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Mapping Rohmer: cinematic cartography in post-war Paris

Richard Misek

How can films map? Is cinematic ‘mapping’ more than a metaphor? Can films be regarded as cartographic documents? This chapter explores mapping as a cinematic process. It explores ways in which film-making can take on a mapping function, as well as ways in which maps can act as analogies for films (in other words, how films can sometimes be said to have map-like qualities). It does so by means of a set of examples: Eric Rohmer’s Paris films. In thirteen of the twenty five feature films that Rohmer made between the early 1960s and mid-2000s, characters journey through Paris – on foot, by train, and occasionally by car.¹ Through these characters, I argue, Rohmer enacts what Teresa Castro (2009) refers to as ‘cinema’s mapping impulse’. Various basic cartographic processes (for example, drawing lines, connecting points, and reconciling accurate geographic representation with graphic simplification) recur throughout Rohmer’s cinematic representations of the city. As a result, the map of Paris appears as an implied presence in his films, as filmed journeys through city streets and on railway lines.²

This chapter takes the form of a spatial narrative, or ‘tour’ (De Certeau 1984: 119), through Rohmer’s Paris. It also explores his cinematic mapping process. As a result, the chapter takes on some cartographic qualities of its own, inasmuch as it maps various themes and contexts onto Rohmer’s delineations of space. The basic unit of measurement in this map-like analysis of Rohmer’s Paris is the individual film. For most of the chapter, I discuss mapping as something that takes place within films, and

demonstrate how Rohmer's Paris films can be regarded as cinematic maps. Towards the end of the chapter, I layer Rohmer's films onto each other, suggesting some ways in which they can together be regarded as constituents of a composite map of Paris – a map which Rohmer spent his entire film-making career drafting.

For a conventional map to come into being, a pen must first touch paper. So I begin with the cinematic equivalent of a point on a map: a single, static shot.³ Rohmer's shots are typically filmed in wide or medium-wide angle, on a tripod, centred on actors, and with minimal camera movement. The actors occupy a point in space, which corresponds to a point on a city map. Through the actors' bodies, Rohmer's static shots indirectly mark this cartographic point. Of course, Rohmer's actors do not just stand still. They also walk. Whenever they do so, which is often, they move in a line between two points. Rohmer often also filmed these movements using static, wide shots; it is not spaces that scroll across the frame when actors move, but the actors themselves who move across the frame. Alternatively, in particular when the camera is situated closer to moving actors, it discreetly pans to keep them in frame. What the camera generally does *not* do, however, is move through space itself. On the infrequent occasions when it does so (notably when characters are walking and talking, or when they are moving through crowded spaces, so necessitating handheld camerawork), it moves only to the extent that the actors move. I have so far found less than a dozen shots in Rohmer's entire oeuvre in which the camera moves independently of the movements of the figures in front of it. In other words, in Rohmer's films, the camera does not itself trace lines through the city – it is the actors who do so. Rohmer uses wide shots to introduce us to a location, and to how his characters inhabit it; he then delineates urban space by means of his actors'

movements through it.⁴

Rohmer once observed that in film, '*you have to show the relationship between a man and the space he inhabits...*' (Andrew 1987: 26 [emphasis in original]). Camera, 'man', and space form the basic tools of Rohmer's cartographic project. So far, so map-like. But once a film-maker starts to join the dots by editing shots together, cinema immediately obstructs the mapping impulse. A map represents a spatial totality. A film, by contrast, fragments space-time into the discrete unit of the shot. When individual shots are edited together, the result usually involves spatial discontinuity, temporal discontinuity, or both. In commercial cinema, shots tend to be edited together in such a way as to conceal this discontinuity. A film-maker may, for example, use a shot of two actors walking along a street, then – as they turn a corner – cut to a shot of the actors continuing their walk in a location shot several miles away. By doing so, the film-maker re-orientates urban space to fit the film, surreptitiously demolishing and rebuilding the city on screen. Rohmer never did this. For example, in a detailed analysis of how Rohmer represents urban space in his 1981 film *The Aviator's Wife*, architect François Penz (2008) traces the movements through Paris of the film's main character (also called François). Over the course of the film, the paths that François takes through Paris are so closely related to the city's actual geography that they can be transformed through geo-referencing into lines on a map. In fact, Penz does this; he transcribes the route followed by François onto a map of Paris, concluding that 'Rohmer is always topographically correct and there are never any unexplained jumps across the city' (Penz 2008: 129).

