SGK-Herbsttagung 2014

“Kunst und Kartografie”

Cartographic Strategies in Fiction

Christina Ljungberg
Macrobius’ map after Crete of Mallos’ Earth globe, 425 AD
Commentary on the Dreams of Scipio (Africanus)
The Shape of the Promised Land
Ireland 750 AD

Irish monks trying to make sense of *The Book of Joshua* in order to disambiguate the Bible’s textual inconsistencies about how Israel was divided among its 12 tribes
Why is the use of maps in fiction so effective?

- because of the intermedial tension generated by the interplay between the two sign systems, cartography and writing
- with the nature of maps as mediated, ‘extended’ seeing
- with the way maps relate to their objects, that is, to the known, unknown or merely imaginary world
Historical maps

- Avoiding censorship
- Documentation
- Mirror the narrative organization
- Question concepts like ‘authenticity’ and ‘exactitude’ and discuss them
- Map emotions
Sir Thomas More, *Utopia* (1518)
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)
So geographers, in Afric maps
With savage pictures fill their gaps
And o’er uninhabitable downs;
Place elephants for want of towns!

Jonathan Swift, *On Poetry, A Rhapsody*
(1733/1983, 526)
World map in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)
La Carte du Tendre in Mlle de Scudéry’s Clélie (1654)
Modernist maps ca. 1880-1950s

- Quest narratives
- Source of motivation
- Depiction of a detailed fictional world
- Visualization of the itinerary on which the plot hinges
- Interactive device for reader involvement
R. L. Stevenson
The *Treasure Island* map (1881)
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1903-4)
Arthur Conan Doyle – *The Lost World* (1912)
Arthur Conan Doyle – *The Lost World* (1912)
Thomas Hardy’s Wessex as a reorganization of actual space into a fictive geography
Postmodern maps ca 1980

• Discussing metaphysical problems of writing and being
• Disclosing social planning or ideological inventions
• Visualizing diagrammatic features of the text
• Woman as map / colonized nature
Professor Stillman’s ‘walked maps’ in Paul Auster’s *City of Glass* (1988)
Aritha van Herk,
Places Far From Ellesmere (1990)
Postcolonial maps ca 1970

• show the consequences of mapping
• question the unreliability of official records
• problematize mythical mapping
• discuss the postcolonial body as (colonised) landscape
• expose maps and mapping as ideological processes
Rudy Wiebe, front map of *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973)
Rudy Wiebe, epilogue map of *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973) in which the Indians have been ‘boxed in’ in the newly created Indian reserves
This is not a map of Karachi. It's Karachi South. Don't you want to know your city more?

What about you?

Kamila Shamsie, Kartography (2002)
Michael Ondaatje,
Running in the Family
(1982)
Using cartographic strategies in fiction – that is, thinking cartographically – requires an understanding of:

- how the map functions as a medium
- why a map is different from an image or other hybrid media
- its usefulness as a narrative prop
- why a map is never a mere illustration but generally functions as a convenient metaphor to compare the fictional world with our physical real world
- how the map engages the reader in the production of meaning
References: