

Mediating Visual Experience: Zbigniew Libera's Photographic Works and Google Street View Imagery

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The word “view” is used in a variety of ways: in specialist jargons, as well as common language. It functions as a synonym for landscape painting or photography, as well as for landscape perceived without the mediation of the picture (looking through a window, we take in the view). It's a genre and a type of composition, but above all to view constitutes a visual experience and an element of perception. On the most basic level—that of popular art historical lexicons—the term usually operates as a neutral *explanans*. The fact that the genre of landscape is defined either as a view or a representation of a view calls our attention to the unclear positioning of this term. Is it a part of the world as it is seen or a result of the human act of creation? The view is certainly connected to images, representations, and pictures but also to imagination, appearance, apparition, and looks. And with the look, it is connected to vision, the gaze, eyes, and the notion of visibility. But the view is not fully identical with any of those. It is related to aesthetics but also to topography, to representation and perception.¹

In my essay, I will focus on three points, each one establishing a different situation of looking. Their interlacing in this text aims to show different aspects of visual experience. The first is Zbigniew Libera's photographic series *La Vue* (2004-2006). The second is Google Street View imagery, one of the tools of Google Earth and Google Maps. The third is late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French writer Raymond Roussel's technique of building description. Roussel's technique becomes an object of analysis because it inspired Libera's two photographic projects and thus contextualizes the artist's work. Roussel's technique also establishes a discursive analogon for Google Maps imagery. In all three examples, I will investigate how each constructs its own vantage points and examine how those vantage points interfere with the point of view of an empirical spectator. In the end, however, my goal is to show that a stable division between an image's vantage point and a spectator's perspective is impossible to maintain.

Flat Pictures and Non-human Perception: Zbigniew Libera's *La Vue*

“What do you see?” This is the question we ask when encounter Zbigniew Libera's (b. 1959) photographic series *La Vue* (2004-2006; in French, “the view,” come from the title of a 1904 poem by Raymond Roussel (1877-1933)) [Fig.1, Fig. 2]. These photographs fail to show what they promise: views, or views of landscapes. This promise is not only given in the title, but also in the image. It is expressed in its appearance and activated in the work of recognition and identification.



Figure 1. Zbigniew Libera (b. 1959), *La Vue* series, 2004-2006, photograph, courtesy of Raster Gallery, Warsaw.



Figure 2. Zbigniew Libera (b. 1959), *La Vue* series, 2004-2006, photograph, courtesy of Raster Gallery, Warsaw.

What we see in *La Vue* are photographic prints, colorful and sometimes out of focus. We immediately start searching for familiar shapes and motifs and begin to associate the colors with familiar landscapes. Perhaps it is not even that we search for familiarity, for without thought we are already convinced of what we're looking at: a beach, the sky, a desert. But, instead of a beach, a sky and a desert, we are "really" looking at close-ups of printed magazines, photographed, or misphotographed, by using a small picture camera with a macro lens. One of the pictures shows a clear horizon line dividing land from the sky, both wreathed in tones of yellow and red. Supposedly we see a desert. The bright circle of light could be the sun caught in that moment when still glaring, but not quite enough to light the patch of land beneath that already starts disappear in crimson red darkness. Beneath the horizon line, the brightness is already succumbing to darkness. Some fragments are still clear and sharp, making parts of the land look like a sand dune. And only afterwards, if at all, we notice the strange light-blue mist at the bottom of the picture. And then we start to realize the photo's grainy quality and how the shadows adopt oddly irregular forms. We realize something is wrong. We understand that our eyes have deceived us, that our sense of visual confidence was an illusion. We were fooled not only by what we saw, but also by the title, and finally by the medium of photography itself. We looked through the photograph, and not at it.

Libera photographs painted surfaces to create views that do not exist outside of his pictures, but appear "real." The artist's gesture may be understood in a "Baudrillardian" mode: an illustration or diagnosis of the infamous "desert of the real itself."² In Baudrillard's apocalyptic and iconoclastic vision, signs are the source of other signs and in a Platonic precession, they drive us away from reality. Reality does not exist

anymore, signs functioning as its only substitute. In this perspective we could read *La Vue* as the dismissal of any connections images have with reality, as the death of reality in the face of images that produce other images.

