, polyvocal engagement with the world. The 'disciplinary' perspective or 'voice', by dint of its being wholly embedded within the institutional mindset of the university, lacks the necessary flexibility to locate itself, in actuality, 'between wonder and thought'. It is unable, that is, to build 'a superstructure of psychic geography' on such 'simplicities' as the wordplay based on similarity in sound between 'Orkades' (the Orkney islands) and Orcus or Hades (Davidson 2005: 26); or to respond to an apparently mundane landscape by deep mapping the coincidence of specific internal and external localities, as Helen Douglas does in *Wild Wood* (1999).⁵ In short, it remains positioned within the bounds of a formal inter-discursive space, academically understood, rather than undertaking the existential risks inherent in entering the space of *metaxy*.⁶ (I will return to this issue later in the article).

As already indicated, in North America and in environmental circles deep mapping is usually understood to refer to an engaged form of documentary literature with its own particular critical and regionalist contexts (see, for example, Powell 2007; Maher 2005a, 2005b; Herr 1996). Its geographical location, longer historical tradition and the degree of critical attention afforded it clearly differentiate it from other approaches grounded in performance or the visual arts, which until recently have attracted less attention (but see Turner 2004; Heddon 2002; Kaye 2000).

A more adequate account of deep mapping will need to link the 'older' North American literary and environmental understanding of the term with relevant performance and visual arts practice in North America; the trajectories of the two 'traditions' initiated in Wales; and the productive overlap between site-specific performance art (Kaye 2000), traditions of Psychogeography as this derives from the Lettrist International⁷ in the 1950s; and other forms of predominantly rural deep mapping. It will also need to note that awareness of deep mapping has reached a wider public through references in novels, for example, *The Testament of Gideon Mack* (Robertson 2007).

THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

'Deep maps will be slow – they will naturally move at a speed of landform or weather' (McLucas 2).⁸ Here Clifford McLucas identifies a defining characteristic of deep mapping with significant implications for its relationship to the institutions of art and academic research. As an often slow, complex and 'unending' process that normally requires a range of critical and creative perspectives, specialist materials (if only those held in university libraries) and the kind of time, expertise and often technology that require substantive funding, deep mapping does not sit well with the emphasis on constant visibility increasingly required of the arts practitioner (or, indeed, the increasing demand for rapid turnover of research outputs in universities). While the financial support provided by cultural and academic institutions provides both vital time and facilitation at one level, the conditions attached to such support are increasingly a major challenge for deep mapping at another. For example, while the traditions of deep mapping allow practitioners to draw productively on a wide range of orientations to help them keep their approach to disciplinary categories open and non-aligned, this flexibility increasingly clashes with institutional requirements. (Self-supporting individuals or groups

working entirely outside the context of institutional funding can avoid this problem, but instead face issues about the necessary range and complexity of conceptual, critical and practical resources required for deep mapping).

Most deep mapping is currently in a situation not unlike that of depth psychology prior to Freud's instigation of the purge of 'wild psychoanalysis' in 1910 so as to establish its orthodoxy as a science, with all the concomitant professional and economic rewards that would follow. The development of 'open' or 'non-aligned' deep mapping is increasingly likely to be subjected to institutional pressure to reconfigure itself on a disciplinary basis, and for similar reasons. Managing the necessary tensions between creative 'closeness' to place and the distance given by informed disciplinary critique; between the 'local' perspective and the 'outside' view; between the priorities of auto-ethnographic particularities and those of institutional norms – processes all vitally necessary to deep mapping – is becoming increasingly difficult. In large part this is due to the fact that both artists and academics are increasingly subject to the accelerating process of 'symbolic arrest', resulting from the substitution of managerial strategies for vital life practices in our culture as a whole (Crowther 2009: 136). This process manifests itself in the requirements of audit, and of defining and justifying work within strict institutional parameters in conformity to government directive. In such circumstances 'open' forms of deep mapping will come under increasing institutional scrutiny and intervention. Individuals and groups will be required to locate themselves ever more strictly in accordance with those disciplinary or cultural norms that receive official approbation and the funding that follows it. Failure to conform will put increasingly elusive funding and/or employment at risk. Variants of deep mapping that are less 'visible' in conventional disciplinary terms, less well theoretically articulated, or less professionally or institutionally embedded will thus be marginalized or suppressed.

To preserve 'open' deep mapping – valuable in part precisely because it *does not* simply conform to the institutional presuppositions of either the university or art world – we need to build strategic alliances between institutionally based and freelance practitioners. We need an expanded account of deep mapping that stresses its *varied*, *provisional* and *inclusive* (indeed protean) nature to help negotiate such alliances. Educationally, we need to argue for the qualities of a 'non-aligned' form of deep mapping on the grounds that it constructs scenarios in which we can see ourselves 'not in terms of a one-dimensional world of opposing terms but rather as complex nucleic entities' (De Ville 1994: 101). All of which requires identifying the distinctiveness of deep mapping, which in part derives from its engaging 'the insider and outsider', 'the amateur and the professional, the artist and the scientist, the official and the unofficial' (McLucas 6 and 7). Additionally, because all deep mappings are fundamentally collaborative in a sense, as I will clarify below, they have particular potential for engagements with memory that might 'move beyond claims to interdisciplinarity within academia' by demonstrating how we might better 'develop more socially responsible research practices' (Till 2008: 98).

