

## (Re-)Mapping the 'native vale': Sara Coleridge's *Phantasmion*

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Sometime between the autumn of 1834, when the idea for Sara Coleridge's fairy tale *Phantasmion* was conceived, and the summer of 1837, when it was published, Sara drew a rough sketch of the imaginary landscape in which her tale was set. The map is scarcely more than a line drawing; it contains little detail beyond some early ideas of place names and suggestions as to where the key topographical features might be located. From the earliest reviews, commentators were certain that the world of *Phantasmion* was simply 'a glorification of the Lake Country',<sup>1</sup> or, more recently, 'a kind of medieval Tuscany nestling into the Lake District'.<sup>2</sup> Sara confirmed on several occasions that this 'account of Fairy-land nature' was based upon her memories of her 'native vale, seen through a sunny mist of dreamery'.<sup>3</sup> Because it was based on a landscape so familiar to readers of Wordsworth and STC, Sara's 'native vale' seemed to confirm her status as 'a Wordsworthian minor poet'.<sup>4</sup> The map supports the text in indicating the extent to which Sara's Fairyland was indebted to her memories of that 'native vale', but it does other things too: it demonstrates that Sara's conception of this imaginary world was more complex than has hitherto been recognised. This essay will argue that the Fairyland of *Phantasmion* is not a simple repetition of established Lake District tropes, but a considered reconstruction of Sara's topographical childhood memories. When read alongside the text, Sara's map reveals the differences between this Fairyland and Wordsworthian and Esteesian imaginative landscapes. Sara imagined a highly personalised version of her childhood home, and, as the map indicates, her Fairyland

swerves away from the Lake District claimed by Wordsworth for himself and by STC for Hartley. This essay invites a re-evaluation of *Phantasmion*, and suggests that Sara's fairy tale offered a distinctive development of the Romantic Lake District. For clarity's sake, I follow Peter Swaab and Nicola Healey in referring to the later generations of the Coleridge family by their forenames. I mimic Sara by referring to Samuel Taylor Coleridge as STC, and in labelling his poetics 'Esteesian'.

In one sense, *Phantasmion* is a quest narrative of the most common Romantic kind;<sup>5</sup> that is, a search for 'an unknown or inexpressible something which gradually leads the wanderer back toward his point of origin'.<sup>6</sup> But when the tale is compared with the hitherto overlooked map, it becomes apparent that this quest is not simply a representation of Sara's longing to return to her childhood. Instead, it expresses a desire, imaginatively – if unwittingly – expressed, to reside poetically in a space which she controlled. In this reading, *Phantasmion*'s quest – to learn to rule over his kingdom, repel the invasions of his neighbours and unite the various kingdoms in political alliance – comes to represent Sara's mission to identify her own imaginative space as a writer. In this Fairyland, she could express metaphorically her poetic independence without compromising her relationship with her immediate Romantic precursors. This reading of Sara's construction of Fairyland encourages a reassessment of her contribution to the second-generation Romantic canon, and suggests that Sara's relationship to her precursors was one of interaction rather than influence.<sup>7</sup>

As has previously been recognised, the composition of *Phantasmion* was closely bound up with Sara's work on her father's writings,<sup>8</sup> as well as with Sara's stay in Ilchester in the autumn of 1835. Accounts of this episode vary,<sup>9</sup> but what is certain is that in October 1835 Sara Coleridge was travelling back to her home in Highgate after a

stressful visit to her in-laws at Ottery St. Mary, Devon. Sending her children back to Ottery, she stopped at The Castle Inn at Ilchester to recover. (Waldegrave differs from other accounts in suggesting that the children were accompanied by a Mrs. Boydell whilst the nurse, Nuck, stayed with Sara (*Poets' Daughters*, 183).) Barbeau writes that Sara 'knew that she could travel no further'; he suggests that this stay was 'one of the most terrifying ordeals of her life' but, like other critics, Barbeau also recognises that this period of confinement proved 'highly productive' (*Life and Thought*, 58). Sara remained in her bedroom there for a month, claiming that she was too ill to travel further. As Peter Swaab comments, this was her 'most severe psychological crisis' ('Poems and Their Addresses', 47). Nevertheless, the protracted stay at Ilchester and the five months she subsequently remained at home convalescing were among the most creatively fruitful periods of her married life (Mudge, 94); indeed, Waldegrave goes so far as to suggest that Sara's entire thought process shifted at this time (*Poets' Daughters*, 188). At Ilchester, she finished reading over her father's *Literary Remains*, as well as Felicia Hemans's *Hymns* and Mary Howitt's moralistic verse drama *The Seven Temptations* (1834); she wrote to her husband Henry Nelson Coleridge of the latter that 'Mr Wordsworth, if forced to read, would say [it was] seven temptations of his patience'.<sup>10</sup> It was here, too, that she began to work on the revisions to her fairy tale.

