ARTICLES

The Slipperiness of Literary Maps: Critical Cartography and Literary Cartography

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ABSTRACT

How we read and interpret a map when it is presented alongside the text in a work of fiction is the central issue with which this paper is concerned. Although "literary maps" can be found across a range of genres in literary studies, they are often treated as illustrative rather than being understood as integral to the meaning of the literary work. This article seeks to challenge such assumptions. The first half of the article is interdisciplinary, engaging with the work of J.B. Harley, Mark Monmonier, Franco Moretti, Christina Ljungberg, and Andrew Thacker in order to open up responses to literary maps in more complex ways. It draws on critical cartography to define core concerns for an emerging literary cartography, such as the nature of the analogy between map and text; the complexity of correspondence when a map and text occur alongside each other and the author is also the map-maker; and the difficulties created by naïve users of the literary map. The second half of the article grounds the prior discussion in analysis of Agatha Christie's house plans in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* and *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*.

Keywords: literary, cartography, fictional, map, text, creative, reader, duplicity, doubleness, critical

RÉSUMÉ

Le présent article porte sur la lecture et l'interprétation de cartes qui accompagnent le texte dans un ouvrage de fiction. Les « cartes littéraires », qu'on trouve dans différents genres en études littéraires, sont souvent traitées comme des illustrations au lieu d'être perçues comme un élément contribuant au sens (à la signification) de l'œuvre. Le but de l'article est de remettre en question certaines de ces idées préconçues. La première moitié de l'article est interdisciplinaire : les ouvrages de J.B. Harley, de Mark Monmonier, de Franco Moretti, de Christina Ljungberg et d'Andrew Thacker servent à susciter des réponses plus complexes aux cartes littéraires. On fait appel à la cartographie critique pour définir les points essentiels d'une cartographie littéraire émergente, comme la nature de l'analogie entre la carte et le texte; la complexité de la correspondance quand la carte et le texte se trouvent côte à côte et que l'auteur est aussi le cartographe; et les difficultés posées par la lecture de la carte littéraire par des utilisateurs novices. Dans la seconde moitié de l'article, on approfondit la discussion précédente en analysant les plans de maisons dans deux romans d'Agatha Christie : *La Mystérieuse Affaire de Styles* et *Le Meurtre de Roger Ackroyd.*

Mots clés : littéraire, cartographie, fiction, carte, texte, créativité, lecteur, duplicité, dédoublement, critique

> *"Part of using maps astutely is knowing when to go beyond them."*
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> —Muehrcke and Muehrcke (1978, 310)[1]

> *"Maps are slippery customers."*
>
> —Harley (1989, 8)

What does it mean to read a literary map, or to map a literary text, when both forms of representation are present? To what extent is the meaning of the map an integral part of the meaning of the work? These are the kinds of question I explore in this article, drawing on recent advances in critical cartography to achieve a fuller understanding of fictional works in which a map is presented alongside the text. My primary interest is in exploring the *integrated* meaning and function of maps for writers, readers, and characters within the text. For the purposes of this article, then, I define a literary map as a graphic representation of spatial relations among places or objects (real or imagined) that is presented alongside the literary work at the time of first publication and is authorial or authorially approved.[2] In a larger sense, too, the article is concerned with the development of what might be called "literary cartography." While there has been a significant increase in research into the relationship between cartography and literature within literary studies (particularly for the Early Modern period), such work tends to focus on real maps of the world or on the negotiation of actual spaces compared with their representations, so that there is still relatively little work on the presence of maps given to be read with (or against) the fictional work.[3]

The first two sections of the article work in an interdisciplinary way to define a literary cartography emerging from critical cartography. The third and fourth parts seek to explain such ideas through grounded analysis of the use of the literary map with reference to detective fiction, looking at two works by Agatha Christie: *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* and *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*.

Critical Cartography

Cartography as a sub-discipline of geography has long been divided into those who make maps and those who interpret, historicize, or theorize about them. Traditional binaries always existed between the map as a product of art or of science, decorative or precise, objective or subjective – replicating a larger disciplinary divide between empirical, scientific activities and human/social reflection upon those activities. In the latter part of the twentieth century, the field was radicalized by the emergence of a "deconstructionist tactic" (Harley 1989, 2) led by Brian Harley, further separating cartography's self-conception into untheorized and theorized positions (in a way highly reminiscent of the "theory wars" in English studies in the 1970s and 1980s). In this article, however, I remain interested in both critical and "uncritical" cartography, since both prove to be relevant to literary mapping.

Jess Edwards (2005–2006, 127) sums up the established position:

> The traditional positivist history of cartography is teleological and idealist. Traditional cartographic history assumes consistent development towards a modern scientific practice founded on the discipline of geometric measurement and projection and treats individual maps as neutral contributions to a Platonic archive of geographic knowledge.

Alongside historical collections of maps following the teleological account, other influential mid-twentieth-century studies such as Robinson's *Elements of Cartography* (Robinson and others 1984), Muehrcke's *Map Use* (Muehrcke and Muehrcke 1978) or Keates's (1982) *Understanding Maps* move between practical consideration of the decision making and judgements involved in cartographical practices and an awareness of map reading and interpretation. The dominant position before the 1980s, then, could be described in terms of a "map communication model." The key issues of concern to such cartographers were accuracy (the "truth" of the map) and how to make the map as "transparent" or "natural" as possible. However, they remained fully aware of the effects of selection and generalization. Muehrcke and Muehrcke (1978, 10) state that "what makes a map so useful is its genius of omission"; Robinson points out that "the great power of the mapping process lies in its ability to provide fresh, insightful perspectives, sometimes even distorted ones, on our environment" (Robinson and others 1984, 16). The primary difference between these cartographers and the critical cartography that comes after them is that they view such effects in a positive light, as a central element of how a map works, rather than seeing them as in any way problematic.