I question the term 'topographically correct', which implies there is only one 'correct' way to represent urban space. Nonetheless, despite the hint of determinism in

Penz's choice of words, his observation is startling. A particularly startling example of what might alternatively be called 'topographic continuity' occurs during an extended sequence in the middle of *The Aviator's Wife*. The film begins with François visiting his girlfriend Anna early one morning, after his night shift as a postal worker. As he turns into her road, he sees her leaving her apartment block with an ex-boyfriend. By chance, he later crosses paths with the ex-boyfriend at the Gare de l'Est. At a café on the station concourse, the ex-boyfriend meets another woman. Over the course of the subsequent sequence, played out almost in real-time, François follows them across Paris: first onto a bus, then on foot through Buttes-Chaumont, a park in the inner north-western suburbs, and finally down a street into an anonymous building. Rohmer recounted in an interview following the release of the film that he shot François' pursuit *ad hoc* in the park and on the streets; when it started raining towards the end of the sequences in Buttes-Chaumont, Rohmer looked for a nearby café in which to shoot the next sequence. He found one, got permission to film in it, and started filming there and then. So, as Rohmer recounts, 'the film was shot at the same time as it was being played.'⁵ Shot by shot, his actors and camera crew moved in an unbroken line through the city. Shot by shot, this production continuity survives into the sequence. Over the course of forty minutes, *The Aviator's Wife* traces an almost continuous journey from the Gare de l'Est to Buttes Chaumont. Penz is able to transcribe François' movements into lines on a map because those lines are already inherent in Rohmer's films.

The ad hoc production method used in *The Aviator's Wife* was atypical for Rohmer, but the film's topographic continuity was not.⁶ All of Rohmer's Paris films, to a greater or lesser extent, feature topographical continuity. In each film, each stage of his

characters' journeys (be they on foot, by train, by car, or by a combination of these) can be transcribed onto a map. For example, speaking about his short film *Place de l'Étoile* (1965), Rohmer commented,

My idea was to show a real route: this said, in the cinema, continuity is the most difficult thing to suggest. We know that time in the cinema is not the same thing as time in real life. Those films which wanted to show in an hour and a half an action supposed to last an hour and a half, whether it's *Rope* or *Cléo de 5 à 7*, seem to last a lot longer. In *La Place de l'Étoile*, it's the same thing: the continuity of space and time really did escape me. (Rohmer 1970)

Despite his dissatisfaction, *Place de l'Étoile* features a palpable degree of topographical continuity: almost every shot contains some spatial overlap with the shot that precedes or succeeds it.

By maintaining a spatial link between the city and his films from shot to shot, Rohmer provides a Parisian's view of Paris rather than the more familiar touristic view that we often see in films set in Paris. 'Tourist' films typically involve spatial reconfiguration, transforming the city into a collage of landmarks. In this, they follow a genealogy that can be traced back through the history of graphic representation. For example, David Bass (1997: 85) notes that in Antonio Lafréry's 1575 map of the seven churches of Rome, the churches are disproportionately large; Lafréry was not interested in the topography of the city, his interest was simply in guiding pilgrims from one landmark to another. Bass then compares this with a sequence from *20 Million Miles to*