In what follows, I am critical of the networks of authorization that 'manage' the work of those in the arts and university sector in ways some readers may regard as unduly 'negative'. My understanding here draws on both my doctoral analysis of the politics of art practice-led research (Biggs 2009) and my involvement in challenges to psychiatric, State-sanctioned interventions into the treatment of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis sufferers (Boulton 2008) – profoundly damaging interventions dependent on the most cynical and self-interested complicity of academic and medical institutions.⁹ Given the current

processes very similar to the Situationist group *dérive* (Carari 2002) as a practical approach to engaging with rural landscapes. The second is the rejection of 'strong' claims concerning authorship, still a cornerstone in the economics of the arts. This rejection is particularly relevant to group-based deep mapping (rather than forms based on auto-ethnography), where different individuals contribute different perspectives and practices. As with Situationism, the adoption of a common level of *shared awareness* (rather than of a dominant disciplinary perspective) becomes central to any coherent cross-referencing of diverse material and to a shared understanding of the networks of connectivity revealed.

8. All quotations from Clifford McLucas in this article are taken from McLucas (2010). Quotations are referenced using the author's name and the number of the statement referred to.
9. See <http://www.meactionuk.org.uk/magical-medicine.pdf>

10. For information on these books, see Wild Conversations Press at <http://www.wildconversations.isophia.co.uk/index.html>. For web material, see LAND2 at <http://www.land2.uwe.ac.uk/>
11. This concept is explored more fully in my forthcoming chapter: Biggs (2010)
12. The task of constructing such an account will be substantially facilitated by doctoral work currently being undertaken on the archive of McLucas' work in the National Library of Wales by Rowan O'Neill at the University of Aberystwyth.

social and environmental crisis generated by the practices of global capitalism and the cult of possessive individualism, a 'negative' orientation – or more accurately a hard-won realism – is arguably the proper response to a managerial politics in which an uncritical 'positive thinking' is increasingly a mandatory requirement of employment (Ehrenreich 2009).

DEEP MAPPING AND CONTINGENCY

This article argues that 'open' deep mapping offers a creative prophylactic against 'high-altitude thinking forgetful of its contingent roots in particular persons, places, and times' (Finn 1996: 137). Consequently I need to indicate something of the contingencies that inform the article itself.

I studied 'fine art' at a university (unusual for Britain in the late 1960s), taking supplementary studies in English literature and the history and philosophy of science. After initially teaching in Further Education, I have worked in Higher Education for over 25 years. I make 'expanded' collaborative book works combining creative and scholarly texts with a range of graphic, cartographic and photographic images and, more recently, related time-based material on CD or DVD, some of which also appears on line. In 1999, I began *The Sowden Project* in the former parish of Southdean, located just North of the English Scottish border. This uses the Border ballad *Tam Lin* to initiate an exploration of networked places and has generated four published works and various web based manifestations.¹⁰ Although I would now see this as a deep mapping project, I was unaware of the term before meeting Mike Pearson on the AHRC-funded *Living in a Material World: performativities of emptiness* research network in 2007. I then began to explore the synergies and differences between his position and my own. The concept of 'essaying' used here in relation to deep mapping draws on material tested during a workshop I organized for that network.¹¹

A PARTIAL AND INDICATIVE ACCOUNT OF DEEP MAPPING

This section provides a partial (in both senses of that term) account of deep mapping. It is animated by my interest in the work of Mike Pearson and Clifford McLucas. (McLucas trained as an architect but might best be regarded as a site-specific, multi-media arts practitioner).¹² However, I am well aware of the importance of the environmental North American tradition that sees a literary deep mapping originating with Wallace Stegner's *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier*. (Although it might be possible to argue for Henry David Thoreau's *Walden: Or, Life in the Woods* as a prototypical deep mapping). *Wolf Willow* was first published in 1955 and is often linked to bioregions as espoused by such figures as the archeologist/poet/environmentalist Gary Snyder.

Stegner's text weaves together fiction and nonfiction, history and impressions of the natural world, childhood remembrance and adult reflection on that childhood. Its underlying implication is that Americans cannot know what wilderness has meant to them unless they share the guilt of wasteful and ignorant tampering with it in the name of progress so that, in consequence, the fulfilment of the American Dream must result in the loss of the qualities Americans idealize in wilderness.

In 1991 William Least Heat-Moon (born William Lewis Trogon in 1939) published *PrairieErth (a deep map)*, an exploration of Chase County, Kansas, as the last remaining expanse of tall-grass prairie in the United States. This

can be read as a substantive adjustment to Stegner's approach, developing environmental concerns in the context of 'participatory history'. It avoids conventionally limited regionalist positions by deploying a formal playfulness that is indebted to Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Least Heat-Moon is a critically reflexive writer whose tensioning of perspectives is analogous to that found in the Critical Regionalism of Kenneth Frampton (1988, 1985). The book employs a variety of scientifically informed reference points and processes that sharpen an already acute attention to the present and historical region, while locating these in terms of the concrete specifics of the particularities of a critical auto-ethnography. The resulting tensions provide the basis for a wide-ranging environmental mediation that draws on both the value of enchantment and the ecological function of loss and absence in equal measure. This distances the book from the tropes of nostalgia and guilt central to Stegner's text. The term deep mapping appeared at some point after the publication of this text – Michael Shanks has claimed that he and Mike Pearson 'invented' the concept of the deep map in 1994 '(after William Least Heat-Moon)'.¹³

At this point, I want to introduce two indicative examples of material that complicates the current division of deep mapping on the basis of geography and creative discipline. The first is a defuse body of writing that would include John Copper Powys's *Wolf Solent* (1929) and *A Glastonbury Romance* (1933), Tim Robinson's *Stones of Aran* (1985) and, more peripherally, Peter Davidson's *The Idea of the North* (2005), all examples of different forms of literary 'telling' of place relevant to a fuller understanding of deep mapping. These suggest that literary deep mapping is an international phenomenon, an important point in relation to its location with regard to Critical Regionalism.