The artist gives another hint about the series in his enigmatic and admiral statements about Raymond Roussel's absolutely "artificial" writing method. Roussel's life and work inspired many artistic and literary groups, including: surrealists, dadaists, OuLiPo, *nouveau roman*, American poets such as John Ashbery, as well as theorists including Michel Foucault. Roussel described his textual procedure in his posthumously issued text, *How I Wrote Certain of My Books*.³ The aim of his method, based on the ambiguity and similarity of words, was to create literature that "has nothing to do with reality."⁴ The book exemplifies his procedure with a text that begins and ends with the same sentence. Because only one letter is different in either, we derive an entirely different meaning from their respective place in the text.⁵ The most basic rule of the procedure was to determine entirely arbitrary correspondences by following, for example, the composition of French heroic meter, finding words that sounded similar, or using homonymy. The procedure would require the author to endlessly complicate his task by introducing endless parentheses into the text. Roussel also started and ended his texts with the same sentence, which had a different meaning in each usage. The procedure constantly tested the author's ability to maneuver between the arbitrary rules and his talent to create literary images.

Foucault wrote that Roussel, the author of *Locus Solus*, "doesn't want to duplicate the reality of another world, but, in the spontaneous duality of language, he wants to *discover* an unexpected space, and to *cover* it with things never said before."⁶ As Allain Robbe-Grillet said, "Raymond Roussel describes, and there is nothing beyond that description; nothing that we could traditionally call the message... Roussel seems to have nothing to say."⁷ Subordinated to textual adventures and arbitrary rules of creation, literature is flat. Readers will not find psychological depth, movement, temporal duration, action, or geometrical depth. There is no illusion of volume, nor is there any kind of reality effect.

In his writing procedure, Roussel thus strove to create an autonomous world, as well as an autonomous mode of perception. In the static views within his texts, "nonhuman" vision, a term used by Pierre Janet, a famous psychiatrist and Roussel's personal doctor, doesn't simulate "real" perception, or even any kind of visual representation.⁸ In Roussel's literature there is no perspectival model and no movement of the eyes on the horizontal axis. Views change like movie stills without fluency; objects cast no shadow and the eye implied in Roussel's literature is capable of seeing "a miniature picture of a size of few millimeters rendering a beach...contours and landscapes are absolutely clear. On the other side of a bay there is a car riding, there is a man in this car, this man has got a cane, and on the hand-guard of this cane there is a small picture, rendering..." and so on.⁹

Still, his literature is not meaningless. Neither is it automatic, nor deprived of sense. Its automaticity and extreme boredom result from a demanding formal procedure. Therefore, I argue that Andre Bréton missed the point when describing Roussel's technique: "When extreme arbitrariness was imposed on a literary subject, the aim was to hide it, to disperse it in numerous fragments."¹⁰ Roussel didn't hide anything; everything in his work was flat and on the surface. The world, the story, the diegesis of his autonomous literature cannot be dismissed as unimportant because together they form an integral part and a result of his textual procedures.

Roussel's procedure inspired Libera not only in *La Vue*, but also a series of temple photographs from the same period [Fig. 3, Fig. 4].¹¹ Libera's photographs capture famous temples, among them for example Santa Maria del Fiore with Brunelleschi's iconic dome. Instead of photographing the buildings themselves, he took pictures of their renderings from a photographic album. This procedure brings to mind Walter Benjamin's canonical essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," a text published a year before Roussel's suicide, not only because Libera conducts quintessentially modern experiments with photography, but also because of his choice of photographed subject.¹² In fact, it is a temple, which Benjamin points to as the typical example of a work of art, whose condition is changed by the use of photography. According to Benjamin's vision, the work of art ("a cathedral") can now be seen in a way inaccessible to the human eye, due to the different points of view and close-ups enabled by photography. Benjamin writes: "The cathedral leaves its site to be received in the studio of an art lover."¹³ It can also appear in situations the temple itself cannot access.



Figure 3. Zbigniew Libera (b. 1959), *Untitled*, 2006, photograph, courtesy of Raster Gallery, Warsaw.



Figure 4. Zbigniew Libera (b. 1959), *Untitled*, 2006, photograph, courtesy of Raster Gallery, Warsaw.