In contrast, "critical cartography" (Crampton and Krygier 2006, 16) or a "critical history of cartography" (Edwards 2005–2006, 129) applies theoretical principles from other disciplines (most notably literary and art theory) to the interpretation of cartographic representation.[4] This approach is established against the prior model, which is now negatively perceived in terms of a "positivist" conception of maps.[5] Harley is explicit about this: "The objective is to suggest that an alternative epistemology, rooted in social theory rather than in scientific positivism, is more appropriate to the history of cartography" (Harley 1989, 2). Edwards, again, summarizes the nature of the shift involved:

> The first revolution in a critical history of cartography involved what might be called a thickening of the map, a shift from the essentially idealist habit of seeing through it, as a window on the world, to one of reading it as a cultural text. (Edwards 2005–2006, 127)

There clearly *is* a fundamental shift involved here, from a position premised on the possibility of creating the perfect map to one that must acknowledge the impossibility of ever doing so. Thus Harley can state that

> The apparent duplicity of maps – their "slipperiness" – is not some idiosyncratic deviation from an illusory perfect map. Rather it lies at the heart of cartographic representation. (Harley 2001a, 36)

As a result of such "thickening," the map is understood as capable of being "read" in ways that language can be read – indeed this is what allows the application of a "deconstructive" approach. Harley (2001a, 36) defines the map as "a graphic language to be decoded," containing several different, sometimes competing, codes as well as being inherently rhetorical (i.e., participating in acts of persuasion).[6] At the same time, this explicit cartographic code can also be interpreted as part of a larger *un*stated cultural code, so that the map actually stands for far more than at first appears when one considers it only as a single object. The map exists in relation to other meanings and above all, in the Harleian account, is defined by Foucauldian power/knowledge relations that function externally and internally and that determine what is included on the map and why.[7] Harley's interest centres on "the hidden agenda of social power which operates on the reader as an unconscious force and through the symbolic meaning of the image as much as through the literal facts of geography" (Harley 2001b, 128). The meaning of the map cannot be understood simply by reference to the artefact itself but requires a full understanding of the socio-historical conditions of its existence.[8] It follows from this that critical cartography tends to shift attention away from an earlier map communication model, centred on map use or on the map as a discrete artefact, toward contextualization of the map, now best understood as part of a complex process rather than as an absolute final product.[9]

As a consequence of these different ways of reading, the "naturalness" of maps is called into question. Once the map interpreter is no longer in thrall to an Enlightenment privileging of the scientific drive toward perfection, he or she is also compelled to acknowledge that any map is partial and biased by its very nature (even a map that does not appear to be so). Mark Monmonier states that "a good map tells a multitude of little white lies; it suppresses truth to help the user see what needs to be seen" (Monmonier, 1991, 25). In other words, if all the information that could be included on the map *were* on the map, it would be useless. Monmonier (1991, 1) calls this the "cartographic paradox": "To present a useful and truthful picture, an accurate map must tell white lies."

Naturally, Harley's destabilizing of "the positivist myth" (Helgersen 1989, 101) did not go unchallenged. Immediate responses to his influential essay "Deconstructing the Map" display a fascinating range of positions.[10] The most resonant of these criticisms concern the fairness or otherwise of Harley's representation of the assumptions of map-makers ("most have a subtle and critical sense of the nature of their work and do not perceive cartography as an objective form of knowledge"; Godlewska 1989, 97); the extent to which the process of map-making should apply to all stages of it, not just to cartographic making ("the laboratory processes of cartography are not solely those of the map compiler, but must be taken to include all mapping activities"; Edney 1989, 94); and the problem, inherent in any deconstructive position, of itself remaining open to deconstruction ("the hermeneutics of suspicion must include self-suspicion"; Helgersen 1989, 100).[11] Later responses have gone on to critique Harley's use of Foucault and Derrida.[12] Nonetheless, these fresh, creative ways of thinking about the information a map contains, and about its intended and actual uses in the world, are extremely helpful in opening up our understanding and interpretation of the *literary* map. The application of common theoretical ideas enables us to make connections in both directions between the disciplines, which was far less possible under a more "positivist" model that alienated scholars from the humanities.

Literary Cartography

There is not room here to elaborate a full genealogy of literary cartography, but a brief overview from the literary side may be helpful.[13] An early, pre-theorized approach might be represented by works such as David Daiches' *Literary Landscapes of the British Isles* (Daiches and Flower 1979) or Margaret Drabble's (1979) *A Writer's Britain*, books essentially linked to literary tourism and the valuing of particular regions in relation to particular writers (Hardy, Dickens, Shakespeare, the Bröntes) while also articulating major socio-historical changes in Britain that shaped actual and literary landscapes over time. In the 1980s, studies such as Pocock (1988) and Lutwack (1984) articulated connections between geography and literature and a larger sense of the importance of place, setting, and landscape for literary works. Such approaches acquired greater prominence under the growing influence of cultural geography in the 1980s and 1990s as geographers responded to landscape iconographically, as something that can be "read," and began to draw on post-structuralist theories also used in literary studies. However, an interest specifically in *maps* in relation to literature still tends to be focused on a particular writer with a strong "sense of place" for whom mapping is relevant, such as John Clare or Thomas Hardy, on whom there are excellent individual studies (Barrell 1972; Hillis Miller 1995; Pite 2002). Alternatively, a period in which maps are accorded particular value can lead to a strong focus on the relationship between literature and maps – for example, in the Early Modern period in relation to the discovery and mapping of the New World (Gillies 1984; Helgerson 1992; Brotton 1997; Klein 2001; Edwards 2006). Still, it was not until the very end of the twentieth century that a fully theorized account of literary mapping (exploring the underlying spatial dimensions of texts as well as the presence of fictional maps within texts) began to develop.

