3
Maps and Place

Shortly into Herman Melville's epic, *Moby-Dick*, the narrator remarks that 'it is not down on any map; true places never are', thereby making a sceptical claim about cartography's attempts to represent truth within an Enlightenment tradition.[1] The narrator also implies that resistance to cartography is itself possessed of a truth function. Maps, it seems, only add a layer of falsehood. Reality, it is implicitly claimed, will always elude the reductive processes of mapping (exactly as, in the previous chapter, texts always exceed their visualizations). Further, though, this statement is situated within a work of fiction, where the places, spaces, and maps all bear some connection to an extra-diegetic reality but are not themselves equal to that externality. The true places of Melville's fiction both appear and do not appear on maps. Melville's fiction is, itself, a type of cartographic *representation* of a reality that does not truly exist but that may capture somehow the truth of reality better than a real-world map.

Long subordinated to philosophical discourses about time, such as Bakhtin's chronotope, ideas of place and space have recently resurged in literary criticism as part of a so-called 'spatial turn'.[2] This model of literary analysis, known as geocriticism after the work of Bertrand Westphal and Robert T. Tally, is one that 'explores, seeks, surveys, digs

[1] Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick: An Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Hershel Parker, A Norton Critical Edition, 3rd edn. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2018), p. 54.

[2] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2006), pp. 84–258; Bertrand Westphal, 'Foreword', in *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Robert T. Tally (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. xi–xv (p. xi); Sten Pultz Moslund, 'The Presencing of Place in Literature: Toward an Embodied Topopetic Mode of Reading', in *Geocritical Explorations*, ed. Tally, pp. 29–43 (p. 29).

into, reads, and writes a place'.[3] A 'geocritic would', Tally imagined, 'read these maps' of literary cartography, 'drawing particular attention to the spatial practices involved in literature'—akin to that termed the 'cartographic trope' by David Cosgrove a decade earlier.[4]

Yet maps have always also occupied a difficult space in literary thought. In his *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, Franco Moretti polemically notes that 'there is a very simple question about literary maps: what exactly do they *do*? […] Do maps *add* anything, to our knowledge of literature?'[5] In Moretti's case, such a provocation is used as a straw man to be knocked down. Indeed, Moretti has famously written an entire book on how geographical space informs the literary imagination. This is a world in which 'geography is not an inert container, is not a box where cultural history "happens", but an active force, that pervades the literary field and shapes it in depth'.[6] However, many scholars have nonetheless critiqued the 'problematically positivist, and non-intellectual, practice of using GIS [geographic Information Systems] to map out quantitative data'.[7] 'So naturalized', writes Johanna Drucker, 'are the Google maps and bar charts generated from spread sheets that they pass', often, 'as unquestioned representations of "what is" '.[8] By contrast, others have been far more enthusiastic about how such digital systems could help us visualize and interpret geographical research.[9]

[3] Robert T. Tally, 'On Geocriticism', in *Geocritical Explorations*, ed. Tally, pp. 1–9 (p. 2).

[4] Tally, p. 1; Denis E. Cosgrove, ed., *Mappings* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), p. 3.

[5] Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, p. 35.

[6] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel:* 1800–1900 (London: Verso, 1998), p. 3.

[7] David Cooper and Ian N. Gregory, 'Mapping the English Lake District: A Literary GIS', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36.1 (2011), 89–108 (p. 89).

[8] Johanna Drucker, 'Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display', *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 5.1 (2011) <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html>.

[9] S. Openshaw, 'A View on the GIS Crisis in Geography, or, Using GIS to Put Humpty-Dumpty Back Together Again', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 23.5 (1991), 621–8 <https://doi.org/10.1068/a230621>; S. Openshaw, 'The Truth about Ground Truth', *Transactions in GIS*, 2.1 (1997), 7–24 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9671.1997.tb00002.x>; Laura L. Paterson and Ian N. Gregory, 'Geographical Information Systems and Textual Sources', in *Representations of Poverty and Place* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), pp. 41–60 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93503-4_3>.

In order to understand maps, space, and place in literature, one needs to have some grounding—if you will forgive the pun—in these terminological definitions, many of which have been derived from social scientific disciplines.[10] For instance, ideas of 'place' can be split into 'phenomenological, poststructuralist, identitarian, and environmental' variants.[11] Phenomenological approaches to space, for instance—pioneered by Gaston Bachelard[12]—emphasize how subjective embeddedness in space contributes to its construction. How do domestic arrangements precede and prefigure how we experience the space of the house, for example? The poststructuralist mode takes this even further, emphasizing what Eric Prieto calls 'the indirectness of so much of our knowledge of the world' and the semiotics of spatial representation: how signs of space are read and, in turn, reshape how we read those spaces.[13] Identitarian or activist approaches to space consider how various constructions of identity—feminisms, for example—interact with ideas of space. Which spaces are open or exclusionary to those who fall under various identity types? And finally, environmental versions of spatial thinking note how identity subjectivities are situated within broader paradigms of planetary or interplanetary ecological settings and do not/cannot exist apart from such considerations.

If these ideas of space are complicated, then things are even more involved when we come to literary place. What does it mean to set a novel, for example, in London or New York? These cities, in real life, have distinct topological features and characteristics that, when referenced, are identifiable to literary audiences. But the place that is referenced in a work of fiction is *not* the actual place (whatever 'actual' is taken here to mean). Characteristics and geographies of places are imported but can be altered, warped, re-constituted, and bent to the literary ambition of the work. Peter Ackroyd's London of *Hawksmoor* (1985) is both London and not. Further, places are rooted within times

[10] Eric Prieto, 'Geocriticism, Geopoetics, Geophilosophy, and Beyond', in *Geocritical Explorations*, ed. Tally (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 13–27 (p. 13).

[11] Much of this background is derived from Prieto.

