

ON MENTAL AND CARTOGRAPHIC SPACE: BELÉN GOPEGUI'S
LA ESCALA DE LOS MAPAS,
BERGSON AND THE IMAGINED INTERVAL

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The dilemmas of space appear to lie in the way we relate to it: the way we understand and therefore transform, it. The debates between absolute and relational space, the dilemma between physical and social space, between real and mental space, between space and mass, between function and form, between abstract and differential space, between space and place, between space and time, can all be seen as indicators of a series of open philosophical questions: how do we understand space and relate to it? Does it exist beyond our cognition or is it conditioned by it? Do we relate to it by our reason or our senses? Is space a collection of things and people, a container for them, or are they embedded in it? Is it representing openness or fixity? Do we understand and transform space individually or socially? How do we relate space and time? In our response to these questions, we find ourselves divided between rationalism and empiricism, between materialism and idealism, between objective and subjective understanding, between reason and emotion, between theory and practice, between uniformity and diversity, and between order and disorder.

(Ali Madanipour, *Design of Urban Space* 28-29)

INTRODUCTION

Through her many intriguing novels and film scripts¹, Belén Gopegui has established an enviable reputation as one of Spain's

¹ These include: *La escala de los mapas* (1993), *Tocarnos la cara* (1995), *La conquista del aire* (1998) —on which the script for Gerardo Herrero's *Las razones de mis amigos* (2000) was based, *Lo real* (2001), *El lado frío de la almohada* (2004), and the script for Gerardo Herrero's *El principio de Arquímedes* (2004).

most talented and successful writers of fiction. In fact, her debut novel *La escala de los mapas* (1993) won the «Premio Tigre Juan» in 1993 and the «Premio Iberoamericano de Primeras Novelas» in 1994. This important novel itself blurs the boundaries between fiction and essay building on a long-standing critical and philosophical tradition of Hispanic fiction —recalling such important works as Miguel de Unamuno's *Amor y pedagogía* (1902) and Juan Benet's narratives of the Civil War starting with *Volverás a Región* (1967), among many others. More than just a prize-winning story, Gopegui's Janus-faced narrative investigates the fictional world of its narrator-protagonist Sergio Prim at the same time that it examines the philosophical underpinnings of our treatment of geographical space —proving to be an insightful look into the intimate connection between mental and cartographic space. In effect, the work responds to a current methodological crisis in geography focusing on how space is produced— a crisis that has divided unflinching materialists from entrenched immaterialists (as the recent pages of *Progress in Human Geography* testify). Reconciling both approaches with one another, and finding the inadequacies inherent in each, *La escala de los mapas* asserts that a thorough answer to our interrogations of space must acknowledge «a notion of the material that admits from the very start the presence and importance of the immaterial» (703), as Alan Latham and Derek McCormack express so succinctly in their article «Moving Cities: Rethinking the Materialities of Urban Geographies» (2004). Gopegui's novel proposes that we question the notion of an objective and static geographically spatial dimension and, in so doing, underscores an idea most clearly articulated in Henri Lefebvre's watershed opus *The Production of Space* (1991)². The novelist leads the reader precisely towards the Lefebvrian idea of space as a *process* that envelops both the notion of materiality and that of immateriality. I argue that an awareness of Henri Bergson's philosophical writings on space, time and consciousness —and the relevance of those writings to Lefebvre's project— most clearly illuminates the novel's contribution to this understanding of a simultaneously mental and cartographic spatiality.

In apparently juxtaposing Sergio Prim, the interval-seeking narrator and Brezo Varela, his unattainable love, Gopegui's novel sets

² Lefebvre's work has influenced many more contemporary thinkers such as David Harvey (1989; 1990; 1996; 2000), Edward Soja (1996), Michael Dear (2000), Ali Madanipour (1996), Don Mitchell (2000), and David Thorns (2002) among many others.

up a straw-man philosophical dichotomy between affect and action, between subjectivity and objectivity, between the purely theoretical poles of ideal and real consciousness, ultimately to affirm Bergson's maxim that «all consciousness is something» over Edmund Husserl's weakened version – «all consciousness is consciousness of something» (Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, 56). More importantly, the Bergsonian idea that existence is an unceasing movement occurring in an ever-expanding duration takes shape amidst a discourse of geographical processes and scales centered on Madrid. Gopegui's resulting elegant take on the production of space highlights the notion of spatial process as a movement at once material and symbolic, with implications regarding whose mental maps achieve cartographic form. Ultimately the novel successfully negotiates those very questions important to the study of cultural and urban geography—inquiring into the very nature of space as well as the method through which space is simultaneously shaped by both action and thought itself.

Although I will focus more specifically on the link that Gopegui's text realizes with questions of cultural geography, the present examination of novelistic form and philosophical methodology is meant to evoke larger questions of perception and even consciousness itself. The questions that Bergson asked of consciousness through his works are by no means relegated to the dustbin of the history of philosophy, but are themselves indicative of the *enduring* nature of the Bergsonian conception of past itself. In an article that appeared in the *New York Review of Books* (January 15, 2004) titled «In the River of Consciousness», Neurologist Oliver Sacks, in fact, returns to Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (1907) in order to explore the renewed interest in theories of perception which posit a discontinuous apprehension of reality³. As

³ This philosophical problem of the discontinuous apprehension of reality is at the core of Bergson's writings. This spatialization of reality is in fact the tendency of life which has obtained evolutionarily in the function of the human intellect (although as he explains as part of both in *Creative Evolution* and *Matter and Memory* this tendency exists in the whole of duration itself). As Bergson explains, this spatialization is caused by the fact that the human intellect has continuously molded itself to matter. My more-than-passing interest in the writings of Sacks leads me to suggest that the whole of Sack's approach to the mind-body-world problem squares quite well not only with phenomenological philosophy and psychology but perhaps more specifically with the writings of Bergson on consciousness. To explore this connection more adequately, however, would be to adopt quite a different focus than that of the present article. Nevertheless, let me conclude this diversion by stating that there is still support Bergson's musings on memory (see McNamara 1996). Readers may wish to consult the discussion on Sacks's article by Benjamin Libet *et al.* and also appearing in the *New York Review of Books*, April 8, 2004.