Earth (Nathan Juran, 1957), a low-budget American film shot in Rome, in which people flee from a giant monster; as they do so, '[t]heir routes jump-cut around the city, taking in all the major sights, in a visually glorious but topographically nonsensical sequence' (Bass 1997: 85). For Bass, this topographic discontinuity demonstrates that *20 Million Miles to Earth* is an 'outsider' film: 'Outsiders' films... violently warp the city's topography and present stereotypes of its culture and physical constitution' (Bass 1997: 85). They are typically made by outsiders for outsiders. Rohmer, by contrast, spent most of his life living and working in Paris. He was an insider. In his films, we get a sense of Paris as perceived and experienced by Parisians. In contrast to tourist guides, as well as 'outsider' films (made for tourists who don't travel), Rohmer's films do not jump around the city. Nor do they magnify or linger on famous landmarks. *Place de l'Étoile* is set in the immediate vicinity of the Arc de Triomphe, but we only see the monument in passing.

The Arc de Triomphe formed one of the focal points for the massive reconfiguration of Paris initiated by Baron George-Eugène Haussmann during his Prefecture of the Seine between the 1850s and 1870s. Scott McQuire (2008: 40) notes that though Haussmann's new boulevards typically culminated in monuments, their length and straightness 'transferred the focus [for Parisians] from the object at its end to the experience of movement itself.'⁷ Marshall Berman (1982: 150) observes that, 'Haussmann's sidewalks, like the boulevards themselves, were extravagantly wide, lined with benches, lush with trees. Pedestrian islands were installed to make crossing easier, to separate local from through traffic and to open up alternative routes for promenades.' As a result, walking along Haussmann's straight line boulevards became a popular leisure activity, especially among the middle-classes. Middle class *flânerie* in turn stimulated an

expanded service economy: lines of cafés, restaurants, and shops – including the new phenomenon of the department store – appeared on either side of the city’s new thoroughfares (Berman 1982: 150).

The movements of Rohmer’s largely middle class characters are, like those of their Second Empire equivalents, literally shaped by the urban layout of Haussmann’s Paris. They also walk in straight lines along Haussmann’s boulevards. Along the way, they also window shop, stop off in street-side cafés and restaurants, and rest in squares and parks. In contrast to their nineteenth-century predecessors, however, the pedestrian routes of Rohmer’s characters form part of longer lines of movement that extend out to the suburbs by means of public transport.⁸ These longer, less leisurely lines of movement are economically motivated, and so precisely regulated – characters work contractually determined hours and catch specific trains to get to work on time; the trains they catch follow a predetermined timetable, giving commuters only two choices – to catch a train to work or miss it. In this context, the pedestrian journeys made by Rohmer’s characters in the city centre can be seen as an escape from the timetabled daily movements of the commute. Between work and home, Rohmer’s characters appropriate time and space to wander through parks, eat in restaurants, and drink in cafés. Rohmer’s films focus on these leisure activities. Almost the entirety of *Love in the Afternoon* (1972), for example, takes place during lunch breaks and coffee breaks.⁹

Characters’ spatial movements through the city centre are inextricably linked to the films’ narrative trajectories – by tracing lines through the city, characters advance the films’ plotlines. These lines of course routinely cross. As they move through space, characters make connections with other characters. For example, in *The Aviator’s Wife*,

by following his girlfriend's boyfriend, François makes a new connection with a young woman sitting next to him on the bus – perhaps even a potential romantic connection. Individual connections often lead to further connections. Rohmer's narratives focus on (indeed, they are often essentially the sum of) these interpersonal connections.¹⁰ So they take place in the city's social nodal points – streets, parks, cafés, and restaurants – spaces where connections are made. Rohmer's characters pursue each other through parks and streets. They sit in the two-way shop windows of cafés and restaurants, where they can see and be seen. There they meet up with friends, lovers, and paramours. They also make new connections – through friends, they meet future lovers. Sometimes they miss connections too, which (as in *Rendez-Vous in Paris* [1996]) can become a source of comedy, or (as in *A Winter's Tale* [1992]) a source of pathos. And sometimes, by chance, they cross paths with people they did not expect, and perhaps did not want, to meet. Often they meet at crossed purposes, and miscommunication ensues. But everywhere – on streets, in cafés, even on trains – they search for meaningful interpersonal connections.