The second example is more oblique. Rebecca Solnit parallels the element in *PrairyErth* that challenges the basic presuppositions underpinning the usual relationship between literary and visual arts on one hand and environmental concerns on the other. She does so by critiquing assumptions about the relationship between creation and landscape that go back to the Book of Genesis, assumptions shared by much mainstream Euro-American environmental thinking and related art. She contrasts these assumptions with approaches that, like 'Native American creation stories', present 'a world-view in which creation of the world is often continual and sometimes comic improvisation, without initial perfection or a subsequent fall' (Solnit 2001: 12). Thus, I read Solnit's 'updating' of Least Heat-Moon's interactions with Native Americans and their mythology as providing an alternative orientation for deep mapping.¹⁴ This is apparent in Solnit's debt to the work of the artist Lewis DeSoto (1994), himself a descendent of Cahuilla Indians, and particularly to his *Tahualtapa Project*, undertaken between 1983 and 1988.

The *Tahualtapa Project* is an American example of visual arts work that parallels the emergence of a non-literary deep mapping in Wales.¹⁵ It documents, reflects on and evokes the complex and multiple cultural and material shifts associated with the mountain originally known as 'The Hill of the Ravens' in Cahuilla lore; tracing its transformation through the Spanish period to finally become 'Mount Slover', a site subject to massive intervention by the mining industry. The installed project (now in the Seattle Art Museum) offers an exemplary deep map that 'tells', through the combination of a variety of media and perspectives, how this particular portion of the earth has been used and regarded by different peoples. Solnit's detailed engagement with this work is, I would suggest, relevant to an understanding of the ways in

13. See Shanks (2006).

14. I am unable to ascertain whether Solnit is familiar with *PrairyErth*. It is likely that she draws on a range of sources in this respect.

15. Other examples would be Houston Conwill's 1992 installation *The New Merengue and Marlene Creates' ethnographically inflected Places of Presence: Newfoundland Kin and Ancestral Land, Newfoundland, made between 1989 and 1991*, both of which have a substantive collaborative element.

16. Lyons' statement concerning his practice, its background and the network of collaborative and other work within which it is embedded, is, in my view, typical in being located between a range of disciplines and orientations. See Lyons (2010)

which it anticipates the 'open' deep mapping I argue for in the second half of this article.

Arguably then, Lewis DeSoto's *Tahualtapa Project* parallels the emergence of 'performance/archaeology' from Mike Pearson's involvement with the Cardiff Laboratory Theatre and the 'theatre anthropology' of Eugenio Barba's *Odin Teatret*, which toured Wales in 1980. In 1981 Pearson co-founded *Brith Gof* with Lis Hughes Jones, becoming its first artistic director. *Brith Gof* is internationally acknowledged as pioneering experimental performance dealing with place, identity and the role of the presence of the past in strategies of cultural resistance and community construction. In 1988, Clifford McLucas' joining the company shifted it to more explicitly site-specific work. Shanks and Pearson's reading of *PrairyErth* in the early 1990s extended both their training as archaeologists and their understanding of the particularities of place articulated by the Welsh terms *yr aelwyd* (the hearth), *y filltir sqwar* (the square mile), *yo fro* (neighbourhood, home district, heimat), and *cynefin* (habitat) (Pearson 2006: 14). Subsequently, *Brith Gof* produced powerful and flexible multi-media performances on a range of scales that engaged with 'the matrix of particular folds and creases, the vernacular detail, which attaches us to place' (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 138–139); a practice that, in retrospect, can be seen to parallel and particularize academic expositions of place from cultural, philosophical and geographical perspectives (Lippard 1997; Casey 1993; Massey 1994).

A major example of Pearson's work post-*Brith Gof* is documented in his *'In Comes I': Performance, Memory and Landscape* (2006). Here he draws on the broadly based cultural thinking of Raymond Williams as much as on the archaeological, 'disciplinary' thinking he shared earlier with Michael Shanks. The concerns of a number of contemporary visual artists or artist performance groups – Simon Whitehead, Lone Twin, Wrights and Sites, and Tim Brennan, for example – converge in certain respects with Pearson's position in this book and there are also commonalities with the various psychogeographies of Iain Sinclair, Peter Ackroyd and W G Sebald. However, Pearson's approach to place-based performance and his close attention to the scars, failures and double meanings that haunt the excavation and archiving of all our life performances – like his deep commitment to Welsh culture with its particular linguistic sensitivity to matters pertaining to place – continue to be both exemplary and to challenge any easy categorization of his work.

