

HUMANISTIC GEOGRAPHY AND LITERARY TEXT: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

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Abstract This paper focuses on the problems and possibilities of an interdisciplinary approach to literature located at the intersection of humanistic geography and literary criticism. Beginning with a review of the development of interest among humanistic geographers in the possibilities of literary text as geographical evidence, it goes on to discuss some of the difficulties involved in such an approach to literature. This discussion is organized according to five major areas of concern: the problems of interdisciplinary study in general, the selection of texts and the problematic 'extraction' of landscape descriptions, the question of the relationship of texts to the 'real world', the question of narrative voices and readers, and the assumed focus of geographical/literary study. The paper then goes on to reconsider these five problem areas in the light of possible responses and alternative approaches. It concludes with the explication of one of the suggested alternative approaches to the interdisciplinary use of literature--the study of figurative language as geographical evidence.

Literature and humanistic geography

The development of an interest among geographers in the possibilities of literature as a source of geographical evidence has been one aspect of the growth, since the early 1960s, of what is now generally known as 'humanistic geography.' This is a geographical approach distinguished by its emphases on subjectivity, the individual experience of environment, environmental perception, concepts such as 'landscape' and 'region,' and issues of value and meaning. This list is itself suggestive of a general philosophy, but in fact the essence of humanistic geography is most easily defined by reference to its beginnings as a reaction against a positivist

human geography grounded in the aims and methods of the natural sciences. (Daniels, 1985; Johnston, 1986).

Humanistic geographers countered the empirical generalizations of the positivists with a renewed emphasis on people and their personal experiences of the world. Invoking a definition of geography that predated the more consciously scientific approach, they reinvented geography as a "study of the earth as the home of people." (Tuan, 1991). The humanistic approach insisted that geography should not become separated from ordinary lived-experience, and that the creativity of individual people in their relationship with the world around them should be recognized. Individual geographers working within this tradition understandably relied to differing extents on the philosophical traditions of phenomenology, idealism, existentialism and pragmatism, and developed their arguments by reference to the intellectual and moral concerns of structuralism and marxism. (Johnston, 1986).

The investigation of the human experience and interpretation of space and place is central to interests of humanistic geography. Making the experience of the environment the center of its interests, this approach naturally comes to define place in terms of its relationship to time, and to regard location as setting. Here is an approach which emphasizes place as the locus of human experience and which values subjectivity; it is easy to see how it would develop an interest in the possibilities of literary evidence. In fact, it is possible to regard the literary use of the environment as an articulation of the central concerns of the humanistic geographer: within literary text place is setting, the world is subjectively experienced and described, and the study of our relationship with the environment develops a moral dimension. For the geographer, literary geography also functions in the study of the historical development of place and region, when literary descriptions become both an acceptable source of

evidence, and a model of geographical writing. Finally, 'geography in literature' provides the humanistic geographer with yet another form of evidence in its role as a shaping force in the development of popular geographical ideas--in promoting a concept of region, for example, or in changing the aesthetics of landscape, or in the development of a sense of national identity.

The relationship between humanistic geographers and literary text is, then, a potentially close one. The extent to which literature has in fact been used by geographers involved in the humanistic reaction to scientific geography has been clearly shown in the review essay "Geography and literature," by D.C.D. Pocock, published in the journal Progress in Human Geography in 1988. As the title of the essay--and the fact that it is presented under the general heading "Interface"--suggests, Pocock is concerned with more than just the geographical use of literature. The six-page list of references includes works by literary critics as well as geographers, and by scholars working in explicitly interdisciplinary fields, such as American Studies. The interdisciplinary possibilities of the geography-literature interface are further suggested by reference to eclectic essay collections, such as the aptly named Geography and literature: a meeting of the disciplines. (Pocock, 1988). Geographers, then, see the relationship of geography and literature as one with potential in the study of both traditions; it is a connection which ought to work both ways.

Interdisciplinary studies in geography and literature

Despite the fact that the geography-literature interface could work in at least two directions, it is clear that as a disciplinary rather than an individual interest the possibilities of the study of literature from a geographical perspective have been most explicitly and widely acknowledged within the geographical tradition. With a few exceptions, the

interface is at present effectively working in one direction only. This paper (although written by a non-geographer) therefore locates itself within the geographical tradition and concentrates primarily on the problems and possibilities inherent in the geographical use of literary text as evidence. It consequently focuses on the cross-disciplinary possibilities of the interface from within the context of work done by geographers, considering the uses of literature as geographical evidence and the contributions of geographers to the study of literature.