*Phantasmion* is a tale of Sara's 'inward eye'; it was written to enliven her 'couch hours' when she was laid low by one of her frequent spells of post-natal depression (*Regions*, 7).<sup>11</sup> She commented that it acted 'as a record of [her] recumbent amusements', evidence that she 'often had out of door scenes before [her] in a lightsome agreeable shape at a time when [she] was almost wholly confined to the house' (*Regions*, 8).<sup>12</sup> Waldegrave demonstrates that, although Sara had 'multiple projects' at

this time, *Phantasmion* proved to be the most beneficial for her distressed mental state: it was 'the one that most allowed her to escape the confines of the room' (*Poets' Daughters*, 184). Nevertheless, it should be remembered that, by all accounts, the decision to remain in her room was Sara's alone; she was encouraged to leave, and so the 'escape' Sara sought was from her emotional trauma as much as from the physical confines of her bedroom. The confinement in Ilchester conversely gave Sara the space she needed to recover a sense of intellectual wellbeing. Her stay there, and the period of recovery following it, provided Sara with a rare opportunity to read and write uninterrupted. It was, in effect, an intellectual return to her pre-marital state. The close work, both on her own and her father's texts, afforded Sara a chance to consider the shaping spirit of her imagination:

Chemists say that the elementary principles of a diamond and of charcoal are the same; it is the action of the sun or some other power upon each that makes it what it is. Analogous to this are the products of the poet's mind: he does not create out of nothing, but his mind so acts on the things of the universe, material and immaterial, that each composition is in effect a new creation.<sup>13</sup>

Sara's 'elementary principles' are shared with her father, but the action of 'some other power' has produced two markedly different beings. The 'things' of Sara's universe were, inevitably, the 'elementary principles' of some of the best-known poetry of the era: STC's, Wordsworth's and Southey's. As Barbeau recognises, '[i]n the creation of *Phantasmion*, Sara Coleridge invokes memory in the formation of a natural world, [and] applies reason in the development of characters with duty and appetite' (*Life and Thought*, 64). Sara's Fairyland in *Phantasmion* is built upon the same 'raw materials' as the so-called Lake poets' canonical imaginative spaces. Comparing the map to the text

reveals how Sara's imagination is that 'other power' which acts upon the Lake District to form a 'new creation'. It was perhaps in Ilchester that the capital city of Rockland was named Diamanthine. This name in itself seems to indicate the extent to which the geography of *Phantasmion* was bound up with her thoughts on her poetic relationships.

### ***Phantasmion's Map***

Sara's map of *Phantasmion's* Fairyland was hastily sketched on a torn scrap of paper. It indicates the spatial relationships between the six countries in which the story is set, and reveals, too, additional areas which did not appear in the final text.<sup>14</sup> Like the tale itself, the map seems to have been part of an imaginative game with her young son, Herbert. Sara wrote to her husband Henry in the autumn of 1834 describing the four-year-old Herbert's cartographic entertainments:

To Herby the map is a sort of game, and one that contains far more variety than any play that could be devised. To find out Sumatra or Owhyhee, to trace the Ganges, and follow the Equator in every different map, is a supreme amusement; and the notions of hot and cold, wet and dry, icy seas and towering palm-trees, with water dashing, and tigers roaming, and butterflies flitting, and his going and seeing them, and getting into tossing boats, and climbing by slow degrees up the steep mountain, are occupying his little mind, and give a zest to the whole affair (*Memoirs and Letters*, 58).

Sara's map outlines the kinds of spaces that Herby found so exciting on maps of the real world. Palmland is a country filled, predictably, with 'towering palm-trees'. Tigridia is home to wild tigers. The fairy Potentilla brings with her the 'butterflies flitting',<sup>15</sup> and various characters' journeys on the sea provide examples of nautical adventure.

Potentilla's supernatural gifts to *Phantasmion* allow the young King to access a similar

experience of landscape to Herby's vicarious cartographic one. In short, whilst the details of the terrain in Sara's Fairyland are modelled on her childhood memories of a close engagement with the landscape surrounding Greta Hall, the defining features of each area are designed for Herby's amusement.

Both Sara and her brother Derwent tried to teach their children how to love the Lake District. Writing to his eldest son, Derwent Moultrie, from the Lake District in 1843, Derwent wishes that his son could have accompanied him to 'this beautiful land, amid the scenes and companions of my own boyhood'.<sup>16</sup> Sara, too, recalled her childhood 'among Waterfalls, Mountains and Lakes' for little Derwy's and Herby's amusement in several interlinked poems.<sup>17</sup> Sara's Fairyland was not designed to be the antithesis to the heavy industrial centres of the Midlands or Lancashire, as Nicola Bown suggests was true of many Victorian Fairylands (Bown, 86). Rather, *Phantasmion* aimed to reconsider the poetic Lake District landscape. This Fairyland differed from most contemporary representations of that imaginative space; although it was a 'version of pastoral', it was a more realistic representation of the natural landscape (Bown, 85). The lands in *Phantasmion* are not universally plentiful, and Palmland is one which requires agricultural technologies to take advantage of the fruits of this fairy earth. Although the wild flora and fauna in *Phantasmion* are designed to complement Herby's imaginings, the various regions of this Fairyland nevertheless reflect different parts of Sara's beloved Lake District. The fantastical place names recall the linguistic games played by the extended family at Greta Hall; Sara's mother, aided by Southey, developed her own 'Lingo Grande' (Southey complained that she 'called me a Tomnoddycum, though my name, as she knows, is Robert') (*Poets' Daughters*, 33). As Waldegrave observes, even the names of their many cats 'give some idea of the landscape of their

[the Coleridge children's] imagination and the books which created it': Madame Bianchi, Ovid, Virgil, Pulchesia, Rumpelstiltskin, Lord Nelson and Hurleyburleybum wandered the house and gardens, embodying the verbal and imaginative playfulness encouraged under Southey's roof (*Poets' Daughters*, 10, and Griggs, 10). *Phantasmion's* place names demonstrate a rationale which recalls Greta Hall 'Lingo Grande'; in a similar way to the 'Lingo Grande', the place names often describe in an obfuscated way the landscape which dominates the region. Rockland, bordered by mountains, and the neighbouring Almaterra both are lake countries. Even Palmland bears more traces of Sara's childhood landscape than tropical climes: it is economically dependent upon agriculture, but crucially that industry is based upon the cows and sheep of a Lake District farming landscape and not the (more probable) arable lands of a richly fertile area. Agriculturally, if not horticulturally, Palmland is a northern country. Gemmaura, meanwhile, depends upon a mining industry.<sup>18</sup>