Though Rohmer's characters enact his mapping impulse, they do not themselves make maps. They pursue their desire for connections by following extant maps. Occasionally, however, a character takes more active control of urban space. One of the rare examples of cartographic self-consciousness in Rohmer's films is the nameless student in *The Girl at the Monceux Bakery* (1963), played by Rohmer's producer Barbet Schroeder. Early in the film, the student repeatedly passes a young woman; the more he passes her, the more he wants to meet her. But he cannot make a connection with her. Every day, they pass by chance in the street and exchange glances and even, on one occasion, a few words, but these coincidental connections lead nowhere. So the student

maps the route that she takes every day, and tries to engineer a meeting with her, as if by chance. But though the city is mappable, other people's lives are not. One day, she stops following the route that she's previously taken every day. Three days, eight days pass, and still the student does not see her. So he tries a new spatial strategy. He maps the locations where he's previously passed her, and walks in a loop around them, hoping to intersect her path at some point. But this plan also fails –weeks pass, and still he fails to make a connection with her.

I use the term 'connection', which in an urban context obviously connotes public transport journeys, deliberately. By focusing in particular on connections, Rohmer's films can in some ways be seen to encapsulate the characteristics of public transportation maps. Both represent networks of movement. To be more precise, Rohmer made films that focus on people moving through the city, and that relate to the geographic spaces of the city in an analogous way in which transport maps relate to them. It is worth pursuing this particular connection further.

There are two distinct models for transport maps: geographic and topological. Geographic maps transcribe the entirety of an area; they are spatially encyclopaedic. Topological maps focus on the way in which specific elements within that area are related, and involve simplification and omission of features not relevant to the map's particular function. Over the course of the last century, urban transport maps have moved *en masse* from geographic fidelity towards graphic clarity. Early transport maps occasionally featured topological elements. For example, an 1896 map of the Metropolitan Line in London was not to scale, and a 1917 map of the London Underground featured lines with simplified curves (Ovenden 2003: 9). The first major

shift towards topological representation in transport maps, however, only occurred in the early 1930s, with the release of stylised maps of the Berlin S-Bahn in 1931 and the London Underground in 1934 (Ovenden 2008: 150-1). Engineer Harry Beck's now iconic map of the London Underground featured straight lines drawn either horizontally, vertically, or at a 45 degree angle. It included no unnecessary over ground features. In addition, distances between stations were not to scale: the city centre, where London's various tube lines intersect, was given more space on the map, allowing the network's nodal points to become more easily identifiable, and complex journeys involving multiple lines more easily navigable.

Over subsequent decades, most other major rapid transit systems also moved towards topological representation. The topological map became a standard means of visualising the space-time compression of urban modernity: ever more disparate suburbs became squeezed into the same size of poster. As cities expanded, distances – at least graphically – shrank. The Paris Métro, however, moved far more slowly towards this form of visualisation than most public transport systems.¹¹ In the 1940s, the French transport authorities asked Harry Beck to draw a Métro map using the same graphic principles that he had used on his London Underground map. It was rejected, as was his refined 1951 Métro map (Ovenden 2008: 152-3). Though there were many topological maps of the Paris Métro around at various times in the twentieth century, these remained unofficial. Examples included maps drawn speculatively by designers but never used, maps produced and sold by private publishers, and even maps printed for advertising purposes – a topological pocket map published in 1914 by department store Au Bon Marché flags which Métro stations had nearby branches (Ovenden 2008: 150). Despite

this topological turn, official Paris transport maps remained geographic for most of the rest of the century. On a few occasions in the post-war decades, official versions of the Métro map tentatively experimented with topological simplification, but then returned to geographic representation (Ovenden 2008: 155-7). For example, the rise of the RER in the late 1960s, connecting the centre of Paris to the outer suburbs, forced a cartographic rethink, as much greater distances needed to be incorporated into the same space on transport maps (Ovenden 2008: 149). Yet still the official Paris transport map remained largely geographic until 2000. Even now, the walls of Métro stations feature a confusing mixture of topological and geographic maps.

