

Understanding Maps after Multimodal Literature: A New Taxonomy

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*The article examines literature's multifaceted engagement with maps and proposes a five-category taxonomy that refines existing classifications. I suggest that the understanding of maps in literature should be increasingly informed by practices encountered in multimodal literary texts, a genre with a rapidly expanding critical framework. The innovative collection of map-based stories *Where You Are* (2013) by Visual Editions, is provided as a case study. The analysis of three selected pieces from the collection highlights the intersections between literature and cartography as well as establishes the significance of design in building literary narratives.*

KEYWORDS: multimodal literature; maps; innovative storytelling; literary cartography; contemporary writing

INTRODUCTION

IN 2013, THE INNOVATIVE LONDON-BASED publisher Visual Editions released *Where You Are*, a collection of stories created by 16 writers/artists/thinkers, with each contribution “exploring the idea of what a map can be” (back cover; see Table 1). Although the front cover describes it as a “book,” the collection does not adhere to traditional book formats or binding conventions, but instead appears in the form of a thick paper box that contains sixteen contributions that are individually bound (Figure 1).¹

The intriguing material artifact was designed by Bibliothèque studio with the assistance of Google's Creative Lab, a long-time collaborating partner of Visual Editions. Opening the box, the reader encounters map-based stories that are marked by the inventiveness of their design as well as by the engaging cartographic and literary experiences they enable. I approach *Where You Are* as an example of multimodal literature: texts that are conceptualized and created as a synthesis of meaning-making elements on the page surface—such as verbal writing, images, and maps, along with varying typography and graphic design—all of which collectively form the narrative world and result in innovative combinations and

Authors	Titles
Chloe Aridjis	“Map of a Lost Soul”
Lila Azam Zanganeh	“A Map of Six Impossible Things”
Alain de Botton	“On the Pleasure of Maps”
James Bridle	“You Are Here”
Joe Dunthorne	“Ghost Pots”
Geoff Dyer	“The Boy Out of Cheltenham”
Olafur Eliasson	“Subtle Nows”
Sheila Heti + Ted Mineo	“How to Be Good When You're Lost”
Tao Lin	“The Lunar Hamsters of 8G-932”
Valeria Luiselli	“Swings of Harlem”
Leanne Shapton	“Tablescapes”
John Simpson	“Nature's Valley”
Adam Thirlwell	“Places I've Nearly Been to But Have Not”
Peter Turchi	“Roads Not Taken”
Will Wiles	“My Atlases”
Denis Wood	“The Paper Route Empire”

1. The distinct format of a box is evocative of B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (2009) and Marc Saporta's *Composition No. 1* (2011).



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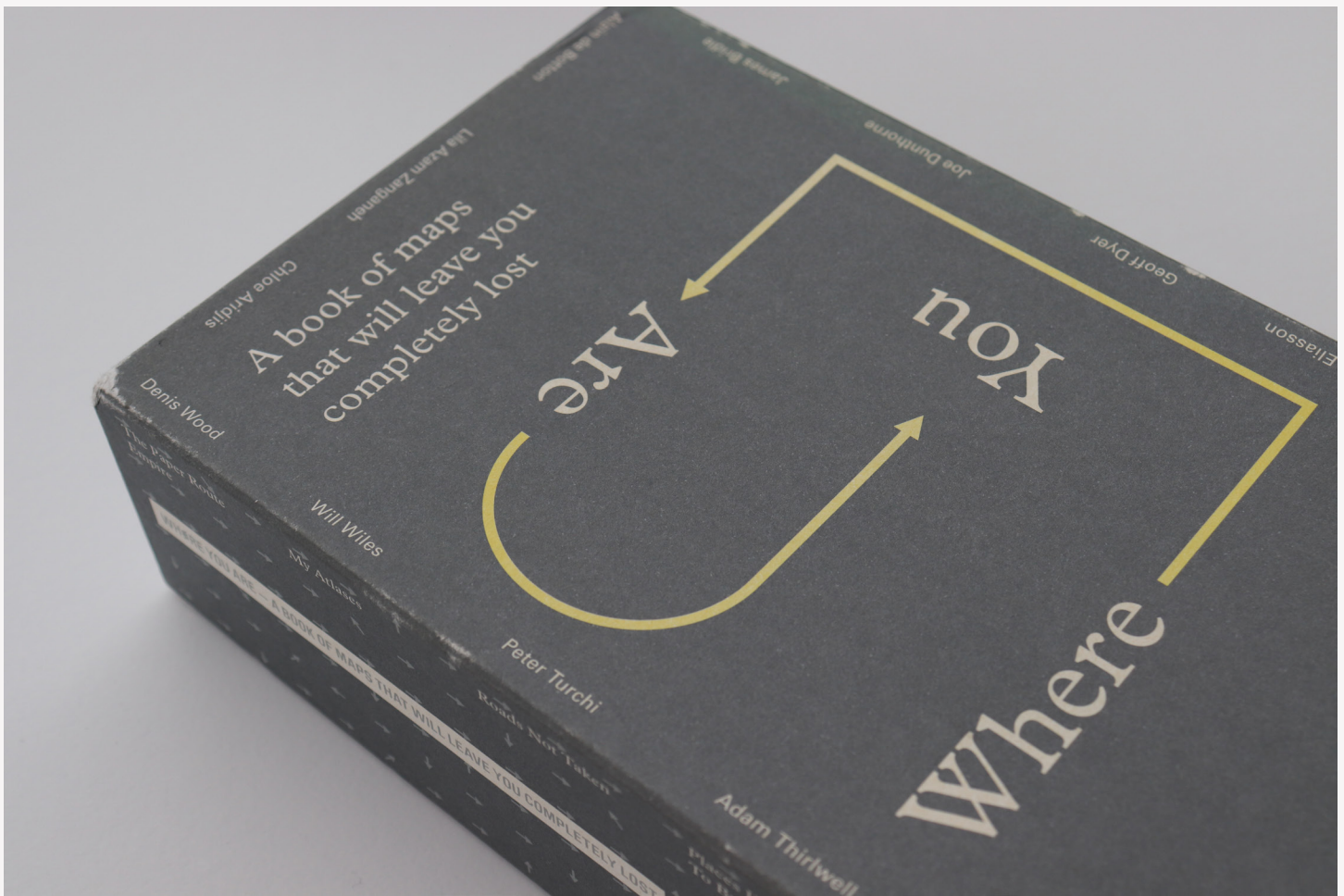


Figure 1. *Where You Are: A Book of Maps that Will Leave You Completely Lost* (2013), by Visual Editions.

readerly experiences. Although certain affinities between multimodal literature and other genres may be recognized, such as children's literature, comics, artists' books, or concrete poetry, the texts belonging to these categories follow different traditions and principles from those pertaining to multimodal literature. In particular, multimodal literary texts are mass-produced (in contrast to artists' books) and have emerged, predominantly in the form of a novel, partly in response to the elegies of the 1990s as regards the future of the print book medium, and partly as a recognition of uncharted possibilities for composing literary narratives in the digital age. This body of (mainly) twenty-first century literary texts is primarily print-based, and the creative combination of verbal and non-verbal modes of representation that multimodal texts comprise has fueled an interdisciplinary critical context, within which this article is situated.

