

# *Travelogues of a Sentimental Journey through Çanakkale, Turkey*

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Mental maps are at the base of the construction of a sense of place, which is formed around social attributes, such as emotions and behaviour, and physical features that function as landmarks to represent that bonding sensation.<sup>1</sup> The workshop 'The City and the Myth', organized from 18 to 20 July 2022 in Çanakkale, Turkey, as part of the COST Action 'Writing Urban Places', intended to study the connection and separation between emotional topographies and tangible locations by proposing the use of a travelogue to navigate between these two dimensions. The mid-sized city of Çanakkale was chosen because it is charged with narratives: it is generally known as the World War One battleground of the Gallipoli Campaign, when the British Empire and France failed to capture Istanbul as the Ottomans used the surrounding geographical features to their advantage. Furthermore, Çanakkale lies in the region that is believed to be the same as ancient Troy, whose destruction is featured in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The Trojan War was considered to be a fictional event until the late nineteenth century, when pioneering archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann followed Homer's geographical descriptions and identified Hisarlık Hill as the site of the former city, together with the help

of Frank Calvert. The site is now UNESCO World Heritage, but the boundary between myth and reality cannot be established with certainty. Additionally, Çanakkale is also the scene of the Greek myth of Hero and Leander, the lovers who swam across the strait every night, guided by the light of a tower. In 1810, Lord Byron re-enacted the myth by swimming in the Dardanelles and inspiring a race that has taken place every year since.

Arguably, Çanakkale plays a secondary role among Turkish centres: it is the 76<sup>th</sup> largest city in the country, though its relevance in immaterial fields such as history or literature exceeds its physical manifestation. The same thing is true in Europe of the Sintra Mountains in Portugal, the Rock of Cashel in Ireland, the Eisriesenwelt Ice Caves in Austria, the Acropolis of Athens or Stonehenge in England. There, as in Çanakkale, narratives function as a superstructure that enhances the significance of place beyond mere numeric data (population, economy, tourists). The many stories attached to the city and region of Çanakkale thus provide ground for the exploration of a topographical system of fictional events and memories.

From this perspective, while in Çanakkale, 30 researchers, professors and artists attending the workshop 'The City and the Myth' were exposed to various disciplinary fields such as architecture, archaeology, landscape, geography and literature. By means of outdoor itineraries, the participants collected personal, visual interpretations of the city using a travelogue, intended as a tool that could spatialize their sentimental journeys. Strolling through the city activated a combination of personal memories, biased interpretations of Troy and the situatedness of the travellers. In this article, we will analyse these three aspects, which together produce a sentimental map, with a focus on the methodology employed during the fieldwork.

### **Travel Literature and Travelogues**

According to Christopher Brown's *Encyclopedia of Travel Literature*, 'travel literature designates those texts that recount the journey of a person from one

place to a significantly different place and that have enduring qualities – be they formal or content based – that resonate with readers from different eras with different interests and backgrounds'.<sup>2</sup> The appeal of travel literature undoubtedly lies in the abundance of information about the different places it describes, the pleasure of imagining the mental images and maps, and the curiosity and desire for exploration and adventure it arouses in the reader. Travelogues, as a specific form of travel literature, are characterized by a truthful account of a voyage, written either in retrospect or during the endeavour of the journey, emphasizing the more memorable parts of the undertaking with detailed descriptions of the place, time, people, events and experiences of the traveller. Travelogues can be written in prose, poetry and dialogue, and can appear as diaries, letters, tour guides, scientific writings, commercial reports and other types of literary accounts. Due to its heterogeneous form and content, this subgenre of travel literature also distinguishes itself by the use of hybrid styles and a tension between truth and fiction that is at the heart of travel writing, as it mostly depicts solitary journeys to remote places that are witnessed solely by the author of the travelogue.<sup>3</sup>

As non-fictional pieces of writing, on the one hand, travelogues produce a chronotope that strongly resembles the real and actual place and time visited.<sup>4</sup> Through this act of simulation, they aim to achieve an effect of realism and truthfulness in the details and experience, and thus sometimes become an ethnographic account of the visited and experienced sites and geographic locations, but also of traditions, customs and culture (for example, of cuisine, art, myths and narratives). On the other hand, the stories that travelogues narrate are inevitably intertwined with and influenced by the author's personal experiences prior to the writing, including knowledge and education, attitudes and philosophy, memories, skills and a motivation for writing as well as any other factors that affect spatial and temporal descriptions, themes, style, perspective and other relevant narrative techniques and devices employed in the travelogue. Even though travel writing, like any



Fig. 1. Cover from the travelogue by Constance Hinfray, *The Fabric of Myths. Inter-species Entanglements and Perceptions*, 2022.



Fig. 2. Spread from the travelogue by Constance Hinfray, *The Fabric of Myths. Inter-species Entanglements and Perceptions*, 2022.

other type of writing, is a highly selective construct, the end result is often also permeated by an unconscious or involuntary mirroring of the author as a whole. For this reason, 'travel writing can serve as a complex and comprehensive repository of reflections' of the individual author and traveller, but also of their own cultural surroundings.<sup>5</sup> The following analysis from a readers' perspective – the recipients – will use a multifaceted and trans-disciplinary approach to address some of the subjectivities of the authors' experiences of Çanakkale as well as the specificities of how they compete with or transform the place together with its existing material and immaterial culture, which the travellers – the authors – attempt to reconstruct in their travelogues.

### Collective or Personal Memories

Personal memories are ordinarily based on the direct experience of individuals within a given society, while collective memory gathers 'the memories of the collectivity as a (necessarily fictitious) whole'.<sup>6</sup> In Çanakkale, it is the mythical nature of Troy that forms this fictitious whole. The notion of myth is pre-scientific by nature; it carries emotional connotations and is always shared within a group of people.<sup>7</sup> Even when epics are written by known authors, they usually translate existing popular stories or characters in a systematic narrative structure: 'History turns into myth as soon as it is remembered, narrated and used, that is, woven into the fabric of the present'.<sup>8</sup> Myths are always manifestations of a collective story, which is passed on from generation to generation and becomes contextualized according to the time and the place in which it is told. In the *Iliad*, for instance, Troy was the place of action where several travellers met their fate. The architecture and geography of Troy are an integral part of the *Iliad*, which seems to open up a space for the creation of other narratives after the destruction of the city. With the departure of the conquerors, the story of the city begins to travel on with the travellers. One can argue that in the *Odyssey*, where Troy is only the starting point, it is ultimately the story of two travellers: one is the celebrated Ulysses, who follows his journey far from home, thus

embodying an archetype of the adventurer.<sup>9</sup> The second is Penelope, who also travels and controls the tempo of the narration while being confined to her chamber, with the act of weaving representing her journey. Ulysses' and Penelope's travels produce a topographical system that is made of events, unexpected in one case and iterative in the other, which characterize the space of their movements. They create a mental map. Geographers make a distinction between maps of tangible objects, those elements that have mechanical properties, and maps of the spatialized experience of the mind. The latter, like those of Ulysses and Penelope, starts from a blank map, a tabula rasa condition, and becomes increasingly populated every time a personal memory is recorded in this imaginary space.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the geography of the mind prevails over that of the real because it is internally produced by the perceiving subject or, in this case, the traveller.

In 'The City and the Myth', we studied how individual emotional geographies, brought forward by the participants and further informed during the fieldwork, interacted with the myth of Troy. Travelogues helped the navigation between the two, accompanying their movement while fixing ideas, concepts and images of an exploration that lasted for two days. In half of the travelogues, authors make direct reference to their memories, for example to the state of destruction of their city, to the subjects they research on a daily basis, or to the preparation process for the very travels they narrate. These stories form a topographical system of fictional memories that can be charted, explored and attached to physical places.

The association of memory with geography has been explored extensively over time, starting from techniques for artificial memorization that supposedly were invented by the poet Simonides in the fifth century BC and soon formalized in the Latin textbook *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (86-82 BC), which became one of the cornerstones of classical education in the ancient world.<sup>11</sup> Quintilian and Cicero elaborated on these techniques, which teach one how to spatialize parts of a speech, known among the Romans as the

'method of loci': maps are organized systems, so the method consists of positioning each discrete memory in an imaginary place. Later, when the speaker needs to remember their speech, the narration unfolds while the subject travels through this mental topography, following an itinerary of successive loci.<sup>12</sup> Quintilian observed that when returning to a place, we also remember the emotions we felt there before. Legend has it that Simonides got this idea after he attended a dinner in the house of a nobleman in Thessaly, where at some point the roof over the hall collapsed; he survived and realized he could remember the names of all the victims by associating them with their seats around the table.<sup>13</sup> Hence, images and locations contextualized abstract notions visualizing imagined places populated with names. Joshua Foer points out that different cultures, such as Apache Indians, also associate memories with the landscape they inhabit as well as with the myths that took place there.<sup>14</sup> Geographical features interlock with mythical episodes in a way that a map coincides with the unfolding of epics. However, this becomes problematic when governments or companies transform such geographies, leading not only to material losses, but also to the disconnection of foundational myths from their geographical places. But the travellers of the workshop had never been to Çanakkale before, so their memories of Troy were inevitably formed by narrations such as movies, poetry and video games. Giuliana Bruno argues that emotional geographies are experiences at the juncture of art and science, and that custom tools are needed to capture the erotics of space, of which the impact goes beyond the seen.<sup>15</sup> In the case of the workshop, it was decided to keep a travel diary, where these newly created worlds could be rendered and collected. Additionally, geography and memory are bounded in terms of appropriation. Benedict Anderson observes how colonialist European countries produced historical maps to project political-biographical narratives that would justify their presence in other places.<sup>16</sup> Instead, participants in 'The City and the Myth' used their narratives to appropriate Çanakkale on a more personal and intimate level, injecting the mental map of their memories with the situatedness of their travels.

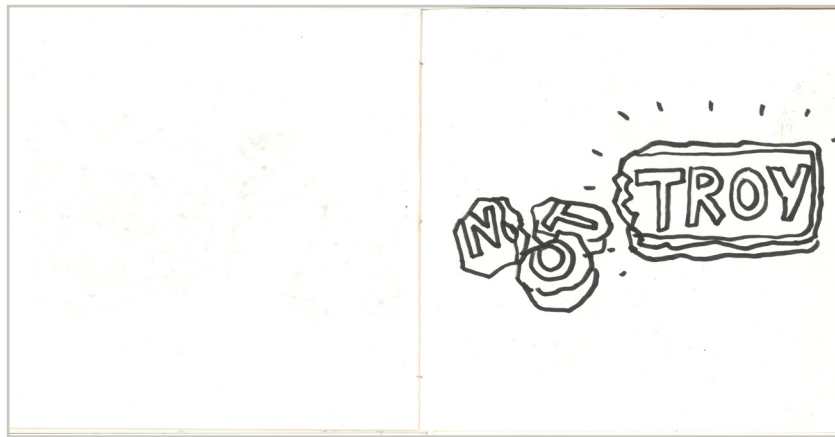


Fig. 3. Spread from the travelogue by Eduardo Côrte-Real, *To Troy or not to Troy, this is the Question*, 2022.

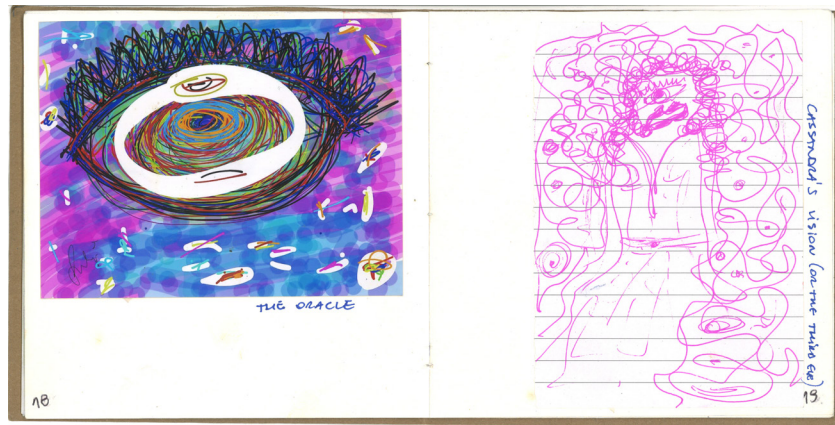


Fig. 4. Spread from the travelogue by Juliana Wexel, *A Letter to Cassandra*, 2022.