[12] Gaston Bachelard and Maria Jolas, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

[13] Prieto, p. 17.

and are temporally mutable. We somehow understand Shakespeare's Venice both as the actual Venice of the 1590s and a fictionalized, off-reality version of the hydropolis. We know that Calvino's Venice of *Invisible Cities* (1972 [1974 in English]) is a Venice of a different time to Antonio and Shylock's. Yet these are also Venices of *no time* and *no place* as they are not purporting to represent with determinate truth, as might history, the places and spaces of Venice within definitive, actually occurring timeframes.[14]

Due to the rise and prevalence of geographic information systems (GIS), digital humanities practices have often become involved in ideas of mapping with respect to literary and historical texts. The above theoretical considerations are but a few of the issues with which such projects must grapple. Indeed, questions of fictional sense-making here come to the fore. Does it *make sense* to plot the location of Ackroyd's fictional Little St Hugh within a real-world version of London, keyed to the purported time of the novel's setting? What is the merit of mapping the fictional walking routes of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) or plotting the Lake District of the Romantic poets?

Further, do such practices simply contribute further to the idea of the neoliberal digital humanities? Certainly, for Bruno Latour, maps bring with them a homogenizing, flattening, and potentially deadening capacity under a watchful and synthesizing eye: 'the main quality of the new space [of mapping] is not to be "objective" as a naïve definition of realism often claims, but rather to have optical consistency'.[15]

One must also consider, as do Cooper and Gregory, that ideas of literary cartography can be split into two categories: 'writerly mapping, which refers to the ways in which an author explicitly explores the relationship between cartography and textuality; and readerly mapping, which denotes the ways in which an individual literary GIS may recalibrate this relationship between textual and cartographical representations of geographical space through the reading process'.[16]

[14] For more on Venice, see Rodney James Giblett, *Cities and Wetlands: The Return of the Repressed in Nature and Culture*, Environmental Cultures Series (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), p. 86.

[15] Bruno Latour, 'Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together', *Knowledge and Society: Studies in the Sociology of Culture and Present*, 6 (1986), 1–33 (p. 10).

[16] Cooper and Gregory, p. 91.

That is to say that considerations of space, place, and maps in literary studies vary according to the perspective from which one views them.

It has often been presumed, by those outside digital literary studies, that digital mapping approaches are naive and do not consider such philosophical questions. But the answer to the questions above—'what is the merit in mapping the fictional walking routes of *Mrs Dalloway*?', for instance—are complex but well understood by those who work with digital mapping technologies. Put simply: digital mapping approaches allow for deeper understandings of the chronologies in and interpersonal characterisations of literary texts. However, let us turn in more detail to some of the projects that have used such techniques.

Body Language

Despite longstanding literary-critical aversions to studying intentionality, originating in the New Critical idiom and culminating with Foucault's and Barthes's respective claims for the 'death of the author', mapping techniques can provide us with insight into creative processes.[17] This can work bidirectionally. For it is not just the case that knowing that Wordsworth wrote *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July* 13, 1798 when he was a few miles above Tintern Abbey on the thirteenth of July in 1798 tells us something about the compositional process. Instead, in a New Historicist fashion, we can also read the environment out of the text, of 'steep and lofty cliffs' and 'hedge-rows'.[18]

[17] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1987), pp. 142–8; Sean Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); Foucault, 'What Is an Author?'; Jonathan Culler, 'The Closeness of Close Reading', *ADE Bulletin*, 149 (2010), 20–5 <https://doi.org/10.1632/ade.149.20>; Barbara Herrnstein Smith, 'What Was "Close Reading"? A Century of Method in Literary Studies', *The Minnesota Review*, 87 (2016), 57–75 <https://doi.org/10.1215/00265667-3630844>; Jane Gallop, 'The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close Reading', *Profession* (2007), 181–6 <https://doi.org/10.1632/prof.2007.2007.1.181>.

[18] See for instance Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Howard Felperin,

One such project on this relationship between place and Romantic poetry is Matthew Sangster's *Romantic London*. As Sangster describes it, *Romantic London* is 'a research project exploring life and culture in London around the turn of the nineteenth century using Richard Horwood's pioneering *PLAN of the Cities of LONDON and WESTMINSTER the Borough of SOUTHWARK, and PARTS adjoining Shewing every HOUSE* (published between 1792 and 1799)'.[19] The project, however, also overlays several other documents atop historical maps of London:

- *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies: or, Man of Pleasure's Kalender, For the YEAR,* 1788. *Containing the Histories and some curious Anecdotes of the most celebrated Ladies now on the Town, and also many of their Keepers* (1788);
- *Fores's New Guide for Foreigners, containing the most complete and accurate description of the Cities of LONDON and WESTMINSTER, and their Environs, That has yet been offered to the Public*… (1789);
- John Thomas Smith's *Antiquities of London* (1791–1800);
- Thomas Malton's *A Picturesque Tour Through the Cities of London and Westminster, illustrated with the most interesting Views, accurately delineated, and executed in Aquatinta* (1792–1801);
- Richard Phillips's *Modern London* (1804);
- Rudolph Ackermann's *Microcosm of London* (1808–10);
- John B. Papworth's *Select Views of London; with Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Some of the Most Interesting of its Public Buildings* (1816);
- Pierce Egan's *Life in London: Or, The Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorne, Esq. and his Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom, accompanied by Bob Logic, the Oxonian, in Their Rambles and Sprees Through the Metropolis* (1921);
- The London locations of Wordsworth's 'Residence in London' from *The Prelude* (from the 1850 text rather than the 1805 version).

'Making It "Neo": The New Historicism and Renaissance Literature', *Textual Practice*, 1.3 (1987), 262–77 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502368708582017>; Jürgen Pieters, '"I Was Never a New Historicist": Catherine Belsey's "History at the Level of the Signifier"', *Textual Practice*, 24.6 (2010), 1033–44 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502 36X.2010.521671>.

