

Paris nous appartient: Reading Without a Map

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This essay, based on extensive research into the exact locations shown in *Paris nous appartient* (1961), asks if having a precisely plotted map of the film would be useful to readers embarking on an interpretative analysis thereof. I give at least one answer, in conclusion, on the evidence of the one place that is not accurately “plotted” by Rivette. Prior to that conclusion, the essay considers “reading”, “mapping” and “viewing” as complementary ways of approaching the film. My point of departure is a challenge to the pertinence of Rivette’s title as clarion-call for the French New Wave.

When, in *Les quatre cents coups* (1959), the Doinels go to the cinema, the film they see, impossibly, is *Paris nous appartient*. Impossibly, because Rivette’s film would not be released for at least two years, and anyway it would never be playing at the Gaumont Palace (their local cinema). By means of this characteristic in-joke,¹ Truffaut claimed authority over the truth of his representations, and announced that Paris would very soon belong to the French New Wave.

Les quatre cents coups is one of several New Wave films circa 1959 in which such a claim might have been made, which could indeed have had the phrase as title. Hanoun’s *Une histoire simple* (1958), Rohmer’s *Le Signe du Lion* (1959) and Godard’s *A bout de souffle* (1960) might have had to be called “Paris m’appartient”, but the plural form fits well, for example, Chabrol’s *Les Cousins* (1959), *Les Bonnes Femmes* (1960) and *Les Godelureaux* (1961), Mocky’s *Les Dragueurs* (1959) and *Un couple* (1960), Godard’s *Une femme est une femme* (1960) and Rouch’s *Chronique d’un été* (1961). In each case, however, including Rivette’s, the claim would be loaded with irony.

In watching Truffaut’s film, audiences would see that the Paris there laid claim to was an unfamiliar city. If in the 1950s you were mostly watching American movies, Paris was more or less the Eiffel Tower, the Champs Élysées and Montmartre, and it belonged mostly to Hollywood stars on their holidays.² If it

¹ In *Les Mistons* (1957) Truffaut’s characters had been to see another Rivette film, *Le Coup du berger* (1956).

² As well as the ubiquitous Gene Kelly in *An American in Paris* (1951), *The Happy Road* (1957) and *Les Girls* (1957) and Fred Astaire in *Daddy Long Legs* (1955), *Funny Face* (1957) and *Silk Stockings* (1957), see Ingrid Bergman in *Anastasia* (1956), Gary Cooper in *Love in the Afternoon* (1957), Bing Crosby in *Anything Goes* (1956), Tony Curtis in *So This is Paris* (1955) and *The Perfect Furlough* (1958), Doris Day in *April in Paris* (1952), Kirk Douglas in *Lust for*

was French films you were watching, then Paris belonged to Jean Gabin. Whether as gangster, theatre producer, restaurateur, artist, detective, lawyer, financier, tramp or ordinary working man,³ Gabin occupied Paris from the centre to the peripheries. Occasionally in French cinema others laid claim to parts of Paris, like the Latin Quarter students of *Les Tricheurs* (1958). In several films, Paris was the natural habitat of Brigitte Bardot.⁴

This was the territory at stake in 1959 when the New Wave arrived and declared that “Paris nous appartient”. It would be simple to take the statement as a *fait accompli* and consider the New Wave to have successfully wrested Paris from the grip of Hollywood and the *cinéma de papa*, but Gabin continued to stake his claim into the sixties, and American stars continued to colonise the city throughout that decade.⁵ The epigraph of Rivette’s film, quoting Péguy to the effect that “Paris n’appartient à personne”, rejects those persistent claims, but also casts doubt on any claim that he or his fellow *Cahiers* filmmakers might make.

Reading

Péguy’s aphorism, from 1911, had been a countershot to the view that Paris belonged to those who in the summer months prepared their winter campaigns, in the context of his own facetious suggestion that a “Péguyiste” political party might be called the L.P.D.G.Q.N.Q.P.P.P.L.M.D.E (“Le parti des gens qui ne quittent pas Paris pendant les mois d’été”). Save that none of Rivette’s characters leaves Paris for the summer (whereas in *Le Signe du Lion* they almost all do), nothing from this context informs a reading of *Paris nous appartient*, and it seems that Rivette has extracted the phrase in order to refute epigrammatically whomsoever might claim that Paris belonged to them.