### The Situatedness of the Traveller

Several scholars have compared the figures of the *flâneur* and the tourist as tropes of the traveller who visits places for recreation and enjoyment.<sup>17</sup> In Baudelaire's work, the *flâneur* is the subject of poetic life, prone to meet the unpredictable with a positive disposition in order to understand 'the world and the mysterious and lawful reasons for all its uses'.<sup>18</sup> There is a sense of mystery in the *flâneur's* wanderings. After Baudelaire, the term *flâneur* was further developed by Benjamin, with a more spatial understanding. To the *flâneur*, the city 'opens up to him as a landscape, even as it closes around him as a room'.<sup>19</sup> Hence, one can travel from the infinite distance of Icarus's flight to the closest proximity of Georges Perec's domestic geographies. Their journeys take many forms (physical, metaphorical, fantastic or symbolic) and their motivations include work, pleasure, study and exploration. This practice was especially embraced by the Situationists, to be used as a technique to survey and analyse urban environments. Designed spaces were not only empty fields that responded to functional programmes, but very much charged with sociopolitical meanings to which a Situationist would resist through the construction of temporary situations.<sup>20</sup> This phenomenological stance added to *flânerie* a more critical and conscious behaviour that transformed wanderings into a precise methodology. As such, the means of transportation, communication and the recording of situations all became strategies to form a methodology for analysis.

'The City and the Myth' attempted a similar approach, facing the same problem the Situationists found in communicating these acts of *dérive* in aesthetic forms.<sup>21</sup> Henri Lefebvre, in an interview on Situationism, discussed how the essential element that creates situations is that of linking up different areas of the city, making them communicate. In this way, separate spaces would attain a certain simultaneity and take the form of a collective narrative.<sup>22</sup> The workshop, instead, was not aimed at connecting neighbourhoods, but mental maps with physical maps. Travelogues asso-

ciate the individual with the collective, collapsing imagined places with tangible ones in a simultaneous cognitive stream that is recorded in a tangible medium.

Consequently, lived experiences and lived spaces were documented with words, drawings, collages, photos and diagrams, in the spur of the moment. Any postproduction or re-elaboration of the travelogues would have probably improved the quality of the outcome, but would at the same time have destroyed the synchronicity of the situation with the act of communication.

### **Clichés and Biased Interpretations of the Traveller**

Considering the fact that visitors already carry interpretations of a place 'from home', before arriving at a certain destination, travelling implies an interesting paradox: it is an activity of enjoyment that, at the same time, requires preparation and organized work.<sup>23</sup> Travelling is a planned activity but seeks adventure, travellers wish to dive into the unknown, even though they already have an idea of what Çanakkale looks like. The experience of being a tourist triggers new or familiar, but forgotten, spatial, social and personal relations with the surroundings. It can happen, for instance, that a place we have never visited before may look familiar, while at the same time the street we walk through every day becomes an adventurous realm. In places like Çanakkale, the body of narratives surrounding its name and landscape echoes Homer's epics, Wolfgang Petersen's blockbuster movie *Troy* (2004), the art work *Fifty Days at Iliam* (1978) by Cy Twombly, the videogame *Total War Saga: Troy* (2020), as well as many contemporary literary texts.<sup>24</sup> Hence, the perception of visitors to Troy is grounded in these and other cultural productions before they even set foot in Çanakkale; their disposition towards what they perceive is not innocent. The critical thesis of the innocent eye, as posed by John Ruskin, which refers to the transition from an unbiased vision to one that is shaped by conventions, is indeed a relevant point of discussion for the travelogues: What is the rele-

vance of memory, of cultural constructs, in charting a place that one visits for the first time? And especially regarding the example of Çanakkale as a highly branded cultural heritage site: How does information gathered before the visit influence the traveller's experience on the site?

Visiting Çanakkale with the task of keeping a diary questioned the mental imagery that everyone already had formed before their arrival. Strolling through the city, you can find the original prop horse used in the *Troy* movie, which is on show on the newly renovated seafront as a monument, as well as the profile of the Trojan horse on the packaging of bakeries, in music festival logos, at restaurants as well as in shops of medical equipment. Major cultural heritage sites have an image that is fed by stereotypes and city-branding initiatives.<sup>25</sup> Sabine Marshall called personal memory tourism the 'form of travel motivated by autobiographical memories, focused on the retracing of memorable previous journeys'.<sup>26</sup> In the case of Çanakkale, travellers are provided with an indirect personal memory of the site constructed by media, not by previous journeys. This confusing cognitive middle ground is caused by today's deterritorialization through mediated communication as well as through a hypermobility that renders the notion of home unstable. The faraway, Çanakkale, becomes intertwined with the very near, because it is first perceived elsewhere in its virtual forms.<sup>27</sup> This biased interpretation accompanies the visit and influences our real-time perception because, as we have previously discussed, its geography is produced by the mind of the traveller and tends to prevail over the physical one.