[19] Matthew Sangster, 'Romantic London', 2017 <http://www.romanticlondon.org/> [accessed 24 February 2020].

These documents can, to oversimplify, be decomposed into the categories of sociological, pictorial, and literary overlays. Each source is also contextualized within the project. For example, *Harris's List*—a 'guide' appraising sex workers in the Covent Garden area—is described as 'lewd and frequently misogynistic, romanticising prostitution while largely silencing the women involved'. The maps become particularly interesting, though, when they are brought into conjunction with one another and overlayed with the last of these: Wordsworth's *The Prelude*.

The Prelude was Wordsworth's lifelong project that was supposed to act as a precursor to his never-completed philosophical work, *The Recluse*. It is a long, book-length poem addressed to his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The poem takes, as its subject, the poet's own life and mentally transformative relationship to nature, while explicitly aiming to supersede John Milton in terms of its epic form.[20] Wordsworth revised and expanded *The Prelude* throughout his life, but there are generally four recognized versions: 'Was It For This', a short poem of 1798, the two-part *Prelude* of 1799, the thirteen-book *Prelude* of 1805, and the fourteen-book version from 1850. Book Seven of *The Prelude*s of 1805 and 1850 is concerned with Wordsworth's stay in London. It is the latter of these that Sangster plots.

Critics have already noted the importance of space to Book Seven.[21] In particular, Book Seven is of interest for its critical focus on the crude spectacle of the urban space: the 'painted bloom' and 'false tints' of the city that designate the prostitute in Wordsworth's text.[22] Yet, curiously in light of the ambivalent appraisal of the city—the 'perceptual confusion' that Raymond Williams notes—many of the spots charted by Wordsworth's 'Residence in London' are far from the prostitution centres of *Harris's List*.[23] This may imply that Wordsworth's views of London were skewed away from the city's seedier core,

[20] For more on this, see Jonathan Wordsworth, 'Introduction', in William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: The Four Texts (*1798, 1799, 1805, 1850*)*, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. xxv–xlvii.

[21] François Hugo, 'The City and the Country: Books VII and VIII of Wordsworth's "The Prelude"', *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 69 (1987), 1–14.

[22] Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, bk. 1805 vii.373, 1850 345.

[23] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 151.

despite the zest with which he describes the city (and which often surprises first-time readers). However, several areas mentioned in the poem are coincident with figures in *Harris's List*. In particular, Drury Lane Theatre is a focal epicentre for salacious goings-on, rivalled only by the Union Street and Kings Street areas.

Of his visit to the Drury Lane Theatre, Wordsworth writes in the 1850 *Prelude*:

> Yet was the theatre my dear delight;
> The very gilding, lamps and painted scrolls,
> And all the mean upholstery of the place,
> Wanted not animation, when the tide
> Of pleasure ebbed but to return as fast
> With the ever-shifting figures of the scene,
> Solemn or gay: whether some beauteous dame,
> Advanced in radiance through a deep recess
> Of thick entangled forest, like the moon
> Opening the clouds; or sovereign king, announced
> With flourishing trumpet, came in full-blown state
> Of the world's greatness, winding round with train
> Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards;
> Or captive led in abject weeds, and jingling
> His slender manacles; or romping girl,
> Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling sire,
> A scare-crow pattern of old age dressed up
> In all the tatters of infirmity
> All loosely put together, hobbled in,
> Stumping upon a cane with which he smites,
> From time to time, the solid boards, and makes them
> Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabout
> Of one so overloaded with his years.
> […]
> The matter that detains us now may seem
> To many, neither dignified enough
> […]
> For though I was most passionately moved
> And yielded to all changes of the scene
> With an obsequious promptness, yet the storm
> Passed not beyond the suburbs of the mind;
> Save when realities of act and mien,
> The incarnation of the spirits that move

> In harmony amid the Poet's world,
> Rose to ideal grandeur, or called forth
> By power of contrast, made me recognise,
> As at a glance, the things which I had shaped,
> And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen,
> When, having closed the mighty Shakespeare's page,
> I mused, and thought, and felt, in solitude.[24]

Here we can see a language register around the theatre space that enters the sexual realm. This is undoubtedly central, itself, to Wordsworth's juxtaposition of the vivacious life of the city with the alienation and disconnection of urban existence (in which 'men lived / Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still / Strangers, and knowing not each other's names'). It is also part, though, of what Geraldine Friedman calls Wordsworth's 'redemptive negation of theatricality'.[25] From 'the tide / Of pleasure', the 'beauteous dame' advancing radiantly through 'a deep recess / Of thick entangled forest', and the 'sovereign king, announced / With flourishing trumpet' who 'came in full-blown state', through the 'romping girl' to the autobiographical state of the poet who is 'passionately moved', the language here is replete with implicit *yet celebrated* sexual imagery.

As C. R. Stokes notes, the 'Residency in London' is an interesting piece for its focus on the writer's own corporeality, conditioned by space and place. This is a work 'where Wordsworth's body, and its experience of itself, is entangled in and produced by London', a work in which the writer 'struggles to explicate his own physiological reaction'—a poem of misbehaving bodies, almost akin to a subconscious sexual response.[26] It is an urban world where agency of possession is traded back and forth between the city and the author.[27] Indeed,

[24] Wordsworth, bk. 1850 vii.407–85.

[25] Wordsworth, bk. 1850 vii.118–120; Geraldine Friedman, 'History in the Background of Wordsworth's "Blind Beggar"', *ELH*, 56.1 (1989), 125–48 (p. 125) <https://doi.org/10.2307/2873126>. See also Bruce Mazlish, *A New Science: The Breakdown of Connections and the Birth of Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 71–7.

[26] C. R. Stokes, 'Sign, Sensation and the Body in Wordsworth's "Residence in London"', *European Romantic Review*, 23.2 (2012), 203–23 (pp. 204, 212) <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509585.2012.653281>.