Not surprisingly, geographical interest in literature has generally been focused on landscape description. This interest can be divided among three main subject areas: the landscape which is used as setting, the way that setting is described, and the real-world setting of the author. Literary evidence, then, is made up of content, modes of description, and authorial experience. The three are obviously connected. In focusing on content, the geographer takes a description as a picture of reality. These 'landscapes in literature' provide the geographer with descriptions of past and present places which can be used as evidence and as bases for comparative study. In this approach, the author is ignored and the textual surface acts like the transparent surface of a clean window. When the focus shifts away from the landscape described and towards the description, the author becomes more important--as a representative person. The author is not ignored, but is treated as typical. The textual surface now functions as a direct reflection of the experience of this person in place. Reading this reflection, geographers can analyze the human experience of the environment, and can also study the effects of modes of description and the effects of the descriptions themselves. Changing descriptions of particular places might, therefore, reflect and influence a changing place aesthetic. When the focus of the study shifts towards the author, the textual surface is still treated like a reflection but in this case it is showing us an exceptional, not a

representative, experience. The record of a particularly gifted response to the physical world can thus have an inspirational effect, heightening the sensitivity of the reader and acting as a model for geographical writing. In this last formulation, the experience recorded is often treated as if it were not time-specific.

These three conventional geographical approaches to literary text--focusing on content, description and describer--can be alternatively formulated as reflecting two main readings of text. In the first, text is a direct articulation of--and thus a gateway into--the real world, the author's world, or the author's experience. In the second, text is treated as a real world influence on readers' perceptions--they learn about places, they develop landscape aesthetics, their 'landscape consciousness' is raised. Both of these ways of reading text look through it or past it at something else.

In general, the geographer working with literary text focuses on content and effect. Yi-Fu Tuan, for example, locates the geographical relevance of text in its function as revelation of experience, as record of cultural readings of the environment, and as model of geographical writing. (Tuan, 1978). D.C.D. Pocock, in the review essay mentioned above, makes explicit the conventional geographical emphasis on the novel (as opposed to other forms of prose writing, poetry or drama), on observed landscapes, and on the extraction of sustained passages of landscape description. He emphasizes the ways in which literary description mirrors and influences our experiences of the physical world, and he emphasizes the universal or generally human rather than the historically specific or individual.

In the conclusion to his essay on the interface between geography and literature, Pocock distinguishes between the "geographer qua geographer" and the geographer as literary critic or as artist. (Pocock, 1988: 96). Taking these three possible roles for geographers as a starting point, we can summarize the cross-disciplinary possibilities of the geography-

literature interface from the geographical point of view as follows. Firstly, there are the contributions which geographers can make in their own fields and in others--to geographical studies, to literary studies, and to literature itself. Thus we have Pocock's geographers qua geographers, as critics and as writers. Secondly, there are the contributions which a sense of geography can make, on the one hand to literature itself, and on the other hand to literary scholarship. Thirdly, there is the influence of the geographical tradition--the discipline itself--upon scholarship in other fields.

The geographer qua geographer we have considered above. As literary critics, geographers see themselves making contributions to the study of a particular author, in the elucidation of the connections between his or her real and remembered world and use of setting. There is also the possibility that geographical evidence can be used in a study of environmental influences on particular authors and literary traditions, although Pocock seems to regard this as old-fashioned. (Pocock, 1988: 91). As artists, geographers work in two ways. On the one hand, there has been speculation that the best sort of geographical writing could achieve the status of literature (Johnston, 1986: 76); on the other hand, there are geographers who have worked in traditional literary genres, such as poetry or the short story.

A geographical awareness can contribute both to literary creation and to literary scholarship. The former is obvious, but it is worth noting that an awareness of geography (and especially historical geography) has the potential to influence the focus and inclusiveness of traditions of literary scholarship, as for example when a raising of the geographical consciousness leads a literary critic to reevaluate the geo-political bases of a literary canon (Bredahl, 1989).