Such a claim may have a political tenor, as in this passage from Zola’s *Le Débâcle*, set in 1871: “Il se revoyait courant Paris, comprenant dès midi que Paris appartenait à la Commune”, or in this entry from Beauvoir’s *La Force des choses*,

Life (1956), José Ferrer in *Moulin Rouge* (1953), Mel Ferrer in *Lili* (1953), Glenn Ford in *The Green Glove* (1952), Ava Gardner and Tyrone Power in *The Sun Also Rises* (1957), Bob Hope in *Paris Holiday* (1958), Van Johnson and Elizabeth Taylor in *The Last Time I Saw Paris* (1954) and Jane Russell in *The French Line* (1954).

³ See *Touchez pas au grisbi* (1954), *French Cancan* (1954), *Voici le temps des assassins* (1956), *La Traversée de Paris* (1956), *Le Rouge est mis* (1957), *Maigret tend un piège* (1958), *Le Désordre et la nuit* (1958), *En cas de malheur* (1958), *Les Grandes Familles* (1959), *Archimède le clochard* (1959), *Rue des prairies* (1959).

⁴ See, for example, *Cette sacrée gamine*, *La Mariée est trop belle* and *En effeuillant la marguerite* (all 1956), *Une Parisienne* (1957) and *En cas de malheur* (1958) – with Jean Gabin.

⁵ For Gabin, see *Le Président* (1961), *La Cave se rebiffe* (1961), *Mélodie en sous-sol* (1963), *Maigret voit rouge* (1963), *Monsieur* (1964) and *Le Pacha* (1968). For Hollywood, see *Paris Blues* (1961), *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1962), *In the French Style* (1963), *A New Kind of Love* (1963), *Charade* (1963), *Paris When It Sizzles* (1964), *Made in Paris* (1966) and *Topaz* (1969).

on the occasion of a “manifestation pour la paix en Algérie”: “Nous avons envahi aussi les trottoirs; on aurait pu croire que Paris nous appartenait.”⁶

A different set of associations, where the city and its women are identified as something to be taken possession of by men, dates back at least as far as the 1920s and Hemingway’s Baudelairean “À une passante” moment in *A Moveable Feast*, when he apostrophises a girl sitting alone in a café: “I’ve seen you, beauty, and you belong to me now [...]. You belong to me and all Paris belongs to me [...].”⁷ The New Wave deploys this topos in its several *dragueur* films,⁸ and it is explicitly glossed in Malle’s *Le Feu follet* (1963), when a *passante* on the boulevard Saint-Michel is pointed out by the protagonist’s friend: “Tu vois, on a envie de la toucher, et bien Paris c’est comme elle, la vie c’est comme elle.”

Also latent in Rivette’s title is the self-satisfaction of those for whom the city is a continuous spectacle, a commodity culture for their consumption. See here the presumptuous *jouissance* of a cinephilic *flâneuse*-cum-*dragueuse*:

Je me promenai une heure, entrai dans six boutiques, discutai avec tout le monde, sans gêne. Je me sentais toute libre, toute gaie. Paris m’appartenait. Paris appartenait aux sans scrupules, aux désinvoltés, je l’avais toujours senti, mais cruellement, par manque de désinvolture. Cette fois, c’était ma ville, ma belle ville dorée et tranchante, la ville “à qui on ne la faisait pas”. J’étais soulevée par quelque chose qui pouvait être de la joie. Je marchais vite. [...] J’entrai dans un cinéma des Champs-Élysées où l’on jouait de vieux films. Un jeune homme vint s’asseoir près de moi...⁹

The clearest New Wave manifestation of such presumptuous *jouissance* is the happy couple of Enrico’s film *La Belle Vie* (1963): they are going shopping on the Champs Élysées, he has a lucrative new job, they can afford expensive jewellery and a new apartment. The husband declares: “tout s’arrange, Paris nous appartient”, though the war in Algeria will with brutal irony foreclose on this happiness by the end of the film. By the time of Perec’s novel *Les Choses*, two years later, any delusion that Paris may belong to such a couple is fully dispelled, so that instead his protagonists fantasise an imaginary metropolis of ultimate luxury and

⁶ Émile Zola, *La Débâcle* (Elibron Classics, 2006), p. 453; Simone de Beauvoir, *La Forces des choses*, 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 437. These are not necessarily explicit pretexts for Rivette’s title (indeed Beauvoir’s wouldn’t be published until 1963), but they suggest a context for its reception.

⁷ Ernest Hemingway, “A Moveable Feast”, extract published in *Life*, 56: 15 (April 1964), p. 63 (with photographs of Paris by Gordon Parks).

⁸ See, for example, *Tous les garçons s’appellent Patrick* (1958), *Les Dragueurs*, *Les Bonnes Femmes*, *Les Nymphettes* (1960), *La Fille aux yeux d’or* (1961), *Adieu Philippine* (1961), *La Luxure* (1962), *La Carrière de Suzanne* (1963), *Les Mauvaises Fréquentations* (1963), *De l’amour* (1964).