[27] See, for example, John Plotz, *The Crowd: British Literature and Public Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 33.

Wordsworth creates an environment in which, following Stokes, 'the body is bound to the semiotics of the city'.[28] These passages are even more notable when one considers, as does Lawrence Kramer's psychoanalytic reading, that in the 1850 *Prelude*, 'Wordsworth cuts [many of] the passages about vivid pleasure', and particularly blunts the scene involving remembrance of a prostitute.[29] (Although it is notably the case, in both 1805 and 1850 editions that Wordsworth protests a little too much about his poor memory of this figure among 'shameless women': 'and scarcely at this time / do I remember her'/'The mother now / is fading out of memory'.)

This is all to say that there is already a long pedigree of scholarship that considers bodies, sexuality, and theatre as a nexus in Romantic poetry for discourse on and condemnation of popular urban fixation on spectacle. In the loosest of terms, this is what Sangster's map begins to show us. It does not achieve this by direct parallel. Certainly, there are serious historiographical problems aligning a list of sex workers from 1788 with geographical locations mentioned in *The Prelude* of 1850 (or even 1805). It is, as Jonathan Wordsworth notes, even 'far from clear in what order the books of *The Prelude* were composed', and Book Seven presents specific difficulties.[30] Mark L. Reed speculates, though, that Wordsworth made his first visit to London in 1788, which would mean that the description in *The Prelude* refers to 1789–90, since the 1805 edition tells us that ''Twas at least two years / Before this season when I first beheld / That mighty place'.[31] Any precise dating is further complicated by Wordsworth's processes of lifelong revision and poetic distance/reflection. The poetic licence that Wordsworth uses makes it likely that the impressionistic sweep of London that he yields is not composed of any single, 'real' visit.[32] In short, it is conceptually hazardous to compare the map data to Wordsworth's visit.

[28] Stokes, p. 217.

[29] Lawrence Kramer, 'Gender and Sexuality in *The Prelude*: The Question of Book Seven', *ELH*, 54.3 (1987), 619–37 (p. 623) <https://doi.org/10.2307/2873223>.

[30] Jonathan Wordsworth, pp. xxxiii, xxxv.

[31] Wordsworth, bk. 1805 vii.72–4; Mark L. Reed, *Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Early Years*, 1770–1799 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 81n <https://www.degruyter.com/view/title/321976> [accessed 28 March 2020].

[32] John T. Ogden, 'The Power of Distance in Wordsworth's *Prelude*', *PMLA*, 88.2 (1973), 246–59 <https://doi.org/10.2307/461490>.

However, I would argue that maps such as Sangster's bring parataxis to disparate sources, which in turn permit appraisal of socially produced spaces, allowing us to focus on new and existing questions. These might include the aesthetic: does Wordsworth's language register *change* substantially as we approach theatrical venues? They might also broach the political: does taking Sangster's overlay of itinerant traders reveal a language of trade, exchange, and economy—but also of class—in particular London regions? And they might prompt further historical investigation: how had the landscape changed by the time(s) at which Wordsworth wrote and how did the produced space of London influence his poetic practice? Thus, maps, rather than just territories, can be productive sites of questioning encounter for literary history and criticism.

It is this questioning and dialectical process that also informs Wordsworth's poetry. The depiction of London in *The Prelude* is one of unresolved contradictions; a battlefield of sorts. It contrasts various forms of imitative artistic representation, for instance, with reality while the battle rages between the transformational power of the poet's mind and the external assault upon his senses that the city foists. In the same way, digital maps can give us a productive foil against which to pit literary texts, with maps serving as reflexive tools for textual interrogation.

Questions from Grasmere

If Sangster's map takes a set of poetic London coordinates and overlays them atop other historical references, yielding, I have argued, not a precise geography of Wordsworth's tour and its intersection with historical places and events, but rather a suggestive cartography that can refocus our attention on body language, other projects have visited more traditional sites of Romantic poetry. The 'Mapping the Lakes' project, funded by the British Academy and hosted at the University of Lancaster, does, to a certain extent, what it says on the tin: it maps the Lake District of Thomas Gray and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. For me, the project highlights many of the processual advantages of conducting work with geographic information systems.[33]

[33] Cooper and Gregory.

By way of background description: ' "Mapping the Lakes" maps out two textual accounts of journeys through the landscape of the Lake District: Thomas Gray's tour of the region in the autumn of 1769; and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "circumcursion" of the area in August 1802'.[34] The website that resulted from the project 'offers GIS representations of these two accounts of place and suggests ways in which the mapping process opens up spatial thinking about these geo-specific texts. The project also offers general reflections on the intersections of digital cartography and electronic textuality, paving the way for future research on the literature of landscape and environment'.[35]

In order to understand the 'Mapping the Lakes' project, one has first to grasp the aims, objectives, and underlying suppositions of the undertaking. The entire project aimed to 'construct a spatial narrative by inviting the user to move through a series of increasingly experimental and exploratory cartographies'.[36] The project then works towards a synthesis of the two narratives. For, in addition to charting the progression of Gray and Coleridge, the project seeks, in a similar way as did Sangster, to 'move beyond these single-author cartographies by highlighting the potential of layered GIS maps: maps which document the representation of place across multiple texts'. Finally, the project attempts 'to highlight the ways in which GIS technology might be used to map out more abstract, imaginative and emotional responses to landscape and environment'. These three aims bear some closer attention.

A common but erroneous criticism of digital literary projects is that they are poor at generating good, humanistic questions. Indeed, when Ted Underwood introduces *Distant Horizons* as a book about 'recent discoveries in literary history', he immediately notes that the 'word *discovery* may sound odd, because the things that matter in literary history are usually arguments, not discoveries'.[37] That is to say: there seems to be a fundamental mismatch between the expectations of

[34] David Cooper et al., 'Home Page', *Mapping the Lakes* <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/mappingthelakes/index.htm> [accessed 12 March 2020].