A representative selection of current deep mapping activity would far exceed the space available here and I will restrict myself to two further examples. The artist and scientist Antony Lyons exemplifies the diversity of approaches brought to deep mapping. He describes the basis for his interest and engagement as being twenty years experience in addressing the water environment that of a geologist/geophysicist. He writes of his practice – as much concerned with paths as places – that he 'seeks to incorporate aspects of the substructures, undercurrents and grain of the land', and indicates, in terms closer to arts usage, that he does so in such a way that 'the site and context determines the choice of medium. Processes of discovery and mutation are set in motion, occupying the borderlands between the geo-sciences, landscape design, archaeology, art'.¹⁶ Sue Palmer, on the other hand, engages in a spectrum of activity related to both community site-based art practice and deep mapping. She has recently worked collaboratively to explore way finding through Taunton town centre, studying the river, the canal, public spaces and other routes to produce creative responses through maps, diagrams, images

and short videos. *Transcience* – an exploration of migratory and transitory paths made by humans and non-humans across the Neroche landscape in the Blackdown Hills on the Somerset-Devon border – is by contrast a digitally-articulated deep map.¹⁷

PART TWO: 'OPEN' DEEP MAPPING AS 'ESSAYING'

'OPEN' DEEP MAPPING AS A SPACE-BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL WORLDS

What cultural space does deep mapping itself occupy? Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks argue that, in the final stage of theatre/archaeology, the two disciplines are no longer discrete: 'They coexist within a *blurred genre* [...] or a science/fiction, a mixture of narration and scientific practices, an integrated approach to recording, writing and illustrating the material past' (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 131).

I want to argue here that 'open' deep mapping results not from the blurring of two disciplines to create a new, hybrid third, but rather from an *interweaving* of many disparate, tensioned strands of experience, genres, knowledge positions and narrative perspectives. These produce a meaningful patterning while remaining discrete threads within that larger whole. In addition to engaging with the specifics of a geographically located place *in* that place, deep mapping is also carried out *in*, and mediates *across*, a particular and specific social/cultural space. It thus leads us to an encounter with 'place' in multiple senses that cannot be reduced to any single disciplinary perspective.

The non-literal 'space' encountered through deep mapping is that in which the relationship between officially sanctioned bodies of knowledge and particular and local bodily experiences is managed through categories that transmit institutional norms. Norms that are: 'always in some sense and to some extent grounded in and motivated by [...] assumptions about the nature, value, and meaning of power in general and our own relationship to it in particular' (Finn 1996: 169). This is the socially constructed 'categorical space' that, for example, organizes how persons are constructed as 'patients', allocated a medical or psychiatric diagnosis of their particular experience (always 'both more and less than' its diagnostic categorization) on which an assigned 'treatment' is prescribed. This example should remind us of the nature of the categorical space specific to our society; an 'exclusive' space specific to, and thus heavily protected by, institutionalized professions that must guard against its reconfiguration as *metaxy*. That is, as a *between-space* where given categories and concepts are contested through imagining and image making in an endless process of speculation and reverie (Bishop 1992: 9), a process thus able to unsettle the categorical assumptions that underpin institutional power.

My differentiation between 'open' and 'disciplinary' deep mapping thus rests on a particular interpretation of the 'katachrestic'¹⁸ approach to *metaxy* in theatre/archaeology (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 131). What is at stake here is our ability to *imagine differently* two currently polarized ways of knowing the world – typically generalized in terms of the 'objectivity' of science (or in this context the social sciences) and the 'subjective' nature of art – two orientations of knowledge and knowing that are the warp and weft through which the richer patterning of 'open' deep mapping is woven. It follows then that 'open' deep mapping performs a 'non-aligned' weaving of attention *to* and intuitive aesthetic knowing *of* 'concrete particulars' on the one hand; and of critical discriminations based on 'categorical understanding' on the other. The

17. A summary of these projects can be found at <http://www.biggerhouse.co.uk/sue/index.htm>

18. In his more recent statements, Michael Shanks takes this term to refer to 'the forced juxtaposition of evidences that have no intrinsic connection' and as relating to a process of 'metamorphosis or decomposition' intended to produce 'amalgams or connections [...] where there probably should be none'; and states that his primary concern is not 'an epistemological one' (Shanks 2006). My understanding here, however, is epistemological in the sense of being concerned with subverting 'high-altitude' thinking, following feminists for whom catachresis applies to the mismatch between the use of master categories that designate and discipline us and our being 'always both more and less than the categories that name and divide us' (Finn 1996: 171).

19. The reductive nature of these characterizations, while ignoring some of their positive benefits, enables me to draw attention to their often overlooked deficiencies.
20. This often refers to the 'sexing up' of research projects for the general public, particularly 'interdisciplinary' work funded by scientific or medical initiatives. It derives from an article by Carl Bagley and Mary Beth Cancienne (Bagley and Cancienne 2001).

first offers a 'relatively unencumbered access to [...] the creative imagination and insight into concrete particulars that as yet porous and inchoate boundaries [...] afford' (Piper 2009: 196); the second provides the basis for reimagining social cohesion grounded in 'conventional empirical categories' (Piper 2009: 203). It is deep mapping's task to treat a wide range of normally distinct and sometimes opposed experiences and categories – framed as 'objective fact' and 'artistic intuition' – as to a degree porous and interdependent, and so to unsettle the institutional territories predicated upon them. It is in this respect that deep mapping makes contributions to a new ecology of embodied knowing.

As already indicated, to work in the particular *metaxy* identified here is specifically to contest the boundaries between what Irit Rogoff refers to as two distinct, if ultimately virtual, 'territories' (Rogoff 2000: 122). The 'territory' of the university, understood here as the privileged site for the production, evaluation and management of categorical knowledge; and the art world, understood here as the privileged site for categorizing and managing those practices that engage with 'concrete particulars' so as to renew or sharpen our intuitive and aesthetic knowing.¹⁹ These 'territories' – or more specifically institutionally sanctioned networks engaged in categorical authorizations – possess distinct social locations, internal cultures and linguistic traditions. They are also characterized by a sometimes-vehement sense of their own exclusivity, unsurprisingly, given the economic and social capital invested in these discursively managed territories, and the instability of the economic climate in which they operate. That 'open' deep mapping works *between* and *across* their boundaries as a non-aligned practice is socially significant in the following way.