Libera's work explores the limits of mechanical reproduction, swapping the photograph for the cathedral as the primary point of reference. Libera takes his photographs from a strange, unconventional angle in order to expose the flatness of the first, "original" photographic work. In this context, his works can be understood as commentaries on photography itself. In the spirit of Roussel's procedure, he explores the realm of representation, the relation between representations and their representations (and not between the world and its representation), seeking to display and make use of the internal relations of this world. Just like in Roussel's poems, Libera creates a "mechanical" perception. By shifting the point of view of the camera, he creates a technical gaze, visible in and as this shift. What this photo represents is not the temple, but a gaze generated between the first and the second photo.

Mechanical Procedure and Its Relation to Reality: Google Maps

So far, my comments on Roussel's literary project and Libera's photographic realizations confirm an interpretation about the works as disconnected from reality, affirming formality, mechanicality, and unreality, an interpretation that fits into Baudrillard's model. Baudrillard mourns the death of the "real" caused by the abundance of representations. Roussel and maybe Libera as well, seem to affirm this attitude.¹⁴

Google's enterprise fits well into the narrative scheme of representation understood as reduplication, misrepresentation, and as representation that breaks off its connection with reality. The totality of Google's enterprise even seems to embody the opening image form Baudrillard's essay *The Precession of Simulacra*, which borrows an image from the writings of Borges. There, "the cartographer's mad project" is a map that covers the entire territory of the Empire.¹⁵ In its mission statement, Google enterprise stresses the company's ambition to organize information, both in text based projects (for example Google's main browser, or Google Books) as in visual representations of the world (Google Images, or Google Art Project). Google accomplishes—before our eyes—certain great fantasies of Western culture. It is a giant archive, expanding in proportion to the collateral expansion of data.¹⁶ It is an enormous library accumulating a sizable amount of the past and almost the whole of the present (though it still has some problems with the future). Thanks to the combined tools of Google Earth, Google Maps and Google Street View, Google is both a giant map and panorama at once. It not only makes different points of views accessible to a single viewer, but also creates new renderings of traditional genres and ways of representing space. Made apparent in Borges' mad project, one of the ambitions of Western culture, to grasp an image of the world that would be at once complete and realistic (thanks to photography's "reality effect"), can "finally" be performed by Google applications.¹⁷ And even though these tools are political and imperial in their gestures and strategies of representing, they can also be used tactically and read subversively.¹⁸

The visual and digital representations of Google mapping, especially its Street View, generate specific ways of showing specific points of view. The world of Google applications is generated by a procedure, an automatic and algorithmic rendering process. Google Street View cars, roaming city streets, take photos every ten to twenty meters. These images are then digitally sutured together and rendered as continuous. But as in the case of Roussel's poems, an automatic and mechanical procedure doesn't rule out the creation of a complex internal world with peculiar relations and "content." Flat doesn't mean empty.

Before commenting on the process of looking inscribed in Google Street View, to which I will return in more depth later, I should emphasize that interpreting Google Maps as a "curtain" that we could mistake for reality, seems not only iconoclastic, but would also inscribe our present within a teleological model where we are gradually disconnected from reality. According to this model, every new visual technique or tool seems to work not as a different kind of mediation, but as a stronger, higher and larger wall alienating us from an utopian, pure experience and clear perception. This process of alienation is supposed to be increasingly deceptive, as it needs to convince us of its realness. Undoubtedly our ways of seeing are changing, but can we really observe a process of losing contact with reality? And do those changes really mark a departure from reality? Such a stance would require thinking about vision as something natural, immediate and direct. Baudrillard's understanding of representation silently implies the same nostalgia for an unmediated experience.

If we leave behind this model that conceives representation as a relation between image (sign) and the world, we can rethink the category of the view and the relation between representation and experience. My aim here is not to suggest an oppositional model, in which representation is understood as a simple relation between the image and the observer, who gains total agency and interpretative power. Instead, turning toward the process of looking helps move our interpretation from elucidating an image as reality's supplement to considering it an important element in the processes of looking. In this interpretation, an image would be present in our look, actively forming it even when our eyes are not looking at a picture. It could also not be maintained within a closed frame, but would actively permeate into our look (for example as an afterimage). Such expansion also helps to avoid artificially juxtaposing the supposedly clear, transparent and passive eye with the closed, framed object-picture. Instead, it should emphasize their mutual codependence.

