

# ***Cultural Mappings: Cities, Landscapes and Memory***

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Maxwell Fry Room (G23), School of Architecture, University of Liverpool

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## **Abstracts**

### ***Musicians' Maps of Liverpool***

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In this paper we discuss methodological issues raised by our current research on music-making in Liverpool, which makes use of maps and mapping to explore how popular music characterises cities and urban environments. The research is being conducted in partnership with English Heritage and National Museums Liverpool as part of an AHRC funded project. The project explores how popular music characterises cities by focusing on musicians and how they interact with the built urban environment as part of their music-making practices, and by mapping their music-related activities, routes, perspectives and memories.

During the course of the project (now ¾ complete) we have engaged with a variety of approaches including creating interactive digital (touch screen) map displays of Liverpool's popular music heritage (created with National Museums Liverpool), GIS generated maps (created with assistance from postgraduate students in the University of Liverpool's Civic Design programme), and hand-drawn maps (created for us during interviews with musicians). This paper will discuss the strengths and weakness of these approaches as we have engaged with them in our struggle to represent what are, inevitably, very messy mapping and ethnographic research processes.

### ***Textual, Cartographical & Digital Space: Refocusing the Literary GIS***

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Writing in 1999, the cultural geographer, Denis Cosgrove, asserted that: 'The most challenging mappings today are found in the creative and imaginative work of artists, architects and designers'. Over the past ten years, many scholars in the arts and humanities have attempted to move towards the creation of their own 'challenging'

mappings by incorporating the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology into qualitative, as well as quantitative, research; and, today, digital map-making is used in increasingly exploratory ways to examine different kinds of spatial experience and representation.

This speculative paper – which emerges out of a major grant application recently submitted to the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) – hopes to raise conceptual issues regarding the future potentiality of GIS in literary studies. The presentation will begin with a brief introduction to ‘Mapping the Lakes’: a project, funded by the British Academy, which sought to develop a methodology for literary GIS through the mapping of two textual accounts of tours of the Lake District. It will then go on to highlight how the proposed project will seek to transcend the cartographical and conceptual limitations of this pilot project through the detailed focus on the spatial texts of a single writer: the Romantic poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). Through investigation of Coleridge’s series of environmental Notebooks, the project will hope to construct a holistic theoretical model of literary spatiality which works on a range of interconnected levels: from the embodied experiences of the historical writer situated in, and moving through, space; to the spatialised responses of the twenty-first century reader. The use of GIS technology will be embedded within this holistic spatial model as we will endeavour to use digital map-making in exploratory ways. That is to say, we are keen to create ‘mappings’ which are predicated upon our spatial reading of the Notebooks rather than what Deleuze and Guattari would refer to as the mere ‘tracing’ of the textual representation of space; we are keen to explore the possibilities of cognitive, egocentric and geocentric, as well as cartographic, mappings. Ultimately, then, this paper will be theoretical and provisional rather than practical and conclusive; yet its primary aim is to indicate how (funding permitting) the Coleridge project will seek to open up thinking about the processes and purposes of literary map-making within digital space.

### *GIS in the Digital Humanities*

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The use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) has become well established in historical research, especially in those aspects of history concerned with the analysis of statistical sources such as the census, or cartographic ones such as old maps. This work has had a number of successes in demonstrating the importance of geography in historical analyses and has developed into a field in its own right known as Historical GIS. More recently there have been calls for GIS to be used across the humanities. If this is to happen approaches to GIS need to be developed that allow it to be used with a range of non-quantitative sources. Texts are the type of source most widely used in the humanities. This paper will review how GIS has been used in historical research to date and discuss how it can be applied to new disciplines across the humanities.

***The Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project***

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The Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project (MHCP) is an innovative survey, which covers the whole of the urban and rural landscape of the five local authorities of Merseyside.