Rohmer's films replicate the Métro map's representational tension between geography and topology. On the one hand, as already discussed, they go to great lengths to remain geographically faithful. On the other hand, they also reflect the fact that from the perspective of the public transport user, to use Beck's words, 'The connections are the thing.' Whenever the narrative demands it, the films' representations of space diverge from geographic fidelity. For example, commutes between the suburbs and the city typically involve little social interaction and connection-making, so they are condensed. *Full Moon in Paris* (1984) begins with its main character, Louise, commuting on the RER from her home in Marne-le-Vallée to her office in the city centre. The opening sequence shows her walking to a train station, waiting on the platform, sitting on a train, and walking to her workplace; the whole journey takes about forty five seconds of screen time. Subsequently, Louise's commute is shortened to individual shots, brief signifiers of her quotidian journey. On one occasion, Louise even moves between city and suburb in the space of a single cut, walking down a city street in one shot and entering her suburban

home in the next. In a strategy analogous to the extra space given by the designers of urban transport maps to the city centre, Rohmer gives more screen time to his characters' movements in the city centre, as this is where most of their social connections take place.¹² In contrast to Louise's truncated commutes between city and suburb, François' urban and mainly pedestrian pursuit of his girlfriend's ex-boyfriend in *The Aviator's Wife* extends to over a third of the film's running time.

Rohmer perfectly expressed the tension between cinematic representation and geographic orientation in a letter he wrote for the special 400th issue of *Positif* about the train journey in Buster Keaton's *The General* (1926):

It doesn't matter that the journey of the General includes some curves. What matters is that it feels overall like a progress (and return) *straight ahead*. It doesn't matter that this journey is often filmed in depth. Once we have distinguished between the pictorial space of each individual shot and the cinematic space created by the montage, we could almost say we see it – as a transverse line from the left to the right on the screen. Logic would demand that the return journey be in the opposite direction, from right to left; but the crossing of the bridge is shot left to right, which bothers me a little, but only in retrospect. (Boorman and Donohue 1995: 180 [emphasis in original])

Rohmer's observation tells us less about Keaton's approach to representing space than about his own. Rohmer's instinct pulls him strongly towards geographic 'logic'. At the same time, he acknowledges that a close correspondence between cinematic and physical

space is not necessary for narrative comprehension. So he reins his mapping tendency in. But still film's tendency towards spatial infidelity annoys him, slightly. This tension is one of the things that, for me, makes Rohmer's films so interesting. His films encapsulate the various tensions that make the relationship between cinema and space so fascinating – for example, tensions between documenting space and reconfiguring it, between simplicity and complexity, between 'map' and 'tour', and between the three dimensional environment and two dimensional plane of the moving image. Rohmer's esoteric approach to urban space is a necessarily imperfect means of negotiating these tensions.

Surveying Rohmer's entire film-making career rather than individual films reveals an additional layer of mapping. Everywhere Rohmer's characters go, Rohmer and his camera crew also went; however, Rohmer's journey as a film-maker was quite different from his characters' journeys. Rohmer's characters typically repeat the same journeys with minor variations, viz. daily commutes on public transport and walking tours during lunch breaks and after work. Preparing for each film, Rohmer himself repeatedly visited the same locations and repeated the same journeys, to get a more intimate understanding of his chosen spaces. However, from film to film, Rohmer almost never repeated the same journey.