Sacks, Bergson and Gopegui are aware, however, admitting that we may perceive reality in a discontinuous manner does not mean that reality is itself discontinuous. Rather, our experience in and production of a shared reality is tied in great measure to our perception of the world through static images, models and mechanisms. *La escala de los mapas* seeks to draw attention to the way these mechanisms influence our understanding and production of personal, social and even urban space.

In the first section of this essay I will show how the novel sets up the binary structure of subjectivity and objectivity, of affect vs. action, through the characters Sergio and Brezo, respectively the literary representations of these oppositions. I will then explore the Bergsonian metaphor of the cinematograph of the mind as it presents itself in the text in order to draw attention to the false divisions created by the mind —divisions which for Bergson are the very essence of a false spatiality abstracted from and imagined as distinct from temporality. Subsequently I will show how, through the concept of the «intervalo» or «hueco», Gopegui constructs a narrative attentive to the problem of uniting affect and materiality and yet unwilling to accept the very way this question is posed. The protagonist's conception of a space *between* the mental and the cartographic illustrates what for Bergson is a spatializing tendency of perception. Notably, Gopegui's novel reveals the insufficiency of this tendency much as the philosopher's *oeuvre* does. Moreover, I will emphasize that the geographical content of the novel highlights the appropriate application of Bergson's ideas on space to geography. Ultimately, the triple fusion of Gopegui's *La escala de los mapas*, Bergson's philosophy, and the theoretical foundations of cultural geography form a unique call for the way in which we perceive space, now neither wholly mental nor purely cartographic, but a process from which the human intellect extracts either one or the other, forming those very simplistic dichotomies that drive the novelistic Sergio Prim to anguish.

SERGIO AND BREZO, A PHILOSOPHICAL LOVE AFFAIR BETWEEN CONSCIOUSNESS AND THINGS

Simply put, *La escala de los mapas* is the story of geographer Sergio Prim's longing for his love interest, Brezo Varela, also a geographer. The former character documents his yearning through a

continual surge of emotions, thoughts and memories, ultimately seeking a gap in space through which he would be able to finally connect with the object of his passions. These memories, thoughts and emotions all but completely eclipse the action of the novel understood in the traditional sense of a sequence of events. This is a direct result of the narrator's (Sergio) clear desire to immerse himself in his own ruminations at the expense of the world around him. In the last chapter he clearly reveals how he has been attempting to hide from reality —«Brezo, aunque la realidad me busque, no podrá dar conmigo. Para esconderse, ahora lo entiendo, conviene elegir el sitio donde nadie supondría que nos íbamos a esconder» (229). It is somewhat problematic to summarize the plot of Gopegui's novel further for the reader. This difficulty is not solely a function, as I will have chance to explore, of the narrator's insistence upon what might all too easily be termed mental or psychic activity—the constant flux of emotions and memories that pervade and organize the work—although this is perhaps the primary obstacle. Rather, creating a short synopsis of the work is made more complex by the text's nuanced and clever narrative structure. At the risk of introducing this narrative complexity before it is entirely appropriate to do so, let it suffice to state that the novel's action—the part that exceeds the protagonist's important mental involutions—is to be read only secondarily, and that the largely (but not wholly) first-person narrative style precludes a so-called 'direct' apprehension of the novel's events taken in the widest sense. In lieu of a chapter-by-chapter summary of the work, then, I hope to give a sense of its trajectory by means of the text's presentation of its major characters through the philosophical opposition of reality to ideality. This opposition, as I will show, is undeniably emphasized throughout the work—and yet as I will argue, the effect of the novel is ultimately to question this dichotomization.

Few previous studies have taken on the complex philosophical core of *La escala de los mapas*⁴. When the novel has been mentioned it has proved tempting to limit discussion of the novel's two (necessarily one-dimensional) protagonists to notions of fixed dichotomies. One such example is to be found in Janet Pérez's «Tradition, Renovation, Innovation: The Novels of Belén Gopegui» (2003). The crit-

⁴ Nevertheless, Judith Drinkwater (1995) unites body and space in an excellent reading of the novel as part of her essay.

ic sets out to explain Gopegui's novels, including *La escala de los mapas*, in terms of «the dichotomy of dreams or illusion versus reality» (128). She explicitly calls attention to problems of ontology, and shows convincingly how one or another of these poles come to be predominant in the novels under consideration, thusly finding the novel to be examined here an example in which idealism obscures realism. Yet, I would like to expand Pérez's discussion of ontology in order to focus on the very division between the real and the ideal. In ignoring that this dichotomy is created by a certain tendency of the intellect, the split serves to affirm the ontological status of its avatars, namely affect/action and mental/cartographic space. This limitation ignores that Gopegui's novel indeed seeks to challenge these very boundaries, and thus leads to the mistaken conclusions that «Readers have no objective external referent, no third-person omniscient narrator, no other narrative voice or character's judgment to help them distinguish between what happens in reality and what exists only in the mind of the protagonist» (120) and «Although Gopegui presents the urban landscape in realistic fashion together with contemporary social and historical attributes of the metropolis, interaction between this setting and the characters of *La escala* is minimal: the important 'action' is psychic, occurring largely within enclosed spaces, often within the characters themselves» (119). I disagree, and would offer that these conclusions are in fact already given at the moment one severs affect from action, internal mind from external reality, memory from matter.

On the contrary, releasing these constructed separations, and finding the complex cohabitation of one in the other provided by Bergson's phenomenology, reveals the text as a rich commentary on reality, on matter, and on the production of space. In *Matter and Memory* (1896) Bergson writes on the inadequacy of the real/ideal dichotomy:

The realist starts, in fact, from the universe, that is to say from an aggregate of images governed, as to their mutual relations, by fixed laws, in which effects are in strict proportion to their causes, and of which the character is an absence of center, all the images unfolding on one and the same plane infinitely prolonged. But he is at once bound to recognize that, besides this system, there are *perceptions*, that is to say, systems in which these same images seem to depend on a single one among them, around which they arrange themselves on dif-

ferent planes, so as to be wholly transformed by the slightest modification of this central image. Now this perception is just what the idealist starts from: in the system of images which he adopts there is a privileged image, his body, by which the other images are conditioned. But as soon as he attempts to connect the present with the past and to foretell the future, he is obliged to abandon this central position, to replace all the images on the same plane, to suppose that they no longer vary for him, but for themselves and to treat them as though they made part of a system in which every change gives the exact measure of its cause. (14-15)

Bergson argues that these two poles of consciousness, the real and the ideal, the consciousness in things and the consciousness in living beings as indeterminate centers of action, are necessarily and intimately connected. This relationality becomes concretely symbolic in Gopegui's work through the two characters, Sergio and Brezo, whose relationship is a literary metaphor for that very relation between the consciousness of things and the consciousness of living beings.