Confronting Your Own Gaze: Back to Zbigniew Libera

I think that it is the right moment to finally, in the context of reception or perception, maybe a little against Libera's intentions, to dump the analogy between pictorial and textual images. Let's dare to reconsider the long dispute over the relation between poetry and painting. I assume that spatiality isn't alien to literature, but is actually inevitable and unavoidable; it is also constitutive for the practice and experience of reading, for the existence of literature, it is not "mere metaphor."¹⁹ What Libera's photographs show, and what they play with, is the *non-metaphorical* aspect of vision in a picture, one that would be impossible to create in a text.²⁰

Let's ask about the relation between Libera's pictures and the vision of a spectator. I've stated that in the temple series Libera creates a "mechanical" gaze between two photographs: the photographed-photograph and his own art work-photograph. This doesn't mean that he enforces this point of view on the spectator of his work. Rather, when the spectator struggles to reconcile her vision with "non-human" vision, she has to acknowledge the existence of another, incompatible way of seeing besides her own vision. The series, drawing on the tactics of anamorphosis, destabilizes the position of the viewer in a manner that generates uncertainty and fluctuation.²¹

I would like to recall an earlier photo series by Libera, this one not inspired by Roussel. *Positives* (2002-2003) explores not only the medium of photography, but also the media of memory and vision. In *Positives*, Libera recreates and enlarges scenes from photographs of dramatic historical events, pictures that occupy the memory of his generation. According to the title of the series, Libera inverts the mood and sense of these photos, by showing scenes of happiness and cooperation. For example Libera's photograph *Residents* recalls a 1945 photograph [Fig. 5]. While the original photograph documents emaciated Auschwitz prisoners on the day of liberation, Libera shows a group of people smiling serenely for the photograph. Their poses, clothes and figures are almost identical to those of camp prisoners from the well-known original. The first thing that appears before our eyes is this original photograph, which functions like a visual *cliché*. After a moment of looking, the spectator grasps the difference .



Figure 5. Zbigniew Libera (b. 1959), *Residents* (from the *Positives* series), 2003, photograph, courtesy of Raster Gallery, Warsaw.

Positives exploits the qualities of viewing [Fig. 6]. Libera might enlarge photographs (they are much bigger than the original pictures), but this doesn't help us to see them any better.

Rather, *Positives* critiques representation by flattening the phenomena they ought to represent; it critiques the public's passive acclimation to certain images, forgetting what they show and what they refer; they critique passivity and distance generated by certain uses of photography; it critiques our ways of looking. But to achieve these critical goals, *Positives* needs to use and reveal its spectators' vision. What is represented here and, in other ways also in *La Vue* and the temple series, is vision itself. The spectator's eye is essential for this piece to start working. In a way these pictures are empty until they are gazed upon, because vision is their matter and content. What Libera's views show is that it is not possible to separate vision from representation or the representational aspects of the vision from the picture or world-being-looked-at. Moreover, they show that it's only theoretically possible to differentiate the view implied in the picture and the view of the empirical spectator. Although Libera uses representations, in *La Vue*, representations of representations, his works expose the process of looking as always opaque, distorted and unclear.