Triggered by the growing body of multimodal literature and *Where You Are* in particular, my aim in this article is

to propose a refined taxonomy of literature's engagement with maps, and to re-locate the understanding of the presence of maps in literary texts towards scholarly avenues that are informed by the practices appearing in multimodal literature. I identify four main categories of literary engagement with maps, and suggest that *Where You Are* expands this framework, proposing a fifth category.

This article begins with a literature review section that describes previous attempts to theorize the presence of maps in literary texts, followed by existing classifications and the five-category taxonomy that I propose. The next section examines the role of maps in literary texts, focusing on the publishing industry, the context of multimodal literature, and the case study of *Where You Are*. Finally, the concluding remarks emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of multimodal literary texts, and the potential for further research and creative production that is built on the intersections between literature and cartography.

SCHOLARLY INTEREST IN THE MAPS found in literary texts was fairly limited until just after the turn of the twenty-first century. Notable early contributions include Philip Muehrcke and Juliana Muehrcke's "Maps in Literature" (1974), Martha Hopkins and Michael Buscher's *Language of the Land: The Library of Congress Book of Literary Maps* (1999), Jeremiah Benjamin Post's *An Atlas of Fantasy* (1979), and Katharine Harmon's *You Are Here* (2003). In their attempt to chronicle the presence of maps in literary texts (Hopkins and Buscher 1999), to catalogue maps in a specific genre (Post 1979), to investigate a wide range of invented maps and consider their implications as human practice (Harmon 2003), and to theorize literary cartography (Muehrcke and Muehrcke 1974), these works offered a foundation for significant scholarly work emerging in the twenty-first century.²

In *Reading and Mapping Fiction: Spatialising the Literary Text* (2020), Sally Bushell sketches an integrative approach that involves "a model of interdisciplinary interpretation based in literary studies that reaches towards and draws upon other disciplines" (Bushell 2020, 2). The interdisciplinary approach to the interpretation of maps resonates with fundamental principles as regards the operation of maps in multimodal novels, but Bushell's definition of a literary map as "a representation of spatial relations between places, people or objects (real or imagined) that corresponds *visually* to the world that the text purports to represent *verbally*" (2020, 6; emphasis in original) partly separates visual from verbal stimuli. In multimodal literary texts, the visibility of verbal writing is often foregrounded through design strategies such as typographic variation or handwriting (simulated or authentic). Moreover, maps in themselves typically comprise verbal and non-verbal elements in their representation. Hence, both verbal writing and maps bear visual and verbal components, which synergically form the multimodal literary text and generate its meaning-making processes. In this regard, Bushell's definition can be considered more suitable for describing maps in less experimental literary texts.

Lastly, the study examines an array of works drawn from several genres such as adventure and detective fiction, fantasy, children's fiction, realist fiction and so on, but the growing genre of multimodal fiction is not mentioned.³ This is also the case with most scholarly works: *Literature and Cartography: Theories, Histories, Genres* (2017) edited by Anders Engberg-Pedersen; *Literary Mapping the Digital Age* (2016) edited by David Cooper, Christopher Donaldson and Patricia Murrieta-Flores; *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives* (2015) edited by David J. Bodenhamer, John Corrigan and Trevor Harris; and *Novels, Maps, Modernity: The Spatial Imagination, 1850–2000* (2009) by Eric Bulson constitute book-length studies that comprehensively explore the intersections between literature and cartography in various contexts, yet do not address multimodal literary texts. By bringing multimodal novels to the fore of the discussion as rich terrains for critical scholarship, this article bridges the gap, expands the existing critical framework, and therefore makes interdisciplinary investigations of maps and literature more inclusive.

There have been limited instances where multimodal novels have been present in relevant scholarly work, as in Renate Brosch's "Mapping Movement: Reimagining Cartography in *The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet*." Nonetheless, the view that the "*main text of the book is supplemented by meticulous representations of geographical surfaces*" (Brosch 2013, 56; emphasis added) supports an understanding of the text's elements that is in accordance with earlier practices of book illustration, when illustrations merely reflected the content of the verbal text, were often not part of the author's creative process, and typically appeared only in select editions, as they were not considered essential parts of the text. Such practices are often encountered in special editions of literary classics but are not applicable to multimodal texts which are created with the principle that all composite elements are integral to the narrative due to their crucial role in the text's meaning-making processes.⁴ Therefore, greater attention needs to be drawn to the genre of multimodal novels, one that is combined with a

2. More recently, Huw Lewis-Jones's *The Writer's Map: An Atlas of Imaginary Lands* (2018) features a significant variety of maps that appear in (or have inspired) literary texts across genres. Valuable input on designing as well as integrating these maps into the creative process is also provided by the writers themselves.

3. Similarly, Giada Peterle's study *Comics as a Research Practice: Drawing Narrative Geographies Beyond the Frame* (2021) examines narrative geographies in comics with an interdisciplinary approach, revealing the genre's research potential but evoking different contexts and traditions from those pertaining to novels.

4. An example of a practice that was not part of the text's original conception is found in [The Vintage Classics Dickens Series](#), which involves six classic novels by Charles Dickens published with fresh covers and black fore-edges. Designer and illustrator Ellie Curtis was commissioned to create covers for *A Tale of Two Cities*, *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Hard Times* in collaboration with the Penguin designer Suzanne Dean. As Dean (2017) reveals, "[w]e intended from the start to add black smoky edges to the pages, framing the covers to evoke the grimy industrial age described by Dickens," which clearly indicates how a long tradition of the purported transparency of design, as concept and as practice, becomes increasingly challenged in contemporary literary

refreshed understanding of the book surface as a complete space upon which a literary text is built.