As is made quite clear in the text, Sergio represents the pole of ideality, an abstracted, receptive center of affect; Brezo is the pole of reality, the distant center of indeterminate action. Sergio Prim is identified with the pole of ideality through metaphors that weaken his physical, and thus corporeal, real presence. He is described as «pequeño» (19, 145). His body is puny, weak and «casi ficticio» (12-13). He is «un hombre tan pasivo» (38). Metaphors of interiority heighten this identification. His narrative is filled with memories, he seeks mental escape (52), seeks to «recolectar imágenes» (70) as an outward projection of his internal memory collector; he envies the *action* of his peers (51), he is «un ser de emoción» (53). The text underlines his «intimidad poblada» (87) in opposition to «los cuerpos venidos del exterior» (20-21). He is a small Sergio (65) a Sergio «imaginario» (65) who prefers to surround himself with «una difusa constelación afectiva» (29). Though he lives in affect, he is unable to exteriorize his feelings or to act (27, 153). His movement in space is clumsy (23), he doesn't calculate the distance between himself and objects well (44), and not surprisingly he is «el único estudiante de geografía que no le gustaba viajar» (44). He even rants against materiality explicitly:

Contra la fisiología. Contra esta humana dependencia de ser abrazado, tocado, lamido con minúscula delicadeza por una

lengua exacta. Me gustaría escribir contra la fisiología, porque la fisiología es imposible. No quiero salir a la vida, no quiero bajar a las tiendas a comprar latas ni arroz, tú eres mi concha, Brezo, quiero quedarme en ti. (58)

His lack of camaraderie with material things is revealed in his need for glasses to focus or magnify the physical world (21) and the centrifugal connection he has with reality within which he feels the sensation of smoke *before* noticing others smoking (21) – affect and sensation before perception. His is not the world of things but that of his own «feraces jardines imaginarios, el ensueño» (62). His is a universe closed and enveloped by an affect that desires itself: «que mi pasión no se repliegue, amiga, que mi pasión fluya por un espacio blanco y libre de realidad, por esta ruta apaisada que voy trazando» (91). In many instances he explicitly opposes himself to reality (87, 102, 105, 138, 172). He is the second half of the book title he shows Brezo: *La realidad y el deseo* (30), a being of desire living in «el peligroso mundo de las sensaciones» (170) as his boss Doña Elena describes it. He toys with the intellect itself as others might play chess (51), needing of course no physical pieces.

Likewise, Brezo Varela is the abstracted pole of reality, movement, action upon things. Her materiality is expressed in the physical term of 'agility' (16, 19); she needs to know the whereabouts of *things* (87). Sergio notes that «[Brezo,] tú mandas sobre los objetos» (152). She is the reality opposed to Sergio's musings on Berkeley's idealist philosophy (89, 135, 155, 169). Sergio describes her as action incarnate:

El mundo quiere pruebas, flor traída del dueño, dinosaurio. El mundo, por lo general, detesta la retórica, desconfía de los verbos mentales: recordar, creer, pensar, suponer, fantasear, representarse. Esas gentes extravertidas que atruenan con su claridad en absoluto prestan oídos a la imaginación. *El mundo y tú, Brezo, que estabas en el mundo, exigíais actos, estabais en tratos con la realidad.* (my emphasis, 183)

His association to intellectual verbs such as «to remember», «to believe», «to think», «to suppose», «to fantasize» and «to represent» contrasts with Brezo's links with reality, actions, and the world. Due to his imprisonment is his own mind, his perception cannot capture real movement but rather only catches a jump shot of Brezo's action in the world: «En el último rincón estabas tú, pero ya te habías

levantado, venías hacia mí» (26). By the time he mentally captures and processes Brezo's location at one instant, she has already moved to another. She is a corporeal presence identified with objective things, supposedly uninflected by that desire to which Sergio clings. In the following quotation, Brezo is clearly identified with this physical movement, while Sergio links himself instead with mental flow:

Brezo, tú eres el énfasis que no tuve, eres la alacridad puesta delante de mi monotonía. Yo soy un hombre introvertido, manantial subterráneo, corriente prisionera, mientras que tú, catarata, te extroviertes pintando de blanco empapado fragmentos de la atmósfera. Tú desconoces la palabra reserva, el acto de acumular imágenes, emociones para el invierno. (59)

Brezo is not equipped to express emotions, but rather only «un relato inconexo de su vida sentimental» (64).

Together, Sergio and Brezo represent in human sexual union the relational union of material and idea, «yo era lo ajeno, y ella me habitaba» (20), «Ella existió en mí» (19). Problems between the two, often glossed in terms of communication, engender the encounter between the mental and the material. Sergio «exigía que el gesto ratificara siempre al sentimiento, que el enunciado fuera reproducción exacta del mensaje interior» (89) while Brezo's connection with the sentimental remains unexplored. Sergio is thus imagined as a subjective experience cut off in many ways from action itself while Brezo is pure movement, lack of reflection and sensation. The ideal consciousness that presents itself in the human organism as a center of indetermination or a screen between received action and its corresponding delayed action (Sergio) contrasts with the real consciousness of things themselves, discussed by Bergson as a plane of images where each interacts with all the others constantly on all of their sides (Brezo). If the realization of this theoretical model is problematized through the appearance of each pole in a distinct novelistic human consciousness this is only an effect of the literary metaphor that Gopegui employs to represent the cohabitation of real and ideal consciousnesses on what Deleuze, following Bergson's nondualistic ontology, terms the 'plane of immanence' through a human relationship.

That their relationship is a failure is attributed to the fact that the pole of individual consciousness has been cut off from action. The implication is that to give in to affect, or to sever affect from

action is to attempt to interrupt the ever-changing flow that is duration. It is not that affect without action is not real. In fact, undermining Sergio's own implicit claims to the contrary, the reader is convinced that affect as expressed by Sergio's self-absorbed narrative has very real properties (and one cannot exist without the other). Rather, as Lefevbre's (1991) triadic model of the production of space outlines, space is experienced, perceived and conceived—spatial practices, representations of space and spaces of representation all engender the real movement of spatial processes (33). There is no thought without action, no action without thought. Sergio and Brezo are thus necessary foils for one another, whose separation illustrates the practice of a false spatiality described by Bergson in *Creative Evolution* (1907) using the metaphor of the «cinematograph of the mind.»