The map seems to have been sketched in the early stages of writing the book. It was never published, and Swaab's suggestion that much of Sara's poetry was not intended to be seen by anyone beyond her immediate family can be applied to this document ('Poems and Their Addresses', 45-64). The numerous deletions suggest that the details of Sara's Fairyland were by no means finalised when she drafted it, although the topography was not altered. For example, what eventually became Gemmaura appears on the map as Land of Gems, Goldland or The Rich Land; Rockland is The Land of Rocks or the Dark Land; Almaterra is labelled Vineland; Diamanthine is labelled simply as 'Capital City'. Other places are erased from the narrative altogether:<sup>19</sup> the [Salt Towers] which separate Palmland from Rockland on the map are replaced by the river Mediana in the text; the [Region of Sleek] does not feature in the tale. There is evidence

that Sara edited some details of the map at a slightly later date: [Pastaeoria] is relabelled as Tigridia. The fact that some obsolete details remain suggest that Sara was not diligent about updating the map once the writing of the fairy tale was properly underway.

The text emphasises the affinities between the real Lakes and this imaginary reinterpretation of them, but I suggest that the map also complicates the picture. To follow Franco Moretti, what exactly the map *does* needs to be established. Moretti suggests that a map is not in itself an explanation, 'but at least it shows us that there is something *that needs to be explained*'.<sup>20</sup> Like the Brontës' maps of Gondal, Angria and Glasstown,<sup>21</sup> Sara's map clarifies her early conceptions of the tale's geographical spaces, across which the complex web of political, social and romantic connections are drawn, but it also makes clear the ways that these fictional interactions can be applied to Sara's poetic relationships. I propose that this map was an important part of the creative process which allowed Sara to visualise her tale's position within the Romantic tradition. The map does something which the text cannot: it 'facilitate[s] a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes or events',<sup>22</sup> and it offers a way to 'make sense of relationships in space, and to communicate them to others'.<sup>23</sup> Like Spenser's description of Faery land, Hartley's map of his fantasy kingdom Ejuxria,<sup>24</sup> or the Brontë children's maps of their imaginary places, Sara's map of *Phantasmion* focuses on one imaginative realm which is a part of a continent of related poetic spaces. On Sara's map, adjoining lands are indicated beyond the lowermost border of Palmland, and implied in the undrawn regions beyond Nemerosa and Almaterra. Whilst Spenser's allegorical realm is surrounded by North Africa to the South and the Americas to the West,<sup>25</sup> the spaces which confine Sara's Fairyland remain unnamed. However, as



Bernhard Klein has suggested, *The Faerie Queene* is 'deeply anti-cartographic'; the geographical certainties implied by a map would 'undermine the didactic project of the poem as a whole'.<sup>26</sup> Sara's tale, on the other hand, arguably rejects such moralistic readings, in that the map reinforces the narrative's suggestion that this tale is more about interaction than education.<sup>27</sup> *Phantasmion's* plot hinges on emotional and political relationships between the regions named on the map, but the map implies that these interactions extend beyond the places identified by the text. The blank spaces at the edges of the map suggest regions which remain unmappable for Sara, but which are nevertheless crucial to the geographic integrity of her imagined place; these unnamed places form the boundaries that confine Sara's landscape.

What Harold Bloom maintained of Keats is true also of Sara: she was concerned with clearing an imaginary space for herself 'in the hope of finding a map with blanks that [she herself] can fill in'.<sup>28</sup> As I shall demonstrate, Sara's resource is heightened subjectivity; her imaginary space must be located within her own psyche and not in the real world. Sara's memories (she never returned to the Lake District after her marriage in 1829) had to be internalised and modified before they could be employed to demarcate an autonomous imaginative space, particularly because by 1837 Sara's 'native vale' from Rydal to Keswick was firmly Wordsworthian.<sup>29</sup> The map of Sara's Fairyland suggests an alternative way of reading that landscape. It cannot replace the text because it cannot contain the details of *Phantasmion's* complex narrative.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, the map indicates the extent to which Sara had, in her own thoughts, separated this imaginative world from the Lake District.

The map, then, was to some extent a playful document, but it suggests Sara's resistance to writing within a tradition imaginatively controlled by Wordsworth and her

father. The map marks the edge of Sara's precursors' poetic territories in her imagination, and also identifies the boundaries across which poetic influences may pass. Crucially, these boundaries mark out Sara's creative space too. The map is not a 'neutral mirror' (Klein, 110-1) of Sara's imaginative landscape. It is an unwitting assertion, much more forceful than the text, of her sense of deserving an autonomous poetic space which nevertheless communicated with the established canon. The map is a space for Sara alone to utilise, therefore, but it exists as part of a network with other Romantic locales. Wordsworth's and STC's separate spaces may 'interpenetrate [...] and/or superimpose themselves'<sup>31</sup> with or onto Sara's, but they cannot overwhelm her Fairyland. When it is read alongside the text the map challenges the conception of Sara's works as being the product only of her anxieties of influence. I argue instead that Sara's is a map of misreading which offers an unwitting challenge to conventional approaches to her works as the products of a 'weak' ephebe to the 'strong' Lake poets.