There are two main types of Rohmer film. The first focuses on Parisians living and working in Paris. The second focuses on Parisians on holiday elsewhere in France. Rohmer's early films, dating from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, follow characters moving on foot through central Paris. From the late 1960s, Rohmer extended his geographic scope to include films about Parisians on holiday. Each holiday film involved

a different destination: Biarritz, Calais, Deauville, Brittany, the Loire, the Côte d'Azur, the Pyrenees. Rohmer continued to make holiday films until the late 1990s, but from the early 1970s he also used his films to explore the Parisian suburbs. Though still focused on the city centre, his films now also typically included characters commuting between city and suburb. In contrast to his characters' repetitive movements, however, from film to film, Rohmer again never returned to the same suburb. Through each new commuter-protagonist in each new film, Rohmer explored another suburb – for example, Marne le Vallée (in *Full Moon in Paris*), Cergy (in *My Girlfriend's Boyfriend* [1987]), and Levallois (in *A Winter's Tale* [1992]).¹³ In short, Rohmer's mapping instinct is evident not only within his films but also from film to film. Indeed, Rohmer's entire film-making career could be regarded as an on-going mapping project. With each new film, Rohmer traced another set of cinematic lines, superimposed over lines traced in previous films.

The forty year expansion of Rohmer's cartographic scope to encompass the outlying regions both of Paris and of France repeats cinematically the expansion of the Parisian and French transport map during the decades of Haussmannisation. Between the 1850s and 1890s, national and suburban train lines in France, as in the rest of Europe, developed simultaneously. The two networks existed in symbiosis. Suburban lines accelerated economic activity by transporting workers; David Harvey (1989: 173) notes the rise of the journey to work as a phenomenon of urban living from the mid-1800s onwards. National lines, in turn, accelerated the circulation of capital by transporting goods; they also made possible Parisians' access to the countryside, thereby further stimulating the economy through tourism (Harvey 2003: 115). At the same time, the French transportation network remained centred on Paris. Paris was the hub from which

transport lines emanated, ending in destinations that themselves formed regional hubs for local transport networks. Harvey (ibid: 114) notes that the various changes associated with Haussmannisation, from wider boulevards through to integrated transport systems, ensured that both Paris and France as a whole became more centralised. The national transport map took the form of a fractal, and Paris was its source.

Over the course of his career, between the 1950s and 1990s, Rohmer replayed in microcosm the French transportation network's suburban and regional expansion. Like the French transport map, the composite map of his films became progressively more complex, spreading simultaneously across both Paris and France. At the same time, despite their geographic expansion, Rohmer's films – again like the transportation lines they emulated – remained centred on Paris. Paris is both a physical hub and a psychological hub for Rohmer's characters. Even when a film extends to the coast or in the mountains, Paris often remains present in its characters' minds. For example, *The Green Ray* (1986) follows two weeks in the life of office worker Delphine, who wants to go somewhere on holiday, but has no idea precisely where. Over the course of her annual leave, she goes on three abortive holidays to three different destinations. Everywhere she goes, she takes her Parisian self with her; sitting on a beach, surrounded by crowds of sunbathers, she remains an uptight urbanite – aloof, lonely, unable to relax or connect with others. Unsatisfied with her holiday destinations, she returns each time to the familiarity of Paris, not realising that the problem is not the locations but her.

The lines that Rohmer's films trace are thus not only geographic but, to use Guy Debord's (1989: 139) evocative term, 'psychogeographic'. Spaces create emotional resonance. This resonance may be different at different times, and for different

characters. In *Rendez-Vous in Paris*, for example, a young woman and her lover go to a hotel that she once stayed in with her husband. As they approach, an unwelcome connection takes place: the woman sees her husband leaving the hotel with another woman. The hotel thus adopts a complex psychogeographic presence within the scene. It exists in several different mental contexts – as a place the woman once visited for a romantic weekend with her husband, as a place which she visits for a secret tryst with her lover, as a place her husband also visits for a secret tryst, and as the site where she experiences the shock of discovering her husband’s infidelity; this in turn motivates her to end her own adulterous relationship, so the location also becomes the site of a break-up. One space, five psychogeographic resonances, revealed almost simultaneously.