Finally, it is worth noting that the geography-literature interface has not, in fact, been entirely unidirectional. Geographical thought and methodology has clearly had an effect on scholarship formally placed within other disciplines. A glance through the bibliographies of several important works in literary and area studies which have a spatial or geographical orientation will indicate the breadth of this connection. In some cases, the influence is central: Robert Lawson-Peebles, for example, in the prologue to his book Landscape and written expression in pre-revolutionary America specifically defines his study as an attempt to harness textual analysis and perceptual geography (Lawson-Peebles, 1988).

Geography and literature: problems

A: Being interdisciplinary

Clearly, one of the biggest obstacles to interdisciplinary study is the difficulty of disciplines developing a mutual awareness. In the case of the geography-literature interface the barriers are formidable, including as they do the bulk of reading in both traditions, the apparent or initial inaccessibility of much of the relevant work in one discipline to scholars working in the other, and the separations of professional organization, including discipline-based journals, publications and conferences. The problem lies not just in the accessibility of material and the problems of professional contact; it also involves the issue of forum. What gets published or presented where, by whom and to whom? What can writers assume that their audience knows about literary criticism and about geography? The issue is further complicated by the fact that although the geography-literature interface is generally characterized as being binary in character, in fact the nexus of intersecting interests is more complex than this. Even the geography-literature connection is not simple: does it refer only to the use of literary text by geographers, and to geographers who are

also creative writers? Sometimes the binary relationship seems to be thus defined, as literature to geography. At other times, however, it is defined differently, referring to a meeting of two disciplines, literary study and geography, sharing subject matter. The interface now involves the texts themselves and two disciplines. Add to this reading the relevant work published in areas such as American Studies and the difficulties of attaining an overall view of what's going on in the field become obvious.

The interface between geography and literature does not, in fact, appear at present to be truly interdisciplinary in any but a few rare manifestations--or perhaps truly interdisciplinary geographical/literary work is usually called something else (coming under the heading of 'area studies,' for example). In his consideration of the ways in which the study of geography and of literature can overlap, Pocock talks in terms of 'reciprocity' and direction. This reflects the assumption that the interface works as a process of borrowing and lending between disciplines, rather than as an interdisciplinary enterprise in itself. This inevitably exacerbates the problem of mutual awareness and cross-disciplinary access.

The question of whether the geography-literature connection should be conceived of as interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary is important, and the organizational dispersion of relevant work is trying, but a more intractable problem than either of these is the issue of the need for disciplinary sophistication in two quite distinct traditions. Any work which involves two forms of scholarship demands caution, as the discussion of interdisciplinary work in literary studies and art history has made clear (Alpers and Alpers, 1972). Within geography, too, there have been doubts cast on the sophistication of readings which humanistic geographers have made of literature. In his essay on humanistic geography for the 1985 collection The Future of Geography, for example, Stephen Daniels takes a

strongly critical view, claiming that few humanistic geographers writing about literature “have been reading literature at all” (Daniels, 1985: 149). According to Daniels, the fact that “there is little or no recognition of . . . literary conventions” in the work of geographers renders their readings invalid. Certainly, geographical studies which ‘use’ literature can at times seem frustratingly superficial to a literary scholar; the reverse, no doubt, is also true, and scholars trained in literary criticism who ‘use’ geographical concepts in their work are also open to the charge of oversimplification.

B: Choosing what to read

There is an approach to literary text as geographical source that treats texts like dishes on a buffet table; ‘literature’ is the understood subject matter, and it is defined by reference to a current popular understanding of the literary canon. ‘Literature’ is what is laid out before us (in schools, in bookshops) and it exists all together in an extended now, in relation to its contemporary readers. This approach explains why Pocock emphasizes the novel as geographical evidence in part because of the fact that novels “represent something like three-quarters of all literary output and remain the most robust genre” (Pocock, 1988: 89). There is little sense of historical development in this view, although most of the novelists who have been discussed by geographers are not writing now. This view of the canon, which relies on our current reading tastes and prejudices and presents literature as a contemporary resource, has some interesting results, mainly because of the ways in which it inevitably emphasizes ‘great authors’ in the context of the contemporary reader’s other ‘great authors.’ Firstly, this placing of text within canon rather than within historical context encourages the study of a limited body of works. This may turn out to be rather counterproductive: the ‘greats’ tend, after all, to derive their ‘greatness’ from such critically valued qualities as technical sophistication