Any epistemological shift in our social self-understanding as a culture is also registered as a readjustment in the relationship between the 'spheres of influence' of these two heavily 'managed' territories, which embody and enact the fundamentally binary structuring of that culture. While degrees of territorial exclusivity have always been central to the authority and economic *realpolitik* of both the university and the art world, this exclusivity has become deeply problematic. The fact that these authorizing networks slavishly conform to the 'business as usual' assumptions of global capitalism works against the development of new cultural and social ecologies. We now urgently require ecologies of knowing, feeling and experience able to relate radically different fields of knowledge and social and personal concern so as to provide for new social – and not simply technological – responses to environmental change. The exclusionary mentalities and territorial imperatives of the university and the art world as discursively managed networks increasingly prevent this, despite such phenomena as 'environmental art', 'relational aesthetics' and the recent growth in inter- and trans- disciplinary work (which all too often serves as a cover for disciplinary neo-colonialism or a means to 'dance the data').²⁰ 'Open' deep mapping is evoked here as a substantive potential contribution to facilitating a new ecology of thinking, albeit one currently predicated on working with 'the fragmentary, the anecdotal, the overheard, the mistranslated, the half-understood, the appropriated' (Pearson 2006: 146).

The grounds for the complex relationship between 'open' deep mapping and the exclusive territories of art and the university as outlined above is suggested by Joanna Drucker's observation that art is:

both what it claims to be (independent thought, discrete from other forms of cultural expression, a separate domain of alternative values)

and what it pretends not to be (bound up with values of the status quo and the ideological system that sustains it).

(Drucker 2005: 17)

(A variant of this insight pertains equally to the university). The polyvocal weaving of multiple perspectives central to 'open' deep mapping offers the basis for a Janus-headed critical solicitude – facing towards the art world from the perspective of critical scholarship and towards the university – and in particular the social sciences – from that of the intuition and aesthetic knowing that art can facilitate. This critical solicitude seeks to keep open both worlds as *metaxies*, while simultaneously challenging the masking, through 'high-altitude' discourse, of the fact that their much vaunted autonomy has long been co-opted by a managerial culture oriented to 'the unpredictable and always shifting contingencies of international markets and the exigencies of a capitalism that has gone global' (Finn 1996: 124). This non-aligned critical solicitude also serves a psychosocial need. The difficulties of our current cultural situation are exacerbated by the fact that both 'territories' are increasingly populated by persons who are *actually* (and not just theoretically nominated as) 'decentred, fragmented, nomadic subjects with no common sense (*sens commun*) other than the non-sense (the arbitrary *sens*) of their present and the indeterminacy and undecidability of the future' (Finn 1996: 128). A professional class that, as Finn demonstrates, has a deep-seated psychological investment in generating and expanding the authority of particular 'high-altitude' discourses.²¹

21. This might be argued both on the level of content and, as Laurence Spurling suggests, in terms of a 'fascination' with theory as a psychological defence against both psychosis and death (Spurling 1993: 13–15).

In this context, it is no coincidence that the dominant discourse around site-specific art now argues that the concrete specifics of place as site are to be regarded as secondary to the 'positions' that artworks discursively produce and then occupy. Positions that are accessible only via the discrete, disciplinarily determined categories, judgements and values arbitrated by precisely that same professional elite. It is in this context that Miwon Kwon states that it is 'historically inevitable' that 'we' will abandon what she refers to as 'the nostalgic notion of a site and identity as essentially bound to the physical actualities of a place' (2002: 164). In addition to any concern about the problematic removal of 'the corporeal trace of history, politics and other ideological texts' this position entails, and its resulting categorical opposing of discourse and matter (Sholette 1998: 47), we might want to question the casual inclusivity of Kwon's 'we'?

As early as 1992, Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lafaivre identified the institutionalized 'forgetfulness' that, ten years later, informs Kwon's rejection of Critical Regionalism (Kwon 2002: 164). They point out that, while Critical Regionalism may have been ineffectual 'in establishing "placeness", and in sustaining community' in European and North American contexts (Tzonis and Lafaivre 1992: 19), it has been effective in doing so elsewhere (Tzonis et al. 2001). They implicitly locate, that is, Kwon's 'forgetfulness' of the contingencies of her own particular geopolitical and economic location. Kwon herself indicates what is at stake here when observing that: 'for many of my art and academic friends, the success and viability of one's work are now measured by the accumulation of frequent flyer miles' (2002: 156). This observation precisely identifies a specific manifestation of the conformity of a cultural and intellectual elite to the values of an economic order that refuses to compromise any facet of its own accumulation of status and wealth in the face of growing environmental need. In the context of the culture of 'possessive individualism'

to which I will refer later, it is indicative that Kwon's reservations about being in what she describes as 'the "wrong" place' – one produced by the globalization required by an ever-expanding capitalist order – are couched in terms of the balancing of personal enjoyment over against cultural and economic reward (2002: 156–157).

I have argued elsewhere (Biggs 2001) that the presuppositions underpinning statements such as Kwon's constitute a specific mentality – the 'metropolitan localism' particular to the managerial elite of the global economy. The identity position of 'critical' cultural workers competing for dominance in this global economy is currently theorized in a variety of ways – as that of 'nomad', 'migrant', 'itinerant', 'radicant', etc. These theorizations provide them with a particular sense of 'at-home-ness' in relation to the values, practices and lifestyle choices of that elite. An at-home-ness grounded in the discursive logic of a global culture and institutional networks located, for the most part, in metropolitan environments where transnational professional identities can be played out with maximum efficacy.