Clichés and stereotypes are the simplest way to represent a heritage site over a distance and thus also affected the participants. Gulnaz Garaeva maintains that the act of travelling does not necessarily engage with a deeper intercultural understanding of the destination.<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, stereotypes encourage a staged representation of the site that is in line with the visitors' expectation. Hence, the more virtual simulacra are distorted through mediated communication, the stronger Troy will resemble its



Fig. 5. Spread from the travelogue by Noemi Alfieri, *Red Lines in Çanakkale, this is the Question*, 2022.

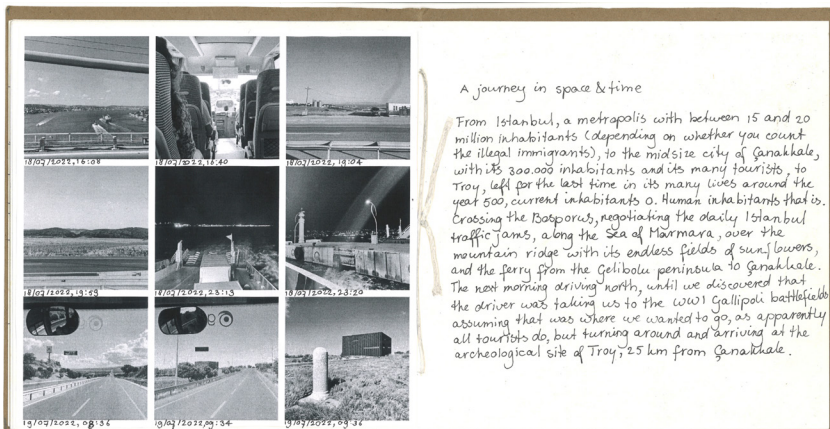


Fig. 6. Spread from the travelogue by Saskia de Wit, *Sleeping dogs and the sea that disappeared*, 2022.

narrative twin. At the same time, getting to know the Turkish city in two days was a challenging task: it was observed that the travelogues, together with the perspective of having them exhibited and published, pushed participants through several stages of editing their first ideas. Initial ideas, carrying the traces of stereotypical references, were re-elaborated through more complex tools for expression, finally producing several thought-provoking contributions.

### The Sentimental Journey through Çanakkale

The outcome of the fieldwork has recently been published in the book *The City and the Myth*, with the support of the COST Action 'Writing Urban Places'.<sup>29</sup> Presented as an archive of scanned travelogue spreads, the body of work became a collective system of knowledge pivoting around the fieldwork. In the first phase, it was important to reduce the excess of information of Troy's excessive media presence. On-site, participants first had to forget and leave behind their prior understanding of Troy. In Jorge Luis Borges' short story 'Funes the Memorious', Ireneo Funes is able to remember everything: not only does he remember every leaf of every tree of every forest, he even remembers every time he perceived the leaf.<sup>30</sup> Thus, he builds a useless catalogue containing all of the images in his memory, and in this way, however, finds himself in a sort of parallel world that perceptively disconnects him from reality. Funes is overwhelmed by information and is confronted by the same risk as those who acquire notions of a place through their media representations and are then satisfied with the level of detail they have attained. The fieldwork was crucial to instil doubt and uncertainty in the participants. This required different perspectives on the historical city of Troy as well as forgetting Schliemann's narrative, which was aimed at by visiting the exhibition at the Museum of Troy as well as the archaeological site of the city itself. Both are incomplete renderings of Troy, because the one only has small fragments, assembled within a contemporary building, while the other is a ruined place where the former reality is merely suggested by the remnants of walls. So, the museum is an intermediate point between the



Fig. 7. Resta Giuseppe (ed.), *The City and the Myth* (Melfi: Libria, 2022).

ruins and the contemporary city of Çanakkale, separated from each other by 20 kilometres, but also the platform that delivers an overarching narrative of the site. Indeed, it is the official and most scientifically accurate explanation of the historical evolution of Troy to date. The participants' visit to the exhibition space was an occasion to confront the body of narratives and develop a fragment of it with a more personal approach, which could be the wind, a certain statue or the landscape. As Borges writes, it is important to forget to be able to propose a synthesis. Instead of providing a synthesis, the juxtaposition of myth and fact that the travellers were exposed to provoked them into forming their own memory and perception of the site as well as the city of Çanakkale. Travelogues served as a tool to record an emotional journey, blending the realm of intimate experiences and that of grand mythological narratives together. Forgetfulness was trained and employed as an important skill to perceive the situatedness of the traveller, their body in space, and its impact on the surroundings. In this way, moods could emerge in the narration and change according to the different times of the day, based on light and weather conditions, which is something one cannot experience in or through media representations.

