



Cartography / Landscapes Christine Buci-Glucksmann, 2000

Seeing the world from above, from a distant, Icarian viewpoint - that is both the reality and the fantasy of every "cartographic eye". For the map is a familiar and ideal abstract: a surface of projection and signs, where the infinitely large is transferred to a plane, with its multiple connections and interconnections. Thanks to all its journeys and utopias, it is the artefact par excellence of all voyages and trips. Whether it be a map on a Borgèsian scale or the empty map of Lewis Carroll, the map is and is not territory.

It is the landscape of territory, the disorientation of landscape even, as well as the scrutiny of territory. Landscapes based on landscapes, artificial landscapes are pictures and fragments taken from the surface of the world. Cosmic spheres, where the inventories follow on from each other and disorientate us through a new creation of the world. There is the earth, with its striations and its snowy wastes. There is the sky, seen through an immense eye-map. And there is that Japanese-like peak, a sort of hyperrealist, fictional Himalaya reminiscent of Caspar David Friedrich. And only those strange models made of wire provide us with the model for generating all these landscapes. For, unlike the regular, metric, Euclidian order, the fractal geometry of these abstract folds permits the measure and the elaboration of irregular and infinite objects, such as a geographical coast, a cloud, or a city with random streets. Now the fractal algorithms with their programmes reinvent a new baroque form of technology and a non-Euclidian topology. The vast drifting of creased and buckled continents, where the surface is deformed into volumes and the volume into worlds. Proliferating and floating, all the post-images associate figures and counter-figures in cosmic, infinitely stratified blocks of time, revealing all the landscape chinks in matter and texture. A whirlwind of matter, a chaos of turbulence "à la" da Vinci and a continuum of chaos: that is the flip side of any digital Arcadia. A Lucretian dream handed down to us through the centuries. For in this world of spiral shapes without top or bottom, this world of atomic points appearing in the void like the blossoming of "snow pixels", everything flows, floats and drifts. Compressed or dilated, folded or unfolded, swarming or rustling, virtual matter is a fluid made up of fluctuations and strange attractors. Screen dot or snow dot, the pixel is to the digital what Seurat's chromatic pointillism was to painting. It breaks down all figuration and recomposes the luminous, like a virtual cavity where the new poetry of matter is developed.

For with pixels we draw intangible worlds, with the same obsession: to give the maximum in the minimum, to capture landscapes and places by multiplying them. For if there is a "real" model, it can doubtless be found in the Zen gardens of stone and water at Kyoto. In these spaces of meditation made of emptiness and stones, the journey always prevails, tracing a visual itinerary where a mountain can be incorporated into the garden, like a fourth wall. Cut out, pruned, swaddled, reworked and mastered, nature forgets its perfection to the benefit of an abstract artifice, which gives way to thought and vacuity. Indeed, the cartographic vision

illustrates the two infinities on the same plane of projection. In aggressive, sulphurous colours, given over to a Warholian, machine-like view, the topography of places becomes an immense changing volume. For from close up and from afar, striated or smooth, the spaces follow on from each other and become hybrids, in a suspended topological time, created by the intoxicating effect of numbers. And in this active cartography, the globalised map-landscapes appear everywhere in the dialectic of site and non-site dear to Robert Smithson. The virtual as exploration of vortexes of images and mirrors with all its "entropic landscapes" and its aquatic liquefactions.