THE INTERNAL CINEMATOGRAPH OF THE MIND

Bergson argues in *Creative Evolution* (1907) that the function of the human intellect, of a necessarily «spatial» character, is to insert indeterminate action into the continual movement of experience. This is done by fragmentation, as this oft-quoted passage explains:

We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality, and, as these are characteristic of the reality, we have only to string them on a becoming, abstract, uniform and invisible, situated at the back of the apparatus of knowledge, in order to imitate what there is that is characteristic in this becoming itself. Perception, intellection, language so proceed in general. Whether we would think becoming, or express it, or even perceive it, we hardly do anything else than set going a kind of cinematograph inside us. We may therefore sum up what we have been saying in the conclusion that the *mechanism of our ordinary knowledge is of a cinematographical kind*. (original emphasis, 306)

Nevertheless, as Bergson emphasizes, matter does not present itself as fragmented snapshots. These intellect-snapshots divide the flow of movement, separating qualities from things from actions, adjectives from nouns from verbs, affect from action and thought from the material world (298-304). Bergson shows that qualities fade into

other qualities, that thingness vanishes, that adjectives and nouns thus cannot capture movement. He writes in *Matter and Memory* (1896) that affect is a material process, that centripetal and centrifugal movements of the nervous system are continuous and that the brain merely introduces an interval between the two in order to act. This interval, this cinematographic character of the intellect, this tendency, however practical it may be considered, to introduce separations into what is but flux is what readers of Bergson may recognize as the «spatialization of time», a notion which the philosopher never ceases to denounce, but which is just as frequently misunderstood as it is recognized. The prevalence of references to the cinema in the novel makes clear Sergio's mania to divide and to «spatialize», thus abstracting objectivity from subjectivity and closing off action from affect. At the same time, these references lead the wary reader, or that familiar with Bergson's phenomenology, to question such easy compartmentalizations. The cinema thus appears explicitly in the novel in three ways: as seemingly trifling detail, as symbol for memory and most of all as structure —the latter paradoxically evocative of Bergsonism.

As detail, it deceptively appears to warrant little attention. Sergio describes a kiss from Brezo to her father as a «beso de cine mudo» (43), her haircut as «su peinado de actriz de cine» (53) and her gait as «una invención cinematográfica» (82). He seeks asylum in the «sombras móviles de una película» (48) and laments the times when «no había cine» (50) while Brezo works «el cine» innocuously into a conversation about one of the many avatars of the «hueco» to be discussed below (55). Other seemingly innocuous appearances of the cinema are frequent throughout the novel as Sergio indexes it in recalling names of screen Indians (34), comparing the size of a window to a movie-screen (112), ruling out future meeting places for Brezo and himself (177), and foretelling his own disappearance (229).

Yet Sergio's referencing of the cinema is not limited to such seemingly insignificant details. A more technical cinematic vocabulary finds its place in his description of moving light on the shower curtain as «sucesión de fotogramas» (59). The cinema becomes equated with the mind through its use as a metaphor for human perception and memory, recalling Bergson's denouncement of the cinematic apparatus. Consider Sergio's meditation that «el hombre es un ser con dificultades para la comunicación, muere con su

película de sensaciones detrás de la frente» (180-81), or the use of the phrase «el proyector de su película daba marcha atrás» (42) as a *segué* into Brezo's memories as perceived by Sergio-narrador. Elsewhere he mentions that her eyes «contemplaban una filmografía interior» (56). Note the language used in his dream that «la película de tus deseos y la de mis carencias, ambas han dejado de rodar» (194). Sergio insists that reality «[t]iene vísceras corrientes, lacias mejillas que el celuloide no refleja. Su vida, en fin, depende del proyector que suena como lluvia, de la oscuridad de la sala, de la corriente eléctrica. Y hay tantos cines, Brezo, y es tan raro que mis imágenes coincidan con las tuyas» (224). In novelistic expression of Bergson's cinematograph of the mind as false spatiality, for Sergio the perception of each individual is thus likened to a cinematic apparatus. Sergio's unfulfilled longing for connection is phrased in precisely these terms, reinforcing the metaphor: «cómo va a incorporar [a un individuo] sobre su corta cinta, sobre su sino nada duradero, una película ajena» (181).

Yet if the cinema is associated with division and separation for Sergio, as well as for the Bergson of *Creative Evolution*, the reader must be more attentive to discern the cinematic structure which pervades the novel. Understanding this structure calls for a recuperation of the cinema from Bergson's derision in order to understand how the philosopher might have better used it to his advantage⁵. As Sergei Eisenstein said, one must remember that the cinema is not only the camera but also montage. It is the juxtaposition of images—it is collision. As Pier Paolo Pasolini (1988) has shown, it is also the semi-subjective; it is the visual and auditory representa-

⁵ In this way, it is unfortunate that Bergson denounced the cinema when later he might have learned to praise it. This is in fact Deleuze's argument in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1-3). Fragmenting a real movement at a rate of 24 per second, the frames of the cinematic apparatus cannot themselves reproduce this real movement as a whole. Between every two frames there are an infinite number of intermediary frames not captured by the camera. It is for this reason that the Bergson of *Creative Evolution* had decried the cinematic apparatus as illusion, but as Deleuze asserts, it is the projection of the frames that restore (albeit through an illusion) to the captured movement its real continuity. Attempting to explain the contradiction between Bergson's philosophical tenets and his rejection of the cinema, Deleuze writes: «The essence of a thing never appears at the outset, but in the idle, in the course of its development, when its strength is assured. Having transformed philosophy by posing the question of the 'new' instead of that of eternity (how are the production and appearance of something new possible?), Bergson knew this better than anyone. For example, he said that the novelty of life could not appear when it began, since when it began life was forced to imitate matter... Is it not the same with the cinema?» (3).