While these observations are important to contextualize the need for deep mapping, this is not the place to examine the psychic particularities of such identity positions. However, we might note that to dismiss as 'nostalgic' those who hold to notions of identity bound to the physical actualities of a place is to disregard the vital importance of such identities to sustaining traditional small-scale farming practices across the world. Practices upon which we are all likely, without exception, to become increasingly dependent for the basic necessities of life as global mass food production falters.

I suggest that it is because of its conformity to the mentality, values and 'forgetfulness' of 'metropolitan localism' that so much contemporary art production has now been reconfigured as:

a primarily 'managerial' phenomenon, in other words, reduced to its position and use in the art world – something whose meaning is in effect little more than the intersection of those critical, historical, curatorial, and administrative interests that are parasitic upon art practice.
(Crowther 2009: 133)

WHAT MIGHT 'OPEN' DEEP MAPPING DO – REGION, PLACE, AND SELF

In this and the following section, I imagine a future for 'open' deep mapping that works in and with two specific 'places', one physically grounded in a specific geography and the other engaged in the cultural and social *space-between* or *metaxy* discussed above. This speculative view draws on Critical Regionalism – a term coined by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lafaivre and developed as a critical 'place-conscious poetic' by Kenneth Frampton (1988 27). Critical Regionalism seeks to mediate between the impact of globalization and the concrete particularities of a particular place, reflecting on 'the way in which the species-being conceives of its relationship to nature, including its own nature', a debate in which a critical ecology provides both a natural limit to 'the myth of progress' and 'a new-found respect for the symbiotic limits of being and cosmos' (Frampton 1988: 65). My argument here builds on one presented elsewhere, namely that this place-conscious poetics has educational and cultural implications that exceed its original architectural context (Biggs 2001, 2000).

Region is an issue here in part because one of the contingencies that frame this article is my employment by a regional English university. The English bias in 'national' politics in Britain has ensured that the 'region' remains an under-developed concept in English historiography and in intellectual and cultural life generally (see, however, Allen et al. 1998). Traditionally England has had 'no regional historiography at all – that is, no established set of regional *problématiques*' (Fischer 1989: 788–789) and, in consequence, the *English* art world lacks any firm historical basis on which to engage with regional cultures. (The situation is clearly altogether different in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.) This long-standing cultural neglect of region is generally attributed to a 'bias [...] especially strong among middle-class Londoners (as it also tends to be in New Yorkers and Parisians), who divide their country into the 'metropolis' and the "provinces"' (Fischer 1989: 789). Deep mapping, understood here as specifically regional and primarily rural in focus,²² must by definition contest both this metropolitan bias and the 'high-altitude' thinking that masks its 'forgetfulness'. Arguably this bias is best contested in practice from the perspective of a mentality informed by Critical Regionalism – that of the 'local cosmopolitan' (Biggs 2001).

The 'open' deep mapping I argue for here understands 'place' from that position. Place is thus the *unstable intersection* of three distinct perspectives or accounts. First, a specific location or network of locations bodily experienced that, in consequence, always exceeding 'the ideal categories of thought within which we attempt to express and contain it' (Finn 1996: 171). Second, it is understood as 'taskscape' – as a pattern of dwelling identities with specific temporalities (Ingold 2000: 190). Finally, it is understood as 'storied' (Ingold 2000: 56) – as the 'simultaneity of stories so far' (Massey 2005: 9) specific to any 'place' in the two previous understandings; one that requires 'different *ways of telling* and different types of recording and inscription, which can incorporate different orders of narrative' (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 1310). Doreen Massey's influential conception of a 'global sense of place' (Massey 1995) is important in this unstable intersection, counterpointing Mike Pearson's argument – drawing on Casey and Ingold – that 'region' is the substantive site of occupation that gives any taskscape its coherence. However, given that the literal taskscape of the chronically sick, for example, may be physically very restricted indeed (to the point of being almost non-existent), an 'open' deep mapping will need to avoid reifying 'region' by paying close attention to the specifics that make up the connectivity of human (and non-human) beings that defines their substantive site of occupation. In many circumstances, it may be more appropriate to speak of 'local' or 'locale' rather than 'region' or 'regional'.

To understand 'place' as the unstable intersection of three distinct perspectives or accounts in this way is to question – from the position of a grasp of intuited patterns too complex for conceptual analysis – the conventions of disciplinary academic thought that, for example, sees the arguments presented by Massey on one hand, and Casey and Ingold on the other, as discursively incompatible. Thus an 'open' deep mapping might be seen, in the terms of a traditional aesthetics, as producing a 'concrete particular [...] too complicated and overwhelming, too cryptic and multifaceted in its connections and associations, to be captured accurately in even the most fine grained analysis' (Piper 2009: 198). Seen from the perspective of categorical thinking, however, deep mapping *both* constitutes a critical intervention that, by blended academic and creative methodologies and the materials they produce, disrupts disciplinary

22. The emphasis on the rural in this article is based on the view that it is in rural contexts that issues that will be of primary concern in addressing radical environmental change will most urgently need to be addressed. The rural is also arguably an area of political contestation that is very poorly understood (see, for example, Cloke 2003; Cloke and Little 1997).