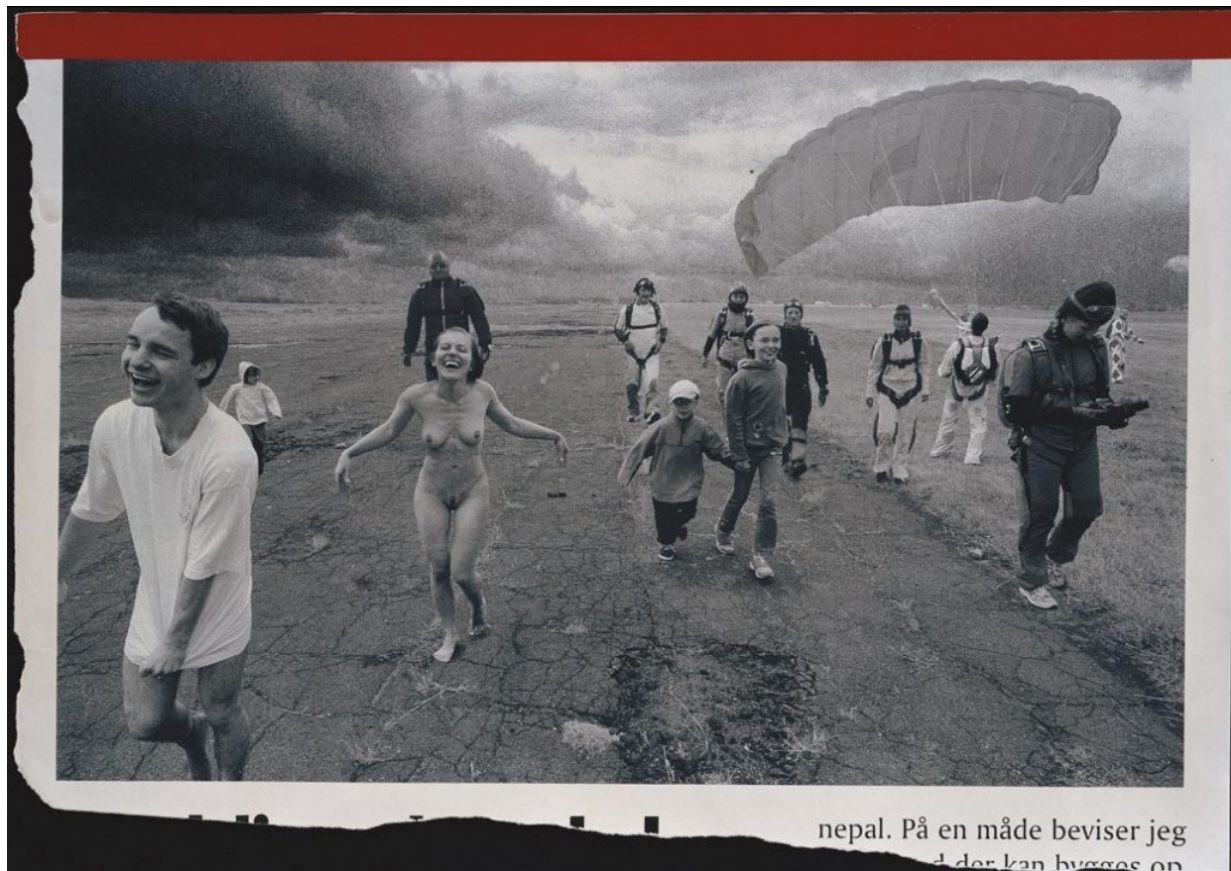


Figure 6. Zbigniew Libera (b. 1959), *Nepal* (from the *Positives* series), 2003, photograph, courtesy of Raster Gallery, Warsaw.

Libera's pictures serve here as metapictures, pictures about pictures, as they expose what is essential to every visual experience. They show vision as recreating and recreated, vision negotiating with points of view, and ways of viewing prepared for it. The view becomes the result of these negotiations.

The Selective Eye: Google Street View

I would like to compare two pictures. The first is a classical postcard landscape [Fig. 7]; the second is a result of the mechanical procedure of photographing by Google Street View [Fig. 8]. The first one is carefully composed, and in a way it resembles a view from above—it is external, closed, framed—while the second one from Street View might seem like the postcard, but only at first sight.



Figure 7. Photo by Clarissa Peterson, CC-BY-NC-SA 2.0 (source: flickr).



Figure 8. Google Street View screen capture. Taken April 16, 2013.

Both pictures aren't interested in people (consider Google's strategy of defacing people appearing on their photographs). Whereas the postcard is the result of choosing a representative view, the Street View photograph has no ambition of becoming the right and proper picture. Neither is composed clearly enough. Google Street View is not focused on the quality of the pictures, but rather on the experience of vision, of viewing space. And this experience is understood and displayed as active, continuous, fluid. Or rather it appears so. As Google still cannot fulfill its fantasy of showing everything in real-time like a great live surveillance video system, it uses montage to construct an illusion of movement. The

incorporeal eye of Google Street View can embrace a large angle of vision (360° horizontally and 270° vertically). Its crucial feature is the ability to move between the single sutured pictures, as well as blow up chosen elements of the photographs. The system, however, has limits. After a couple of clicks, we encounter the border of visibility and are thrown back. This contrasts with the unlimited movement forward. On screen this move is not shown as switching from one picture to another. There is not blacked-out screen and no visualization of uploading the next photo. The photos are “sewn” together, and the seams are precisely the places where non-human vision is visible. To illustrate the way Google Street View functions, I turn to a passage by Lev Manovich from his writing on new media aesthetics:

The 1990s compositing supported a different aesthetics characterized by smoothness and continuity. The elements were now blended together, and the boundaries were erased, rather than emphasized. This aesthetics of continuity can be best observed in television spots and special effects sequences of feature films which actually put together through digital compositing (i.e., compositing in the narrow, technical sense).