Rohmer’s films also constitute a more personal map, presenting a journey not only through his various characters’ psychogeographies but also through his own. Rohmer's mapping impulse took him across France. At the same time, though he travelled to diverse suburbs and regions, like *Delphine*, he always returned to Paris, his own mental epicentre. His journey was always an *aller-retour*. Specifically, he returned to film in one area of Paris more than any other: the Left Bank. Rohmer’s first cinematic journey through Paris was the short comedy *Charlotte et Véronique, ou Tous les garçons s'appellent Patrick*, written by him and directed by Jean-Luc Godard in 1959. The entire film was shot within a few hundred metres of the Luxembourg Gardens. Subsequently, Rohmer returned to film in the Left Bank throughout his career.

Nicholas Hewitt notes that between the 1850s and 1890s, i.e. throughout the period of Haussmannisation, the Left Bank was the intellectual and cultural centre of Paris:

In the case of Paris, that cultural geography was initially heavily dependent on the institutions of cultural power, in particular the University and allied institutions of higher education... and the publishing houses that flourished around the University. In other words, Parisian cultural geography is inextricably enmeshed, as Herbert Lottman reminds us, in the history of the Quartier Latin. (Hewitt 1996: 30)

After a period in the early twentieth century in which many artists decamped to the cheaper and more exciting areas around Montmartre, the Left Bank cafés again became a focal point for artists as well as intellectuals in the immediate post-war years (Hewitt 1996: 31). Rohmer was born in Nancy, and moved to Paris as a young man. As both an artist and an intellectual, the young Rohmer inevitably found his home in the streets around cafés such as La Coupole and Dôme. His subsequent personal history maps closely onto the Left Bank. The Left Bank is where the *Cahiers du cinéma* critics often met after work in the 1950s, where Rohmer and Godard made their early short film, and where the offices of Rohmer's production company (les Films du Losange) was and remains based. The more integrated Rohmer became into the Parisian – and so also the French – cultural elite, the less reason there was for him to consider living and working anywhere else. His repeated return to filming on the Left Bank could even perhaps be seen as a psychogeographic return to the excitement of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when budgetary constraints ensured that the young *Nouvelle vague* directors filming often centred on their Left Bank localities. In his films, as in his interviews, the memory

of the *Nouvelle vague* is palpable.

Rohmer's final film to be shot on location in Paris, the aptly named four-story portmanteau *Rendez-Vous in Paris* (1996), returns in two of its four episodes, via two different sets of characters, to the Luxembourg Gardens. In both cases Rohmer literally retraces his steps, mapping lines of movement onto previous lines of movement. In the first episode, a young man walks with a young woman down the same stretch of Rue de Médicis that the young man in *Charlotte et Véronique* chases Charlotte. In the third episode, another man walks with another woman through the same gate, also on Rue de Médicis, through which the young man in *Charlotte et Véronique* later pursues Véronique (fig.). If one had to choose a single geographic point to mark the epicenter of Rohmer's Paris, it would be this. Like the student in *The Girl at the Monceux Bakery*, though on the far larger scale of his entire career, Rohmer looped back and ended his cinematic journey at the same point where he began it.

Discussing *Monceux* in an interview, Rohmer characteristically bemoaned the fact that his character's looping movement could not be communicated visually: '[O]n the screen, one can't show a circular trajectory: the screen is flat, a straight line becomes confused with a circle...' (Rohmer 1985, 5 [my translation]) He need not have been disappointed. Cinematic cartography does not require the visual presence of a map with thick animated lines advancing across the screen to become more than just a metaphor. Rohmer's films themselves, through the purely cinematic processes of shooting and editing, map Paris in at least as much detail as do many transport maps. In fact, as I hope I have demonstrated, Rohmer's films can themselves together be regarded as a map of Paris, connecting hundreds of locations across the city. They also constitute a map of

Rohmer's Paris, connecting hundreds of narrative nodal points from across his lifetime of shooting in the city. By doing so, in my view, they form one of the most complex and fully realised maps yet to have been created through film-making.