### Reflecting the Lakes

The world of *Phantasmion* is not an echo of Wordsworth's Lake District: it is, literally and metaphorically, a reflection. Sara Coleridge's Fairyland is Cumberland and Westmoreland as seen through the looking glass of its author's imagination. If the map is turned across its vertical axis, so that it becomes a mirror image of itself, the topographical affinities between Sara's Fairyland and her 'native vale' become clear. The outline of this Fairyland seems to have been based on an existing map of the Lake District (or, at least, on Sara's memory of such a map).<sup>32</sup> The coastline mimics the actual Lake District coastline: the estuary of the river Mediana, which flows from the Black Lake to the sea, correlates neatly with the mouth of the River Esk where it joins the Irish Sea at Ravenglass. The peninsula upon which Anthemmina is imprisoned finds its

double in the small protrusion south of Whitehaven. Further inland, the Black Mountains recall the mountains of the southern Lake District, including Black Combe, and are the backbone of this imaginative landscape. Iarine's home, the Black Lake, is an echo of Wastwater, the lake at the heart of Eskdale, 'the wildest & savagest surely of all the Vales that were ever seen from the Top of an English Mountain'.<sup>33</sup> The topographical similarity between the Lake District and the setting of *Phantasmion* highlights the influence that Sara's childhood home – and the poets associated with it – had over her creative thoughts. Nevertheless, it also indicates that Sara visualised this Fairyland as a swerve away from the Lake District and the poetry it inspired towards a realm that could be more completely hers. The map simultaneously becomes a site of memory and of creation: Sara re-designs the Lake District landscape to reflect her imaginative independence. By drawing the map as a reflection of the real world, Sara acknowledges the similarities between her imaginary space, that of STC's 'Dejection Ode' and of Wordsworth's poetics. But this reflection is nevertheless integrally different from those existing spaces: it is a representation of a Lake District landscape that is conditioned by Sara's creative experiences. The map reveals that Sara's imaginative experiences develop out of her intellectual dialogues with her precursors, but it also indicates the ways in which she alters their ideas to suit her creative ends.<sup>34</sup>

Sara's map also recalls her father's cartographic drawings of the Lake District from his 1802 walking tour. STC drew a series of line maps from the top of Scafell, including one of Wasdale.<sup>35</sup> Kathleen Coburn notes that this map is drawn 'in quasi-mirror image, and the note beside it does not altogether clarify things'.<sup>36</sup> STC describes places as being in a directional relationship to his line of sight; a 'bulging green Hill' is 'to my left', and the Dodd ('evidently the highest point between Buttermere &

Ennerdale') is 'to my right' (*Notebooks*, i.1208). Sara's description of the landscape in *Phantasmion* recalls STC's geographical descriptions. Although the text initially suggests that the Sea is to the south of Phantasmion's palace (*Phantasmion*, 14), it is later described as being 'on the right hand' (26). This direction confirms that both in the text and on the map this Fairyland is a landscape where the real topography is reflected across a vertical axis; the usual directional orientations do not apply here. The location of Sara's imaginative looking glass is crucial.

In the words of Cristina Bacchilega, 'the tale of magic's controlling metaphor is the *magic mirror*, because it conflates mimesis (reflection), refraction (varying desires), and framing (artifice)'.<sup>37</sup> The 'mirrhour fayre' (*Fairie Queene*, III.ii.22.5) in this case is the only part of this landscape which is common to both the world of *Phantasmion* and the real Lake District: that is, the 'glassy sea'.<sup>38</sup> Usually a mirror operates entirely by reflecting an object back to the viewer. The image in water, on the other hand, is much more nearly akin to Bacchilega's magic mirror: it refracts the image of the Object. The new image is altered slightly as the light passes through the water's surface, resulting in a modification of the original. For STC, the reflection in water provided access to an other-world. Thirlmere, for example, becomes for him a 'mirror of 3 miles distinct vision', which daemonically reflects Raven Crag: 'at every bemisting of the mirror by gentle motion [it] became a perfect vast Castle Tower, the corners rounded & pillar'd or fluted' (*Notebooks*, I.1607). The Crag becomes a faery castle, an image of the architecture of the poet's mind.

For Sara, it was the sea near Ravenglass which acts as an imaginative looking glass. It is through this glass that she encounters her precursors and so enacts the confrontation that Bloom maintains is necessary for the poet to claim her imaginative

independence.<sup>39</sup> The characters in *Phantasmion* do not travel across the sea. Indeed, any attempt to do so is punished, hence Anthemmina's captivity and Phantasmion's broken wing. The real world is not for them. The water is the barrier between that Fairyland and this world, and the noise of the water where it meets the coast on the other side of this reflection – at the real Lakes, that is – inspires not Sara's poetry, but Wordsworth's.<sup>40</sup> By reversing the position of the sea, Sara's map makes the division between the real world and her Fairyland clear: this Fairyland may owe a topographical debt to the Lake District, but it is nevertheless a world that exists on the other side of the looking glass. Furthermore, it is a refracted image of the real world, one which reveals Sara's 'varying desires'; that is, it indicates the differences between Sara's imaginative landscape and those of her precursors.