By far the most influential theoretical account of literary mapping to date is that of Franco Moretti (1997, 2005). In *Atlas of the European Novel*, Moretti (1997, 3) articulates a desire to move beyond maps as merely illustrative or decorative in relation to literature and to use them instead as "analytical tools: that dissect the text in an unusual way, bringing to light relations that would otherwise remain hidden." He seeks to employ a spatial perspective in two key ways: "It may indicate the study of *space in literature*; or else, of *literature in space*" (Moretti 1997, 3). This leads him to create maps either linked to explorations of kinds of plot and narrative ("space in literature") or mapping the spread of a certain genre or generic convention in relation to actual places in the world ("literature in space"). In effect, he seeks to develop a quantitative method for the study of larger patterns of meaning in and across literary texts and genres, in order to bring the spatial dimensions of literature dramatically to the fore. Moretti's succinct account of his own method makes clear the nature of his approach:

> in the end this is what literary geography is all about: you select a textual feature ... find the data, put them on paper – and then you look at the map. In the hope that the visual construct will be more than the sum of its parts: that it will show a shape, a pattern ... (Moretti 1997, 13)

So, in *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, for example, his analysis of the space within Mary Mitford's *Our Village* clearly illustrates that you "make a map of the book, and everything changes" (Moretti 2005, 36): in this case, what appeared to be a linear depiction of life is revealed as involving a double circle. Moretti (2005, 39) asserts that "in order to see this pattern, we must first extract it from the narrative flow, and the only way to do so is with a map." In this respect, Moretti could be seen as exemplifying the active use of maps for spatial analysis in the humanities, as called for by Monmonier (1993) in *Mapping It Out*.

I have strong sympathies with Moretti's spatial intentions and find his work original and attractive, but at the same time it has clear limits. For one thing, although he states that "geography is not an inert container . . . but an active force, that pervades the literary field and shapes it in depth" (Moretti 1997, 3), he never truly engages with the academic disciplines of geography and cartography. Equally, within the field of literary studies, Moretti's research suffers from an accusation of a return to unfashionable positivist methods, which he does nothing to discourage. Moretti's declared interest is in literature as "*comparative morphology*" (Moretti 2005, 90). Such an approach is structuralist at bottom, as his repeated references to Vladimir Propp make clear. The problem with this is that it makes his approach potentially reductive in relation to the rich spatial geography and geometry of literary texts, as well as in his conception of the relationship between texts and maps. It also does cartography no favours, since it suggests that a connection between cartography and literature can occur only on scientific terms, rather than adopting a more sceptical post-phenomenological view of the kind of information, with all its subjective bias and distortion, contained in the map.

Moretti does not focus on existing maps within literary texts, explicitly noting that "several people have asked me why on earth did I want to *make* maps, instead of analysing those that already exist?" (Moretti 1997, 5 n. 3). This comment clarifies the major difference between his work and my own: Moretti is concerned with actively creating *post-authorial* maps and analysing the results of doing so, while I am interested in analysing the relationship between already existing authorial maps and the texts for which they have been drawn, or without which they would not have come into being. Unlike Moretti, I seek to create an active dynamic between spatial interpretation and literary interpretation where these are directly juxtaposed within a work.

It is necessary also to acknowledge the recent work of Christina Ljungberg, which focuses on the relationship between map and text in ways closer to my own interests. Unlike Moretti, Ljungberg draws upon the larger principles of critical cartography (for example, in focusing on the "processes of mapping rather than finite objects"; Ljungberg 2009, 309), but her approach dwells on a particular aspect of it – the map as code – which she develops out of Peircian semiotics. Ljungberg centres her analyses of visual/verbal representation on "the diagrammatic relationship between the map and its territory, which enables the recognition of similarities and patterns, and which determines the complex relation between a sign and its object" (309). For a literary work, in which the "diagrammatic relationship" relates to fictional rather than actual worlds, the map also functions in a more open metaphorical way in relation to the text, as the juxtaposition of two semiotic systems (writing and cartography) compels the reader to move between the two. This leads to a performative way of reading literary maps, in which they are understood to be "always both the result of mappings and the impetus for re-mappings" (Ljungberg 2010, 271). Ljungberg interprets actual examples of literary maps within texts as well as a larger process of "diagrammatization" in terms of how the reader spatializes the literary work itself. In various ways, this kind of semiotic method overlaps with my own more literary-critical, reader-response-based approach.

Finally, an excellent attempt to define the terms of a "critical literary geography" is made by Andrew Thacker, who engages with (and moves on from) Moretti when he poses the question, "What would such a 'critical literary geography' look like in practice? Would it be a critical practice based on cartography?" (Thacker 2005–2006, 60). As well as identifying limitations in Moretti's objective response to maps, Thacker considers other ways in which literature and cartography relate. These involve the most common metaphorical approach, in which a literary text is "mapped" or spatial metaphors are linked to thematic elements, and one in which more geographic representations of space are compared to their literary representations. Thacker's (Lefebvrean) model is not specifically cartographic in focus, being ultimately concerned with broader "interaction between spatial forms and social space" (Thacker 2005–2006, 63). However, he does helpfully identify different ways in which this interaction might be explored in terms of "typography and layout on the page; the space of metaphor and the shifting between different senses of space within a text; or the very shape of narrative forms" (Thacker 2005–2006, 63). He also raises the possibility of mapping material spaces, suggesting that "we should reconnect the representational spaces in literary texts not only to the material spaces they depict but also reverse the movement" (Thacker 2005–2006, 63). Miles Ogden (2005–2006, 147) returns to this point when he states that "the page of any book is a material space on which typography imprints its own geography."

Thacker directly anticipates my work here when he suggests that "another line of investigation for a critical literary geography might be to analyse the occurrence of maps and mapping in specific texts, analysing how cartography functions as an instance of visual culture in such texts"

(Thacker 2005–2006, 64). I aim to pursue just such a line, but to do so by interpreting maps through the filter of critical cartography, to address the fundamental question of "what is at issue when a text employs an actual map as a component of the narrative" (64). Literary cartography enables us to enlarge Thacker's helpful lines of inquiry to include both traditional "positivist" elements of cartographic concern – the "accuracy" or "truth value" of the correspondence between map and world; the use of the map to negotiate that world – *and* more sceptical concerns.

The Function of the Literary Map

As I have already suggested, critical cartography tends to problematize map use, since it is an approach centred on showing the map to be an unstable representation, the meanings of which cannot be understood by interpreting it in isolation. For the *literary* map, however, the *function* of the map remains extremely important, because the map is never given in isolation but always presented alongside, or within, a text to which it corresponds. In a sense, then, literary maps are what Monmonier (1993) calls "expository maps."[14] For the most part, the map does not have independent status (although some literary maps, such as those for Tolkien's Middle Earth, can be liberated from their texts), but this does not mean that it should be read merely as an illustration. Indeed, one of my purposes in drawing on cartographic strategies is to argue for the integrated importance of the map as part of the meaning of the literary work of art. This also means that while a more critical stance is helpful in opening up the possible meanings held within the map, there is still a need for considerable emphasis on how the map is *used* by readers (within the fictional world and outside it). Whether the presence of a literary map encourages a certain kind of engagement with the text, or whether a certain kind of text leads to the creation of a map, remains to be seen.