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Notes

1. Rohmer also used the public spaces of Paris as a location in at least six short films and a documentary series (*Ville Nouvelle*, 1975).
2. Throughout this chapter, when I refer to maps, I refer (unless otherwise stated) to the kind of maps that were contemporaneous with Rohmer's films, viz. paper-based maps featuring lines drawn in ink. Rohmer's cinematic mapping also carries strong affinities with current geo-positioning practices. Though I hope in future to explore the various connections between geo-positioning and film-making, I do not include discussion of recent satellite and computer-based elaborations of the mapping process in this particular chapter.
3. It is on the scale of the shot that Teresa Castro's excellent article focuses, searching film history for overtly cartographic processes, and finding cinema's mapping impulse enacted in early travel films, and in visual techniques including the 360 degree shot and the aerial shot (Castro 2009: 11). The overall focus of my chapter, however, is both larger and smaller scale: I engage with the cartographic nature of sequences and entire films as well as individual shots, but restrict myself to the work of a single film-maker.
4. Of course, the camera also makes a journey itself, as it has a continuous physical presence on location; however, most of this journey happens when it is being transported to the next location on the production schedule.
5. 'Eric Rohmer parle de ses films. Extraits de l'entretien avec Claude-Jean Philippe. "Le cinema des cineastes"', *France Culture*, 22 March 1981'. Bonus feature on DVD release of *The Aviator's Wife* (Fremantle Home Entertainment, 2004).
6. Rohmer typically researched locations in exhaustive detail. For example, before

- filming *My Girlfriend's Boyfriend* (1987) in the outer suburb of Cergy, Rohmer travelled there once a month for over 18 months (Guerand 1987: 49).
7. It is outside the scope of this chapter to retrace the last few decades of academic discussion about Haussmann and Napoleon III's entwined economic, social, and military motivations for rebuilding Paris. The following observation by David Harvey (2003: 112) cannot, however, go unquoted in the context of a chapter on urban mapping: 'Haussmann's passion for exact spatial coordination was symbolized by the triangulation that produced the first accurate cadastral and topographical map of the city in 1853.' Haussmann, like Rohmer, was an inveterate cartographer.
 8. As I discuss later, Rohmer also uses topographical continuity to represent the paths of his characters' daily commutes.
 9. Though the leisurely walks of Rohmer's characters act as a release from the capitalist movements of the commute and the stasis of office-work, it is impossible to remain in a city and escape entirely from capitalist activity. As has often been noted, one of capitalism's great strengths is its ability to co-opt almost all human activity. Rohmer's characters escape from their work slavery by shopping, and going to cafés and restaurants, where they spend the earnings gained through their labour, thereby continuing the circulation of capital. Early in *Love in the Afternoon*, for example, a character buys a check shirt out of sheer boredom, because he has nothing else to do in his lunch break. Looking at it later, at home, he wonders why he bought it.
 10. In his classic study of urban anthropology, *In the Metro*, Marc Augé (2002: 7)

observes that the French calls intersecting transport lines ‘correspondances’, while ‘Italians, more evocative and more precise, speaks of *coincidences...*’. Connections can be defined as the co-incident of two or more entities. They are also frequently coincidental. Rohmer’s films rely for their comic and dramatic effect on coincidental connections.

11. The only major transport map that remains entirely geographic is the New York subway, partially a result of the fact that subway stations tend to be named according to the streets and avenues under which they are situated, and so maintain a direct referential connection to the topography of the city.
 12. Louise herself is an extreme personification of Rohmer’s centripetal tendency: she shares a house with her boyfriend in Marne le Valée, but spends most nights at her *pied-à-terre* in the city centre.
 13. Rohmer had in fact already made a documentary on Cergy in 1974, as part of his urban documentary series *Villes nouvelles*. Rohmer’s mapping instinct also extended to his documentaries.
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