[35] Cooper et al., 'Home Page'.

[36] David Cooper et al., 'Aims & Objectives', *Mapping the Lakes* <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/mappingthelakes/GIS%20Aims.htm> [accessed 12 March 2020].

[37] Underwood, *Distant Horizons*, p. ix.

what literary criticism and history *are* and what digital literary studies *do*. Certainly, this is not true of 'Mapping the Lakes', which decomposes its inquiries into writer-specific, geo-specific, and theoretical topics, all of which seem to be valid fields of humanistic inquiry.[38] Examples of questions in the writer-specific domain include 'which places do both Gray and Coleridge say that they visited on their respective excursions through the Lakes?', 'do the writers name any Lake District sites which they do not actually visit?', and 'which versions of the respective texts should be used as base texts for the digital mappings?'[39] When it comes to the geo-specific questions, the project is equally as expansive: 'how do different writers define the (imaginative/actual) boundaries of the English Lake District?', 'do different writers use similar (or contrasting) language in their respective accounts of particular locations?', and 'how do the definitions of region, suggested within the texts, correspond with the spatial boundaries imposed by the National Park Authority in the middle of the twentieth-century?'[40]

If questions are good, though, then surely answers also matter? Indeed, the authors give a set of responses to their prompts in their resulting journal article. For instance, they note that it is clear, in visual form, that Gray's 1769 tour 'moved exclusively through the eastern half of the region' while Coleridge in 1802 'focused on the more vertiginous, western fringes of the Lakes'. The geographic data they have assembled are then recombined with the already known biographical accounts, focusing on the facts that Gray's routes 'unambiguously' document a type of 'spatial mobilities of the tourist', painting a man who aestheticized his travel, carrying an artist's Claude-glass and working within (and beyond) the development of the high Picturesque of the Lake District. By contrast, Coleridge can be confirmed as an inhabitant of the region, demonstrating a 'socio-spatial insiderness'

[38] For more on ideas of decomposition, see West.

[39] David Cooper et al., 'Writer-Specific Aims: Gray & Coleridge', *Mapping the Lakes* <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/mappingthelakes/GIS%20Writer%20Specific%20Aims.htm> [accessed 12 March 2020].

[40] David Cooper et al., 'Geo-Specific Aims', *Mapping the Lakes* <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/mappingthelakes/GIS%20Geo-Specific%20Aims.htm> [accessed 12 March 2020].

that informs his walking tour. The effect of the 'overarching spatial trajectories of the two journeys', as mapped in the 'Mapping the Lakes' project, is to 'reinforce the notion that Gray and Coleridge offer contrasting portraits of spatial outsiderness and insiderness'. A shocking and new observation? Perhaps not. But as the authors put it, 'the critical value of literary GIS resides in its capacity to prompt further spatial thinking about texts'.[41] This is an argument that chimes with my own provocation in this book that digital methods can bring us back to direct textual engagement.

In addition to asking questions across these domains, though, the project also has merit in the outcomes of its actual process. In the first instance, the team were frustrated by the lack of extant digital texts. Furthermore, their textual coding systems proved incredibly time consuming and it became clear to the team that their efforts could not easily grow: 'the process of digitising the primary texts involved typing up, and tagging, the respective accounts by Gray and Coleridge: a process which proved to be extremely time-consuming. Future literary GIS projects will require the development of an alternative method of textual digitisation and encoding'.[42] In addition to creating a digital textual edition here that will be of use to future scholars, this statement recognises one of the fundamental paradoxes of digital abundance thinking. Although I already highlighted this in the preceding chapter on machine-generated text, it bears repeating: while we think of the digital realm as one of digital abundance and overflow, there are hard limits placed on this abundance by the scarcity of labour provision upon which this rests.

This digital abundance thinking is exemplified in the 'Mapping the Lakes' project. For, immediately after noting the intense labour limitations that hindered the project, the team remark upon their hopes for the future expansion of their efforts: 'connected with this, the researcher will need to be able to draw upon a greater range of spatial attributes with which to tag the "data" (in other words, the primary texts). In this pilot project, each place name was given one of three

[41] Cooper and Gregory, pp. 94–8.

[42] David Cooper et al., 'Research Outcomes', *Mapping the Lakes* <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/mappingthelakes/Research%20Outcomes.html> [accessed 12 March 2020].

attributes based upon the supposed actuality of writerly spatial experience: "visited"; "unvisited"; or "unknown". The future literary GIS, however, will need to offer a way of representing the imagined, as well as the actual, experience of place'. How, one might ask, is this to be accomplished? Resourcing for time and labour in the humanities is not set to increase. Certainly, philanthropic grant agencies continue to do much good in the world. However, it seems possible that there will *never be a time* when all materials are available digitally with comprehensively useful semantic content. Even Google, which perhaps has more resources dedicated to this than any other organization in the world, has struggled just to conduct basic digitization of all the world's texts (not least because of various copyright suit hindrances). To believe that there is some future point at which this level of digitization—or, even better, a world of semantically rich digitization—has been possible seems utopian, in the naive sense. Instead, we—and GIS projects—must acknowledge that we must *select* in the present, based on imperfect notions of canon formation, for the underlying reason that we have not sufficient labour capacity to act otherwise.

In turn, though, the shortcuts that we sometimes have to take in terms of labour time can lead to tricky elisions. In the case of 'Mapping the Lakes', this was clear in how the team created a composite version of Coleridge's tour of the Lake District. Following Roger Hudson's editorial strategy, the project conflated Coleridge's notebooks with his letters to Sara Hutchinson, creating a single text.[43] 'The creation of this composite account', however, write the project members, 'fails to acknowledge that intertextual references made in Coleridge's Notebooks (to Thomas West and William Gilpin; or to Salvator Rosa) do not feature in his letters to Sara Hutchinson'. In other words, 'the geo-specificity of these explicit references highlights how Coleridge perceives particular locations as sites of spatial intertextuality. At the same time, such discrepancies raise important questions regarding the ways in which Coleridge's articulation of his geographical experience differs across textual forms and spaces'. Participants in 'Mapping the Lakes' imagine a further, 'more comprehensive project' that 'would have to remain sensitive to these textual

[43] Roger Hudson, ed., *Coleridge Among the Lakes & Mountains* (London: Folio Society, 1991).

overlaps and intersections'. However, the question remains as to who will undertake this involved and challenging work of textual mapping and whether the payoff would be commensurate to the labour invested.