EXISTING CLASSIFICATIONS

A number of existing taxonomic classifications have been devised to organize maps in fiction, though none have completely accounted for the context of their appearance in multimodal novels. For example, Robert Stockhammer's classification involves four categories: "1. Map precedes the text; 2. Author draws maps during writing; 3. Publisher puts a map in second or third edition; 4. Map is drawn by readers and critics" (qtd. in Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu 2016, 59). With a pronounced emphasis on "the relative temporality of map production and authorship" (Bushell 2020, 7), Stockhammer's classification provides a useful tool for the examination of maps in literary texts. The first two categories seem applicable to the body of multimodal literature, as authors often integrate pre-existing maps or design maps during the creative process. However, the third category does not take into consideration the context of multimodal novels and their operative principles, where a publisher intervention in a subsequent edition would alter the literary text significantly. Finally, readers have attempted to map the fictional environment of novels using current technological affordances, as in the case of [the interactive map](#) of Abrams and Dorst's *S.*, which portrays locations using the interface of Google Maps.⁵ Matthew Graves (2006) has provided an alternate classification of literature maps, identifying four categories: paratextual maps (frontispieces), intra-textual maps (embedded in narrative), intertextual maps (referring to an external geography, real or imagined), and logo-textual maps (comprised of verbal text). In the case of multimodal novels, paratextual maps are not applicable, as all verbal and non-verbal elements are integral to the narrative, therefore falling under Graves's category of intra-textual maps, which are embedded in the narrative. Moreover, logo-textual maps are described as "word maps or narrated maps that are pure text, bereft of graphic form." However, strictly speaking, any form of writing bears a graphic form and, given the experimentation with typography and the

production. This illustrates the relevance of multimodal literature as a terrain of experimentation and its significant potential to inform broader practices of literary and cultural production in the digital age. The initiative by Vintage Classics is considerably different from recent marketing-oriented publication practices that involve colored fore-edges, as evidenced in Janice Hallett's *The Twyford Code* (2022; blue), Danya Kukafka's *Notes on an Execution* (2022; yellow), Charmaine Wilkerson's *Black Cake* (2022; coral red), Lee Child and Andrew Child's *Better Off Dead* (2021; orange), Nina de Gramont's *The Christie Affair* (2022; red), and Monica Ali's *Love Marriage* (2022; pink, yellow, green, blue, and red). Colored fore-edges also appear in specific hardcover editions of works of fantasy: the deluxe editions of Frank Herbert's *Dune* (2019; blue) and Patrick Rothfuss's *The Name of the Wind* (2018; red), and the illustrated editions of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* (2022; lime green) and *The Lord of the Rings* (2021; red), which also features engraved writing on its fore-edge.

5. Reader-generated interactive maps have also been developed for other novels such as J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, revealing a vibrant readerly community and the rise of participatory culture. The Lord of the Rings Project, featuring an interactive map of Middle Earth, can be accessed at lotrproject.com.

different meaning-making processes that typography can convey or trigger, the "purity" of verbal text is challenged.

Finally, Marie-Laure Ryan's work has focused on cognitive maps that "internalize an experience of space which is usually based on visual cues" (Ryan 2003a, 231); this aspect of Ryan's work falls beyond the scope of this article, as it corresponds to readerly constructions of "a mental model of spatial relations" (Ryan 2003a, 215). However, Ryan also organizes maps into two categories: internal maps, "designed by an author or illustrator as part of the interface between the text and the reader" (Ryan 2003b, 336), and external maps that are drawn by readers or critics. Ryan's external maps appear similar to Stockhammer's fourth category, and Ryan's internal maps to Graves's intra-textual maps.

While these three categorizations offer valuable ways to conceptualize maps in fiction, they do not account sufficiently for the context of multimodal literature, and there is a need for a more inclusive taxonomy. To this end, I have identified five main categories of literary engagement with maps, including one based upon the example of *Where You Are*, which opens up further possibilities for literature and cartography.

PROPOSED TAXONOMY

My proposed taxonomy involves five categories of relationships regarding maps and literary texts:

The first category includes *maps as inception*, in which the creation of a map object precedes the literary creative process. In this case, authors draw inspiration from pre-existing maps, and develop their literary narrative after being stimulated by the object.

The second category includes *maps that are embedded in the creative process*, in which the object is developed along with the narrative. Regardless of the map's presence in the final form of the literary text, it is an intrinsic part of the writing process.

The third category includes *maps that appear in the published works*. They are often found as frontispieces or endpapers, and this common positioning offers a clue to their usual function.⁶ Located “outside” or at the border of the verbal text, they serve as a tool of orientation to the reader. The fourth category includes *maps that are present in multimodal literary texts*, whose defining operative principles suggest that all parts of a narrative are integral to compositional and readerly processes. In this category, maps constitute intrinsic parts of the text, and their positioning as well as their particular characteristics depend on their distinct narrative function rather than on publishing conventions.

The fifth category includes literary texts that consider *maps as both the foundation and the endpoint of a creative process*. In *Where You Are*, authors have turned to old maps as sources of inspiration, which alludes to the first category, but their ultimate objective has also been to create a map. Therefore, a creative process that commences from a map and leads to

one can be considered a distinct category, and the outcome may be described as map-based fiction. In this context, the term “map-based” refers to a map as both a foundation for the creative process and as an intended objective for the broader project.

The aforementioned categories are not mutually exclusive, and they are not intended to be restrictive either: for instance, a map can be embedded in the creative process *and* appear in the published work. The purpose of this categorization is to refine our understanding of literary engagements with maps, prompted by the growing contemporary contexts of multimodal novels and that of critical interdisciplinary developments in literature and cartography. Therefore, this categorization aims to spark critical discussion on the changing landscape of the intersections between literature and cartography, one that is triggered by the emergence of multimodal literary texts in the early twenty-first century.

MAPS IN LITERARY TEXTS

IN JUNE 2019, PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE released ten classic novels with new covers through its imprint, Vintage Classics. The **Vintage Voyages** series, as it is called, features texts such as Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*, alongside less popular ones such as Bruce Chatwin’s *In Patagonia*, and Tim Butcher’s *Blood River*. Varying forms of maps and highlighted routes are depicted on the covers of the books, creating a sense of uniformity in their design.⁷ The launching of the series was accompanied by the description, “[a] world of journeys, from the tallest mountains to the depths of the mind,” emphasizing each novel’s thematic engagement with maps and traveling. This initiative is an example of the deep fascination that literature has with maps, one that has been registered throughout its history in multiple forms.

Writers have often linked the inception of a literary text to a map (Lewis-Jones 2018), or have created a map from scratch, firming up the text’s spatial context and transforming envisioned territories into more concrete geographies. On certain occasions, these maps are present in

the finalized form of the literary text, typically as a frontispiece that precedes the beginning of the verbal text. In multimodal novels, maps are integral to the narrative, and hence their positioning on specific pages serves the literary text’s narrative function. Thus, maps have served as sources of inspiration, triggering the writers’ imaginative process, and often guiding the unfolding of a literary narrative. In multimodal literary texts, their functions have been enhanced significantly, as maps operate in conjunction with other modes of representation in the meaning-making process. However, there have been few instances where maps have served both as the starting point and as the endpoint of a creative literary process. *Where You Are* serves as a distinct example of map-based narratives whose literariness both derives from a map (found or created) and leads to one.