The reference to Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* in the title of this text is an attempt to stress the importance for scientific disciplines to allow biased and subjective accounts of places to complement quantitative data. The sentimental traveller/researcher, as Sterne admits, is 'aware, at the same time, as both [his] travels and observations will be altogether of a different cast from any of [his] forerunners, that [he] might have insisted upon a whole niche entirely to [himself]'.<sup>31</sup> All observations of Çanakkale are partial by definition, because the branding of the city is highly connected to the narrative of Troy, which hovers between truth and fiction, myth and reality, similar to travel writing itself.

Travelogues are not disconnected from a sense of reality, but rather accept human limitations while facing Çanakkale's layered context. The museum



as the place of truth, where evidence is stored and catalogued, also occupies a place within the media representations. Berna Göl, in the publication on the workshop, observes the recurrence of ramps in the travelogues, which is also the architectural element that characterizes the design of the building by architect Ömer Selçuk Baz. Here, 'the visitors' gaze going from one exhibition floor to another, is framed by vertical slits on facades which hold these ramps behind the perfect prism of the structure'.<sup>32</sup> The building itself is a device, a viewing machine, that visitors use to overlook the flat landscape and the archaeological site. On top is a terrace where the wind blows fully, making the traveller's experience really tangible.

This quixotic challenge produced, as an immediate result, 30 new narratives of the city in relation to the myth of Troy, but also an open-ended project that others can continue. The methodology of the travelogue allowed for very different types of output to coexist. First, the background of the travellers ranged from sociology and architecture to comparative literature and literary history. Some were very much focused on textual output, others worked predominantly with visual means. We wanted these travel journals to be instinctive, spontaneous and essentially empirical. As a result, among the produced travelogues, there is the story of a murder, a collection of QR codes linked to AI-generated visuals, drawings of a fictional species invading the archaeological site, and parallels between ancient Troy and today's Kharkiv that reflect on how a destruction of contemporary Troy(s) is possible. Twelve European countries were represented in the group of doctoral students, early-career researchers and professors. Analysing the output, we observed that architects tended to employ textual techniques, while participants with a background in literature experimented with drawings and photography. This confirms that the multidisciplinary dimension of the workshop implicitly encouraged individuals to go beyond their comfort zone. In six cases, the travellers merged the exploration with their personal research topic, creating interesting references to different places and subjects. It shaped a network of associations that starts in Çanakkale

and reaches towards every corner of Europe, in the same way in which the destruction of Troy was the beginning of several foundational mythologies for other countries as a result of the diaspora of populations that fled west.<sup>33</sup> In these cases, stories and fragments followed the researchers back home, providing perspectives for further development. Research in architecture is often believed to be too far removed from the environment that it intends to study and assess, hence the importance of fieldwork, where methodologies are tested, revised and employed to generate new views on the contemporary world.<sup>34</sup> Architecture can learn from such travelogues by discovering new ways of narrating and making sense of the world. The travelogues are not meant to sustain or reconstruct a memory, but they should reorganize the old and propose new interpretations, where the dichotomy between truth and fiction is replaced by sentimental accounts.

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- 21 A *dérive*, from the French verb *deriver*, which means 'drifting', was defined by Guy Debord in 1958 as 'a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. *Dérives* involve playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll.' See: Guy Debord, 'Theory of the *Dérive*', translated by Ken Knabb, in: Ken Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 50.
- 22 Kristin Ross and Henri Lefebvre, 'Lefebvre on the Situationists: An Interview', *October* 79 (1997), 69-83.
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- 24 For example, novels such as Peter Ackroyd's *The Fall of Troy* (2007), David and Stella Gemmill's *Troy* trilogy (2005-2007), Margaret George's *Helena, genannt die Schöne: Mein Leben zwischen Sparta und Troja* (2009), Gisbert Haefs' *Troja* (1997), Colleen McCullough's *The Song of Troy* (1998), Dan Simmons' *Ilium* (2003), Stephen Fry's *Troy: Our Greatest Story Retold* (2020), or Christoph Ransmayr's play *Odysseus, Verbrecher* (2010) and many more. Petersen's blockbuster starred many

- Hollywood celebrities such as Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, Orlando Bloom and Eric Bana, ensuring the audience's enthusiasm and interest in the theme.
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