⁹ Françoise Sagan, *Un certain sourire* (Paris: Grasset, 1956), p. 46.

“d’innombrables bonheurs”: “Il leur suffisait de vivre, d’être là, pour que s’offre le monde entier. [...] Le monde leur appartenait...”¹⁰

Towards the end of his film’s long gestation, rumour circulated that Rivette was changing the title to foreground a more traditional topos, echoing Balzac: *A nous deux Paris*.¹¹ Among the film’s many strangers are the Balzacian provincials Anne (Betty Schneider), Pierre (François Maistre) and Jean-Marc (Jean-Claude Brialy), all from Châteauroux, a town almost at the centre of France, from which all three may have arrived in Paris on the train that opens the film by pulling into the Gare d’Austerlitz. In the end Rivette kept his first title, no doubt because the irony of evoking Rastignac’s “A nous deux, maintenant” from the top of the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt (rather than from the Père Lachaise cemetery), would have seemed somewhat heavy, and the burden of irony is more happily borne by Péguy’s phrase as epigraph. Nonetheless, the Balzacian motif is strong in New Wave Paris,¹² with its population of provincials hoping to succeed in the city and make it theirs (Monique in *Les Surmenés* [1958], Charles in *Les Cousins*, the woman in *Une simple histoire*, Philippe in *On n’enterre pas le dimanche* [1960], Nana in *Vivre sa vie* [1962], Guy in *L’Amour à la mer* [1963], the two Brigittes in *Brigitte et Brigitte* [1966], Joe in *Joe Caligula* [1966]). Balzac is directly invoked in *Les Cousins* when the bookseller who befriends Charles complains about a customer who preferred *policiers* to *Le Père Goriot*, and gives Charles a copy of *Illusions perdues*. The film’s novelisation fills out the thematic detail of the topos, as Charles drifts off to sleep on his first night in Paris:

Il était fatigué d’ailleurs, d’une bonne fatigue joyeuse. Paris était à lui et son appétit n’était pas grand. Quelle tête pouvait avoir cette fille qui avait des ennuis? Il lui prêta le visage d’Ophélie et s’endormit, bercé par les remous d’une chevelure dorée qui partait de l’Étoile et recouvrait Paris.¹³

The point of departure of this motif, as of much in New Wave cinema, is Astruc’s *Les Mauvaises Rencontres* (1955). For Truffaut, Astruc’s film is the first “à parler de Paris autrement que de manière touristique et by night; le premier à en parler de façon balzacienne”.¹⁴ The arrival of two young provincials is commented upon by the voice-off, a Balzacian narrator who has read Baudelaire:

¹⁰ Perec’s cinephilic couple are not particularly keen on the New Wave (“*Marienburg*, quelle merde!”), and it is not Rivette’s film that is echoed here but Raoul Walsh’s *The World in His Arms* (1950), called in French *Le monde lui appartient*. On the other hand, their fantasy of utopian luxury is clearly informed by having watched Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927), which also provides *Paris nous appartient* with its one cinephilic moment.

¹¹ See *Cinéma*, 42 (1960), p. 84.

¹² Among many who have pointed out the prevalence of New Wave references to Balzac are Claire Clouzot, *Le Cinéma français depuis la nouvelle vague* (Paris: Nathan, 1972), p. 28, and Jean-Lou Alexandre, *Les Cousins des Tricheurs* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005), p. 131.

¹³ Jean-Charles Jehanne, *Les Cousins* (Paris: Seghers, 1959), p. 28.

¹⁴ François Truffaut, *Les Films de ma vie* (Paris: Flammarion, 2007), p. 324.

C'est au crépuscule qu'il faut découvrir Paris, lorsqu'on arrive de province et que l'on a vingt ans. C'est l'heure où les premières lumières s'allument, l'heure où commence cette vie étincelante et mystérieuse de la capitale, où l'on s'est promis dans le fond de son cœur de jouer quelque jour un rôle. Les ateliers et les bureaux viennent de fermer, les théâtres vont ouvrir. Paris tout entier est un théâtre. Il ressemble alors à sa légende. Nous ressemblons à nos rêves. Paris, nom magique. Paris, terre promise. Nous campons enfin sur les rives de ton fleuve. Quels rêves, quelles illusions ne tournent pas dans ce sommeil, quels espoirs. Paris, à nous deux. Oui, à nous deux, Paris. Combien de jeunes ambitieux débarqués de Clermont-Ferrand ou de Carcassonne ne se sont-ils pas à leur tour répété cette phrase, avec sur leur épaule une tête féminine.