We could also wonder, what are the sources of this kind of vision of vision.²²

The aesthetics of continuity is what best characterizes the relation between successive photographs in Google Street View. Introducing movement to the view, they constitute a continuum.²³

The Renaissance of the Exhausted, Imperial Landscape

Photographic projects by artists like Michael Wolf or John Raffman, which cut out single pictures from the overwhelming panoramic image of Google Street View, demonstrate how our eyes perceive and recognize views, forms of presentation and genres, which are already “known.” Raffman chooses photographs that show how the “method of photographing, artless and indifferent, does not remove our tendency to see intention and purpose in images [<http://9-eyes.com/>].”²⁴ Viewers identify the styles, situations, stories, and motifs in Google Street View, treating them as intentionally created.

But perhaps the most fruitful and most obvious analogy here would be the one comparing Google Street View images to classical landscape painting. The myth about the origins of landscape painting is a story of emancipation from other genres.²⁵ In this myth the establishment of landscape painting as an independent genre (its emancipation from functioning only as the background for a scene or portrait) is a result of many factors and processes. One of them is the development of a new understanding of nature. The other is the disengagement of the spectator from the world, as well as such practical issues as the usefulness of this genre in the evolution of technical artistic skills.²⁶

But there is also another story about the origins of landscape painting, a story of exclusion. From the example of Giorgione’s *The Tempest*, we can see how a genre can also be defined negatively, through that which cannot be said about it. Giorgione’s painting did not allow easy iconographical interpretation, and so it was pronounced the first landscape painting of the Italian renaissance.²⁷ The genre is one disconnected from a story, certain events, or people. The genre establishes an ideologically constructed view, granting the viewer a specific position.

Let me quote a few of the eight “Theses on Landscape” from W.J.T. Mitchell’s essay “Imperial Landscape”:

1. Landscape is not a genre of art but a medium.
2. Landscape is a medium of exchange between...self and the other.
8. Landscape as a particular historical formation associated with European imperialism is an exhausted medium, no longer viable as a mode of artistic expression. Like life, landscape is boring; we must not say so.²⁸

Although the relation between the view and the landscape is uncertain (stemming from the same family of concepts, they are not identical, interchangeable or symmetrical), many of Mitchell’s theses can be applied to the category of the view. I would especially like to concentrate on the “mediatory” status of the view. Such an understanding of the view allows us to reflect upon its position, place, and location in a process of looking. As I have tried to show in my analysis of Libera’s work, the view is located in vision itself, in practices of looking. The mediating position of a view would mean that the view functions as an extension of our eyes, and at the same time as that which is in between the retina of an eye and the surface of what is seen.

By conceiving Google Street View as an enormous landscape, I do not aim to place this form of imaging in a historical context. My goal is not to compare the experience of the viewer constructed by the software and by traditional landscape painting. What I want to stress, however, is the ideological, imperial, and less visible strategies of Google Street View. These are visible in Google’s slogan, “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible,” which assumes not only a simple appropriation of the world, a pictorial colonization, but also its standardization and subordination to (post-Enlightenment) systems of value. These processes are, moreover, achieved through visual measures.

Mitchell might be right, then, when he writes that “landscape is an exhausted medium” in Western art. Although of course “the ‘end’ of landscape is... mythical.” In tools such as Google Street View, however, landscape reinvents itself as a common and popular tool, extremely powerful in its ubiquity. It seems much more powerful than an older, modern form of landscape: postcards. As our eyes and our fingers get accustomed to forms of Google Street View, and through its forms to specific views of the world, the re-embodiment of the landscape naturalizes itself in our contemporary mediascape.

Mitchell concludes his theses with a key sentence: “Like life, landscape is boring; we must not say so.” If I’m not mistaken, he is pointing to John Berryman’s poem “Dream Song 14,” a song of boredom, perfectly rendering the exhaustion of Western society.

I conclude now I have no

inner resources, because I am heavy bored.

Peoples bore me,

literature bores me, especially

great literature,

Henry bores me, with his plights & gripes

as bad as Achilles,

who loves people and valiant art, which bores me.

His is also a song about landscape:

Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so.