In *Phantasmion*, Anthemmina's (Iarine's mother) plight suggests the importance of correctly interpreting the refracted image; her 'varying desires' are her downfall. She abandons her love for Pensilimer in favour of Dorimant because she misinterprets a refracted prophetic image. In her essay 'On the Disadvantages Resulting from the Possession of Beauty' (1826), Sara wonders about the feelings of 'the flattered belle, of her that is accustomed to be gazed at & raved about, when she examines her admired form & features in the glass?' (*Victorian Daughter*, 189). But Anthemmina does not see her 'admired form & features'; her face is obscured by her silver pitcher. She does not correctly interpret the subject of the message because she cannot see her own face. When Phantasmion is presented with the same image, he interprets it accurately: because he can see a refracted image of his face (the image in the water has a different expression to Phantasmion's actual demeanour), he is able to accurately interpret the journey he must take (*Phantasmion*, 119-20). Phantasmion's refracted face is like Sara's

map: the furrows and streams on his real face recall the harsh landscape of the real Lake District, whilst the smooth brow of the reflection is equivalent to the blank regions of Sara's map. It is across these uncharted areas that Phantasmion must travel to save his kingdom and find Iarine. Anthemmina's inability to see her own face denies her access to the map-substitute which could have saved her.

Phantasmion is quick to realise how Anthemmina's error occurred: 'the watery picture is my likeness, only like Dorimant, as I resemble my father' (*Phantasmion*, 120). This 'likeness', as Anthemmina should have noticed, is a refraction: Phantasmion's face is a refraction of Dorimant's (simultaneously like and unlike his father's), and Iarine's figure (her face is still obscured) is a refracted form of Anthemmina's. Just as Sara's map outlines an imaginary space that is a refraction of her precursors' Lake District, her characters' faces recall their precursors but do not repeat them. In the text, Phantasmion's reflection takes the place of a map in acting as a guide for his future journeys: correctly reading the image leads Phantasmion to his goal. Like Britomart's magic mirror, this refraction reveals to Phantasmion his future spouse, but Anthemmina's story reveals the dangers of misreading such a text. Hers is the fate of Narcissus, doomed by her fascination with the picture in the water, or of the unadmonished Eve, likewise fascinated by her reflection in 'the clear / Smooth lake'. Anthemmina believes that the promise given to Eve ('What there thou seest, fair creature, is thyself [...] but follow me, / And I will bring thee where no shadow stays / Thy coming, and thy soft embraces, he / Whose image thou art, him thou shall enjoy / Inseparably thine')<sup>41</sup> applies to her also. She mistakes the image as a prophecy of her own marriage, when it is in fact a revelation of her daughter's fate.<sup>42</sup> Like Eve, Anthemmina is offered a treacherous guide which has none of the trustworthiness of

the cartographic representation. *Phantasmion*, on the other hand, sees beyond the image to the words forming on the 'sparkling sands in the bed of the river'. The sands form the names 'Dorimant and Anthemmina, Iarine and *Phantasmion*'. *Phantasmion*'s attempts to decipher the words as they fade enable him to hear the disembodied 'tinkling melody' which confirms his reading of the image in the water (*Phantasmion*, 119). The relationship between text and image here confirms that between Sara's fairy tale and map: the map offers a guide towards the interpretation of the text, and a complete reading of *Phantasmion* benefits from scrutiny of both.

### ***Phantasmion* and STC**

Reading the map alongside the text alters the implications of the narrative. The visualisations of the text which the map makes possible emphasise the ways in which Sara used her fairy tale to alter the Estesean narrative. The plot of Sara's text is centred on Rockland, the reflection of Eskdale, the area around which STC's 1802 tour of the Lakes concentrated. *Phantasmion*'s journeys map closely onto STC's, a connection only clear when they are visualised using Sara's map. I plotted *Phantasmion*'s journeys onto a version of Sara's map which has been turned across its vertical axis, so that it becomes a mirror image of the original. Reversing the map highlighted the topographical similarities between this Fairyland and the Lake District. By overlaying a map of STC's 1802 tour<sup>43</sup> onto the reversed *Phantasmion* map, I uncovered several similarities between these excursions: *Phantasmion* and STC venture out to sea at similar points towards the southern limits of the region; they both visit the peninsula. But it is their mountain-climbing experiences which reveal that the refraction indicated by the map can also be found in the text's emotional events.

Phantasmion's third and longest route takes him from his palace in Palmland around the southern point of the Black Mountains via the border town of Lathra, and onward to the Black Lake. This journey echoes in reverse Sara's father's travels between Beckfoot Bridge (6 August 1802) and Coniston (which he reached the next day) (*Mapping the Lakes*). The epiphany for both travellers occurs immediately prior to this stage in their journeys. On 5<sup>h</sup> August 1802 (a little more than four months before Sara's birth on 23 December 1802), STC completed his infamous climb down the formidable Broad Stand. In 'A Letter to -----', an early version of the 'Dejection Ode', STC meditates upon his relationship with his wife and, by extension, with his children:

My little children are a Joy, a Love,

A good Gift from above!

[...]

Those little Angel children (woe is me!)

There have been hours, when feeling how they bind

And pluck out the wing-feathers of my mind,

Turning my Error to Necessity,

I have half-wish'd, they never had been born.<sup>44</sup>

STC imagines his two sons and as-yet-unborn daughter to be the forces which keep him trapped on the side of an intellectual mountain; they 'bind' him, and 'pluck out the wing-feathers of [his] Mind' so that he can no longer imaginatively 'soar aloft', away from the ridge. Broad Stand becomes the imaginative site of a wide-reaching Romantic interaction; STC suffers from a profound anxiety of influence from his young children, in a way which anticipates in reverse their anxieties as adults.



Figure 2 indicates that Phantasmion's journey covered similar ground to STC's, but the text indicates that Phantasmion's emotional conclusion in this episode is a refracted version of that which STC reached on Broad Stand. For Phantasmion's first journey he is equipped with butterfly wings 'of golden green adorned with black embroidery' (*Phantasmion*, 12). Nature rejoices in his acceptance of Potentilla's gift. As he flies above his kingdom, voices from the 'groves and flowery meads' celebrate Phantasmion as the newly-risen bardic figure:

See the bright stranger!