At which point the woman whose head is on the young man's shoulder tells him as he types, looking out over the city: "Comme c'est beau cette ville, dire que tout cela nous appartient maintenant." The connection with Rivette's film is reinforced by the coincidence of actors. Astruc's aspiring journalist is Gianni Esposito, i.e. Rivette's Gérard, for whom Paris is, if not "tout entier un théâtre", at least "tout entier" a rehearsal space, as he moves his troupe rehearsal by rehearsal from the heights of Montmartre down through Paris to the Châtelet, a centripetal movement from margins to apex.

Mapping

The Place du Châtelet is one of three centres around which the topographic spread of *Paris nous appartient* is arranged. Narratively, the scenes set there are the culmination of Gérard's progress from amateur enthusiast ("jeune animateur un peu cinglé") to professional director. Symbolically, the square is divided by the line across which the east and west of the city reflect each other in the form of matching theatres each side, identical edifices built in 1862 for Haussmann. Scenically, it is the site of the film's single vista over the city, from the roof of the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt. This provides the film's emblematic image, from a shot where the camera pans west from a downward view of the Pont au Change to the Théâtre du Châtelet across the square and northwards. At this point the camera takes in Gérard first looking west and north, then coming towards the camera (as it moves towards him) and directing his gaze down into the place du Châtelet. The rooftop shot catches several Paris landmarks – the Conciergerie, the Seine, the Pont-Neuf, Les Invalides, the Eglise Saint-Eustache – and catches Gérard gazing upon them, claiming them as his.

A second topographic centre of the film's Paris is the home of Dr de Georges (Jean-Marie Robain), on the Île Saint Louis. This is the most central and the most affluent of the film's eleven domiciles, and is presented as a world apart from the more bohemian milieus of the rest of the film. If de Georges is the evil *éminence grise* behind the conspiracies, that evil is banalised through his domicile as an evil

habitual in the Parisian upper classes. The same year the same building was used for the home of Gabin's eminent lawyer in *En cas de malheur* (1958), presented as a world apart from the sordid realities (i.e. Brigitte Bardot) of the city beyond.

The third such centre in *Paris nous appartient* is the Pont des Arts, first seen as a crossing point whereby the film passes from *rive droite* to *gauche* in Anne and Philip's hurried, un-Gabin-like *traversée de Paris*. This bridge appears again as the setting for sedentary conversation between Anne and Gérard in which the camera indulges itself with varied framings and reframings of the two, always against a detailed background of the river as unifying element. The dominant view from the Pont des Arts in this sequence is downriver toward the Île de la Cité, and it is this view that, in the closing sequence of *Paris nous appartient*, will be given as a last glimpse of the city, again against water as the elemental ground.

These centres are easy to situate and gloss, but to map *Paris nous appartient* more exactly would require as exact an identification as possible of the film's more than thirty locations. Here they are listed according to type:

Domiciles:

- Anne's apartment is in Neuilly, at 11 rue des Dames Augustines (architect Henri Delormel, 1926). This was Chabrol's address at the time, and the same exterior serves for the Neuilly apartment in *Les Cousins*.
- Gérard lives on the rue Lincoln, 8e (no. 14).
- Terry (Françoise Prévost) lives rue de Montpensier, 1er (no. 14?).
- Philip lives at the Union-Hôtel (now Hôtel des Canettes) at 17 rue des Canettes, 6e.
- Pierre's apartment cannot be identified from the film, but an early scenario places it on the rue de Seine, 6e.
- Jean-Marc lives at 35 avenue Ernest-Reyer, 14e, on the outer edge of Paris.
- Bernard's apartment is somewhere near the Drugstore, 133 Avenue des Champs-Élysées, 8e.
- Dr de Georges lives on the Île St Louis at 45 quai de Bourbon, 4e, in "la maison du Centaure" (architect François Le Vau, 1659).
- Aniouta Barsky's apartment, where Juan died, is situated, according to an early scenario, on the "rive gauche".
- Tania Féline lives at "35 rue de Bellechasse", 7e.
- Jean-Val's "campement" is said to be at Antony, a town to the south of Paris, but the house and grounds filmed are actually the "maison du garde-pêche", by the Étang du Désert near Ermenonville, north-east of Paris.

Cafés:

- Anne and Pierre meet twice at the Café Pressbourg, 3 Avenue de la Grande Armée, 16e.

- Anne meets Gérard at the café in the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, Place du Châtelet, 4e.
- Anne and Birgitta meet Godard at the terrace of the Royal Saint Germain, 6e.
- Anne makes phone calls from a café on the rue Washington, 8e, off the Champs-Élysées.