tion of the free indirect discourse (see Voloshinov 1973) analyzed by Bakhtin in the written text of the nineteenth century Russian novel. The cinema gives this discourse enunciation through the oscillation between subjective and objective poles, or by a camera that is neither within nor outside of the character but merely *with* him or her. It is evident that what Pasolini understands as the semi-subjective has much to do with Bergson's phenomenological rejection of the purity of such notions as reality and ideality. In *La escala de los mapas*, a markedly non-homogenous narrative style that turns unceasingly from the first person 'Sergio-yo' to the third person 'Sergio-él' and back again betrays both Sergio's feelings of isolation as well as the concomitant philosophical concepts of fixity and closed systems. Although it is beyond the scope of this essay to assess the frequency of these twists and turns, the following excerpt may be taken as typical:

Brezo, *mi* vida estuvo llena de cifras inexactas, *me confundía* en las sumas, tachaba y era en vano, los errores nos siguen siempre. De un lado *estaba Sergio e iba perdiendo* cabellos, peones, torres; del otro, la realidad intacta, sedienta. Fue cuando subiste a *mi* casa [...] *Pude haber eludido* tu presencia [...] *Pude haber permanecido* solo [...]. (my emphasis, 87)

It is certainly possible to believe that this narratological choice is best interpreted as the self-speech of a disturbed individual who describes himself in the third-person and not, in fact, as the near-cinematic oscillation between subjective and objective perception. Yet to do so would be to deny, on the whole, not only the prevalence of the cinematic indexing described above, but also the very prevalent philosophical concern of the novel. This concern is the investigation of the connection between desire and reality, between inner and outer space, between affect and action, all implicitly mediated through the relationship Sergio-Brezo.

As a whole, then, the cinematic indexing and semi-subjective narration work together to posit various dualities, the juxtaposition of affect and action as well as that of real and ideal consciousness, and then record their collision. Just as in *Matter and Memory* Bergson is interested neither in pure perception nor pure memory but their cohabitating indiscernibility, just as he merely abstracts affect from action for theoretical reasons and then joins them as part of an indivisible movement, here Gopegui's work is focused neither on

Sergio nor Brezo, but on their connection. This connection, the goal of the first-person narrator's search, is imagined as a *space*. Within the confines of his mind, and with cinematic imagery, Sergio imagines that he invites Brezo into that space: «ven y quédate conmigo entre la gota de luz y la pantalla» (42). This is metaphorically the Bergsonian gap between action and reaction formed by the human brain, the theoretical meeting place of real with ideal consciousness. This is the point of collision that expresses Sergio's desire to connect with Brezo. This is the interval. It is in reference to this concept, one which is all too easily misunderstood, that Bergson's work most illuminates my reading of *La escala de los mapas* and provides a subsequent necessary correction to the philosophical basis of current explorations in cultural geography.

INTERVAL, THE SPACE BETWEEN THE LIGHT AND THE SCREEN

The prevalence of the idea of the interval as a *space between* in the novel, as a nexus between affect and action, as a gap or a space betwixt and between desire and reality, between ideal and real consciousness, testifies to the power of Sergio's mistaken spatialization of flow, a process of division whose over-application Bergson denounces as the tendency of the intellect (*Matter and Memory*). It is the goal of the novel's protagonist to inhabit this gap, thereby being able to transmit emotion into action, a possible connection manifested through the amorous relationship between Brezo and himself.

From the first chapter, Sergio's obsession with the opening crank or «manivela» of a window (9, 88, 168, 216-17, 227) becomes a metaphor for the interval between himself as a creature of affect and an outer reality. This gap, also a connection, is more ubiquitously referred to as a «hueco» and even explicitly, in some cases, an «intervalo», though it is elsewhere described in terms of «pausas», «fallas» and is implicit in recurrent symbolism of portals such as windows and doors⁶. If Bergson comments that «[t]here are in-

⁶ As «hueco» on 11, 13, 80, 82, 90-91, 101, 106, 109, 111, 116, 120-122, 125, 137, 141, 148, 156-57, 153, 160, 164-68, 170, 174, 176, 179, 183, 191-92, 196, 199-200, 205, 207, 210, 218-19, 227 and 229; as «intervalo» on 85, 120-122, 139, 159, 173, 176 and 229. The explicit source given in the text for the use of the word interval is Nabokov's *Ada o el ardor* which Sergio finds it necessary to quote at greater length than

tervals of silence between sounds» (*Matter and Memory*, 259), Sergio complements this with a quotation from Debussy «La música no está en las notas, sino entre las notas» (55). Sergio, then, is seeking this gap, as he terms it «un puente levadizo [...] un lugar suspendido entre dos mundos, el de la desnudez [el material] y el otro [el ideal]» (26). The «hueco» is «*el espacio que va desde la acción del uno al sentimiento del otro: un tramo firme, un puente no inconsútil sino hecho de sólido granito transitable*» (my emphasis, 157). Through this utopian gap the isolated protagonist hopes to access a world he considers to be outside of himself.

For Sergio, this idea of the hueco, the space between, comes into being to correct a teratological error of a spatializing intellect. Instead of renouncing this intellect (through a method akin to Bergson's) and recovering the phenomenological ground of existence, that is, instead of recovering the indivisible presence of the objective in the subjective and likewise of the subjective in the objective, Gopegui's protagonist follows the tendency of intellect and creates yet another abstraction. This need to partition space calls his attention to the «margín» —a mystical number situated between seven and eight discovered in Cádiz in the XVIth century (27-28), to the birthday gift that a young Brezo asks her father for— «una barra espaciadora [...] que sirva para la vida. Si yo la aprieto dentro del cine, por ejemplo, empiecen a aparecer asientos vacíos entre mi butaca y la de al lado» (55). The «hueco» is, of course, a symbol for the relationship between Sergio and Brezo themselves. It is «un lugar de descanso en donde transcurrir contigo sin cometer equivocaciones» (90), «el canal que comunica los objetos entre sí» (91).