23. Significantly, Anthony Lyons points out in this context (and 'as a "visitor" from the world of science practice'), that there is a 'huge difference in ideas about "originality" between the arts and sciences; 'there is no originality in science [...] everything builds on, and acknowledges, the precursors' as opposed to the 'huge "currency" attached to '(so-called) originality' in the arts – to the extent that artists disguise and deny their influences – partly out of fear of being accused of copying someone else's 'original' idea or 'approach' (Antony Lyons, personal e-mail, 03 May 2010).

academic thinking *and*, at the same time, is excluded from the academic enterprise as adopting a merely 'aesthetic' or intuitive position. (The same paradoxical position would, with the appropriate shift of terms, indicate why 'open' deep mapping does not sit comfortably within the administered territory of the art world).

This paradoxical location of 'open' deep mapping again distinguishes it from the 'disciplinary' variety. Barbara Bender can be read as confirming both the appropriateness of my location of 'open' deep mapping and of Finn's observation above (regarding the limits of ideal categories for an experientially-based study of 'place'), when she observes that:

Landscapes refuse to be disciplined. They make a mockery of the oppositions that we create between time [History] and space [Geography], or between nature [Science] and culture [Social Anthropology].

(Bender quoted Massey 2006: 34)

On this basis, 'open' deep mapping is best seen as 'post-disciplinary', both in relation to the 'disciplinary' approach typified here by Michael Shanks and in the more literal academic sense implied by Bender's statement.

Implicit in Bender's rejection of disciplinary ways of 'knowing landscape' is a question about the hyper-professionalization of knowledge based on an understanding of self as discrete, independent and oriented by 'possessive individualism' (Leach 2007, but also Ingold 2000; de Certeau 1984). This need for an alternative understanding of self converges with Ingold's view that the evocative 'telling' of landscape is able to dissolve, at least temporarily, 'the boundaries between person and place, or between self and landscape' (Ingold 2000: 56). While it might be argued that theorizations of 'the death of the author' have long since dispelled any notion of 'possessive individualism' in the production of culture, it remains the case that, in *economic* terms, this form of individualism dominates the actual lived practices of academic and artistic life. The resulting fracture between theory and lived practice constitutes a prime example of the cultural hypocrisy and psychological self-delusion of much 'high-altitude thinking'. As indicated earlier, it also suggests a significant distinction between those who engage in 'open' deep mapping and the figure of the artist conventionally understood as, for economic and reputational purposes, the 'sole author' of her or his work.

The expanded understanding of self implicit in 'open' deep mapping is incompatible with the extreme individualism dominant in our time and culture as enacted in exemplary fashion by the conventional self-understanding of the artist in a post-Warhol 'celebrity-based' culture, a self-understanding that leads A. David Napier to observe that: 'what is extraordinary [...] is not how radical artists can be, but how conservative is their sense of the artist's persona' (1992: 21). This expanded understanding rejects the linking of creativity to possessive individualism on the grounds that we are always 'made up of – and manifest physically – other people's work, input, substance and knowledge' and do not in fact 'own' ourselves or anything we produce on an individual basis, given that: 'there is no project that is not already the project of other people as well' (Leach 2007: 112).²³ It follows that, in line with this expanded, ecological understanding of self, its connectivity is a given. One primary task of 'open' deep mapping is to draw out and make apparent that connectivity in all its ramifications. This connectivity is the collective condensation of histories of growth, maturation and decay 'within fields of social relations'; a process

that requires 'a kind of "relational thinking" [...] applicable right across the continuum of organic life' (Ingold 2000: 3–4). However, the existential fact of our absolute connectivity within the web of being should not be taken to imply that contestation and conflict are not significant ways in which our connectivity is manifested. Divisions, like national borders, both join and divide.

This necessarily brief and schematic outline of orientations to region, 'place' and self serves as a point of reference for speculations about 'open' deep mapping as an 'essaying' that addresses region as home, where 'home' is understood in John Berger's expanded sense as 'no longer a dwelling but the untold story of life being lived' (1984: 64). Deep mapping works through and with a wide range of intellectual orientations and creative strategies to *document*, *narrate* and *evoke* the concrete particularities of 'place', along with the networks of both physical penumbra and stories that inform it. It counterpoints and intertwines past and present, the intuitive and the political, the documented fact and healing fictions, categorical knowledge and sensual understandings, a blending process that conflates 'oral testimony, anthology, memoir biography, natural history and everything you might ever want to say about a place' (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 64–6). However, I am suggesting that, in addition, 'open' deep mapping consciously aims to strategically locate itself in and to mediate a '*space-between*', in a manner analogous to that necessary to enacting a 'politics of contingency' that requires:

[...] *speaking from the space-between* representation and reality, language and life, category and experience: the space of the ethical encounter with others as the other and not more of the same – a space and an encounter that puts *me* into question, which challenges and changes me, as well as the other (the otherness of the other) and the socius/the system that contains and sustains us.

(Finn 1996: 176)

Arguably it is this issue of a self in question – a self that is always both more and less than its categorization as 'academic', 'artist', 'scientist', 'citizen', etc – that differentiates it from 'disciplinary' versions and gives it its greatest social potency.

'OPEN' DEEP MAPPING AS 'ESSAYING'

My designation of 'open' deep mapping as an 'essaying' derives from Edward S. Casey's distinction between position and place, where he claims that: 'if a position is a fixed posit of an established culture, *a place*, despite its frequently settled appearance *is an essay in experimental living within a changing culture*' (Casey 1993: 31, emphasis added). It presumes a need to go beyond a 'disciplinary' deep mapping oriented by fixed 'disciplinary' and academic posits, particularly given the close and complex relationships between 'place' and assumptions about normative behaviour (Cresswell 2004: 102–103). Casey's sense of 'place' as an essay in experimental living is taken here as paralleling Geraldine Finn's concern with a *speaking from the space-between*. Both refer to an encounter that puts us in question as *speakers* whose authority is normally located and authorized by a professional category. So understood, engagement with 'place' challenges and changes us, as well as changing our understanding of those 'territories' that *both* contain/constrain *and* sustain us (Finn 1996: 176).