Rehearsal spaces:

- Anne and Jean-Marc go to see Gérard’s troupe rehearse in Montmartre, at 15 rue Ravignan, 18e.
- The open-air rehearsal space is again in Montmartre, beside the rue Gabrielle, 18e (and not the Arènes de Lutèce, as commonly thought).
- The third rehearsal space (with the exterior staircase), is the “maison des jeunes”, rue Bossuet, 10e.
- Rehearsals take place in the attic, and then on the stage, of the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt (architect Gabriel Davioud, 1862), Place du Châtelet, 4e.

Other exterior locations:

- Anne meets Jean-Marc in the Place de la Sorbonne, 5e.
- Anne and Jean-Marc join a Resto-U queue on the rue des Beaux-Arts, 6e.
- Anne and Jean-Marc eat a sandwich in the Place Saint-Sulpice, 6e.
- Anne meets Gérard on the Pont des Arts, 1e/6e.
- Anne makes a phone call from a kiosk, presumably near her home in Neuilly.
- Anne and Birgitta meet Pierre on the corner of rue de Vaugirard and the rue Rotrou, opposite the Luxembourg, 6e.
- Pierre phones from a kiosk by Dupleix metro station, Boulevard de Grenelle, 13e.
- Pierre is shot by Terry somewhere on the way to “Antony”.

With these points marked on a map, *Paris nous appartient* can be plotted to show concentrations in the 6th arrondissement and around the Champs-Élysées, with a broad spread across Paris north, south, west and centre (though nothing to the east).¹⁵ But these identifications in themselves do not account for the Paris that appears in Rivette’s film. Account needs to be taken also of journeys into, through and out of the city:

- The opening credit sequence features a journey into Paris, arriving at the Gare d’Austerlitz after passing through the city’s suburbs.
- Anne and Philip cross Paris, starting from the Place Émile Goudeau, in Montmartre. After an ellipsis (night has fallen) they pass Le Brebant, a café at 32 boulevard Poissonnière, and the Max Linder Pathé cinema next door, then they pass the café Au nègre, 41 rue Montmartre, and the

¹⁵ A planned scene in a café near Belleville was not included in the final edit.

offices of Paris-Pressé at 100 rue Réaumur, through the Louvre courtyard to cross the Pont des Arts, down the rue Bonaparte, past the École des Beaux Arts, and finish Place Saint-Sulpice and the rue des Canettes.

- Anne walks (then runs) from her apartment in Neuilly via the Place de la Porte des Ternes, crosses the Place de l'Étoile (past the Arc de Triomphe), down the Champs-Élysées to Gerard's in the rue Lincoln.
- Anne goes by taxi to Jean-Marc's, along the boulevard Lefebvre west to east. She continues on the Boulevard Brune, and arrives at the Avenue Ernest-Reyer. The return journey takes her up the rue de Rennes to the junction with the Boulevard Saint Germain, where she stops to phone from a kiosk opposite the Royal Saint Germain, and then on to Terry's apartment, rue de Montpensier. The taxi then takes them up the Champs Elysées into the rue Lincoln.
- Anne goes by taxi to "Antony".

To these can be added the already discussed movement of the troupe from Montmartre to the Place du Châtelet, in four stages, and the journey suggested by the opening juxtaposition of locations. Between the opening arrival at the Gare d'Austerlitz from the south-east and the following sequence in Neuilly to the north-west can be traced a movement across Paris, as in similar manner the opening movement of *Les Cousins* takes us from the Gare de Lyon across to Neuilly (to the same destination in fact). Such openings differentiate places in Paris, opening up the city to further differentiations, though the basic intra-mural opposition of *Les Cousins*, between Neuilly and the Latin Quarter, cannot match the complex articulation of Parisian places in *Paris nous appartient*. Both contrast dramatically with the opening movement of *A bout de souffle*, from Marseille to Paris, where the big question becomes not whether to be in one part or another of Paris,¹⁶ but whether to stay in or leave the city and head back south again (to Italy). The opening of Rohmer's *Le Signe du Lion* is again different, beginning *in medias res*, on a boat on the Seine going through the centre of Paris, around which the action of the film will be concentrated.¹⁷

The horizontal spread of *Paris nous appartient* needs to be read against the film's vertical configurations, of which only the most famous is Gérard's panoramic contemplation of Paris from the theatre roof, followed by a plunging view, with zoom, of the Châtelet metro station entrance below, as Anne comes up the stairs

¹⁶ A discussion about not hiding out in Montmartre because Michel Poiccard (Jean-Paul Belmondo) and friends have "trop d'ennemis" there does make a distinction between Paris districts, but that is also presented as a distinction in film-history terms: *A bout de souffle* is keeping deliberately away from the habitual territory of 1950s gangster films such as *Bob le flambeur* (1956) and *Touchez pas au grisbi*.