Yet Sergio's greatest error is assuming that the «hueco» really exists as he perceives it—that is, as a space in between things. One of the core assertions of Bergson's philosophy is precisely that space between things is a view taken by mind, and that we err in limiting our conception of the universe to this view. Bergson's first thesis in *Matter and Memory* is that one cannot equate a movement with the

what appears below: «No los golpes recurrentes del ritmo sino el vacío que separa dos de esos golpes, el *hueco* gris entre las notas negras, el Tierno *Intevalo*. La pulsación misma no hace sino recordar la pobre idea de medida, pero entre dos pulsaciones acecha algo que se parece al verdadero Tiempo» (my emphasis, 120). It is not out of place to say that Gopegui's Sergio sees in Nabokov's Van Veen a fellow entity of affect, a memory-diver whose ability to feel and think also heavily outweighs his ability to act.

distance covered by that movement⁷. As Bernard Pullman's exhaustive work *The Atom in the History of Human Thought* (2001) explores, since Democritus the idea that space is empty and that small atoms move within it has held intermittent sway in the philosophy of the material world. Yet Sergio's insistence that there is a hueco between an atom and an electron (102) has given way in the twentieth century to the quantum acknowledgement that energy is either a wave or a particle, depending how you set up the experiment. An electron follows no set path but is now discussed as an electron cloud following a model that rejects the spatializing metaphors of an outdated science. Quantum theorists, notably David Bohm (1983; 1994; 1998; Krishnamurti & Bohm 1985; 1999), challenging traditional physicists now embrace the idea that space is full and not empty, an immense background of energy upon which materiality in our conception of the term is a mere surface disturbance.

This idea is not so far from the suggestion of the novel itself. In fact, in a moment of lucidity, Sergio tells himself that it the «hueco» is only a metaphor (137). This is exactly what Bergson tells us—that although in one sense language makes a community of action possible, it allows us to erroneously separate the continuous flow within space into qualities (adjectives), things (nouns) and movements (verbs) when there is only movement, only change itself. There is no empty space between objects. Sergio misunderstands the continuity of space and instead believes in the body as ontologically-given separator of affect and action. Yet, instead, as Bergson notes, perception is virtual action, and affect is real action occurring where it is felt. Movement is continuous, and the body is one of many abstractions that can never, in reality, be separated from the system of images that interact each on the others on all their sides simultaneously. From Sergio's perspective, this remark that the

⁷ The proof of this assertion lies in the deconstruction of Zeno's example of Achilles and the tortoise. If Achilles runs ten times faster than the tortoise, and the tortoise is given a ten-meter head start, then by the time Achilles runs the initial ten meters, the tortoise will have moved another 1/10 meter. When Achilles runs the 1/10 meter, the tortoise will have moved another 1/100 m. and so on. Thus, Zeno concludes, Achilles will never catch up with the tortoise. Nevertheless, and as Bergson correctly assumes, the flaw in this reasoning is that while the space traveled may be divisible, the movement is not. Movement cannot be equated to the distance covered because it is pure duration, continual becoming, the eternal moment where the past bleeds into, even recreates itself in, the present. Achilles will indeed surpass the tortoise.

«hueco» does not exist conveys his doubt that he will ever be able to negotiate the gap between affect and action, and in fact he will not, provided he persists in his divisive intellectual oppositions.

Moreover, Bergson's implication that the barriers between inner and outer space are *not* strong ones is mirrored in the text subtly, in details that consistently evade Sergio's conscious knowledge. Not until late in the book does he admit his «problemas limítrofes» (209). After a conversation with his psychologist's secretary, he takes offense at her desire to continue working instead of chatting with him. This moment delivers a notable shock to his fixed ideas of limits, «[E]ntre el punto donde aquella mujer pronunció la ironía y el punto donde la recibí, no había separación. Me sentí maltratado de repente. Como un pequeño animal retráctil, *sin membrana*, soy. Y por eso mi corazón se encoge, es un calambre de corazón que duele, y tú percibes mi dolor, y por eso resulta tan difícil relacionarse conmigo» (my emphasis, 209). Questioning that which he has taken for granted at other times in the novel, he asks doña Elena, his boss, «¿dónde está el límite entre la vida exterior y la interior?» (169). Similarly, windows consistently evoke the «delgado límite [...] entre los radiadores y el mundo, entre la habitación concreta y el exterior oscuro, interminable» (113), a stand-in for the meeting place of affect-action. His disappearance at the end of the novel, presumably into the «hueco», into the very spaces between the words of his memoir (229), indicates that his problem has not been caused by an inability to relate to his environment, but rather by renouncing himself to a debilitatingly-advanced affective sense. It is precisely that the inner and outer worlds are *too connected*, and not that they might not be connected enough, that causes his anguish. Bergson is right:

[a] body, that is, an independent material object, presents itself at first to us as a system of qualities in which resistance and colour —the data of sight and touch— occupy the centre, all the rest being, as it were, suspended from them. On the other hand, the data of sight and touch are those which most obviously have extension in space, and the essential character of space is continuity. There are intervals of silence between sounds, for the sense of hearing is not always occupied; between odours, between tastes, there are gaps, as though the senses of smell and taste only functioned accidentally: as soon as we open our eyes, on the contrary, the whole field of vision takes on colour; and, since solids are necessarily in contact

with each other, our touch must follow the surface or the edges of objects without ever encountering a true interruption. (*Matter and Memory*, 259-60)

Not only are all things in space connected with no gaps, but also sensation, just as perception, is extensive, only that it *takes place* inside the body where it is felt (*Matter and Memory*, 45-49). Sergio sees barriers where there are only transitions, staticity where there is only constant movement and change in the whole. His feelings are real, yet he is incapable of turning affect into action. This is of course one of the primary problems facing urban studies, how to create spaces of hope (Harvey 2000), how to combat the uneven geographical distribution of a pernicious capitalism and assure «the right to the city» (Lefebvre 1968; Mitchell 2003).

GEOGRAPHICAL BERGSONIANISM, MENTAL AND CARTOGRAPHIC SPACE

In the novel, the interplay between Sergio and Brezo, between affect and action, evokes another movement between mental and cartographic space, between physical and mental maps (56, 88). Without collapsing idealism and realism, without sacrificing idea to action, Gopegui's novel articulates the link between the two in purely geographic terms. The book's spatial vocabulary leaves no mental or physical state untouched. Sergio imagines that his interior world will grow «como península emanada, como margen de río o bastión inatacado por los otros» (87). He is Castilla and Brezo is Aragón (95). He is «un pueblo de Burgos cuando nieva, territorio aislado» (135), he is Albania (29): «En mi república se practica la autarquía de repliegue: producir para autoabastecerse y permanecer inmodificado, al abrigo de influencias extranjeras. Porque habitar con los otros es la guerra y me destruye, he preferido rodearme de una difusa constelación afectiva» (29). If interior spaces are compared with geographical forms, the reverse is also true. A map of the Baltic Sea is said to have «forma de hombre arrodillado» (40). A discussion of a geographical study bleeds into a question of a personal nature: «El resto de la mañana lo pasé corrigiendo las consecuencias de un error de escala en un estudio de impacto: cómo instalar una estación espacial en las estribaciones del parque de Monfrague sin perturbar el equilibrio. ¿Cómo instalar a una mujer de ideas fijas en mi vida prudente y lograr que los dos saliéramos incólumes?» (24).