MAPS IN MULTIMODAL LITERATURE

In multimodal novels, maps can appear in a range of forms: hand-drawn or computer-generated, black-and-white or full color, inhabiting a segment of a page surface

6. This practice is more typical in the genre of fantasy, where authors craft a map of the imagined world. Examples include J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2012) and *The Hobbit* (1995), and George R. R. Martin’s *A Game of Thrones* (2011). But they do appear in more classic literature such as William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* (1964), which ends with a map of Yoknapatawpha County.

7. All covers have been designed and illustrated by members of the Vintage Design team.

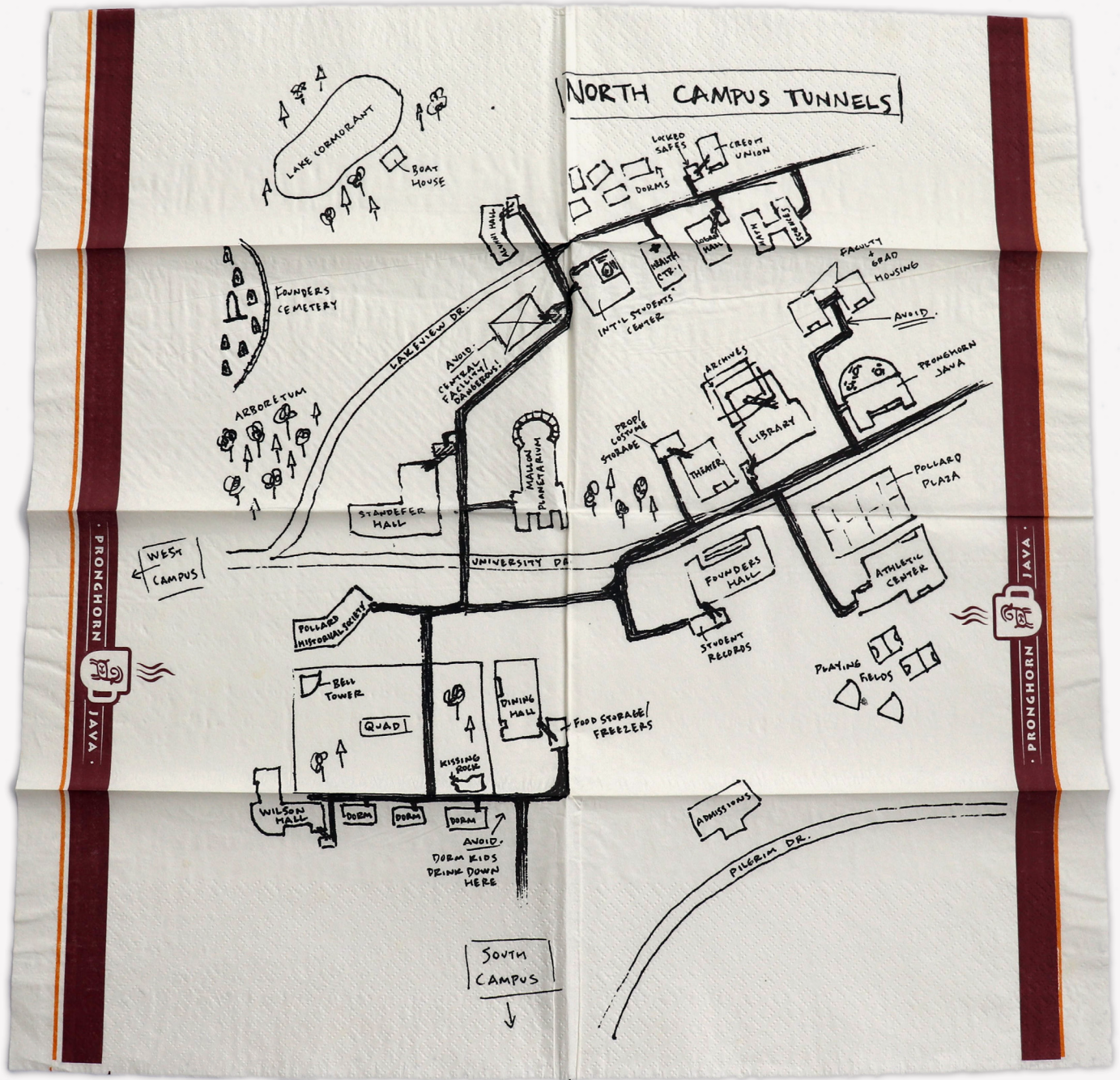


Figure 2. Napkin map in J. J. Abrams and Doug Dorst's *S.* (2013).

or an entire page spread; they can also be found positioned in various places in the text. Unlike other forms of literary text, maps in multimodal texts do not operate simply as frontispieces or decorative elements, and so this variation in their design properties and positioning is intimately connected to their narrative function. All modes of representation in multimodal texts bear meaning and collectively shape the narrative.

Two specific examples illustrate the functions and varieties of maps that may be found in multimodal texts. In J. J.

Abrams and Doug Dorst's *S.* (2013), the reader confronts a campus map that is conspicuously tactile, as it is designed upon a paper napkin inserted between the pages of the novel: a material artifact that is tightly woven into the narrative while being a physically independent object (Figure 2). The napkin, including a logo, appears as if it belonged to the Pronghorn Java cafe on the north campus of the fictional Pollard State University. It is the surface upon which a main character of the novel has drawn a map to share his knowledge of the campus tunnels with another character. The map is revealed once the reader unfolds the napkin

completely, emphasizing performativity in readerly engagements with the map, as well as temporarily eclipsing the experiencing of other elements in the book. In terms of my proposed taxonomy, *S.* belongs to several categories, as the map has been embedded in the creative process (second category), appears in the published outcome (third category), and is part of the novel’s multimodal composition (fourth category). The performative aspect of the reader’s engagement with the map in *S.*, echoes J. R. R. Tolkien’s intention as regards Thrór’s map in *The Hobbit* (1937) which involved “‘secret’ moon-letters written on the other side of the sheet [which were] meant to be read by holding the sheet up to a light, thus simulating the effect of the runes as they are revealed to Elrond,” as Wayne Hammond and Christina Scull reveal (2011, 49).

Contemporary advances in technology and the proliferation of open-access software have enhanced the possibilities for publishing innovations, which in turn allow creative writers to consider material actualizations that were previously deemed unfeasible. Particularly in the case of *S.*, the material texture of the napkin map contributes considerably to the readerly experience, as the artifact is designed to appear as part of a specific narrative level.