and innovation. They may well be the authors most skilled at integrating description and fictional purpose and the least susceptible to having their settings "extracted." They are the authors whose works are most familiar to us as pieces of our 'now'--the characteristics of their particular subjective landscape views may therefore be less easy for us to see. They are also the authors who have had the most influence on our own sense of place and landscape: yet another reason why they are difficult to study objectively. So far, geographical writing about literary texts has seemed usually to focus either on a single well-known author, or to range freely across wide historical sweeps, citing references to particular texts on the way. Both therefore tend to deal with a tightly circumscribed group of highly sophisticated writers. For various reasons, some indicated above, this tendency makes the analysis of the relationship between real world and text which is at the heart of much geographical writing about literature particularly problematic.

D: Looking for the 'real world'

In the writings of humanistic geographers on literature there is an understandable emphasis on the real world and its relationship to text. This emphasis usually focuses the study either on the supposed 'real world' inside the text, or on the real world in which the maker of the text--the author--lived and wrote. However, as suggested above, neither of these real worlds is easy to identify from textual evidence, and if we are to distinguish our approach as working with literature, then textual evidence is what we have.

The most direct geographical approach to 'landscape in literature,' and the most common, is to extract chunks of landscape description and to treat them as pictures of the real world. Pocock considers the issue of whether this extraction can be said to destroy "the totality of the art form" but

concludes that such extraction need be no more destructive than a literary analysis of character or plot (Pocock, 1988: 90). There are three points to make about this. Firstly, the totality of the art form is not at issue in either of these cases; appreciating a totality is one thing, analysis of its construction, while it may enhance the appreciation, is another. Secondly, the extraction of blocks of text is a different proposition to the analysis of a sustained presentation of character or the discussion of plot. These last two activities are analogous to the analysis of setting as it functions throughout and within the novel, not to the removal of selected passages to be considered out of context. The third point is the most fundamental, and it is the question of whether the extraction of landscape description, on any but the most mechanical level, is in fact possible.

Many novels contain passages of sustained geographical description. Nevertheless, the extent to which these passages reflect the 'real world' and the extent to which they function within the novel as parts of the fictional web of meaning is not easy to determine. Even the writer of a strenuously 'realistic' novel may not be aiming to produce objective descriptions of real settings. The description which presents itself as objective is inviting; the problem with its invitation is that the objectivity may well only be a presentation, a desired effect. Writers of 'realistic' novels are quite likely to be more concerned with verisimilitude than with geographical objectivity; realism is thus the vital effect and not the fictional purpose.

In discussing the geographer's use of setting in the novel, Pocock does address the issue of verisimilitude and 'recognizable' settings, even giving an extensive quotation from Leonard Lutwack's writing on this subject. Pocock seems nonetheless still to see the disjunction between geographical realism and literary realism as unfortunate, albeit inevitable. "Ultimately," he says, "the nature of fiction, rooted in fact, leaves the writer of creative literature, if not the geographer, in an equivocal position" (Pocock, 1988:

89). To a non-geographer, the emphasis here seems odd: isn't it the geographer, looking for realism in fiction, who is in the equivocal position? There is a lingering sense in Pocock's writing here (as elsewhere in the work of geographers using literature) that geographical inaccuracy is always unfortunate no matter how necessary it may be to fictional purpose.

The question of whether the extraction of passages of 'unadulterated' landscape description is possible is complicated by the ways in which authors may develop the specifically literary sophistication of their uses of setting. This is an area usefully explored by the literary scholar Rhoda Flaxman, in her study Victorian Word-Painting and Narrative. As Flaxman explains, the tradition of word-painting in English poetry and prose is complex, and has a traceable history of development. Flaxman shows how landscape description in poetry and prose can range from scene-setting using traditional perspectives of landscape aesthetics, to the integration of landscape and emotion in extended passages of description functioning as "symbolic motifs that often anticipate or unite narrative developments" to the use of "external landscape elements to represent internal states of consciousness" (Flaxman, 1987: 128-9). It is clear that even within the work of one author setting and landscape descriptions can be used in widely different ways. Presumably, a chunk of description which the author was using as the physical representation of an internal state could be extracted and treated as a piece of geographical evidence, but the dangers inherent in such an exercise are obvious.