Sergio is sure that the emotive forces in which he is drowning are real, and he is not wrong. His conclusion is thus that they occupy space. Implicitly affirming Bergson's idea that sensation *takes place* where it is felt and thus that it is extensive, in supporting that all consciousness *is* something, Sergio is led to speak of his emotions in geographical terms: «Brezo, toda la noche estuve pensando que existía la emoción y era geográfica: ocupaba un sitio, tenía longitud y diámetro como la barra del metro, yo podía aferrarme a ella para no caer» (180). Whether he does this in order to deceive himself as to the debilitating nature of his affective sense or as a preparatory step in his intent to link his mind and world, subjective and objective consciousness, idealism and realism (note that he claims «estoy dispuesto a pasar a la acción») (209) matters not. What is important is that the geographical metaphor for body gives emotions a real and extensive character. The implication is that there is a fundamental link between mental and cartographic space.

Yet Sergio persists in imagining this link as a space, instead of recognizing the immanence of mind to cartography, instead of realizing that both one and the other are simplified abstractions. Consider the development of this linkage as it is explored through Sergio's discussion of the geographers of perception:

Me hallaba particularmente interesado en los geógrafos de la percepción, una corriente que apenas había merecido un epígrafe en el programa de la asignatura, pero entre cuyas aportaciones figuraba el «mapa mental». Oh deliciosa idea. *Oh concepción tripartita del mundo*. No hay un dentro y un afuera, no hay un hombre en su casa y abajo la superficie de avenidas y paseos que consignan los planos, sino un hombre en su casa, una urdimbre de aceras en las calles y, *entre los dos*, un mapa mental o *filtro* que modifica el paisaje, el desnivel de las cuevas, las escalas... Con un dibujante cartógrafo a su servicio, cada individuo podría plasmar las imágenes de su mapa mental en un papel. Veríamos entonces cambiar la geometría de las plazas, multiplicarse o reducirse la distancia entre la Cibeles y la Puerta del Sol, crecer la densidad de población de Africa, la extensión de China, la altitud del Retiro. Con un cartógrafo a su disposición, Sergio Prim hubiera acertado a descubrir ángulos como heridas de un papel doblado muchas veces, pues no ignoraba que había fracturas en su mapa mental por donde cabía irse. ¿Pero cómo accederse a los mapas mentales ajenos? ¿Cómo señalarlas allí? (my emphasis, 85)

Using a tripartite structure and the idea of a space «between» proves problematic for Sergio. In defining mental and cartographic space as inherently distinct he creates the necessity of a bridge between the two. And yet his vocabulary points to the city-space imagined by the Situationists. For Guy Debord and Asger Jorn, the apparently Cartesian-gridded space of the city existed not as a planar totality but rather always mediated by the experience of the individual. Any individual, then, with the help of a cartographer could reconstruct an experiential map of the living city, no longer a reification subject to the spectacle of modern capitalist practice, but, in Bergsonian terms, a circuit formed by the continuous flow of ideal consciousness into real consciousness and back again. For all his differences with the Situationists (see Harvey 1991: 429), it is this very circuit that Lefebvre delineates in *The Production of Space* (1991). Space is a process, a relation, just as Marx's revolution was to define capital as a relation. A radical understanding of this idea involves a more complex articulation of spatial praxis than Sergio's dualistic affect-action model, no more complete for the inclusion of a «hueco» connecting space.

It is just such a complex articulation of space that has been taking hold in the field of Geography. Theorists are recognizing the constructed nature of what was previously thought of as statically given, the mutually constituted nature of the previously isolated spheres of culture and of material landscape. David Harvey (2000) looks «From Place to Space and Back Again.» Charles Tilly (1999) advises us to go «toward relational analyses of political processes» (419). Bob Jessop (1999) asserts that the boundaries between the economic and the political are of cultural origin (380). Michel Foucault (1975) looks at the way disciplines originate at the level of the individual and take on the form of repeated spatial practice. Tim Mitchell (1999) argues that the «state effect» arises from the material and provides a framework for a «double-articulation» between the Foucauldian notion of disciplines ascending to more global constructions of power. Sallie Marston (2004) calls for recognition of the «'nexus' among» and «mutually constitutive nature of the categories» of state, culture and space (38). In «The Social Construction of Scale», Marston (2000) presents an incisive and convincing look into how ideas of scale, itself not ontologically given, become shaped by social practice.

In fact, as Gopegui's novel suggests despite the insistence of its

mistaken narrator-protagonist, scale is a matter not only of global, supranational, national, regional, and local, but also of individual concern. It is no wonder that the psychologist who advises Sergio, Maravillas Gea, has written her thesis on «la pérdida del espacio en los esquemas mentales: un análisis del sentimiento de desaparición» (177); geographical space and body are intimately entwined, or as Sergio states in a rare epiphany, «todo está comunicado» (131, 182), itself an echo of what Waldo Tobler in 1970 called the First Law of Geography⁸. Like the protagonist of John Cheever's «The Swimmer» who, in using an «ojo de cartógrafo» (129) as Gopegui's text mentions, finds that he can get home by tracing a path through the pools of his suburban wasteland, both the reader and the protagonist of *La escala de los mapas* discover that a movement exists which envelops both psychic and geographical space. Sergio links the geographical with the psychological upon declaring «las escalas no son patrimonio de los geógrafos. En realidad, todo el mundo las utiliza» (33). The partitioning of reality into levels of abstractions called scales finds a complement in the discussion of the layering of minerals (69) and the profound and simple structures of both emotions and extra-corporeal facts (89). In fact it appears that «todo es cuestión de escalas» (227).