In another multimodal novel, Zachary Thomas Dodson’s *Bats of the Republic: An Illuminated Novel* (2015), the reader encounters two full-color maps of Texas, each pertaining to a different timescape (1843 and 2143) and reflecting, in its design, the sensibilities of that particular timescape (Figure 3). While the 1843 map resembles

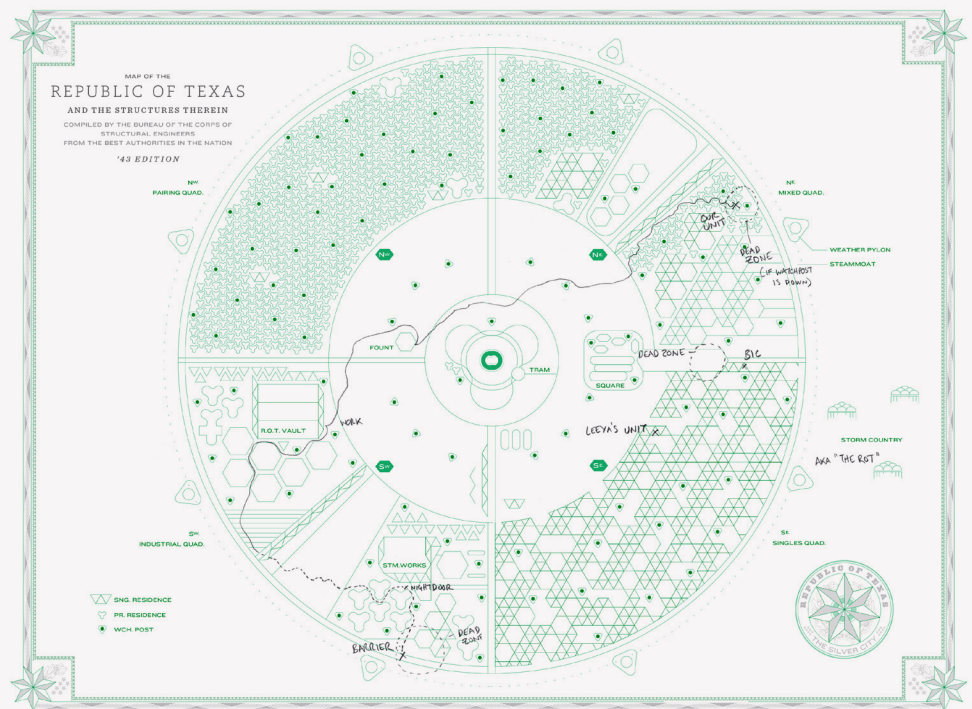


Figure 3. Maps of Texas pertaining to the timescapes of 1843 and 2143 in Zachary Thomas Dodson’s *Bats of the Republic: An Illuminated Novel* (2015, 16–17; 32–33)

a topographic map, and chronicles the journey of a young naturalist across the wilderness of Texas (Dodson 2015, 16–17), the 2143 map is more rigid and structure-based in order to reflect the post-apocalyptic environment of

the surveillance-driven City-State that characters in that timescape experience (Dodson 2015, 32–33).⁸

The maps are consistent with the color-coding that Dodson employs in each storyline throughout the novel: brown dominates the pages pertaining to the 1843 storyline, while vivid green echoes the artificiality of the 2143 storyline. The scale of the two maps is also strikingly different: while the first one depicts a vast area, including territories *adjacent to* The Republic of Texas, the second one is concentrated on the City-State and displays structures *inside it*.

Both maps were designed by Dodson (Mantzaris 2020, 193), which places *Bats of the Republic* in the second, third, and fourth category of my proposed taxonomy, as the maps are embedded in the creative process, appear in the published outcome, and are part of a multimodal assemblage. Each map inhabits a page spread in the novel, which renders all other textual elements temporarily inaccessible, and intensifies the presence of maps. In addition, their positioning early in the text allows the reader to invest the maps they have encountered with subsequent narrative content, highlighting what Muehrcke and Muehrcke describe as a map's "paradoxical ability to be both more and less than itself" (Muehrcke and Muehrcke 1974, 329). As the reader is exposed to a range of visual and verbal stimuli on the surface of the novel's pages—including handwritten and typed letters, a book within a book, sketches of animal species and urban structures, among others—the presence of the two maps in the opening sections of *Bats of the Republic* shows the relevance of Rob Kitchin and Martin Dodge's argument that "maps are constantly in a state of becoming" (2007, 335).

These two examples demonstrate the potential of cartographic representation in literary fiction, one that multimodal novels not only bring to the fore, but also experiment with, resulting in innovative and engaging readerly experiences. Particularly in this context of experimentation with multimodality in literary fiction,⁹ inventive maps are not isolated representational units, but interact with

other design elements such as typographic variation, photographic images, and page layout, therefore enhancing their narrative potential. Operating against the invisibility of book design as articulated by Beatrice Warde's famous crystal goblet essay (1955), multimodal novels highlight design's crucial role not merely in supporting, but in *forming* narrative content. *Where You Are* is not a novel but a collection of multimodal literary texts that, when viewed within this interdisciplinary framework, can shed light on the significant narrative capacity of maps that remains untapped.

CASE STUDY: WHERE YOU ARE: A BOOK OF MAPS THAT WILL LEAVE YOU COMPLETELY LOST

Despite its relatively recent publication in 2013, *Where You Are* has been out of print for several years, with used copies being sold on platforms such as Abebooks or Ebay for high prices. *The Workers* studio was commissioned by Google Creative Lab and Visual Editions to develop a **digital interpretation** of *Where You Are*, offering an online experience of the book. They provide a snapshot of the visual landscape of each map-based narrative, with partial access to the map and text of each piece, but complete access to the stories appears to have been disabled. This restricted access has likely limited critical examination of *Where You Are*. Thus, in this article I want to draw attention to this elaborate collection and remedy the lack of attention that *Where You Are* has received.

The varying engagements of authors with maps in *Where You Are* challenge traditional taxonomic classifications, while their innovative designs and inventive storytelling configurations suggest new avenues for literary narratives. The contributors not only resort to different visual stimuli such as old maps, satellite imagery, handmade drawings, and photography, but utilize them imaginatively in conjunction with verbal text, creating map-based compositions that mobilize cross-disciplinary insights and propel multimodal syntheses.¹⁰ As a collection, *Where You Are* falls under the fifth category of my proposed taxonomy,

8. This is considerable different from the three maps that appear as frontispieces in Hanya Yanagihara's recent novel *To Paradise* (2022). Although each map in Yanagihara's text corresponds to a particular timescape, too (1893/1993/2093), typographic elements are uniformly employed in the design of the maps.

9. The novel form appears to constitute the most common terrain of experimentation with multimodality in the early twenty-first century. Multimodal experiments in poetry activate different frameworks and conventions that render their examination considerably different.

10. Though most of the contributors employ multiple modes of representation or resort to different resources as composite elements of their pieces, Lila Azam Zanganeh's "A Map of Six Impossible Things" features mainly verbal text, pointing to cognitive mapping processes and thematically alluding to Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (1974), while Peter Turchi's "Roads Not Taken" mainly comprises verbal text in addition to a few symbols. The mental or cognitive maps that constitute the outcome of solely verbal text form a different category of engagement with maps, one that falls beyond the scope of this article.