The extraction of chunks of landscape description is problematic; but even if it were possible, we would still be left with the problem of relating these chunks one to another. As Yi-Fu Tuan has complained: "[i]n belles-lettres we find indeed eloquent evocations of place, but these evocations add up to a long gallery of individual portraits with no hint as to how they might be related" (Tuan, 1975: 151). Particular 'chunks' may be

informative, but how do they hang together? This lack of relationship is in part a result of the 'bookshelf' view of the literary canon, where all works exist together, now, lined up before us in a collection. This removes the possibility of the construction of a system of relationship by reference to historical development. The lack of relationship is also exacerbated by the geographical approach to authorship which reveres the writer as the embodiment of an exemplary response to the environment. The writer (and the description) is thus somehow promoted to a position in which the absence of a relationship with other responses (and descriptions) is almost characteristic.

The problematic nature of the identification of 'chunks' of landscape description in text as objective pictures of the real world (or as failed attempts at such pictures) is a major issue in the use of literary texts as geographic evidence. An associated problem of identification lies in the area of narrative voice, for the narrative voice of a text is of course not necessarily that of the author--and therefore cannot easily be taken as representative. The identification of a voice within text with a real person is dangerous; apparently neutral third person description of the experience of landscape need not necessarily reflect or describe the actual experience of the text's author. The question of voice is considered in more detail below in the section on narrative voice and the reader.

A third area of difficulty in the relationship between text and the real world is to be found in the discussion of the "influence" of setting on character and action. There is a potential here for the confusion of an author's use of environmental imagery to fictional effect--to foreshadow plot, suggest aspects of character, create the atmosphere of a meeting, etc.--with a form of environmental determinism, or at least a belief in some form of real world environmental effect. At times it is difficult to know whether geographers writing about literature are talking about the real

world or the fiction. Take, for example, Pocock's remark that only a few literary critics "acknowledge, or seem aware of, a neglect of setting or landscape, with its possible influence on action and personality" (Pocock, 1988: 87). Is Pocock referring here to a real world influence of landscape on action and personality, an influence which operates in real life, and which is (or should be) reflected in fiction? Or is he referring to setting as it is used in literature? Another example of the confusions inspired by the relationship between text and real world is to be found later in the same essay, after Pocock explains that "[i]n the novel, especially during the nineteenth century, a causal relationship between place and character was widely drawn." This seems straightforward: the nineteenth century novel reflected a belief that place influenced character. Pocock goes on to explain that "[l]andscapes, but especially dwellings, both shaped and expressed personal character" (Pocock, 1988: 91). This is more difficult, especially the use of the word "expressed"; does he mean that in the novel, as in life, landscapes and dwellings were actually, physically created in ways that expressed the character of their creators? Or does he mean that the novelist used the landscapes and dwellings of the novel's setting symbolically, as ways of expressing and illuminating the character of people in the story? If the latter, then this does not necessarily reflect a belief in a real-life causal relationship between place and character at all. The two could be entirely separate; what it would show is how an author can use landscape figuratively in order to express meaning.

There is one final and important question to be considered with regard to this central issue of the relationship between real world and fictional setting. When geographers find a description less than objectively real, when it does not seem real to a modern reader, does this mean that it is not an accurate picture? The question arises: whose accuracy are we talking about? How do we decide whether a setting is 'real' or not? Clearly, some

changes (moving a well-known river, or renaming a town) are 'inaccuracies.' But when reading a description written in the context of another lived-world it is probably only too easy to see it as a conventionalized and unreal view, when what we really mean is that it does not fit into the patterns of our own conventions.

D: Sorting out the voices: lining up the readers

While geographers have at times reacted to the subjectivity of the authorial voice by taking it as typical, or by celebrating it as exceptional, they have also quite often completely ignored it. There are, it is true, many well-hidden authors; still, there is no such thing as an unwritten text. When reading in search of geographical evidence it is dangerous to ignore the purposes of the author, the author's assumption of who the reader is, and our assumptions as readers.