On wings of enchantment,

See how he soars!

Eagles! that high on the crest of the mountain,

Beyond where the cataracts gush from their fountain,

Look out o'er the sea and her glistering shores,

Cast your sun-gazing eyes on his pinions of light!

Behold how he glitters

Transcendantly bright!

Whither, ah whither,

To what lofty region

His course will he bend?

See him! O, see him! the clouds overtaking,

As tho' the green earth he were blithely forsaking;

Ah now, in swift circles behold him descend!

Now again like a meteor he shoots through the sky,

Or a star glancing upward,  
To sparkle on high! (*Phantasmion*, 13)

Phantasmion is recognised as an Esteesian poet. He is a 'bright stranger', borne up to some 'lofty region' on the correspondent breeze of Romantic imagination. He is to be revered by his subjects below, including Nature itself. Crucially, Phantasmion seems to forsake the 'green earth', a rejection of Wordsworthian nature in favour of a more Coleridgean visionary poetics. The 'choral strain' suggests that Phantasmion is like a 'star glancing upward, / To sparkle on high'. The verb is carefully chosen: it recalls STC's poetic dejection. The stars STC beholds likewise sparkle when they are not 'bedimm'd' by passing clouds ('Letter', l.38). Sara rejects this morbid creative vision, however. Phantasmion overtakes the clouds, and so his star – that is, his imaginative powers – can continue sparkling. The poem reinforces Phantasmion's rightful place as a poet: it recalls George Herbert's 'Angel's Wings',<sup>45</sup> but this shape is, instead, Phantasmion's butterfly wings. The form of the poem acts as a reminder of the means by which he will reach the 'lofty region' of Romantic vision. The song encourages the eagles, the reincarnations of the High Romantics, to behold him from the 'crest of the mountain';<sup>46</sup> the 'wing-feathers of [their] mind[s]' are still intact, as will be proven by their aggressive response to the flying king. More specifically, this is STC himself, 'lately taken wing'. It is by this eagle that Phantasmion is injured: he loses the use of one wing, and so is brought back to earth after his poetical flight. This is the text's literal *tessera* (*Map of Misreading*, 84): the young poet is disabled by a violent attack on his wings, and thus his poetry, as the shape of the song indicates. The attack renders him unable to 'soar aloft', just like his Esteesian precursor. Mimicking that precursor becomes impossible, and he must find a way to refract the Esteesian approach. Phantasmion returns to Potentilla to

try a different tactic: if he is unable to maintain his status as a visionary poet in the air, he will become a poet of the ground.<sup>47</sup>

For his second journey, Phantasmion is equipped with feet 'like those of flies, which climb up the mirrors or walk over the roof of [his] marble hall' (*Phantasmion*, 17). This modification allows him to walk up the 'precipice of solid rock, many hundred feet deep, which looked like a dark curtain let down from the sky' (*Phantasmion*, 18). The simile indicates Phantasmion's new status as the young poet of domesticity; if he cannot aim for the heavens, he will conquer the hearths. Phantasmion's ability to climb his own mirrors and walls indicates his new-found power over his own palace, and, by an allegorical extension the advisers within it. Later, the ease with which he passes over the mountain border into Rockland anticipates the two countries' unification at the end of the tale. Figure 2 reveals Phantasmion's unlikely route: like STC climbing down Scafell, Phantasmion's second power allows him to clamber straight over the Mount of Eagles. This mountain is the 'crest' atop which the High Romantic eagles have established their nest. It is the obstacle which Phantasmion must overcome to affirm his right as king, and, implicitly, Sara's rightful place as a second-generation Romantic poet. Just as Sara's reputation depended upon the recovery of her father's poetic laurels (particularly after De Quincey's damaging articles throughout the latter half of 1834), Phantasmion's hopes rely upon the recovery of his late mother's jewelled wreath. When he reaches the summit Phantasmion sees an eagle flying away from its nest, from which he hears the cry of an infant. With the eagle absent, Phantasmion is able to go 'with steady foot' (*Phantasmion*, 19) into the nest to rescue the child. He carries the child down the other side of the mountain, where he Iarine. Phantasmion carries her back to the foot of the mountain and reunites her with her baby brother, Eurelio. Phantasmion

is rewarded for this rescue: a 'beam of light' directs him to a tarn that had been covered with shadows. Phantasmion's prioritising of the safety of the baby – and by extension of domestic values – enables him to recover his mother's 'gemmy coronal' (*Phantasmion*, 23).

Phantasmion's path over the mountain mimics STC's straightforward route down Broad Stand, but the decisions he makes whilst completing the journey are a refraction of his precursor's thoughts. Phantasmion seeks to forge his domestic ties in the equivalent locale to the place where STC rejected his young family. The baby Eurelio will become heir to the land Phantasmion inherited from his mother, Gemmaura, and Iarine will become his wife. The future of his kingdom is thus secured, and Palmland and Rockland united by the marriage. The eagle's absence is crucial; by only entering the eyrie after the poet-bird has left it, Phantasmion is able to complete his quest without injury from the strong poet-eagle. In other words, he swerves around the eagle; he comes into contact with its legacy, but is able to complete his quest by diverting away from it.