Figure 4. Satellite imagery in Chloe Aridjis’s “Map of a Lost Soul.”

since maps involve both the foundation and the endpoint of the creative process. However, the individual pieces comprising the collection can be thought to belong to one or more categories of the taxonomy.¹¹ In this section, I will focus on three contributions that feature innovative renderings of maps: Chloe Aridjis’s “Map of a Lost Soul,” Valeria Luiselli’s “Swings of Harlem,” and Adam Thirlwell’s “Places I’ve Nearly Been to But Have Not.”

The first story is about the life of Margaret Aberlin, a 65-year-old woman who was abandoned by her family while on vacation and lived on a bench in the streets of Mexico City for four years before being repatriated. Chloe Aridjis employs a combination of satellite imagery of Mexico City, photographic images, and verbal text in “Map of a Lost Soul,” while simultaneously revealing their incapacity to fully capture the experiences of this character. This booklet-bound piece begins with two large satellite images occupying two consecutive page spreads (Figure 4). Each is overlaid with rectangular shapes that evoke portrait or landscape photographs. The information removed from the images is partially restored by the combination of verbal text and photography throughout the piece. This inventive combination demonstrates the inherent incompleteness of what satellite imagery displays.¹²

11. For example, maps that precede the creative process (first category) and appear in the published outcome (third category) are present in Alain de Botton’s “On the Pleasure of Maps,” in Will Wiles’s “My Atlases,” and in Denis Wood’s “The Paper Route Empire.” Also, maps that are embedded in the creative process (second category) appear in Wood’s piece as well as in Joe Dunthorne’s “Ghost Pots.”

12. Similarly, in “The Boy out of Cheltenham,” Geoff Dyer invests Google Maps imagery of Cheltenham with personal experiences, resulting in an autobiographical rendering of a satellite map. Resisting the singularity and stability of the satellite imagery, Dyer contests the complexity and transience of an ostensibly fixed map.

Philip Leonard observes that “the stories and other texts in *Where You Are* continually trouble the notion that the satellite’s celestial gaze recentres us, creates a better connection with the world itself or produces a perceptual system that reliably captures the world’s immanent character” (2019, 101). In addition, by employing photographic images taken on the ground level, Aridjis provides an alternate camera angle to the one provided by Google Maps, blending machinic capturings of locations via different media and agencies.

Aridjis utilizes an online platform of mapping that is pervasive in our everyday reality, that of Google Maps, and shows how personal narratives remain obscure and elusive to the satellite lens. The multimodal landscape of “Map of a Lost Soul” can be associated with different categories of my proposed taxonomy, as it involves pre-existing maps (first category) that appear in the published outcome (third category), albeit partly modified, and is multimodal (fourth category) due to the presence of satellite imagery, photographic images, and verbal text.

The next piece I want to examine from *Where You Are* is Valeria Luiselli’s “Swings of Harlem,” with a focus on the interaction between the multiple modes of representation

that her visual map comprises, and the framing of this interplay via an elaborately designed dust jacket that displays a satellite image of Harlem in New York City. In her piece, Luiselli embraces the potential of satellite imagery and Polaroid photography alongside verbal writing. Within the booklet, each page spread operates with a degree of independence, with full-color or sepia-tone Polaroids positioned opposite the inscribed verbal text (Figure 5). Spatial information on the upper part of the page attaches the story to a particular location, energizing it with Luiselli's narrative.

In an interview with Lily Meyer (2019), Luiselli reveals the process of creating "Swings of Harlem":

Visual Editions asked me to write a visual map, and I decided to make it a map of swings in Harlem. My daughter was little, and I was a student, and I only had so many hours of day care. I just decided that I couldn't work against the time I had, so I needed to work with it, to integrate her into the project. We went around for months, taking pictures of every swing in Harlem. She had fun fooling around with the Polaroid, and then while she was swinging, I took notes. I think that's a place you can write from: not insulating yourself from noise and mess and distraction, but integrating them.

Bearing in mind the properties of Polaroid photographs as singular material objects transfixed in time, Luiselli integrates the conditions of creating the particular visual map into her narrative, which resonates with what several scholars (Caquard and Cartwright 2014; Rossetto 2014; Kitchin 2010; Kitchin and Dodge 2007) have identified as a post-representational turn in cartographic theory: a shift in focus from the narrative displayed *in* the maps to a narrative *of* the maps. In particular, Sébastien Caquard and William Cartwright posit that in post-representational cartography, "the focus is more on the process of mapmaking and map use rather than on the cartographic form" (2014, 104). Luiselli embeds the conditions of the creative process into the outcome of the visual map and, while the surface of the inner pages does not feature a map, "Swings of Harlem" is the only piece in *Where You Are* that is encased in a dust jacket of its own, where the reader encounters a low-contrast, grayscale satellite map of

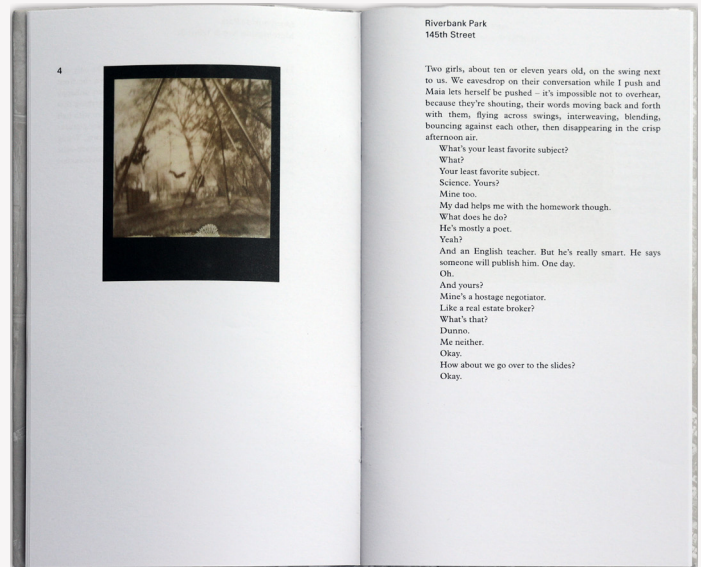


Figure 5. Polaroid photographs and verbal writing in Valeria Luiselli's "Swings of Harlem."