With respect to literary interpretation and the integration of map with text, then, there are three core questions to be asked: What does the map add to the text? What does the reading of the map do to the reading of the text, and vice versa? What might the map reveal about the text, or the text about the map? In terms of function, the map is strongly connected to the narrative; to the use of the map at a dramatic level by fictional characters; and, often, to its maker within that fictional world. Narrative structure and motivation for the development of the story are closely bound up with the way in which the map is introduced and used as a guide. At the same time, the literary map often has a doubled identity, since it exists both for the reader outside the text and for the characters within it. The map's uses at these two levels may work in conjunction with each other, or they may conflict, providing misleading or contradictory information.

We must also bear in mind that most users of the *literary* map are likely to be "naïve" readers of the sort described by Monmonier:

> People trust maps, and intriguing maps attract the eye as well as connote authority. Naive citizens willingly accept as truth maps based on a biased and sometimes fraudulent selection of facts. (Monmonier 1991, 87)

Readers of literary works are likely to accept the map's authority rather than questioning it, and thus to adhere to the earlier conceptualization of the map as neutral scientific object. Therefore, the literary map (generally not made by a professional cartographer) is likely to be responded to as if it were objective and absolute in its meanings, *even if* it does not necessarily function in this way. This is true both for readers outside the text and for characters using the map within it. The untheorized cartographic account, concerned with accuracy and truth, cannot therefore be totally discarded in analysing literary maps, since it corresponds to what an ordinary reader (or a historicized character) might understand a map to be.

What specific issues emerge when we apply cartographic ideas to fictional maps in literary works? A key concern that is immediately raised (and has been voiced by other literary critics) is to clarify the base analogy between map and text that enabled Harley's original critique of the prior model: only once maps were able to be defined as texts could the same theoretical approaches used in the humanities and social sciences be applied to them. Harley unproblematically describes the map as a "graphic text," but Jess Edwards returns to the Derridean critique of Husserl in order to consider the relationship between the relative priority of geometric/spatial awareness and that of language.[15] He concludes that "we are wrong to read the map as an analogy or alternative to language; and especially wrong to attempt intuitive readings of geometry and space" (Edwards 2006, 11). In other words, an assumption that spatial understanding *precedes* verbalization is incorrect; but, equally, the "text" of the map does not function in quite the same way as a linguistic text. Instead, Edwards concludes, "Language is neither prior to the human experience and representation of space nor posterior to it. Writing, geometry and practice are not analogous but inextricable and the same" (Edwards 2006, 11). Similarly, Ogden (2005–2006, 146) comments that "neither spaces nor text can be the *a priori* basis for the other." Verbal and visual representations are of equal but different orders.

Matters of correspondence between the verbal and the visual become even more complicated when a map is made *by* a writer and included *alongside* a literary text as part of the work. This presents a much more integrated kind of literary cartography, as well as confronting us directly with the difference between the two "texts" or the "codes" they present. The maker of the map is *also* the writer of the text to which it corresponds, so that map and text are not just comparable in terms of metaphor or analogy, as two forms of representation, but also empirically coexist and relate directly to each other. Moreover, the reader of the text is also the user of the map and must negotiate these two activities at the same time. This means that the literary map has a doubled audience and a doubled function, potentially working in two different ways for users within and outside the text. Such "doubleness" bears upon assumptions about the map's "accuracy" in relation to the literary world it represents, but it also returns us to the concept of "duplicity" that Harley's interpretative strategies are premised upon. A literary map appears to be created straightforwardly to help negotiate the space and place of the fictional world to which it corresponds. However, once we take on board the idea that a map can "lie," or that it must do so by its very nature, then we must think about the ways in which the map does, and does not, directly represent that world. Like an actual historical map, a literary map is capable of manipulating and distorting information, so that the points where it does not correspond directly to the world of the book may be more interesting than the points where it does. It is the complexity – the "slipperiness" – of these doubled relations between map and text, between visual and verbal representations of the same space, and between different audiences for the map, that is of most interest to me here.[16]

Case Study: Agatha Christie's Maps

There is an obvious circularity involved in interpreting the literary map by drawing on critical cartography, which has in turn defined itself through literary and cultural theory. However, the ultimate intention in re-applying cartographic approaches to literature is to reveal to what extent the meanings of literary maps correspond to, exceed, or differ from actual maps in the world, and even to feed back once more into critical cartography. The second half of this article, therefore, puts such ideas into practice by analysing Agatha Christie's use of house plans in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* and *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Christie's maps will be considered in terms of the apparent objectivity of the map, the "truth value" of the correspondence between map and world, and the map's ability to "lie."

The full emergence of the house plan as an intrinsic characteristic of detective fiction coincides with that of the popular subgenre of the "whodunit," which dominated British crime writing between the wars. The map's presence signals the intrinsic spatiality of a genre concerned with Who did What, Where, and to Whom, while also allowing repeated playing out of combinations by the reader. The recurrent diagrammatic representation of interior space is linked to the use of the controlled environment of the country house, which allows for a limited number of possible intersections of person, event, and location.

A key figure here is Agatha Christie, who employed maps right from the start of her career in her 1921 first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles,* which also introduces the famous Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. The story is narrated by Poirot's rather limited British assistant, Hastings, who has been "invalided home from the Front" (Christie 1921, 9) and gone to stay with a family friend, John Cavendish, at Styles. While he is there John's mother is taken ill in the night and dies, and suspicion of murder falls upon her new husband, Alfred Inglethorp. Poirot, who happens to be settled in the village as a Belgian refugee, is called in by Hastings to help solve the case quietly. Suspicion falls on various characters in turn until it is finally revealed that the first suspect was in fact the murderer all along. The book makes use of the interior plan twice over, presenting two maps at different scales: a floor plan of all the bedrooms, and then a detailed plan of the room in which the murder takes place (see Figure 1).