For Sara, too, this swerve is essential. Sara uses the map to visualise an imaginative space which is a refraction of her forebears' poetic landscapes. By describing a move away from her father's emotional decisions, Sara imagines an alternative for the Esteesian poetic figure and, by extension, for second-generation Esteesian poets. The map reinforces this move away from this existing tradition, and affirms Sara's status as an independent poet. The map confirms that Sara's poetics were influenced by her literary relationships to her precursors, and it also suggests that critical responses to these relationships deserve to be revised. Sara's reconstruction of the Lake District as an independent Fairyland indicates a poetic autonomy that has been

largely overlooked. In turning away from her father's world without hope, Sara created a Fairyland in which her own creative power might be embodied. For literary scholars today, moreover, Sara's re-drawing of conventional Romantic boundaries implies the need for a re-interpretation of the marginal literary space she has hitherto occupied.

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<sup>1</sup> G. A. Simcox, 'Review of *Memoirs of Sara Coleridge*', *Academy*, 86 (December 1873), 462-3, 462.

<sup>2</sup> Shirley Watters, 'Airy Dreams of Father and Daughter', *Coleridge Bulletin*, NS 35 (Summer 2010), 1-14, 11.

<sup>3</sup> *The Regions of Sara Coleridge's Thought: Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. Peter Swaab (Basingstoke, 2012), 17. Letter to Aubrey De Vere, 1846.

<sup>4</sup> To borrow Harold Bloom's description of Hartley. (*The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (London, 1962), 198.

<sup>5</sup> For detailed plot summaries of *Phantasmion*, see Jeffrey W. Barbeau, *Sara Coleridge: Her Life and Thought* (New York, 2014), 60-2, and Dennis Low, *The Literary Protégées of the Lake Poets* (Aldershot, 2006), 137-8.

<sup>6</sup> M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (1971) (New York & London, 1973), 193. As Nicola Bown writes, 'In escaping to Fairyland, [the Victorians] dreamed themselves back home' (*Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge, 2001), 96).

<sup>7</sup> See Susan Wolfson, *Romantic Interactions: Social Being and the Turns of Literary Action* (Baltimore, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Low and Mudge agree that the writing of *Phantasmion* was closely bound up with her reading of STC's works at this time, as well as with the beginning of her plans to defend his reputation against the likes of Thomas De Quincey and James Ferrier (Dennis Low, *The Literary Protégées of the Lake Poets* (Aldershot, 2006), 134 and Bradford Keyes Mudge, *Sara Coleridge, A Victorian Daughter* (New Haven and London, 1989), 76). Low suggests that the tale was begun sometime in 1835. Mudge does not suggest a specific

date, but implies that Sara began writing the tale as part of her 'motherly duties' in late 1834, a date with which Jonathan Wordsworth agrees; see 'Introduction', *Phantasmion* (Oxford, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> See Barbeau, *Life and Thought*, 57-9; Low, *Literary Protégées*, 133-4; Earl Leslie Griggs, *Coleridge Fille* (London, 1940), 93; Mudge, *Victorian Daughter*, 88-90; Swaab, 'Sara Coleridge: Poems and Their Addresses', *Coleridge Bulletin*, NS 133 (Summer 2009), 45-64, 47; Katie Waldegrave, *The Poets' Daughters: Dora Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge* (London, 2013), 182-4; and Watters, 'Airy Dreams', 9 and 'Sara Coleridge and *Phantasmion*', *Coleridge Bulletin*, NS 10 (Autumn 1997), 22-38, 35.

<sup>10</sup> Low, 133. Letter to Henry Nelson Coleridge, 23 October 1836.

<sup>11</sup> *Regions*, 7. Letter to Emily Trevenen, 20 July 1837. For the first ten years of her marriage, Sara was almost constantly pregnant, although only two children survived (*Victorian Daughter*, 2).

<sup>12</sup> *Regions*, 8. Letter to Arabella Brooke, 29 July 1837.

<sup>13</sup> Sara Coleridge, *Memoir and Letters of Sara Coleridge*, ed. Edith Coleridge, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1875), 77.

<sup>14</sup> Low counts five countries (137), but this total does not recognise Nemerosa as a separate country as revealed on the map.

<sup>15</sup> Sara Coleridge, *Phantasmion* (1837) rpt. Woodstock Books (Oxford and New York, 1994), 25-27, 31, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Raymonde Hainton and Godfrey Hainton, *The Unknown Coleridge: The Life and Times of Derwent Coleridge, 1800-1883* (London, 1996), 232. Letter to Derwent Moultrie Coleridge, July 1843.

<sup>17</sup> See 'When Herbert's Mama was a slim little maid', 'Young Days of Edith and Sara' and 'When Mama was young' in *Collected Poems*, ed. Peter Swaab (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2007), 97, 101 and 219-20.

<sup>18</sup> Allen J. Scott notes that for centuries traditional livelihoods in the Lake District were dominated by sheep farming, with more varied forms of agriculture in the lowlands, as

well as a small amount of mineral abstraction. 'The Cultural Economy of Landscape and Prospects for Principle Development in the Twenty-first Century: The Case of the English Lake District', *European Planning Studies*, 18.10 (2010), 1567-1590, 1569.

<sup>19</sup> Square brackets indicate tentative readings.

<sup>20</sup> Franco Moretti, *Maps, Graphs, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London, 2005), 39. Emphasis in original.

<sup>21</sup> See Christine Alexander and Jane Sellars, *The art of the Brontës* (Cambridge, 1995), 156 and 299-300.

<sup>22</sup> *The History of Cartography*, ed. J.B. Harley and David Woodward (6 vols, Chicago and London, 1987), i. xvi.

<sup>23</sup> Jacinta Prunty, *Maps and map-making in local history* (Dublin, 2004), 15.