¹⁷ For a detailed reading of this film's opening, see R.-F. Lack, 'The Sign of the Map: Cartographic Reading and *Le Signe du Lion*', *Senses of Cinema*, 54 (2010): <http://www.sensesofcinema.com>

to street level. Budgetary restrictions prohibited filming in the metro, as had been planned, and we may guess that it was this underground journey of Anne's that would have been presented, as contrast with Gérard's high vantage point.

As memorable as are the views from the rooftop, this sequence's characteristic element is Anne's coming up the metro stairs. In the course of the film Anne is shown going up or down stairs fifteen times (and rarely the same stairs), a motif given further substance by four very curious stairways displayed in the film: the exterior stairs of the Maison des Jeunes (the troupe's third rehearsal space); the stairs to the mezzanine inside Tania Fédine's apartment, down which she walks with a wooden board fixed on her back; the distinctive deco staircase of Anne's own apartment building, filmed in striking *plongée* as Anne descends it; and the massive stairway up which advances the crowd in the "Babel" extract from *Metropolis*. To these stair scenes as views of a diagonal movement either up or down should be added the habitual angles upward of the camera to view buildings (the Sorbonne, Saint-Sulpice, the Institut, the Sacré Cœur, the Eglise Saint Vincent de Paul, the "maison du Centaure", the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, the Arc de Triomphe), and the plays of angle upwards and downwards in the various rehearsal scenes.

Only horizontal trajectories can be traced on a map of the city, and even then only if the scale allows. The film's recurrent conversations in, gazes down and trackings along corridors are unmappable micro-movements, but are configurations of Paris nonetheless. On a macro-level, similarly, the scale of the map has a bearing. Paris is just one field of action for the worldwide conspiracy, alongside the places from which all the exiles have come (Spain, Germany, Romania, Poland, Russia and the US). If the claim made in the film's title is made by the conspiring masters, then Paris is theirs just as each of these other places is theirs. The map of the film is then just a map of the world.

Two further configurations of the urban resist mapping: the past and the imaginary. Paris's past, in *Paris nous appartient*, is evoked in its historic buildings, as vestiges thereof, and through allusion. New housing estates around the Porte de Choisy can be glimpsed from the opening train journey into Paris, and modern apartment buildings are passed by Anne on her taxi ride along the southern *boulevards extérieurs*, but the film resists invoking the familiar period pathos about the "vieux Paris qui n'est plus" (compare with, for example, *Rue des Prairies* [1959], *A bout de souffle*, *La Proie pour l'ombre* [1961], *Mélodie en sous-sol*, *La Peau douce* [1964]). The old Paris of *Paris nous appartient* is left to be part of the city's modernity, unchallenged.

The most explicit allusion to the past of Paris is the exchange at Bernard's party between Pierre and a Romanian exile (played by Rivette himself), where the Romanian declares: "Vous ne savez pas ce que c'est qu'une révolution écrasée",¹⁸

¹⁸ The man we see knocked down by a car in the course of Anne and Philip's *traversée* looks very much like Rivette again, reprising his role as car crash victim from *A bout de souffle*, and

to which Pierre replies: “Et la Commune?” At the other end of the film Pierre will be seen next to a torn poster announcing a commemoration of the Commune. The title’s possible echo of a phrase from Zola on the Commune fills out the allusion, but the real substance of this other, older Paris is the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, built in 1862 as the Théâtre Lyrique but destroyed during the Commune, to be rebuilt in replica three years later. So that Gérard contemplates Paris from atop an architectural expression of a revolution not only crushed but effaced in all its consequences, and if ever Paris were to belong to him it would be, in part at least, because Paris no longer belongs to the Commune.

The Paris configured in Rivette’s film is set against two cities that cannot figure on the same map. The first is the lost city sought after in the film *La Cité disparue* (*Legend of the Lost*, 1957), playing at the cinema in front of which Anne and Philip pass (and which perhaps they have just been to see, given the unaccounted-for time in their walk across Paris). The second is *Metropolis*, glimpsed in the cinephilic soirée chez Dr de Georges. These cinematic cities are fabulous counterparts to the reality of Paris, but imply also that Paris might be like them: purely cinematic.

Viewing

The topographical coherence of the three montages of journeys in Paris (Anne and Philip walking from Montmartre to Saint-Sulpice, Anne’s walk from her home to Gérard’s, and Anne’s taxi ride to Jean-Marc’s, Terry’s then Gérard’s) is very precise, which is all the more striking in that destinations such as the homes of Anne, Jean-Marc and Terry are not identified by name or landmark, a relative anonymity that could have justified a more casual tracing of paths between them. Given that the shoot lasted over a year, the film would have been forgiven if it had not so carefully consulted its map, but a precise sense of place is characteristic of the film as a whole.