While several critics have remarked upon the presence of such plans in Agatha Christie's fiction, they tend to simply accept the maps as helpful, rather than looking more closely or critically at their function. Thus Robert Barnard, in *A Talent to Deceive,* writes, "We are entering the age when plans of the house were an indispensable aid to the aspirant solver of detective stories" (Barnard 1987, 23). More recently, Merja Makinen, in her chapter on Christie for the *Blackwell Companion to Crime Fiction* (which makes the case for narrative complexity in Christie's work), refers to the plans as "overt clues" (Makinen 2010, 423).[17] It is worth pausing to consider this latter description of the literary map.

A clue (or clew) is defined in the *OED* first as "a ball of yarn or thread," which then becomes "a ball of thread employed to guide any one . . . into or out of the labyrinth or maze" and finally (with the literal sense obscured) "that which points the way, indicates a solution or puts one on the track of a discovery" (Simpson and Weiner 1989). In other words, a clue is both a physical object and one that acquires a spatial and metaphorical dimension. If the map is understood as a clue, then it ought also to possess the innocence of such an object – having no meaning in itself but only as part of an unfolding reconstruction of sequence and event. However, a map is *made*; it is not *found*, as other clues are. Although it may purport to be just another "thing" (as in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles,* where it exists alongside supposed facsimiles of notes and other fragments), it does not in fact work in quite the same way as the other clues, and it is far less innocent than it seems, as well as being affected by the fictional identity of its maker. I want to look more closely at its apparent objectivity and the extent to which a naïve acceptance of its neutrality is misplaced.

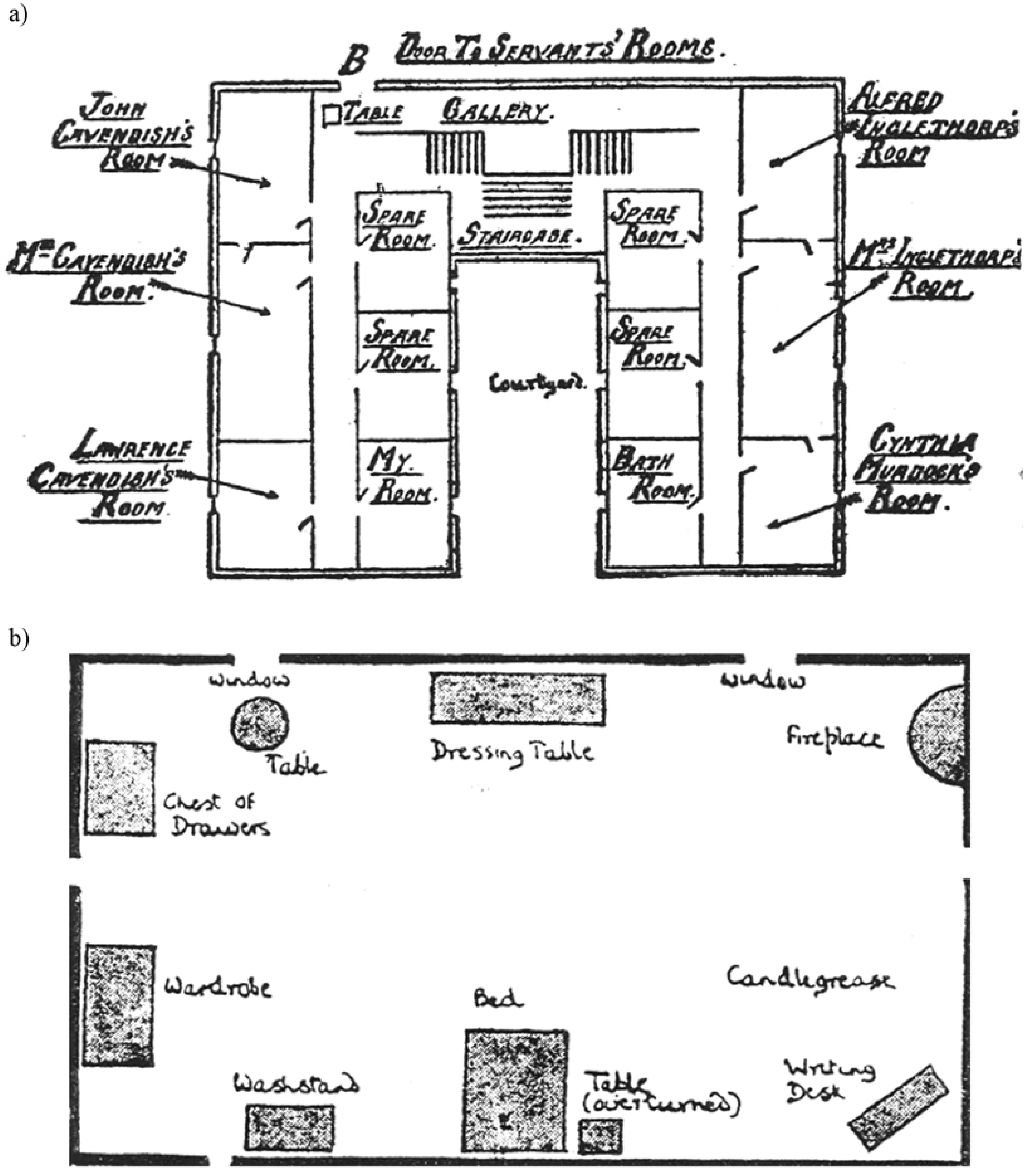

Figure 1. Two first-edition maps for *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (Christie 1921): (a) floor plan of bedrooms; (b) detailed plan of murder site

It is no coincidence that narratologist Tzvetan Todorov, in his influential piece "The Typology of Detective Fiction," describes the genre as one that "tends toward a purely geometric architecture" (Todorov 1977, 45). In his widely accepted account of the narrative form he states that "this novel contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation" (Todorov 1977, 44). A dual temporal and narrative structure involves the forward momentum of the murder investigation and a backward drive into past events to solve the crime. The second structure, in particular, involves a necessary "mapping out" of spatial and human relations to reconstruct the first structure and so resolve the narrative. Only once everything is "in place" can the truth emerge. The second story of the investigation, according to Todorov, "enjoys a particular status. It is no accident that it is often told by a friend of the detective, who explicitly acknowledges that he is writing a book" (Todorov 1977, 45). This self-conscious "literariness," which draws attention to the act of retelling, also explicitly bears upon the reproduction of plans within detective fiction. The interior plan ostensibly serves a supportive function in relation to the story of the investigation – involving the reader in a secondary reconstructive act from that of the narrative itself.