Funded by English Heritage with assistance from five local authorities, the project is due for completion in 2009. Central to MHCP is the development of methodologies designed to explore and define the historic character of a large urban conurbation. The method chosen to characterise (define and explain) the existing landscape is applicable to smaller historic towns, large urban centres (identifying historic centres, urban growth and suburban development) and also the surrounding more rural areas. The project uses digital mapping technology to define and describe how the past landscape has influenced what we see around us surviving in today's landscape. It consults a series of historic maps, aerial photographs and the Merseyside Historic Environment Record to provide information on the history and archaeological interest in an area.

The presentation given on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2009 will introduce the Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project, giving a brief resume of the work undertaken so far and suggestions for future work.

The methodology of Historic Landscape Characterisation will be explained through a 'broad-brush' look at Merseyside (particularly Liverpool and Wirral).

The presentation will then take an 'in-depth' look at Wirral from 1750 to the present day, using examples from Egerton Park, Bromborough Pool, Greasby and Birkenhead. These examples will focus on historic change – in urban expansion, housing and social history.

***Mapping the City in Film: Amateur Cine Culture and Urban Memory***

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Although the term 'mapping' has become something of a well-rehearsed trope in recent studies on film, the use of cartographic resources to analyse and contextualise film texts and practices remains comparatively under-developed. Scholars such as Robert C. Allen, Jeffrey Klenotic and Kate Bowles have started to explore the potential role of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software in charting early social geographies of cinema consumption. However, the full scope and potential of GIS-related film research, particularly in relation to film and landscape historiography, has yet to be realised in any significant degree. We argue that this can in part be attributed to a general under-utilisation of empirical methods in extant research on film, much of which has remained dominated by textual analysis and representation at the expense of broader

interdisciplinary considerations of the social, spatial and historical contexts within which film texts are embedded.

In this paper we demonstrate ways in which both *cartographic* and *ethnographic* modes of analyses may be productively brought to bear on research into film, space and urban memory. Focusing on research conducted in Liverpool and Merseyside, in the first half of the paper we examine the extent to which GIS and database resources can provide a hitherto untapped means of comprehensively analysing film images of a specific place and region, thereby drawing correlations between a range of film genres and practices, different spatial formations (urban, cinematic, ethnographic, geographic, etc.); and shifting historical patterns of socio-spatial activity as ‘mapped’ and collated in over 1700 film titles shot in and around Liverpool. The works of amateur filmmakers- both documentary and fiction- have proved particularly illuminating in terms of mapping the cinematic geographies of Merseyside and have formed the basis of further investigations into issues concerning film and urban memory. In the second half of the paper we discuss how our own ethnographic research into cine-club activity can provide valuable insights into ways in which ideas of place and locality have been historically negotiated and articulated. This will be illustrated with an early demonstration of how primary research into amateur film activity through printed publications and scrapbooks could usefully be combined with original interviews and contemporary footage of key urban locations. Overall, this paper attempts to highlight ways in which the prompting and cultivation of urban memory in film can inform broader historiographical insights into the social and cultural geographies of urban living.

### ***Mapping Performance Culture: Nottingham 1857-1867***

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The ‘Mapping Performance Culture: Nottingham 1857-1867’ project has as its objective the creation of a web-based, interactive map of the mid-nineteenth-century town, which will enable the user to explore the environment of Nottingham and see spatial connections between key sites of performance, both theatrical and civic. As questions of space and proximity are central to the choice making processes of both venue managers and potential spectators, the creation of a resource that organises spatial and socio-economic information about the town breaks new ground for theatre research, and aims to allow us to ask questions about the ways, for example, in which audiences were attracted to and shared between different kinds of venues and performances within the town.

As the project reaches completion, in July 2009, this paper reflects on the development of the interactive map and database of performance, taking as its main example the Christmas period of 1865-66 when the first pantomime was performed in Nottingham’s newly built Theatre Royal. The concept of mapping is here employed in two ways: in a geographical sense, to examine the space and place of the New Theatre Royal, and illustrate the sites of potential alternative performances through which the audience of *The House that Jack Built* would make their way to that theatre, and to this

particular performance; and in a metaphorical sense, to draw out the network of intertheatrical connections between this pantomime and other performances, and between this pantomime and its varied audiences, which enable us to begin to map those potential spectators against the range of social and cultural contours existing within the nineteenth-century town.