24. This also relates to arguments within the art and design education community that understand creative practice-led research as 'a visual essay' created 'on the basis of discovered research material' (Couvans 2003: 6).

This line of thinking is, in turn, convergent with that of Ruth Behar who, referencing feminist concerns with the politics of the essay, describes it as 'an act of personal witness' that is: 'at once the *inscription* of a self and the *description* of an object', open-ended in nature and able to desegregate 'the boundaries between self and other' (Behar 1996: 20). The process of 'essaying' here is, in consequence, taken to be a *qualitative act*, rather than a category defined in terms of its history, status as a genre of writing, and so on. It is this line of thinking that leads to my designating 'open' deep mapping as an 'essaying'.

This article has argued that an 'open' deep mapping can occupy and give an account of both a particular geographically located 'place' and, simultaneously, non-literal but specific *spaces-between*. This allows it to both mediate and contest, from a position of critical solicitude, the exclusionary position of the authorizing networks of the art world and the university. I have argued that it does so by treating our categorical knowledge *of*, and the manifold threads of our experience *in*, 'place' – both literally geographically located and in memory – as material for an act of weaving and looping so as to create intricate patterns of metaphorical connection (as in storytelling or the traditional ballads). As such, it produces 'the patterns [...] equivalent to what anthropologists are accustomed to call "culture"' (Ingold 2000: 361). An aspect of the *space-between* occupied by 'open' deep mapping has not yet been referred to directly here. This is the productive tension between politics and ethics that the feminist essay specifically set out to reclaim in the 1980s and early 1990s so as to open up the space between 'category and experience, representation and reality, language and life [that] is [...] the necessary and indispensable space of judgement: of creativity and value, resistance and change' (Finn 1996: 172).

Etymology reinforces my designating deep mapping an 'essaying' in a sense derived from feminist concerns. The English term 'essay' derives from the French *essai* – a trial, attempt, or essay—which in turn derives from the Latin *exagium*, a weighing, and relates 'essay' back to 'assay'. 'Open' deep mapping appears here, following Casey, as a lived, experimental 'essaying' of 'place' that simultaneously 'essays' and 'assays' it through imaginative juxtaposition and interweaving of distinct aesthetic approaches and documentary perspectives that may be presented through a broad range of media and genres. I understand this as corresponding to Clifford McLucas' concern that deep mapping should adopt a *sumptuousness* of presentation that embraces a range of different media and registers in a sophisticated and multi-layered orchestration of material and includes an open database or archival system. These diverse strands may be unified through the use of 'the digital processes at the heart of most modern media practices', processes that 'allow the easy combination of different orders of material – a new creative space' (McLucas 3 and 8). More specifically, I see 'open' deep mapping as essaying in terms of a development of Janet Wolff's argument that the feminist essay provides an important model for resistance.²⁴ That is, it helps us to challenge the authoritarianism of 'high-altitude' thinking; to combat the threat of excessive deconstruction to senses of identity (analogous to my concern with, and discussion of, Kwon's casual use of 'we'); and to resist the increasing depersonalization resulting from the professional requirements of academic work (Wolff 1995: 50). My proposition here is that, in the context of the 'telling' of 'place', 'open' deep mapping as 'essaying' performs an analogous function to the feminist essay as Behar, Wolff and others present it (Boetcher and Mittman 1993). It

does so in part because it works with much the same 'bricolage of cultural events and moments through which the experience of culture is mediated and in which it is encapsulated' (Wolff 1995: 35).

There are further analogies between the feminist reconfiguring of the traditional essay and 'open' deep mapping. In each the autobiographical or auto-ethnographic element is re-emphasized as the basis for an act of personal witnessing; as providing a lens through which to attend to the fragment or concrete detail as a proper focus for *social* analysis; or as giving access to otherwise overlooked or suppressed cultural histories. Both practices focus on an attentive 'essaying' of concrete particulars that is at once the *inscription* of a self and the *description* of an object. Both deploy the 'discursive strangeness' cultivated by ethnographers to enable practitioners to distance themselves from the social world as defined by theory and yet to retain membership of it; both aim to provide forms of 'non-dominating, dialogic knowledge'; and both seek to critique cultural theories that 'often simply do not work at the level of concrete experience' so as to resist 'the distortions of theoretical orthodoxy' (Wolff 1995: 29 and 35). In the case of 'open' deep mapping, these concerns correspond to McLucas' view that deep mapping should be a 'politicized, passionate, and partisan' evocation of a site, involving 'negotiation and contestation over who and what is represented and how' and giving rise to 'debate about the documentation and portrayal of people and places' (McLucas 9).

CONCLUSION

The partial nature of this article determines that it can only conclude by restating the aspirations voiced here. My hope is that those involved in or aspiring to work with 'open' deep mapping will find ways to resist becoming complicit in its 'disciplining', will circumnavigate pressures to conform to any 'reduction by audit' made by either the university sector or art world funders, and will do so by remaining disciplinarily 'non-aligned' or 'agnostic' in the sense indicated here. My argument here seeks to enable a future in which robust 'open' deep mappings are able to remain 'unstable, fragile and temporary [...] *a conversation and not a statement*' (McLucas 10) and, as such, contribute to those new ecologies of embodied knowing upon which our future is likely to depend.

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