We may begin by assuming that any text has a writer--and while this writer may be hidden by the text, he or she is nonetheless present. A text also has a voice, or more probably voices. In one reductive formulation, we could identify the possibilities as: authorial voice, an apparently authorial voice created by the writer (the "fictional author"), a narrative persona (reliable or unreliable), an implied point of view, and the voices of characters in direct speech. If an author seems invisible to us as readers today it is probably for one of three reasons. Firstly, it may be that we are so familiar and comfortable with the text, or with similar texts, that we identify almost completely with the narrative voice. Secondly, it may be that we share the conventions and assumptions (both geographical and literary) of the text to such an extent that we don't notice them. Thirdly, and most disturbingly, it may be that we just don't recognize the particular viewpoint of the narrative voice: we reinterpret it on the basis of our own experience and assumptions.

As this possibility of reinterpretation suggests, text also has an audience. Audience, like voice, is a highly complicated thing, which another reductive formulation would identify as including the possibilities of: a fictionally included audience, addressed directly; a consciously implied audience (which may be completely different from the audience the author realistically anticipated); an actually anticipated audience; and, somewhere beneath all of this, the fundamentally assumed 'implied reader' who will inevitably be connected to the text's social, historical and geographical implied context.

The question of audience brings us back to the question of canon, in which 'literature' is seen primarily in relation to 'us,' now. The implied center to much geographical writing on literature is not the author at all, nor the implied audience, nor even the relationship between text and real world, but the contemporary reader. As Tuan has characterized it: "Literature and painting induce an awareness of place by holding up mirrors to our own experience; what had been felt can now be seen, what was formless and vacillating is now framed and still" (Tuan, 1975: 161). This seems to be something of a waste of historical evidence.

We need to consider ourselves as readers placed within a particular context. How do we envision place and space when reading? What conventions and memories and associations are we referring to? As one literary critic puts it, "human beings have memory, and can visualize a quite definite scene from word symbols" (Henighan, 1982: 3). This, of course, is true: but what do we do with 'new' landscapes, and what happens when our memory and the author's experience are at odds? It is clear, too, that the meanings and implications of words and geographical concepts change over time and across cultures. It is inevitable that the reader has something of an active role in reading. Pocock, while acknowledging this, points out that we still can't insist on a particular reading--for example, a

marxist one (Pocock, 1988: 95). This, too, is true: but what we can do is become aware of the specificity of our own reading, no matter how natural it seems to us.

Radical changes in the perception of the physical world take place over time, something William Mills has shown happening on a very large scale in his study of the changing metaphors through which western society has organized its vision of the physical world (Mills, 1982). Each social group has its own perspectives and ways of seeing and reading: as Tuan says: "One's own culture is not only a pair of glasses that enable persons to see but also glasses that are inevitably tinted and thus bias the viewing in some way" (Tuan, 1991: 104). Thus, there is clearly a need in the study of space and place for a historical perspective; as David Harvey has told us: "[c]ritical reflection on the historical geography of space and time locates the history of ideas about space and time in their material, social and political setting" (Harvey, 1990: 430). This is an issue closely connected to the problem of narrative voice and the reader in the interpretation of literary text for geographical purposes.

E: Choosing what to study

Traditionally, the focus of the geographical method which uses literary text as evidence has been upon something other than the textual surface itself. It has concentrated on phenomena seen to be contained within the text, lurking, somehow, beneath the surface. It has studied the effect of text, the role of text as influential artifact. And it has looked at the experiences, the environments and the people who have produced texts. This has led, in some cases, to the confusion of setting with actual geographical context. To summarize, the focus has in general been on content and not method, author and not text. What is missing from this picture is the detailed analysis of the textual surface itself: how is the sense

of place conveyed and how has it been understood by readers in the past? Or, perhaps even more usefully for geographers, upon what geographical conventions and assumptions did the text--as originally read--depend?

Geography and literature: possibilities

The discussion of the problems inherent in the current use of literary evidence by geographers was divided in the section above into five main areas of concern, which could be characterized as follows: (1) interdisciplinary study, (2) selection of texts, (3) the relationship of real world to text, (4) narrative voices and readers, and (5) focus. Some of the possible responses to these concerns can be organized according to a similar division.