In contrast, and again understandably given how long it took to shoot the film, the time of *Paris nous appartient* is harder to keep in line. We begin in June 1957, the day following Juan’s suicide, and advance one by one to the fourth day (the day of the exam that Anne decides to miss). On day one, the first reference to external events, the death of Senator McCarthy a month before, promises a sustained attempt at coherent chronology.¹⁹ But this is not *A bout de souffle*, where the four days of the film’s action are regularly punctuated by reference to extra-narrative events, especially Eisenhower’s visit to Paris on 2 September 1959; indeed the shooting of the last Champs-Élysées sequence in Godard’s fiction

perhaps punning on the aforementioned “révolution écrasée” by being himself “écrasé”.

¹⁹ In which a substantial plot element is grounded, since Philip Kaufman is presented as a refugee from McCarthyism, though one can doubt how seriously this is to be taken, given how spectacularly un-American Philip, as played by Daniel Crohem, is: un-American not in the McCarthyite sense but simply in that his English is so poor.

becomes indistinguishable from *actualité* footage of Eisenhower's motorcade advancing towards the Arc de Triomphe.²⁰ *Paris nous appartient*, on the other hand, though it covers a period of only four to six weeks, becomes chronologically looser as the film progresses, and loses its grip also on the punctual markers from the extra-narrative world. An overheard conversation in a café refers to Nixon's lack of experience, clearly alluding to discussions in 1959 around his eventual candidature in the 1960 Republican primaries, placing us some two years ahead of the narrative's chronology.

Otherwise, *Paris nous appartient* keeps the external markers to a minimum: in Terry's apartment can be glimpsed the April 1958 issue of *Cahiers du cinéma*²¹; when Godard offers his cameo appearance at the terrace of the Royal Saint Germain, he is reading a September 1958 issue of *L'Équipe*; the poster next to the kiosk from which Pierre telephones announces a Commune-related event to take place on May 31, 1959. But none of these temporal ephemera displays its date to be read, indeed the Commune poster is intact save for where the year might have been legible, where it is torn.²²

As *Paris nous appartient* began by a movement into Paris from outside, so the film will close by moving back outside of Paris, stepping out of the intra-urban circuits that have shaped the film's plotting. The place is clearly identified by Philip ("Rendez-vous à Antony"), a town directly to the south of Paris. Antony is an unusual place in *Paris nous appartient* for its extraneity, for being identified (of the film's thirty or so locations, only six are identified by name), but above all in being not itself at all, but another place. The story of the film has moved south of Paris, but the shoot had moved north, to Ermenonville. If the real name of the place filmed had been used, the film's closing intertext, after its Hitchcocko-Shakespearean opening,²³ would be Rousseau (who died at Ermenonville), and it would be hard to find congruity in that association. Certainly it would be spurious to see in Anne's inquisitions the "rêveries" of a "promeneuse solitaire" (and she is

²⁰ Or rather only a stylistic feature distinguishes them, the jump cuts imposed by the restriction on actually showing Eisenhower and De Gaulle in *A bout de souffle*.

²¹ Only after lengthy scrutiny did I manage to fix the dates of these ephemera, and I do not in the least imagine that audiences were expected to discern any chronological disparities. My identification of the *Cahiers* cover we see is particularly recherché, and somewhat redundant – though it is a curious coincidence that the film featured on that cover, Tati's *Mon oncle* (1958), included in its cast *Paris nous appartient*'s very own Betty Schneider (indeed this and Sautet's *Classe tous risques* [1960] were more or less the only other films of distinction she was ever to appear in).

²² For a discussion of how temporal ephemera may signify in New Wave cinema, see R.-F. Lack, "The Point in Time: Precise Chronology in Early Godard", *Studies in French Cinema*, 2: 3 (2002), 101–109.

²³ The passage from *The Tempest* that Anne is reading as the film opens served as the epigraph to Chabrol and Rohmer's 1957 book on Hitchcock.

not of course a “flâneuse”).²⁴

It is apt, perhaps, that the final affirmation of the plot’s unreality (“l’Organisation est une idée, elle n’a jamais existée que dans l’imagination de Philip”) should be made in an unreal place, when the plot had seemed so real in the real streets of Paris. “Rien n’aura eu lieu que le lieu”, says Rivette of the end of his film,²⁵ though the place which will have taken place remains Paris. The Antony named by the film is not real, and in the final sequences we view Ermenonville, a place that has not taken place in the film.

