

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

The More-Than-Representational Lives of Literary Maps

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'Non-representational geography' was launched by Nigel Thrift as an umbrella term implying dissatisfaction with the dominant methodological implementation of cultural geographies, the lack of methodological innovativeness and methodological conservatism (see Thrift 2000; 2007). Instead of spatial representations, Thrift argued, geographers should pay attention to the liveliness and performativity of space, with new creative methodologies enabling a grasp of the basic essence of the (post)modern world, 'the flow of events' and 'spaces of the now'. Basing his criticism on post-structuralist theories, Thrift argued that space is not a stable social construction, but complicated, multidimensional and constantly in motion. According to Anderson and Harrison (2010: 15) 'non-representational theory may be characterised by an attention to being-in and being-of relation'.

But how can we even speak about a thing that goes beyond presenting? Although critical of textual methodologies, and calling for alternative approaches, non-representational theories do not refer to the anti-representationality of space. The concept was criticized widely simply because it was misleading; 'maybe the name was a mistake' suggest Anderson and Harrison (2010: 19). Ever since Hayden Lorimer's (2005) suggestion to replace Thrift's concept 'non-

representational' with the concept of 'more-than-representational' has been followed by many geographers.

Approaching literary texts as more than representational has been applied, for instance, by Sheila Hones (2008), according to whom, instead of 'representing' space, text is 'happening' in a performative manner as a geographical event, with the reading experience a spatial event (Hones 2008). Hones also discusses the methodological potential of various approaches in literary geography and proposes that text-as-event provides 'a way of understanding and coping with differences in approach across the field as a whole' (1303). By following the theoretical conceptualization of Hones, Aijaz (2018) suggests that 'text-as-event' could be utilised as a methodological tool for going 'beyond representationalism to perceive the co-constitutive nature of the word and the world. The text does not necessarily *re-present* a world discursively or conceal a world behind it but creates a world in front of it' (151).

A crucial part of geographical discourse, map studies also embraced the more-than-representational approach. Envisioning the importance of going beyond the idea of representation in the analysis of the construction of spatial thinking, map scholars started to think that to 'question how a map performs is to ask the same question of what it is' (Gerlach 2014: 24).

Nonetheless, long before the establishment of the more-than-representational approach, cartographic representation was interrogated by J.B. Harley (1989), who pointed out the need to rethink the nature of maps, and also the assumed link between reality and representation. For Harley, maps are texts to deconstruct, able to build order into the world and strictly related to the construction of power. He argued that perceiving maps through deconstructive methodologies is a step towards redefining the social status of cartographic presentations. These insights invited scholars to question the rhetoric of representation, but above all opened the field of cartography to new debates on the ontology of maps.

In this regard, and preparing room for more-than-representational approaches, Denis Cosgrove edited a collection of essays entitled *Mappings* (1999), paying attention to maps as processes rather than finished objects. A few years later, John Pickles (2004) introduced 'post-representational cartography' (68) as a way of looking at maps as inscriptions which produce social relations and must be read with political intent.¹ In 2007, and drawing from previous theorisations, Kitchin and Dodge theorised what is now recognised as the post-representational approach to maps, conceiving of 'maps as always mappings' (335), ontogenetic and always emerging in process.

The new attention towards maps as processes and the need to develop new theoretical (and philosophical) tools to understand them produced an interesting shift: the overcoming of the critical perspective on maps. Maps and mappings were no longer read and conceived only as imbued with power and producing political implications. Indeed, the rising interest in the performativity of maps included also map art (Cosgrove 2006), emotions and cartography (Craine and Aitken 2009, Caquard and Griffin 2018), cognitive mappings (Caquard 2015), playful mapping (Willmott et al. 2016) and a new attention to the relationship between maps and narratives (Caquard 2013).

In this productive framework, the more-than representational-approach can play a crucial role in guiding the understanding of the relationship between maps and literature, a field of study that has been explored in the last thirty years by both literary scholars and geographers. Next, we will take a more-than-representational approach to look at ‘reader-generated mappings’, maps created by readers after/during reading a literary text, which processual definition was first given by Cooper and Priestnall (2011: 250). Drawing on Cooper and Priestnall’s paper, we would like to present the more-than-representational lives of literary maps. Moreover, drawing on Del Casino and Hanna’s invitation (2005) to go beyond the representation/practice binary, we propose to consider how maps of literature can materially be more than representational, without losing the conceptual possibilities of conceiving them as representation and practice at the same time.

First, literary maps link the geographies of the text and the geographies of the map, building connections between different realms and ways of seeing the world. By bridging the geographies of the literary text and of verbo-visual cartographic language, the literary map arranges a processual relationship between different spatial representations, activating and questioning their dialogues with the geographies of the world.

Literary maps guide a spatial reading of the text, inviting readers to conceive literary narrations as geographical places that can be enacted with maps; the reading experience mediated by the cartographic language is a spatial event (Hones 2008), and literary maps lead readers towards a geographical imagination, or imagining geographically. Furthermore, literary maps embody the relationships between the geographies of the reader and the geographies of the text. In terms of literary theory, literary maps disclose the place-bound nature of literary forms (Moretti 1998), while setting up new perspectives on the geographies in and of the text (Brosseau 1995).

Literary maps arouse emotions. Steedman’s (1995) psychoanalytical study of polar literary maps illustrates how cartographic representations can function as cognitive and emotional ‘tools’ for the development of children’s subjectivity and self-consciousness. The literary maps of polar regions do not just represent ‘cold’, but also teach children about ‘the coldness of life’ at an emotional level.

Literary maps tell stories; they are not only tools that re-tell a literary text by focusing on its spatial configuration, but ways to express a reading experience, a gaze on the world: a new story. Beyond simply referring, literary maps primarily *are* and *do*. They are expressions (more than just information and communication) and they enable the familiar to be conceived and experienced differently (Newell 2017).

Literary maps link literary narratives to other, non-literary social functions and practices. For example, literary maps can be used for commercial purposes in tourism marketing and place promotion, either with the help of work conducted by contemporary digital cartographies (Donaldson, Gregory and Murrieta-Flores 2015), or map-like artistic visualizations created by tourism actors themselves (see Ridanpää 2011; 2019). Mapping literature may thus, in a highly pragmatic manner, build a bridge between stories and the realm of economics, creating new contextual layers and functionalities for literary narratives.

After this brief exploration of literary maps as always mappings, we can state that, first and foremost, literary maps *contest* and *question*. They contest the stereotypical conception of maps as the symbolic depiction and reduction of material elements in space; they question the reality/representation binary, highlighting the generative power of the interrelation of various kinds of spatial languages; finally, they contest the meaning/materiality divide by disclosing that maps are not inert containers of meanings, but material devices able to create meaning. Literary mapping has a far-reaching functional role in terms of how mapping is seen as a methodological tool within the field of geographical studies. By encouraging an ongoing reflection on their capacity to express, tell and create, literary maps invite readers and scholars to question what maps are.

Notes

¹ For Pickles, a ‘representational thought’ coincides with objectivism (see Rossetto’s ‘ruminations’ on post-representational cartography, 2016), thus he suggested using the prefix ‘post’ to rethink the role of maps.

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