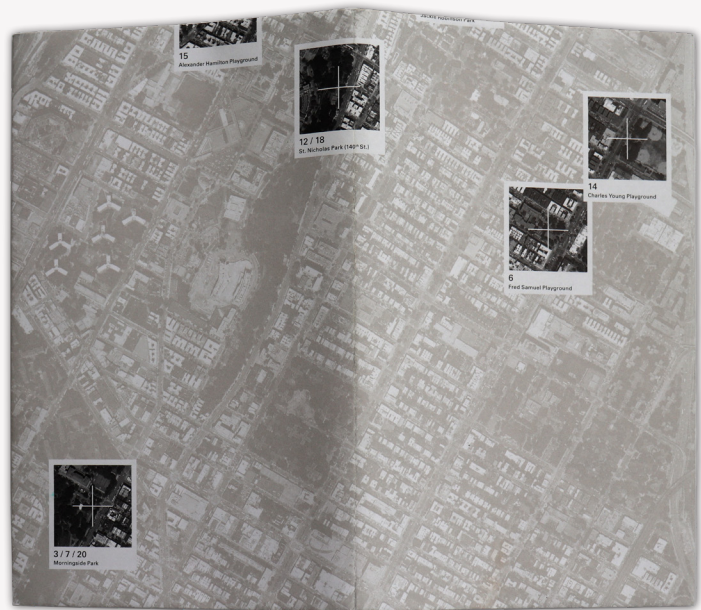


Figure 6. Grayscale satellite imagery and pinned reproductions of Polaroid photographs on the dust jacket of Valeria Luiselli's "Swings of Harlem."

Harlem, overlaid with Polaroid-shaped pins that highlight the places mentioned in the narrative (Figure 6).

In addition, the front and back flaps of the jacket are sealed along the top and bottom, and are wide enough to "house" a Polaroid. Luiselli and the publisher, Visual Editions, have collaborated to use clever design in order to draw attention to the capacity of the dust jacket to function not

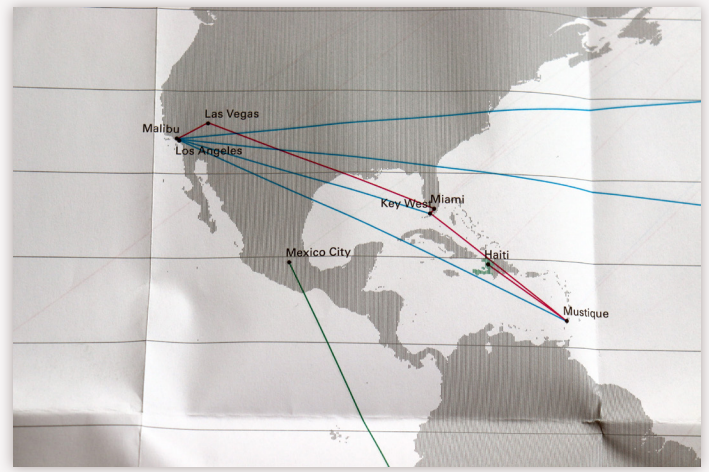
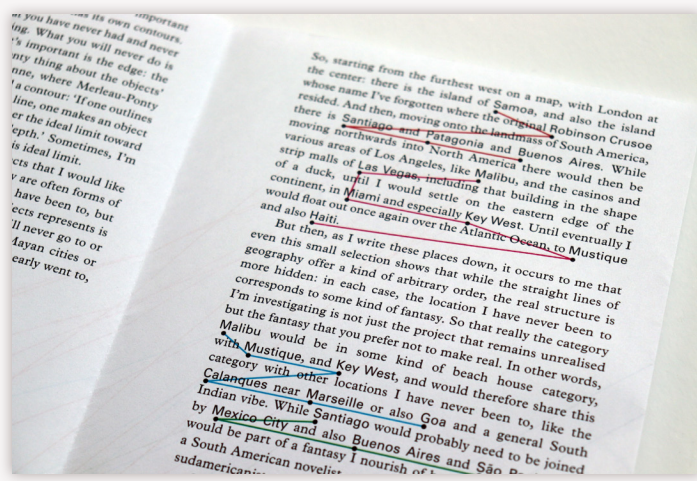


Figure 7. The use of color in Adam Thirlwell's "Places I've Nearly Been to But Have Not."

only as an informative (and protective) surface, but as an integral narrative element. This example suggests wider possibilities for print-based narratives.¹³ Luiselli's creative interplay of dust jacket, Polaroid photography, and satellite imagery, yield a site where cartography, the literary, and photography inform as well as confront one another, shaping an intriguing multimodal landscape. "Swings of Harlem" can be placed in different categories of my proposed taxonomy, as it involves a pre-existing map (first category) that is present in the published outcome in processed form (third category), and features a combination of different meaning-making resources (fourth category) as composite elements of its multimodal character.

The creative engagements with maps encountered in *Where You Are* not only involve material from technologically advanced ecologies such as satellite imagery, but also pay tribute to the traditional format of the printed road map, which is employed in the design of Adam Thirlwell's piece, titled "Places I've Nearly Been to But Have Not."¹⁴ Thirlwell's contribution is particularly inventive, an unbound piece that unfolds as a large-format print map, designed to operate in a space wider than that of the typical page in *Where You Are*. When opened completely, blocks of verbal text run horizontally above a world map, creating a deceptively rigid segregation of modes. However, Thirlwell utilizes the transparency of the printed page in order to link the verbal text and the world map: colored lines connect the names of cities mentioned in each trip,

superimposed upon the verbal text, while the same colors are also employed in the lines that connect the respective cities on the world map, color coding them (Figure 7).

The colored lines breach the separation of text and map by adding a further layer of inscription. They invite the reader's eye to navigate the surface differently, away from the rigid structure of the map and verbal text, and show how color can not only "frame and highlight" (Kress 2010, 1), but also operate as a cohesive device. The design of "Places I've Nearly Been to But Have Not" harnesses the potential of the material page, engineering a creative interplay, in yet another way: the back side of the piece features colored lines against a white background. Held up to the light, the semiopaque paper permits the visibility of both sides, and the reader sees the colored lines directly connect the verbal text with the cities located on the map, enabling a transition from conjuring specific locations verbally to visually substantiating the route across them (Figure 8).

In terms of its classification in my proposed taxonomy, the map-based story that Thirlwell has created can be said to belong to the second and third categories, as it involves a map embedded in the creative process, and which is present in the published outcome, respectively. The multimodality of "Places I've Nearly Been to But Have Not" (fourth category) is evidenced not only in the presence of the world map and that of verbal text, but also in the use of color.

13. In the last few years, attention has been given by scholars and authors to this area. George Thomas Tanselle (2001) has urged the field of book history to cease disregarding book jackets. Nina Nørgaard (2019) investigates them from a multimodal stylistics perspective, while Peter Mendelsund and David J. Alworth (2020) explore dust jackets in conjunction with book covers and art. Moreover, the deep integration of covers into the narrative of several multimodal novels reveals their significant narrative potential, one that Luiselli's "Swings of Harlem" emphasizes.