Talking Points

Thus far, I have argued that literary maps shine a spotlight on the difficult intersections between their intra-diegetic settings and the cartographic representations of the world outside. For the next section of this chapter, I would like to turn to a novel that uses cartography in exactly this way and that, thereby, is incomprehensible without an at least mental map of its landscape but also, I would argue, a tabulation of its timetable: Mark Blacklock's 2015 *I'm Jack*.[44] This is another illustration of how, following my provocation, approaches that are traditionally associated with the 'digital humanities'—building geographic coordinate systems and creating tables of (meta)data—can be a way to orient us *back* towards literary texts.

Given the particularly British context of Blacklock's novel and its relative lack of prominence, a small amount of upfront summary and historical explication is necessary. From 1975 to 1980 in Yorkshire, in the north of England, in a high-profile criminal case, Peter Sutcliffe murdered thirteen women in a a serial-killing spree. Seven other women survived Sutcliffe's attempted murders. The British tabloid press—never known for its restraint, balance, or tact—dubbed Sutcliffe the 'Yorkshire Ripper', after the famous Victorian spree-killer of prostitutes 'Jack the Ripper'. Sutcliffe was eventually apprehended and died from COVID-19 in 2020, having spent most his whole-life tariff in Broadmoor, one of three high-security psychiatric hospitals in the UK.

Blacklock's novel is bound up with the case of the Yorkshire Ripper, but it is not primarily concerned with Sutcliffe. Instead, the novel centres on one of the grimmest hoaxes of the police force in British

[44] Portions of this section are derived from Martin Paul Eve, 'Reading Redaction: Symptomatic Metadata, Erasure Poetry, and Mark Blacklock's *I'm Jack*', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 60.3 (2019), 330–41 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00111619.2019.1568960>.

history: that of John Samuel Humble, dubbed 'Wearside Jack'. Between 1978 and 1979, Humble sent three letters to the West Yorkshire police and the newspaper the *Daily Mirror* impersonating 'the ripper' in which he accused the police of incompetence and of being unable to catch him. One of the items that Humble sent to the police was an audiotape in which he 'confessed' to the killings but told the police chief, George Oldfield, that he was unlikely ever to catch him. The letters are signed 'Jack the Ripper'. Most importantly, though, the audiotape that was sent revealed an accent from the Wearside area of Sunderland. This caused the police to divert their investigation away from the West Yorkshire area, even though they had already questioned Sutcliffe himself (who did not have a Wearside accent). In turn, Sutcliffe was then free to murder a further three women, mostly due to Humble's contamination of the investigation. Humble was eventually caught, twenty-five years after the event, in 2006, and handed an eight-year sentence for perverting the course of justice. Humble died in 2019 from heart failure.

Hence, *I'm Jack* is primarily a novel about impersonation. Re-imagining Humble's life leading up to his acts and then recounting the events via letters from prison to a (now-deceased) police chief, George Oldfield, the text itself is named after another, nonfiction book: Peter Kinsley's *I'm Jack: The Police Hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper*.[45] That is, Blacklock's novel shares its title with and usurps the title of another work. This act of archival/factual imitation sits well with the book's theme and formal mode and is itself a type of redaction; the novel quietly redacts a purported factual and historical work in favour of its own fictionalized history. For *I'm Jack* presents its fictionalized narrative through a collage of research material. Reconstructed police documents from Humble's earlier spat with the police, for example, form part of the back narrative of the text. By shadowing Kinsley's book, which is explicitly referenced in Blacklock's novel, *I'm Jack* clarifies the archival game that it is playing.[46] In many ways, of course, this is just another turn from the Hayden White school of postmodern historiography, in which the only difference between fiction and

[45] Peter Kinsley, *I'm Jack: The Police Hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper* (London: Pan, 1980).
[46] Mark Blacklock, *I'm Jack* (London: Granta, 2015), p. 107.

history is the claim to truth.[47] In another sense, though, there is a more sophisticated take at play here, since Blacklock's novel subtly but explicitly signposts its fictionality, never claiming the truth that history possesses, yet maintaining an accuracy throughout. Blacklock's work is not full of showy self-reflexive gimmicks, but is rather concerned with how narrative can emerge from the formal mechanism of documentary parataxis.

What does *I'm Jack* mean, though, to someone who has no access to the sonographic map of British accents? Blacklock himself provides some clues to a reader of the type of vocalization that a Wearside accent implies in the novel's opening pages. He there yields a stream-of-consciousness narrative in a transcription of the dialect: 'diesel greeny-bluey sheen on top uv the brown churn all flowin out tu sea all getting washed down the wiah unspoolin in the watta all the guts uv it innards out all the fish guts on the harbar the herrin guts the wifies guttin them brown loops uv it the wyrms wunda iv thes lampreys theh used tu eat them in auden days' etc.[48] Certainly this gives the reader an idea of what is meant by a Wearside accent, although the text is somewhat cryptic in refusing to say, outright, that this is a representation of that accent.