In *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* Hastings provides the reader with a map showing the sleeping arrangements of the family on the night when Mrs Inglethorp dies, poisoned, in her bed. The map is presented immediately before Hastings' account of being woken in the night and his eyewitness description of various members of the family trying to gain access to Mrs Inglethorp. It is introduced in an explicitly integrated way: "To make this part of my story clear, I append the following plan of the first floor of Styles" (Christie 1921, 42). The situating of the map *within* the text, rather than at the front of the book, and its presentation immediately *before* the key event takes place encourage the reader actively to read and interpret rather than merely looking at it. In the ensuing chapter, a second, larger-scale map is provided as a detailed plan of the room in which the murder took place, and this is given immediately before Poirot's detailed examination of that room, in which he uncovers "six points of interest." The maps are thus fully integrated within the narrative structure, both materially and conceptually, since (in Todorov's terms) the first map relates to the final event of the first narrative (the "story of the crime") and the second map to the first event of the second narrative (the "story of the investigation").

The maps *appear* to ground events by presenting an objective, empirical account that will contribute to the search for truth. However, they also partly distract, since the information they provide – in this novel, at least – ultimately proves irrelevant. The murder has actually been committed by adding bromide powders to the victim's medicine, causing a large amount of strychnine to be taken in the final dose. However, this is prepared well in advance so that the location of suspects given on the floor plan at the time of her death has *no bearing upon the final solution*. The map's potential to mislead is further reinforced when it turns out that the murder was committed by someone who was not even in the house at the time (the victim's husband, Alfred Inglethorp). In fact, the absence of an individual from the building – itself a potentially suspicious circumstance – is in danger of being overlooked as a result of the map's focus on the movements of those present.[18]

The second, more detailed, map in the narrative has an immediate spatializing function in locating and fixing the various clues that Poirot finds in the room (a piece of fabric in the door, a smashed coffee cup on the floor by the bed, etc.). However, "the final proof" (Christie 1921, 275) that *does* exist in that room (a piece of paper hidden among spills in a vase on the mantelpiece) is overlooked by Poirot until much later in the book. At the time when the reader is given the room plan, it is accounted for only in the following generalized description: "He rose from his knees, and walked slowly across to the mantelpiece, where he stood abstractedly fingering the ornaments, and straightening them" (Christie 1921, 63). The reader is not told either that there is a vase on the mantelpiece, or that there are pieces of paper in it. Thus, the apparent specificity and helpfulness of the map in situating "clues" within the room again works only to deceive. The limits of the two maps might also serve to remind us of their fictional origins. They are provided for the reader by Hastings, not by Poirot, and Hastings is an unreliable narrator – as is made clear by his lack of intelligence; his bias against Alfred Inglethorp; his friendship with the victim's son, John Cavendish; and his partiality for Mary Cavendish (wife of John). If the narrator is unreliable, then so are the maps he provides.

Detective fiction of the "Golden Age" of the 1930s and 1940s brings with it a requirement of "fair play" for the genre, a guarantee "that the reader has at least a theoretical chance at outguessing the detective" (Wagoner 1986, 34). Various narrative devices – misdirection, fragmentation, a high level of ambiguity – are brought into play to prolong the narrative without revealing the murderer. In a helpful account of such structures, and of changing responses to strategies of reading for the genre over time, Heta Pyrhönen (2010, 53) reminds us that Umberto Eco (1981) was "among the first to distinguish a dual readership for popular cultural products such as detective fiction." While the average reader enjoys the form because of a formulaic model with a strong plotline, the more advanced reader responds to the genre's self-referentiality and its capacity to play with devices and conventions, as well as reading through an intertextual filter and active re-reading. So the genre knowingly employs a *doubled* narrative for a *doubled* audience. All of this becomes telling when we look closely at Agatha Christie's maps, which clearly signal a need to read actively, not passively, and to reconsider and revisit events, encouraging the right kind of "advanced" readerly dynamic for the genre.

An excellent example of this is Christie's controversial 1926 novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (controversial because it does not adhere to the rules of "fair play"). The story is narrated by Dr Sheppard, the family doctor, who has access to many secrets and intimacies within the village. A first death, that of Mrs Ferrars, is followed by the death of the squire, Roger Ackroyd, who is shot in his study. It emerges that Mrs Ferrars took her own life after killing her husband, and that she was being blackmailed by someone who knew this, so that by sending a letter to Roger Ackroyd just before her death, revealing all to him, she then triggers *his* murder. The doctor rushes to the Hall following a mysterious unattributed phone call telling him of Ackroyd's death, and so finds the body. Poirot, as a mysterious neighbour, gradually becomes involved; the doctor occupies the Hastings role as his amateur assistant. Following considerable misdirection, and after suspicion falls on Roger Ackroyd's stepson, the apparently reliable first-person narrator is ultimately revealed to be the murderer.

Like Hastings, Dr Sheppard conforms to Todorov's description of the self-consciously literary narrator, and he is also explicitly compared by Poirot to his former sidekick: "'You must indeed have been sent from the good God to replace my friend Hastings,' he said, with a twinkle. 'I observe that you do not quit my side'" (Christie 1926, 107). Throughout, the novel plays with readers' assumptions about narrative authority, authorizing the narrator not only through Poirot's approval but also by his social status as a doctor. In this case, however, even for the self-aware reader, there is a further temporality built into the book, since it is impossible to appreciate the doubleness of the text unless you already know the solution. In other words, only on a second reading can one read the narrator *against* himself. Two intentions are attributable to many of his comments, but only once one knows that he is the murderer.

