

Some methodologies & philosophy for psychogeography practice

Here are some things to bear in mind during the walks on March 21st and April 1st that might also prove instructive when making solo submissions for 'New Pathways: A Psychogeographical Exploration of Lewes'.

In true psychogeographers' tradition these walking 'Mappening's and/or individual projects should, in essence, revolve around a rallying against the urban mundane, the traditional traversable and encouraged pathways through a town space, with the aim to reveal geo-psychic sites that are enabling fresh narratives. You are on a *dérive*, a drift, but this is NOT a casual stroll. NEITHER is it a historical walking tour, NOR the shortest or prettiest passageway from A to B. This is informed aimlessness as embodied movement, walking at its most political and playful.

There is a lot of Zen action-non-action going on here. For instance, don't force anything 'interesting' to happen. Seek but don't seek signs of surrealist realism or meaningful encounters in the everyday sprawl of known symbols, recognisable architectonics, and ordinary people going about their daily lives. The extra-ordinary may be just around the next corner, but remember that mystery and insight can also come from nothing, from empty spaces, dead air, from glancing onto something than moving on, never dwelling. But also pause and wait occasionally – remember buses come in threes. You might find relevance in Walter Benjamin's much-quoted comment on Atget's photographs of empty 1930's Parisian street as if 'they were the scene of a crime', emphasising the sense that something *has* happened on this site, while Annette Micholson, sees it also as the stage where something will or could happen. Keep your eyes peeled. As Colombo says, "Just one more question..."

Indeed, a key methodology of the psychogeographers' way is that of a detective's mission. But you are also stalkers of the terrain, deep topographers of lost, and alternate, parallel zones. This is not passive. Why not arm your mission with just cause – bring prior research to your walk: e.g. follow in someone's footsteps – living or dead (either way: ghost walks). Find the present point of historical interest, an old local legend or site evidenced by a sourced photograph. Or invent histories, characters, happenings – a good *dérive* might make the make-believe manifest.

From novelist WG Sebald to filmmaker Patrick Kieller the successful *dérive* is, in part, an attempt to open rifts in the space-time continuum, to perceive the past within the present, to see, and thus prove, history as not just spherical but superimposed onto itself. Seek the changeover state of being to facilitate opening doorways to places at other times, (especially) if only for a moment.

Become sensitive to alterations in light and weather conditions.

Personal physiological conditions are very relevant in maintaining an outsider stance. For instance, it seems fair to say that the Situationists were most often drunk and cavorting, and this possibly this is why posterity records next to nothing of their psychogeographical excursions - their experiences of the new utopian Parisian streets might invariably have been left to the street in the street. This is usually the source of the mistaken notion that a *dérive* is nothing more than a pub-crawl. The red herring is the inebriations but an altered state is helpful in revealing

psychogeography. In *Lights Out For The Territories*, psychogeography scholar Iain Sinclair often speaks of terrible leg pain during his charges along and across London's ley lines **because** it was something personal and of the body with which to do battle, an ache that quickened the quest.

We're obviously not advocating intoxication or physical agony as a prescribed new way of seeing Lewes, but it's liberating to play around with the senses. Why not drink or eat something on route you wouldn't normally – savour these new flavours: your tongue tasting something different might make the ears hear differently, for instance. Alter perceptions: wear sunglasses AT NIGHT!

At certain times why not make the effort to suddenly break into a run. If in pairs talk while running then lie down and be silent. Adrenalin and shortness of breath help alter the brain state.

We encourage (but don't enforce) dressing up (particularly on April Fools Eve). This type of anonymity operates two-fold; as a simple route to détournement, causing ruptures by daring to stand out, as well as a means for letting disguise allow you to remain outside the everyday swim, to 'feel' separate, or even vanish.

In *Wanderlust* Rebecca Solnit writes of how Virginia Woolf, in her essay *Secret Haunting*, described 'anonymity as a fine and desirable thing', and how 'the confining oppression of one's own identity, of the way the objects in one's home "enforce the memories of our experience"'.

"As we step out of the house ... ", Woolf wrote, "we shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers ...". Of the people she observes she says, "Into each of these lives one could penetrate a little way, far enough to give one the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind, but can put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others". In this anonymous state, "the shell-like covering which our souls have excreted for themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye."

Further useful study can be found at these excellent websites:

<https://emotiveterrains.wordpress.com>

<https://hybridflaneur.wordpress.com>

Adam Whitehall
Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research
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