Additionally, Blacklock's use of accent is here tied to the literary precedent of Russell Hoban's seminal 1980 science fiction novel, *Riddley Walker*. That text is written entirely in a phonetic style that bears close resemblance to Blacklock's: 'on my naming day when I come 12 I gone front spear and kilt a wyld boar he parbly ben the las wyld pig on the Bundel Downs any how there hadnt ben none for a long time befor him nor I aint looking to see none agen'.[49] The difference here is that Hoban's novel is set in the distant future in Kent, after an unspecified nuclear apocalypse, whereas Blacklock's work is an epistolary historical fiction of sorts in the North East of England. Yet Hoban's future world is also regressed; its temporality is one where the time yet to come resembles the Iron Age. The novelistic world of *Riddley Walker* is, therefore, also mirrored in its linguistic regression to

[47] Hayden White, *Metahistory: Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), pp. 93–7.

[48] Blacklock, p. 2.

[49] Russell Hoban, *Riddley Walker* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), p. 1.

a transcription of a phonocentric setup where the text records the spoken dialect of the characters. In mimicking *Riddley Walker*, however, the temporality of *I'm Jack* is also affected. In Blacklock's novel, accents are not merely about place but also about time.

Yet what does it mean for the novel's plot that one can identify how an accent sounds, but perhaps not where it is placed? Initiatives such as those led by Ruth Ahnert at the Centre for Early Modern Mapping, News and Networks at Queen Mary, University of London, have done much concerning the digital visualization of 'social networks' in the early modern period, as part of what they call 'the network turn'.[50] However, the importance of space and networks to the contemporary epistolary novel remains largely uncharted.

Of course, in the case of *I'm Jack*, this narrative plotting is complicated because it is also a historical plotting; the plot points of the novel are re-imaginations of real events. Indeed, it would be tough and probably not very interesting to plot the actual metadata of the letters that Blacklock has fabricated since they almost all come from two prisons and are addressed to a single deceased man. We can plot, though, the various geometries and points of the address and time signatures of the events in the novel to more clearly see why Humble's hoax was so powerful.

The first thing to unearth here is the spatial metadata from Humble's letters, which we can make clearer with the aid of digital mapping. Ironically, these are the only addresses that do not appear in Blacklock's novelization. This is because while the prison letters contain a return address in *I'm Jack*, the original hoax letters are presented as though documentary items, in isolation and without a source or destination. In fact, apart from prison and hospital addresses, the only property listed is '26 Hawarden Crescent, Sunderland' (perhaps a joke on the part of the author, a reference to a childhood or family member's home?) In any case, when we plot Sunderland (where Humble was based) as the source of letters and tapes to the central police station in Leeds, as well as the *Daily Mirror*'s offices in Manchester,

[50] For more, see Ruth Ahnert et al., *The Network Turn: Changing Perspectives in the Humanities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108866804>.

Figure 3.1 Letters and tape metadata coordination of 'Wearside Jack'. The shaded polygon represents the area in which Peter Sutcliffe was operating. Letters were sent by Humble to the two circles within the area of Sutcliffe's crimes from Sunderland. The erroneous reverse triangulation threw detectives off the case of the Yorkshire Ripper, allowing him to roam free. Map generated with Neatline. Map data copyright OpenStreetMap contributors 2015. Used under a CC BY-SA License. Image shared under CC BY-SA License.

alongside a polygonal mapping of the area in which Sutcliffe's murders were committed, it is clear why the metadata was so damaging.

Indeed, we can see in Figure 3.1 why it was such a diversion for the police and for the *Daily Mirror* to receive a letter from Sunderland. Both of the entities to which the letters were sent fall within the 'Ripper's' actual area of operation, the shaded polygon. By contrast, the letters were sent from a triangulated point some hundred miles or

so north. Moreover, the voice evidence on the tape also pointed towards the Wearside area.

If the letter and tape metadata proved so crucial in terms of *place*, they were also indispensable, though, in terms of timing—a narrative element that can be better understood through a datafication method of *tabulation*. Indeed, Keith Brannen has assembled a comprehensively (some might say 'fanatically'[51]) detailed web resource about the Sutcliffe case that provides the chronological background metadata surrounding the Wearside Jack hoax.[52] The results of this, interspersed with historically accurate metadata from *I'm Jack*, can be seen in Table 3.1. In the table, lines in **bold** represent events pertaining to the hoaxer. Additional sources, beyond Brannen's site, are indicated within the table.

The crucial timings that are not wholly clear (or may be entirely fictional) are Humble's nightclub spat and his subsequent assault. I have been unable to pinpoint these outside of Blacklock's novel. Yet again, though, the chronological metadata alone here proves instructive in reading and understanding the geographic narrative flow both of history and of the novel. The most crucial interview with Sutcliffe took place on 1979-07-29 in which officers Greenwood and Laptew strongly suspected that they might be talking to the 'Ripper'. They passed on their recommendation for further investigation but this took some time to reach senior officers because of a substantial administrative backlog. By the time it had reached senior officers, the report entitled 'Murders And Assaults Upon Women In The North Of England' had been issued, which explicitly listed a criterion of a Geordie (Newcastle) accent as a necessary prerequisite for a suspect, based on Humble's tape, sent on 1979-06-17. The time signatures of

[51] Although Blacklock's parody of the conspiracy theorist Noel O'Gara (as 'Norris Downing' in *I'm Jack*) is more on the 'fanatical' side. Indeed, a search for Google Groups conversations on the topic will prove instructive in this regard. Furthermore, the letters that Humble writes to 'Norris Downing' are transcribed from a conspiracy theory posted on O'Gara's website. Norris O'Gara, 'John Humble', *THE REAL YORKSHIRE RIPPER STORY*, 2011 <http://www.yorkshireripper.com/2011/12/29/john-humble/> [accessed 28 December 2015].

[52] Keith Brannen, 'POLICE INTERVIEWS', *The Yorkshire Ripper*, 2015 <http://www.execulink.com/~kbrannen/intervws.htm> [accessed 28 December 2015].

Table 3.1 A chronological timeline of the investigation into John Samuel Humble and Peter Sutcliffe. Author's own.