This feature is present from very early on in the book, as the following conversation between the narrator and his sister about the possible suicide of Mrs Ferrars illustrates:

> "Ten to one she's left a letter confessing everything."
>
> "She didn't leave a letter of any kind," I said sharply, and not seeing where the admission was going to land me.
>
> "Oh!" said Caroline. "So you *did* inquire about that, did you?" (Christie 1926, 6)

In this passage Caroline, without any evidence, intuitively (and correctly) guesses that the dead woman committed suicide and left some kind of final note. The doctor replies "sharply" – an emotional response that is interpreted by his sister as confirmation of her own opinion. However, once one knows that the doctor is the murderer, and that the letter under discussion (which has been posted to Roger Ackroyd) will incriminate him as the dead woman's blackmailer and cause him to murder its recipient, his "sharpness" is attributable to a very different cause – not uncovering a suicide but covering up his own actions. A further element of misdirection occurs in the comment "not seeing where the admission was going to land me," which appears to have only immediate meaning but also, of course, has greater resonance in light of his future actions. As events unfold, however, and power shifts from murderer to detective, Poirot plays this game of doubled rhetoric back onto the murderer:

> "Not at all," cried Poirot heartily. "You and I, M. le docteur, we investigate this affair side by side. Without you I should be lost." (Christie 1926, 122)

At times this leads him close to revealing that he has seen through the Doctor's many deceptions:

> "Everyone concerned in them has something to hide."
>
> "Have I?" I asked, smiling.
>
> Poirot looked at me attentively.
>
> "I think you have," he said quietly. (Christie 1926, 114)

At every level of plot, character, and dialogue, the novel provides dual intentions. When we turn from the verbal to the visual "text," therefore, it stands to reason that if Hastings as map-maker was not quite to be trusted, this is far more true of Dr Sheppard. Here again the narrator provides two maps at different scales (see Figure 2). The first is a plan of the house, given soon after the finding of the body, when Dr Sheppard tells us, "To make things clear and explain the position, I have appended a rough sketch of the right-hand wing of the house" (Christie 1926, 62). As in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, the first map provides largely irrelevant information regarding the movements of the murderer. In fact, it goes further: it deliberately *mis*leads, encouraging the reader to consider the movements of those in other parts of the house when, in fact, we have been "beside" the murderer all along. It also represents the immediate environs around the house as well as the inside, strongly encouraging the reader to assume, incorrectly, that the murderer came from outside.

The second, more detailed, large-scale map is of the room in which the murder took place. At the point when this map is given, the narrative is concerned with discussion of a chair that the butler asserts was pulled out to face the door in an odd position but which has now been pushed back into place. Poirot asks him,

> "Anything else?"
>
> "Yes, sir, this chair was drawn out a little more."
>
> He indicated a big grandfather chair to the left of the door between it and the window. I append a plan of the room with the chair in question marked with an X.
>
> "Just show me," said Poirot.
>
> The butler drew the chair in question out a good two feet from the wall, turning it so that the seat faced the door.
>
> "*Voila ce qui est curieux*," murmured Poirot. "No one would want to sit in a chair in such a position, I fancy." (Christie 1926, 91–92)

However, in the map provided within the text – around which this dialogue takes place on the page – Dr Sheppard,

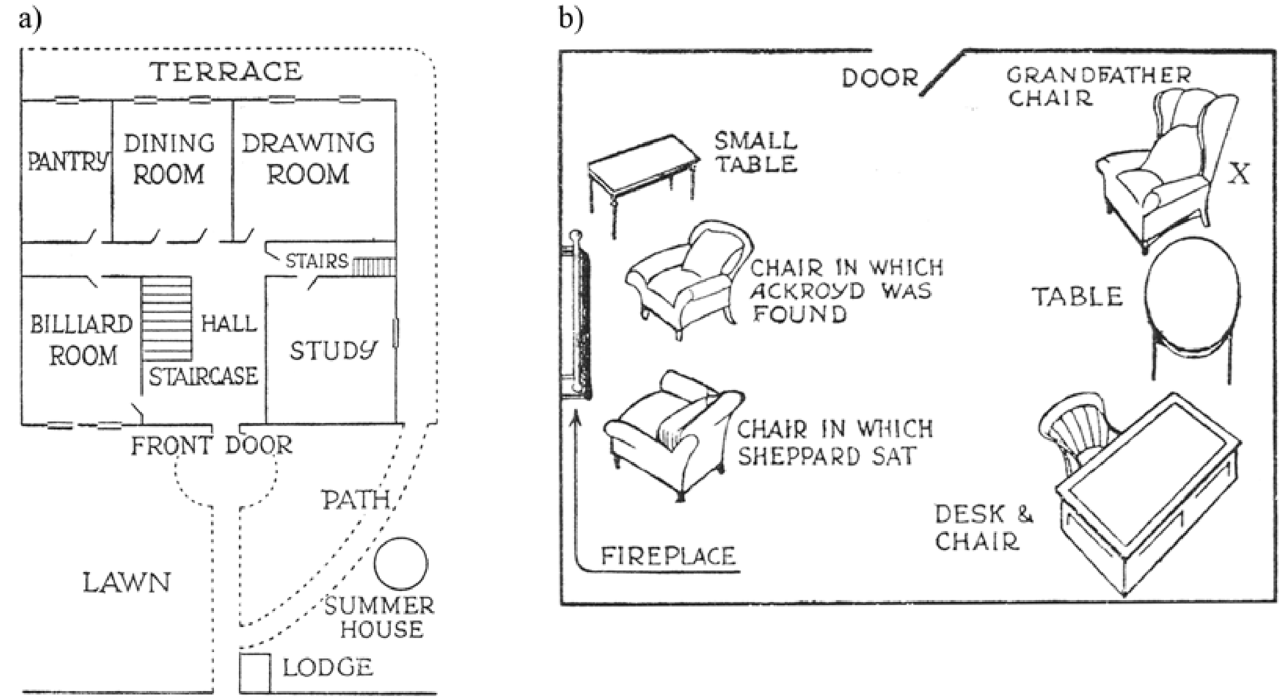

Figure 2. Two first edition maps for *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (Christie 1926: (a) floor plan of house and environs; (b) detailed plan of murder site

as map-maker, presents the chair *pushed back into its place*, a fact to which Poirot later draws the reader's attention:

> "In your manuscript you have drawn a neat little plan of the study. If you had it with you this minute you would see that – the chair being drawn out in the position indicated by Parker – it would stand in a direct line between the door and the window." (Christie 1926, 298)

The movement of the chair by the murderer proves highly significant, as Poirot finally reveals that the table contained a dictaphone and that the murderer used a recording of the dead man's voice to misdetermine the time of death. The map given in the book is thus *actively misleading* for the reader. Again, like the manuscript in which it appears, it partakes of a double game on the part of the murderer, who, while apparently providing innocent and helpful responses to aid Poirot (and the reader), is actually omitting or eliding vital information as a deceptive act of self-protection. The narrator presents the room as he claims to "remember" it, apparently not seeing the significance of the shifted chair, when in fact it was he who moved it in the first place.