Firstly, the very recognition of the problems inherent in interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary study is a good start; awareness of and sensitivity towards the aims, methods and justifications of other traditions would seem to be the key to progress. Access is central: even the physical organization of libraries seems to make cross-disciplinary reading a more than purely academic exercise. In his review of the geography-literature interface, Douglas Pocock implies that only financial difficulties have prevented the formation of a specialist journal in the area. He speculates, however, that in the end it may be more appropriate for publications to remain within the context of the "particular aspect of formal study concerned" (Pocock, 1988: 88). It is unfortunate that there is no such journal, however, not so much because it was needed as a forum for the publication of articles but because it could have functioned as a central source for reviews and summaries of work done in intersecting disciplines, even as a place in which work-in-progress could be discussed, with comments and suggestions solicited.

There is clearly a need for more communication between disciplines. Scholars in other fields are covering areas geographers have not yet reached. For example: while David Harvey has noted how the geographical exploration of literature has focused more on the evocation of place than on the "far more fundamental question of spatiality" (Harvey, 1990: 427), non-geographers have not been ignoring this area of study. To cite only two examples from among literary scholars: Judith Fryer has investigated the actual and imagined spaces that women inhabit through an analysis of the novels of Edith Wharton and Willa Cather, while Tom Henighan's Natural space in literature provides a more general survey of the subject (Fryer, 1986; Henighan, 1982). There are other works, particularly in the fields of literary criticism and area studies, which either build upon or relate closely to the current concerns of humanistic geographers (for example: Bredahl, 1989; Thacker, 1989; Fletcher, 1983).

The second problem area discussed above was the selection of texts: the establishment of a canon. The response to this problem seems obvious: we need to read more, and not just more of the 'great authors.' As Pocock points out, "works of minor literary merit may be of major research worth" (Pocock, 19889: 93).

The third area was the largest: the issue of the relationship of the text to the real world and the extent to which that relationship can be regarded as in any way simple or direct. One response to this problem is to concentrate more on the text itself as evidence of its own unstated assumptions about space, place and places. It is true that texts approached in this way would probably be more informative within the area of historical geosophy than in the study of universal human responses to the environment. At the same time, however, the geographical use of literary texts would then be less liable to criticisms of oversimplification.

The fourth area of concern had to do with narrative voices and readers: here the line of investigation suggested in response to the real world/textual world problem is again useful. A focus on text in the historical context of an assumed relationship between author and reader could use the idea of the implied reader to inform inquiry of a geospherical nature.

Both of these last two responses imply a final suggestion with regard to focus: that we should shift our attention away from content or the large-scale social effect of text and towards the detailed study of the textual surface. Thus text itself would become the subject, and would provide us with evidence of communication specific within and dependent upon its social, historical and geographical context. By concentrating on the method of communication and the assumptions which underpin communication we could expand dramatically the possibilities offered by literary text to geographical inquiry. By studying the assumptions which the text implies were shared by author and reader we could study in detail the geoscopy of another place and time, and in so doing could become more aware of our own "tinted glasses."

As Tuan has pointed out, the naming of natural features and aspects of our environment is central to the creation of our humanized worlds. Words are not mere labels, however; "some words are more emotionally charged than are other, and these may be applied to features of special importance, for instance, a prominent tree or rock" (Tuan, 1991: 102). Furthermore, the significance of words changes over time--and this is true of named geographical phenomena of a much more abstract nature than "tree or rock". Daniels has made this point specifically, in his criticism of current humanistic geography. 'Place', he argues, "like 'landscape', 'nature' and 'community' . . . resonates with ideological implications," which are "scarcely explored" by humanistic geographers, who take 'place' uncritically

as a positive concept, ignoring the ways in which its positive connotations are "informed by a strict, even oppressive, sense of social order and control, explicit in the expectation that the poor should know their place." 'Place,' Daniels insists, is a "predominantly conservative notion" (Daniels, 1985: 146). Here Daniels is calling attention to the tint in our glasses. The study of the significance of the use of the term 'place' and the place concept in general in popular literature of earlier times and other contexts would be one method of defining our own version of this central concept and elucidating the connotations that Daniels feels are so dangerously unexplored.