14. Joe Dunthorne's "Ghost Pots" also appears in this format, adopting a metafictional tone in the verbal text as well as in the map drawn.

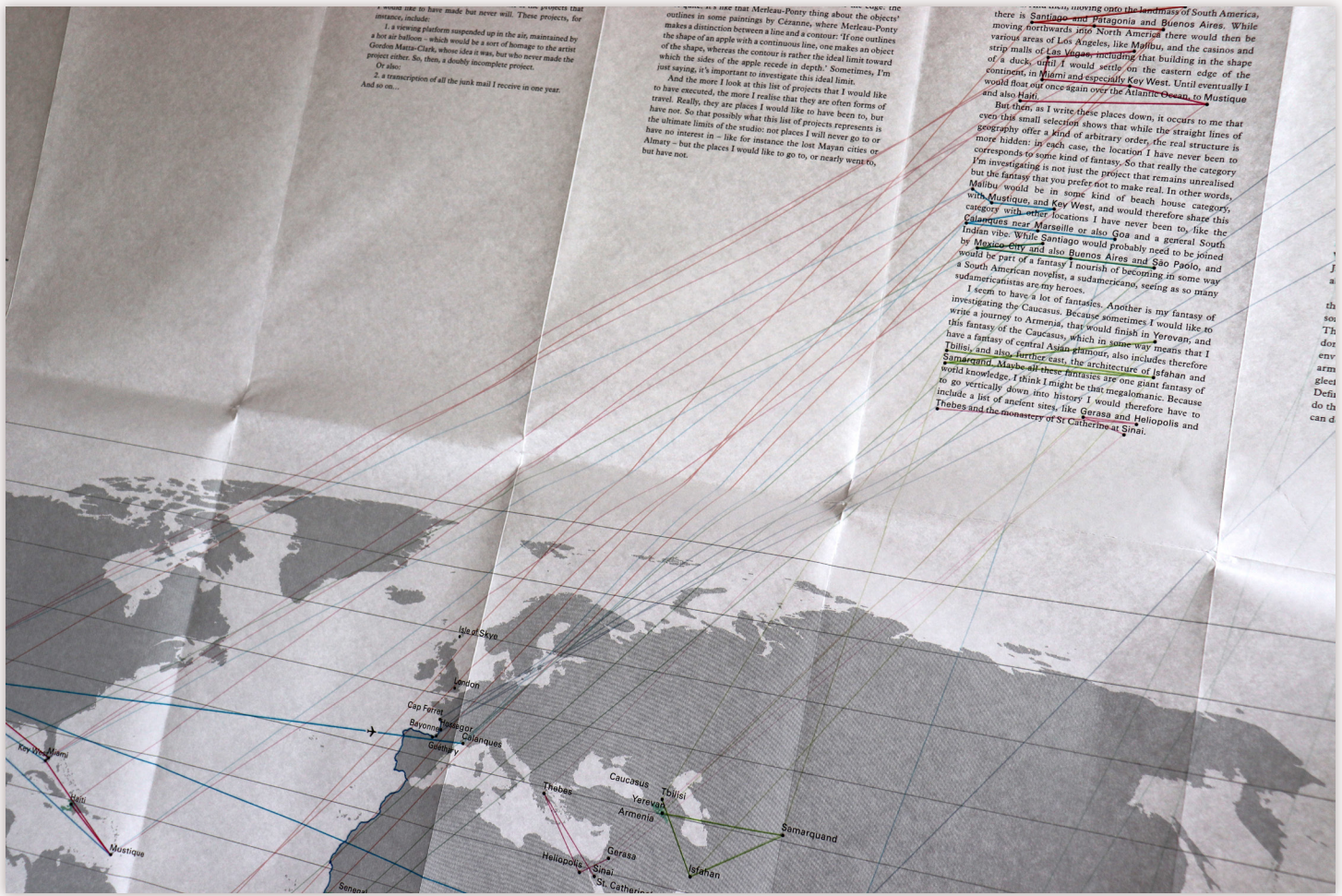


Figure 8. Design connecting verbal text with locations on a world map in Adam Thirlwell's "Places I've Nearly Been to But Have Not"

These three selected pieces from the collection *Where You Are* bring to the fore the significance of book design in the conceptualization and production of a multimodal literary text. Approaching a map-based narrative from varying

perspectives, Aridjis, Luiselli, and Thirlwell compose stories that sustain collaborations between different artistic forces, invite cross-discipline scholarly work, and push the boundaries of experimentation in literary cartography.

CONCLUSION

AS THE INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN literature and cartography increasingly manifest themselves in digital media and platforms, the collection *Where You Are* highlights the significant potential that print-based literary texts hold as terrains of creative experimentation. Positioned within the framework of multimodal literary texts of the early twenty-first century, *Where You Are* allows cross-disciplinary critical observations to emerge while it opens up avenues for artistic collaboration that seemed foreclosed. The growing genre of multimodal novels adds new dimensions to the long tradition of literature's engagement with maps, and conceptual publications such as *Where You Are* challenge conventions and push the boundaries of how that

engagement takes place. As a consequence, they herald a change in our understanding of maps in literary texts, one predicated on two fundamental principles: that the role of maps is integral to the literary narrative, and that the design practices employed in such texts impact significantly upon the representation of the map that the reader encounters.

In this article I have proposed a refinement of existing taxonomic classifications for the relationship between maps and literary texts. In particular, I have identified five categories: maps as inception, maps that are embedded in the creative process, maps that appear in the published works,

maps that are present in multimodal literary texts, and literary texts that consider maps as both the foundation and the endpoint of a creative process, of which *Where You Are* constitutes a prime example. In addition, I propose that scholarly work on maps in literature take into consideration the practices that are operative in multimodal literature, and henceforth approach maps in literary texts with principles that derive from this perspective. The phrase found in this article's title, "maps *after* multimodal literature," does not indicate that multimodal literature has reached an end, but rather points to a broader understanding of literary texts and their composite elements (including maps, verbal text, and so on) that is irrevocably affected by the practices and meaning-making strategies encountered in multimodal literary texts.

Within this framework of experimentation and multimodality, the examination of *Where You Are* is relevant as it

sheds light on cross-disciplinary sensibilities and collaborations that are operative in the conceptualization, production, and reception levels of the creative process. The diversity of map-based stories that comprise *Where You Are* reveals the untapped potential that cartography holds for literary texts and suggests further critical territories for re-positioning literary texts and storytelling practices in the digital age.

By approaching maps in fiction through multimodality, contemporary literary and cartographic engagements acquire a renewed understanding of their narrative operations in the digital age. And while literary and cartographic narratives interrogate the stability of topographical representations, experimentation in these realms reminds us that our perception of space remains varied, contingent, and multimodal.

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