<sup>24</sup> See Judith Plotz, 'Childhood Lost, Childhood Regained: Hartley Coleridge's Fable of Defeat', *Children's Literature*, 14 (1986), 133-48, and Hartley Coleridge, 'Adolf and Annette', *Children's Literature*, 14 (1986), 151-61.

<sup>25</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Fairie Queene*, Revised Second Edition, ed. by A. C. Hamilton (Harlow, 2007), II. Proem 2. 6 and III iii 6. 7-8.

<sup>26</sup> Bernhard Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2001), 74.

<sup>27</sup> Sara repeatedly defended *Phantasmion* against the need for it to demonstrate a didactic purpose (*Regions*, 9).

<sup>28</sup> *A Map of Misreading* (1975) (Oxford, 2003), 152.

<sup>29</sup> A fact indicated by the burgeoning tourism industry in the Lake District as the Victorian period got underway. Scott notes that the Lake District became a popular tourist destination in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, encouraged by the profusion of publications of guidebooks, notably Thomas Grey's *Journal in the Lakes* (1769), Thomas West's *A Guide to the Lakes* (1778) and Wordsworth's *Guide to the*

*Lakes* (1810) (1571). See also Saeko Yoshikawa, *William Wordsworth and the Invention of Tourism, 1820-1900* (Farnham and Burlington VT, 2014).

<sup>30</sup> As Trevor M. Harris, Susan Bergeron, and L. Jesse Rouse have suggested of Tolkien's maps of Middle Earth. See 'Humanities GIS: Place, spatial storytelling, and immersive visualization in the humanities', *Geohumanities: Art, history, text at the edge of place*, ed. Michael Dear, Jim Ketchum, Sarah Luria and Douglas Richardson (London and New York, 2011), 226-240, 230.

<sup>31</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974), trans. Donald Nicolson-Smith (Oxford, 1991), 86.

<sup>32</sup> As Julia S. Carlson has demonstrated ('Topographical Measures: Wordsworth's and Crosthwaite's Lines on the Lake District', *Romanticism* 16.1 (April 2010), 72-93), Wordsworth's poetics were heavily influenced by developments in map-making, including his visits to Peter Crosthwaite's 'museum of curiosities' in Keswick. Crosthwaite's museum was 'a popular destination for visitors to Keswick, including Wordsworth, from 1780-1870' (74). It is inconceivable that Sara did not also visit it, particularly given the regularity with which Robert Southey, with whom Sara lived, mentions the Crosthwaite family in his letters (see *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. Lynda Pratt, Tim Fulford and Ian Packer, *Romantic Circles* [http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey\\_letters](http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters) [accessed 14th January 2014]). Furthermore, Crosthwaite's maps of Britain praise the 'native isle', a phrase which Sara recalls in describing the Lakes as her 'native vale'.

<sup>33</sup> Letter to Sara Hutchinson, 1-5 August 1802. *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (6 vols, Oxford, 1956), ii. 841.

<sup>34</sup> Barbeau summarises Sara's intellectual stance in relation to STC, Southey and Wordsworth when he writes that 'Sara modified many of the views these revered men shared with her, but under the continued influence of their ideas' (*Life and Thought*, 35).

<sup>35</sup> *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn et al (5 vols, London, 1957), i.1206.



<sup>36</sup> Kathleen Coburn, 'Introduction', *Notebooks: Notes* (London, 1957), i. xxii. Coburn notes that the map was drawn from William Hutchinson's *The History of the County of Cumberland* (2 vols, Carlisle, 1794), which he copied even down to the slope of the printing of names, the spellings and the buildings (*Notebooks: Notes* 1206).

<sup>37</sup> Cristina Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (Philadelphia, 1997), 10.

<sup>38</sup> 'Elegiac Stanzas, Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont', *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (5 vols, Oxford, 1947), 258.

<sup>39</sup> *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven and London, 1976), 2.

<sup>40</sup> Abrams notes the importance of reflection on the water to Wordsworth's poetry, finding in it a metaphor 'for the interdiffusion of two consciousnesses' (*Natural Supernaturalism*, 75).

<sup>41</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Oxford, 2005), IV. 467-73.

<sup>42</sup> In fact, Anthemmina fulfils Eve's alternative fate; that is, to become a victim of her own 'extreme interiority'. See Jonathon Shears, 'Wordsworth's Poets 2: England', *The Oxford Companion of William Wordsworth*, ed. Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson (Oxford, forthcoming 2014).

<sup>43</sup> Taken from David Cooper and Ian N. Gregory's *Mapping the Lakes: A Literary GIS*: <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/mappingthelakes> [accessed 15 May 2013]. See also David Cooper and Ian M. Gregory, 'Mapping the English Lake District: a literary GIS', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36 (2010), 89-108.

<sup>44</sup> 'A Letter to ----- / April 4, 1802. – Sunday Evening', l.271-81. Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (New York and Oxford, 1994), 234.

<sup>45</sup> 'Easter Wings', *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge, 2007), 143-9. Sara admired the 'power and thought' of Herbert's poetry (*Poems*, 233).

<sup>46</sup> Abrams suggests that the eagle was an 'emblem of the poise of human aspiration between impossibility and despair' (*Natural Supernaturalism*, 453).

<sup>47</sup> Phantasmion, like Wordsworth, finds that he 'cannot take possession of the sky' ('The Recluse', *PWWW*, l.199). See *Visionary Company* (251-65 and 393) for discussion on Byron and Keats's respective responses to these kinds of 'flights of fancy'. Bloom suggests that both Keats and Byron are, in different ways, poets who prefer to keep their feet on the ground.