*After all, the sky flashes, the great sea yearns,
we ourselves flash and yearn.*

What is left for us is either the position exemplified by the subject's optimistic, naive mother ("Ever to confess you're bored /means you have no /Inner Resources.") or the passive and helpless subject ("and somehow a dog /has taken itself & its tail considerably away /into the mountains or sea or sky, leaving /behind: me, wag."). Are there any other positions available in front of an exhausted medium?²⁹

1. See among so many other W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, second edition) and Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998). Although both authors favor the category of landscape, they show its close dependence on a view as well as the practice of looking, and situate both these concepts within a broader topographical relation with place and space. ↵
2. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faira Glaser (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 2. ↵
3. Raymond Roussel, *How I Wrote Certain of My Books*, trans. Trevor Winkfield (New York: SUN, 1977). ↵
4. Cited in Bohdan Banasiak, *Raymond Roussel, Słońce ekstazy i noc melancholii* (Lodz: Thesaurus 2007). Much of my knowledge about Raymond Roussel's literary practice is drawn from Bodgan Banasiak's excellent book on Roussel. ↵
5. Within his day-to-day life, Roussel didn't want to interfere with reality in any way. For example, he ordered a special model of a truck camper in the Rolls-Royce factory—a "roulette automobile," that allowed him to travel without moving from his home. ↵
6. Michel Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*, trans. Charles Raus (London: Continuu,, 1986), 18. ↵

7. Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Zagadki i przezroczystość u Raymonda Roussela," trans. (Polish) Ewa Wieleżyńska, *Literatura na świecie* 9-10 (2007). ↵
8. See J. Garrabé, "Martial, ou Pierre Janet et Raymond Roussel," *Annales Medico-Psychologiques*, 166 (2008). ↵
9. Here, I give a short summary of Roussel's literature by Bogdon Banasiak, *Słońce ekstazy*. ↵
10. Andre Breton, "Raymond Roussel (1877-1933)," trans. (Polish) Ewa Wieleżyńska, *Literatura na świecie* 9-10 (2007). ↵
11. The series was showed next to *La Vue* in a small exhibition in Paris titles *Nouvelles Impressions d'Afrique (New Impressions of Africa)*, a titled once again derived from Roussel's literature. *Nouvelles Impressions d'Afrique*, Galerie Anne de Villepoix, Paris, November 2006. ↵
12. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility," in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008). ↵
13. Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 22. ↵
14. Unless we read Roussel in the spirit of Paul de Man, who emphasizes the radical incommensurability of literature and reality, but doesn't assume the annihilating power of representations. ↵
15. Jean Baudrillard, "Procession of Simulacras," *Simulacra and Simulation*, 3. ↵
16. A Google search does not search the internet, of course, but instead it searches its own catalog of the internet. ↵
17. W. J. T. Mitchell notes that another great historical fantasy is no longer a mere fantasy, but already a reality, namely the clone understood as a living picture. See *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). ↵
18. The questions of political and ideological implications of Google are extremely important and discussed in abundance. See Steven Levy, *In the Plex: How Google Thinks, Works, and Shapes Our Lives* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011). ↵
19. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 6, no. 3 (1980), 541. ↵
20. Of course it is impossible, unless one for example uses colored fonts, as Roussel wanted. ↵
21. Anamorphosis forces the viewer to change his/her point of view to see properly and to see everything. But changing the point of view means loosing part of the picture from one's sight. The figure of anamorphosis marks the impossibility of the stabilization of vision and completeness of the seen object, and that is one of the reasons why it became popular in the domain of psychoanalysis, starting with Jacques Lacan's analysis of *The Ambassadors* by Hans Holbein. See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1998). ↵
22. Lev Manovich, *Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 142. ↵
23. It is worth mentioning that there is nothing technologically necessary in this way of showing a shift from one picture to another. Google Street View and its construction of the view is a fantasy about seeing, a fantasy as fantastic as science fiction, which may be one of the sources of this kind of vision. ↵
24. John Rafman, *9 Eye of Google Street View*, www.9-eyes.com, accessed September 30, 2012. ↵
25. Charles Harrison, "The Effects of Landscape," *Landscape and Power*, 213-214. ↵
26. See Martin Warnke, *Political Landscape* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). ↵
27. See Dan Lattieri, "Landscape and Lyricism in Giorgione's Temptesta," *Artibus et Historiae* 30 (1994). ↵
28. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, 5. ↵

29. The author is the beneficiary of a “Start” Grant from the Foundation for Polish Science. ↵