The film’s last place is left, instead, as a void, merely the other of the meaningful places on display hitherto in the film. Its difference is marked firstly by how it is displayed. Every other building in the film is a substantial edifice shown as a fragment, from an angle or partially obscured, but the *maison du garde-pêche* is on a scale the camera can accommodate: we get an initial side view, complete, as Anne arrives, and a pan to place the building in its grounds, then later a complete frontal view, with Anne centrally framed in its doorway. (The only other complete, unobscured and frontal representation of an edifice in *Paris nous appartient* is the brief view of the ziggurat in the screened extract from *Metropolis*.)

Just as this last place is out of place, so are we, here, out of time. Whereas hitherto, and despite the exigencies of an extended and interrupted shoot, the seasonal aspect of the film’s exterior sequences had respected story time (roughly six weeks, beginning in June), in this last place, though the story can only have reached mid-August, the season is full-blown autumn. As if to acknowledge that exact chronology no longer holds, when Anne visualises the murder of Pierre by Terry she sees him falling onto snow, in a winter yet to come. A second vision gives us in insert a mid-summer view of the île de la Cité, a memory of Paris and of the story played out there, from the moment when Anne met Gérard on the Pont des Arts and became implicated in the plot. This insert fixes all the more surely the film’s last place as beyond plotting, whether in time or space.

²⁴ *Paris nous appartient*’s disinclination to name its places, or indeed to make their identification particularly easy, suggests an indifference to those places’ intertextual associations. There is nothing of Cocteau about Terry, despite her living on the rue de Montpensier; nothing of the Princesse Bibesco and her illustrious guests (Rilke, Proust, Valéry, Cocteau again) in Dr de Georges’s Quai de Bourbon residence (nor of Drieu la Rochelle, who also lived in the building). Gérard refers not to the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt but to the Théâtre de la Cité, the name imposed on the theatre during the Occupation (because of Bernhardt’s jewishness), and it may be that Gérard’s misnomer points to the postwar persistence of fascism.

²⁵ “Un film est, en général, une histoire construite sur une idée; j’ai essayé, en m’aidant d’une intrigue à forme policière, de raconter l’histoire d’une idée; c’est dire qu’au lieu de dévoiler en fin de partie l’intention première, le dénouement ne peut ici que l’abolir: ‘Rien n’aura eu lieu que le lieu.’ Aucune idée ne peut prétendre expliquer le monde, épuiser l’étendue du réel qui, parce que réel, la déjouera toujours par ses contradictions.” Rivette, *L’Avant-scène du cinéma*, 7 (1961), p. 34.

This essay wanted to ask if it was pertinent to plot *Paris nous appartient* on a map. Mapping was understood as literally as possible, with Tom Conley's figure of a cartographic cinema in mind, a useful precedent given Conley's cartographic reading of *Les quatre cents coups*, a close cousin of Rivette's film.²⁶ But – unlike the Paris films that are Conley's focus (*Paris qui dort* [1925], *Les quatre cent coups*, *La Haine* [1995]), unlike several Paris films contemporary with *Paris nous appartient* (*En cas de malheur*, *Pickpocket* [1959], *Le Signe du Lion*, *Classe tous risques*), and unlike Rivette's later Paris films *Out 1* (1971) and *Le Pont du nord* (1982) – *Paris nous appartient* has no embedded map to serve as prompt to a cartographic reading. Instead it has a common cinematic substitute for a map, a case, as Giuliana Bruno would put it, of “cartographic transference”²⁷: this is, precisely, the iconic panorama over Paris from the theatre roof, incorporating the viewing of a character with whom the title's claim on Paris may be identified. As we have seen, that claim is no more sustainable in the film than in the textual and cinematic tradition in which it is inscribed. In acknowledgement of this, the panoramic view encompasses nothing of the Paris in which the action of the film is situated: if the carefully observed theatre opposite is the mirror image of the one on which Gérard is standing and in which his drama will reach its crisis, that simply further ironises his claim over what he beholds. (The reverse angle of the view of the Pont-Neuf offered in the film's last image of Paris is an irony of the same order.) This most famous of New Wave *vedute* tells us, then, that the Paris of *Paris nous appartient* is elsewhere.

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²⁶ Tom Conley, *Cartographic Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), pp. 141–155. See also T. Jefferson Kline's chapter on “Cinema and/as Mapping: Reorienting Ourselves Through Film”, in *Unravelling French Cinema* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

²⁷ See Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 271. For a discussion of establishing shots and *vedute* as map-substitutes, see R.-F. Lack, “London Circa Sixty-Six: the Map of the Film”, in Gail Cunningham and Stephen Barber (eds), *London Eyes: Reflections in Text and Image* (London: Berghahn, 2007), pp.149–176 (pp. 168–169).