The possibilities for new lines of inquiry which have been suggested in response to the current state of the geographical-literary interface and its problems can be summarized as taking two main directions. One would focus on the presentation of landscapes: the aesthetic and practical organizing concepts which structure their presentation in writing and their understanding in reading. The other would focus on the analysis of the connotations and implications of geographical features and concepts, currently and as they have developed over time and within cultures. Several specific methods of inquiry suggest themselves. One would involve the study of the familiar methods of spatial organization that underpin the description of alien, unknowable landscapes in science fiction or exotic travel writings. Another could focus on the use of geo-spatial images and concepts in the description of such abstract phenomena as emotions, or conversational tones. As this last approach is probably the more difficult to imagine at work, the last section of this paper will explain in more detail the justification and method of this line of inquiry.

Another landscape in literature: figurative language as geographical evidence

The described and implied settings of a novel and the themes with which it is explicitly concerned are not the only sources of its geographical evidence. As members of a culture, writers think and communicate by reference to the patterns and images of a shared geography, a largely unarticulated world view. Insofar as literature is a form of communication, the experience or scene which is imagined by the author or is unfamiliar to the reader must be described in understandable terms: an unknown world can only be articulated by implicit reference to a reality common to both writer and audience. A particular vision and individual experience is therefore often communicated not only by reference to shared experience but also by reference to shared--assumed--concepts of geo-spatial understanding. Used figuratively, these shared concepts thus provide a common vocabulary, a network of assumptions which the text implies is taken for granted by both author and audience.

The investigation of such a network of assumed geo-spatial concepts would be of interest to both the historical geographer and the literary critic. The interest for a geographer would lie in the fact that the literary use of assumed concepts makes them visible; the interest for the critic would lie in the extended range of connotative and symbolic possibilities to which this analysis gave access. The network of assumptions could be studied through textual analysis which focused on the close examination of figurative language and the figurative communication of meaning.

The essential point about figurative language in this model of investigation would be that it is a literary technique which depends upon the shared assumptions of an author and his or her implied audience, and is hence indicative of those assumptions. Figurative images may refer to an actual environment, to an assumed understanding of the connotations of

terms such as 'place' and 'space,' to trends in geographical understanding, or to a particular landscape aesthetic. Collected and analyzed, the explanatory use of geographical images could therefore reveal aspects of the world and the world view which is context for the text. It could show both a physical environment and a mentally constructed world whose form and significance is taken for granted. Here we would have another 'landscape in literature'; an underlying world view, a lived-world, culturally assumed, which functions in the communication of meaning as a common point of reference.

To summarize: this would be a model of geographical inquiry which could be used to study the use of landscape or geo-spatial imagery within a homogeneous body of texts in an attempt to reveal the underlying geospatial assumptions upon which such figurative communication of meaning depends. This 'figurative communication of meaning' could include not only figures of speech, such as similes and metaphors, but also the figurative implications of syntax and rhythm or plot structure. This approach would relate most directly to the interests of historical geosophy, in that it would be an investigation of "the nature and expression of geographical ideas" located in the past at the junction of a specific culture, place and time (Wright, 1966: 83). In other words, it would be an attempt at an explication of a world view that is assumed and therefore not easily visible. Resting its argument on the assumption of culture-specific world views (Lowenthal, 1961), it would turn to textual criticism as a possible approach to their explication.

Conclusion

This model of one of the possible directions that an interdisciplinary study of geography and literature could take embodies several of the proposals of this paper. Firstly, it trusts in the possibility of a method with

truly interdisciplinary aims and implications, assuming that the study of literature even if undertaken from the primary perspective of a discipline other than literary criticism can benefit from the techniques of literary scholarship and can contribute to its range. Secondly, it emphasizes the need for an awareness of textual surface and textual analysis in any study which uses literary text as evidence. It further implies the need for a wider canon of texts for such study, and it focuses on the context of text and on the implied reader. Where geographical approaches to literature have traditionally focused on the geographical implications and usefulness of the settings described or created within literature, this approach would focus more radically on the implications for both geographers and literary critics of the geographical basis to literary communication. It stresses the advantages of looking at the text as meaningful, rather than looking through the text to meaning. And it suggests one way in which interdisciplinary work involving geography and literary analysis could be useful to both disciplines. Such a study of the figurative language of text could contribute both to historical geosophy and to the literary analysis of text in context. Ultimately, such an investigation of the interrelationship between author, reader, text and context could contribute not only to a history of culture but also to a recognition of the values and meanings with which we unthinkingly invest our own worlds and world views.

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