This connection between mind and geography, phrased in scalar terms, manifests itself in an equivalence between maps and books. Essentially, Sergio points out, «el mismo sistema que rige para la tierra y sus mapas, rige para los hombres: escalas y signos, representación. Los mapas de los hombres son los libros» (127). Completely debilitated by an overdeveloped affective sense, the question for the interval-seeking protagonist is how to convert affect into action. He complains that «Nadie me puso ejercicios para aprender a trasladar lo imaginado a lo vivido» (169). His affective sense is so self-indulged that his emotions have the power to cloud the perception of space. In the following passage, Sergio touches Brezo affectionately and finds the world around him distorting itself, eventually disappearing: «En el instante en que puse mis manos en su cuello comenzó la dispersión de los objetos, se marcharon aceras y cabinas

⁸ For an enlightening forum on Tobler's First Law of Geography —«everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things»— the reader may wish to consult the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Volume 94, June 2004, Number 2 for a series of seven authors' comments including a reply by Tobler himself.

y espejos retrovisores. Como se interrumpe el río en la cascada cesó el día» (156). Like emotions, books also have this power to immerse Sergio completely in the idea (127)⁹. This temporal metaphor works alongside the prevalent spatial metaphor of the «hueco» to signify the nexus between desire and reality manifest also in the space between books and reality. The reader wonders how Sergio will turn the imagined into lived experience. This at times takes a personal tone focusing on the small scale —Sergio modifies the space of his office to reflect his isolation (84). Yet, given the geographical context, the reader simultaneously must ask questions of a larger scale-how, for example, do ideas of city-space become social praxis?

The novel caters to these larger questions as Madrid and its surrounding areas are implicated by the numerous studies of environmental impact performed by the novel's geographers. Even Sergio's group is contracted to «evaluar el suelo no urbanizable de quince municipios periféricos» (46), and Sergio himself leads a study of the impact of «un helipuerto militar» (80) in Alnedo, «un pueblo de la serranía alta de Cuenca» (102). Despite his insistence to the contrary, he is in intimate connection with reality, taking part in the production of space. Nevertheless, Sergio's personal isolation and the fact that he carries with him a mental map of Madrid (127) have consequences not only for his relationship with Brezo, his other half, the reality to his subjectivity, the matter to his memory, but also for his relation with city space. Losing a connection with Brezo, with his outer reality, will leave a flexible mental map that will soon become unmanageable. «Brezo, piano mío, te callarás y entonces Madrid sea infinito, laberinto sin puertas, y no volveremos a coincidir» (177). Yet it is not that this connection might be lost, but rather that it will be clouded by the power of his affective sense¹⁰.

With the above reading, we find that Sergio's mistake is creating an interval between things where there is none. That at the end

⁹ The idea of stopping the world, a philosophical tenet explored in Deleuze (1988: 139) and taken from the works of Carlos Castaneda (1968), appears in Gopegui's novel as well («detener el mundo» 139, 170; «detener el espacio» 176).

¹⁰ Here Gopegui has inverted, traditional social gender roles with an end to emphasize larger questions of spatial process. If the story had been told with Sergio as the active reality and Brezo as the passive subjectivity, it would have been tempting to read the novel through constructions of gender—either as affirmation or critique of the societal roles continually negotiated by individuals. Yet Gopegui's reversal of a traditional and ill-formulated dichotomy that links affective with feminine and extensive with masculine pushes us away from this interpretation, instead presenting an illustration of a standard dichotomy of spatial production.

of the book Sergio dissolves into the «hueco» between the words of his testimony (229) means that the intellectual division between affect and action, books and reality, mental maps and cartographic maps has come to an end. Sergio is a mere vehicle for showing the absurdity of the divisions the human mind thinks into reality. Only by seeing these products of thought as such can we truly see space as a process, as Bergsonian real movement. We are then faced with «el problema del después» (25), with the real problem of how to put our capability for indeterminate action to work. We find ourselves riding the wave of the eternal Bergsonian transition of the past into the present «como quien vive en lo que está a punto de ocurrir» (92).

CONCLUSION: THINKING SPACE

The link between representations of places and those places themselves, between mental maps and cartographic maps, between the individual and the city, between the small and the large scale has an ample and accessible bibliography. Theorists such as Dear (2000), Foucault (1975), Harvey (1989; 1990; 1996; 2000), Jessop (1999), Latham and McCormack (2004), Lefebvre (1974), Madanipour (1996), D. Mitchell (2000), T. Mitchell (1999), Marston (2000; 2004), Soja (1996), Thorns (2002) and Tilly (1999) ask trenchant questions of the relationship between the mental and the cartographic. Taken as the philosophical basis for the understanding of the production of space, Bergson's works caution against simplifying the interaction of both material and immaterial processes and are more relevant than ever to geographical inquiry¹¹. Gopegui's *La escala de*

¹¹ The philosopher, in fact, may be experiencing a new wave of attention in critical theory as a recent issue of the journal *Culture and Organization* (9.1, 2003) shows, to name just one example. In their essay «Time Creativity and Culture: Introducing Bergson» Stephen Linstead and John Mullarkey (2003) argue for the relevance of Bergson's work to the analysis of culture (see also Linstead 2002). Alexander Styhre's «Knowledge as a Virtual Asset: Bergson's Notion of Virtuality and Knowledge Organization» (2003) shows the importance of Bergson's thought to a theory of knowledge as process. Sean Watson attempts to bring Bergson to bear on the analysis of both literature and social groups in his «Bodily Entanglement: Bergson and Thresholds in the Sociology of Affect» (2003). Antoine Hatzenberger's «Open Society and Bolos: A Utopian Reading of Bergson's 'Final Remarks'» (2003) likewise finds great relevance of Bergson's ideas to current and alternative social organizations. Carl Power's «Freedom and Sociability for Bergson» (2003) suggests that «we need to re-evaluate the relevance and value of Bergson's thought today» (71). Bergson's importance for Deleuze is evident not only in the cinema books but also in *Bergsonism* (2002) and in two essays of *Desert Islands* (2004).

los mapas provides a notable opportunity to assess the relevance of these two approaches to spatial process. Sergio Prim's strict dichotomies (of affect vs. action, of subjectivity vs. objectivity, of idealism vs. realism) serve as a warning of the dangers inherent in partitioning the movement of spatial production into material and immaterial components. Scholarship must be able to reassess its intentions in order to see how these categories become abstracted out of the flux of experience only through the work of the human intellect. Ultimately, the fusion of Cultural Geography, Bergsonism and Gopegui's text suggests, as do Latham & McCormack (2004), that «we need to consider more fully how the process of abstraction actually allows us to draw out, and also to become implicated in, the excessive force of materiality» (707).

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