Date (YYYY-MM-DD)	Actor(s)	Event
1977-11-02	Howard (Police), L. Smith (Police), Sutcliffe	Interview #1
1977-11-08	Police, Sutcliffe	Interview #2
1978-03-08	**Humble, Oldfield (Police)**	**Letter #1**
1978-03-13	**Humble, *Daily Mirror***	**Letter #2**
1978-08-13	P. Smith (Police), Sutcliffe	Interview #3
1978-11-23	P. Smith (Police), Sutcliffe	Interview #4
1979-03-23	**Humble, Oldfield (Police)**	**Letter #3**
1979-06-17	**Humble, Oldfield (Police)**	**Tape**
1979-07-29	Greenwood (Police), Laptew (Police), Sutcliffe	Interview #5
1979-09-13	**Police**	**Report issued: 'Murders And Assaults Upon Women In The North Of England', including elimination criterion: '(e) If his accent is dissimilar to a North Eastern (Geordie) accent'.**
1979-10-23	Police, Sutcliffe	Interview #6
1980-01-13	Police, Sutcliffe	Interview #7
1980-01-30	Police, Sutcliffe	Interview #8

Continued

Table 3.1 *Continued*

Date (YYYY-MM-DD)	Actor(s)	Event
1980-02-07	Police, Sutcliffe	Interview #9
1991	**Police, Humble**	**Humble arrested for being drunk and disorderly. Saliva swab (and DNA) stored on file.**[a]
2005-10-19/20	**Police, Humble**	**Arrest/Interview/Charge**[b]

[a] Jeremy Armstrong and Lucy Thornton, 'Yorkshire Ripper Hoaxer Wearside Jack Speaks for First Time about "prank" That Derailed Serial Killer Investigation', *Daily Mirror*, 14 July 2013 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/yorkshire-ripper-hoaxer-wearside-jack-2053906> [accessed 30 December 2015].

[b] David Bruce, '"I'M JACK" HOAX – MAN CHARGED', *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 20 October 2005 <http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/latest-news/top-stories/i-m-jack-hoax-man-charged-1-2135152> [accessed 28 December 2015]; Blacklock, p. 12.

the events, as well as the geographical markers, constitute important metadata for the narrative.

What begins to emerge from this plotting of temporal and spatial metadata in this text, using methods that are more usually seen in data-driven approaches, is that the unavailability of content provides an ideal space for fictional narrative. As with all geo-historical fiction, it is necessary for there to be gaps in the record that can be filled with imagined content. The metadata surrounding events provides the chronology, while the narrative provides the emplotment/history. From this, we can deduce, though, that *I'm Jack* is a (hi)story about how what is said can be, in some ways, less important than how it is said and whence it is communicated. Understanding this novel requires a comprehension of accent and sound, history and emplotment, and space and literary geography; all aspects with which a digital approach to mapping and a datafying tabulation can assist us.

Literary Geography

'What', asks Moretti, 'do literary maps allow us to see?' He provides, to his own rhetorical foil, two answers that are worth quoting in full:

> First, they highlight the *ortgebunden*, place-bound nature of literary forms: each of them with its peculiar geometry, its boundaries, its spatial taboos and favorite routes. And then, maps bring to light the internal logic of narrative: the semiotic domain around which a plot coalesces and self-organizes. Literary form appears thus as the result of two conflicting, and equally significant forces: one working from the outside, and one from the inside. It is the usual, and at bottom the only real issue of literary history: society, rhetoric, and their interaction.[53]

Without some understanding of spatiality and literary geography, we have an impoverished view of what literature represents. Literary texts are set in representations of places and the logic of plot involves encounters in spaces.

So far, so obvious, even if it is a point worth restating. However, a final aspect must here be addressed: what is the role of computation in all of this? Yes, although there is debate and the 'reuse' of maps 'by critics tends to be confirmatory rather than revelatory', we can see that there might be merit in plotting literary maps in order to abet our understandings.[54] Why, though, should this distinctly be the purview of a digital humanities approach to literary studies and mapping, using computers?

The short answer is that it need not be. It is perfectly possible to conduct literary mapping exercises without the aid of a computer, as for centuries maps were drawn and produced. However, the expansion of access that computerized mapping software has brought has greatly reduced the effort involved in producing such artefacts. In addition, the existence of openly licensed global, accurate, and even historical maps provides literary cartographers with lowered barriers to geographic participation.

At the same time, this expanded accessibility brings with it fresh dangers. As more venture into the territory of literary mapping there

[53] Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel*, p. 5. That said, Stefanie Markovits has questioned the extent to which the generic place-boundness is precisely not a feature of the Victorian verse-novel. Stefanie Markovits, *The Victorian Verse-Novel: Aspiring to Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 167.

[54] Ray Davis, 'Graphs, Maps, Trees/Sets Hamper Grasp', in *Reading* Graphs, Maps and Trees*: Responses to Franco Moretti*, ed. Jonathan Goodwin and John Holbo (Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2011), pp. 15–30 (p. 16).

is the ever-present risk of thinking that mere plotting will yield narrative insight, when all it may actually do is to inscribe further scars on the fictional text. In fact, with the wide availability of digital maps, seemingly ready-made for literary overlay, the importance of questioning the interlink between the literary representation and the world it purportedly represents is greater than ever. Perhaps more than anything, though, digital mapping approaches demonstrate to us the problems in transposing literary texts, which use their space as narrative structuration devices, onto maps that purport to represent an extra-textual reality. Like all good humanistic inquiry, digital mapping does not simply produce positivistic answers to scientistically framed questions. Because the two—maps and reality, or mapping questions and cartographic answers—do not piece together neatly like a jigsaw. They rather sit in a relationship of mutual tension and productive questioning, like X-shaped pieces, with W-shaped holes.[55]

[55] The situation faced at the end of Georges Perec, *Life a User's Manual*, trans. David Bellos (London: Harvill, 1996), p. 497.