As these two examples show, the ability of literary maps to "lie," and our willingness to grant them an authority beyond themselves, is brought into play in Agatha Christie's use of the house plan in two ways. First, their presence leads us to assume that they are useful, not least because they are presented in an expressly "readerly" way. They function *as if* they were tangible clues to which the reader has direct access, while at a narrative level they seem to exist to help us to interpret the text at points where spatial knowledge bears upon character and event. In fact, however – possibly without the reader's even realizing it – they obfuscate rather than illuminate. Our gullibility as readers allows the lure of apparently "empirical" evidence to take us in. A further irony may be involved, however, since this means that the maps ultimately serve as subtle reinforcement of Poirot's own broader working methods: he repeatedly asserts the limits of mere empirical evidence in favour of psychological interpretation of the individual. "I am not one to rely upon the expert procedure," he asserts in *Murder on the Orient Express*. "It is the psychology I seek, not the fingerprint or the cigarette ash" (Christie 1934, 89). It is not the detective but his sidekick who makes the map (or relies upon it); the detective knows "when to go beyond" the map (Muehrcke and Muehrcke 1978, 310).

Conclusions

I hope that this article has begun to suggest that critical cartography provides an extremely helpful means of teasing out the ways in which literary maps work and the complexities of the relationship between reading the map and reading the text when the two are actively compared. At the same time, when analysed closely, the extent to which these maps anticipate such complexities is striking. Despite their superficial marginality and secondary status, literary maps do far more than merely visualize the verbal account – not least because they exist simultaneously as an empirical visualization for the reader and as an object within the fictional world. They can be read both with and against their corresponding "reality." They are powerfully authoritative at multiple levels while at the same time proving deliberately and actively duplicitous. Their validity is undercut by the texts in which they appear, and yet their power remains. They are the slipperiest of "slippery customers."

Notes

1. It is necessary to acknowledge both an earlier article on "maps in literature" (Muehrcke and Muehrcke 1974), which provided a starting point for my own interests, and the work of Christina Ljungberg (see below).
2. Such maps might be termed "fictional maps" or "imaginative maps," but since I am primarily interested in their integrated location as part of a literary work, I am calling them "literary maps."
3. For key studies in the early modern period see Gillies (1984); Helgerson (1992); Brotton (1997); Klein (2001); and Edwards (2006). Work exploring Modernist spaces (particularly that of the city) also exists; see, in particular, Thacker (2003).
4. The relative newness of the field is reflected in a degree of uncertainty as to what it should be called. Edwards (2005–2006, 129) writes of "new cartographic historicists, to coin a rather awkward label for Foucauldian map-readers in the style of Brian Harley."
5. I understand "positivism" in terms of the following definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "the name given generally nowadays to the view, held by Bacon and Hume amongst others (including Comte), that every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically verified or is capable of logical or mathematical proof" (Simpson and Weiner 1989).
6. In "Maps, Knowledge and Power," Harley (1988) identifies 4 codes (iconic, linguistic, numerical, and temporal); Denis Wood and John Fels enlarge this to at least 10 cartographic codes, including "intrasignification" within the map and "extrasignification" outside it (Wood and Fels 1992, 111–13).
7. Harley (2001b, 112) provides clear definitions of external power as "that which was usually centralized, and thus imposed from above" and internal power as "the political effects of what cartographers do when they make maps."
8. This too is in contrast to the prior position. Crampton and Krygier (2006, 23) make it clear that Robinson, in the post-war period, "sought to study an a-political mapping without reference to an outside world." Again, such a shift corresponds to a similar movement in literary studies, from the decontextualized readings of New Criticism to the self-aware contextualization of New Historicism.
9. For an approach to maps as part of a process see Cosgrove (1999).
10. A collection of these responses appeared in *Cartographica* 26:3/4 (Fall/Winter 1989): 89–121.
11. Helgersen (1989, 101) also poses the following provocative question: "The positivist myth of the map has clearly served interests far more significant and far more oppressive than those of cartographers themselves. What interests will be served by the deconstruction of the map?"
12. In a stringent critique, Barbara Belyea identifies a significant difficulty with Harley's account of "external" and "internal" power: "The problem is therefore not 'to understand how power works *through* cartographic discourse,' not '[to assume] the world to be a place where human choice is exercised,' but to see that power is an impersonal, indistinguishable, unsubtractable aspect *of* that discourse" (Belyea 1992, 3).
13. A fuller historical account of forms of literary-critical mapping is likely to be the subject of a later paper.
14. Although Mapping It Out is intended to aid scholars in creating their own maps for academic writing, many of its points are indirectly relevant to my approach here, not least the comment that "a good expository map is an integral and unambiguous part of the author's narrative" (Monmonier 1993, xi).
15. In "Maps, Knowledge and Power" Harley (1988, 278) states, "I view maps as a kind of language (whether this is taken metaphorically or literally is not vital to the argument)."
16. Compare a similar position articulated differently by Ljungberg (2005, 160): "by juxtaposing the two different semiotic systems of writing and cartography, the writer forces her or his readers to switch between the two and thus compare two kinds of representing 'reality.' The process … reveals discrepancies in the construction of realities."
17. Comparing Poirot and Miss Marple as detectives, Makinen (2010, 423) notes that "the Miss Marple stories do not offer the reader such overt clues as card scores, diagrams of a room's layout, or typographically reproduced handwritten notes."
18. The narrator, Hastings, does note the suspicious nature of the absence: "Where *was* Alfred Inglethorp? His absence was strange and inexplicable" (Christie 1921, 49). Because Hastings' judgement cannot be trusted, however, we overlook this.

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