

Please cite the Published Version

Cooper, David (2020) The Problem of Precedent: Mapping the Post-Romantic Lake District. In: Romantic Cartographies: Mapping, Literature, Culture, 1789–1832. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 9781108472388

Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Version: Accepted Version

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The Problem of Precedent: Mapping the Post-Romantic Lake District

David Cooper

*[. . .] He made report
That once, while there he plied his studious work
Within that canvas Dwelling, colours, lines,
And the whole surface of the out-spread map,
Became invisible.*¹

Introduction: 'Mapmindedness'

In a 2009 manifesto for map studies, Martin Dodge et al argue that there is a need for the work of scholars to be informed by the practices and processes of creative cartographers. Noting the proliferation of maps and mappings in contemporary art practice, the geographers argue that 'creative possibilities [. . .] ought to inform our studies too, and that we ought not to separate the analytical from the creative'.² This chapter picks up on this braiding of the artistic and the analytical by examining how creative cartographies can open up critical thinking about mapping, place, and Romantic writing. More specifically, this chapter expands the literary historical focus of the collection by interrogating how three post-war landscape writers – Alfred Wainwright, Sean Borodale, and Richard Skelton – have each embedded maps and mapping practices within their creative responses to a cardinal Romantic site: the English Lake District. This chapter, then, thinks critically about the work of three writer-cartographers; but, in turn, it argues that reading this creative work can facilitate critical thinking about place-specific Romantic writing.

There are points of imaginative and formal connection between these three writers whose work, to date, has received surprisingly little scholarly attention. The work of all three is characterised by an attentiveness to the textural particularities of the Cumbrian topography; and they each share a preoccupation with what it means for the human body to move through, up, and across this landscape. Perhaps more importantly, their works are unified by a shared difficult-to-defineness: a resistance to conventional generic categorisation that is evident in their mutual merging of textual and visual, literary, and cartographic strategies. Yet, in spite of these nodes of connection, it is also important to acknowledge that Wainwright, Borodale, and Skelton are radically different landscape writers with radically different creative agendas; and, crucially,

Borodale and Skelton – in the work considered in this chapter – are responding to particular commissions. So, although Wainwright, Borodale, and Skelton, each gravitate towards maps and mapping practices in order to situate themselves and their work within the intertextual space of the Romanticised Lake District, they each display different attitudes towards what Robert Macfarlane has described as ‘the problem of precedent’.³ What is more, they each conceive of and utilise the figure of the map in heterogeneous ways. Integral to this chapter’s literary geographical readings, therefore, is the concept of ‘mapmindedness’: a term coined by the cartographic historian, P. D. A. Harvey, which is foundational to Damian Walford Davies’s theorisation of the multiple, slippery ways in which maps and mappings can be framed within literary contexts.⁴ Walford Davies’s pluralistic understanding of literary maps allows for ‘maps and mappings both actual and figurative, textual and graphic’; it takes in ‘literal physical entities, verbal choreographies and textual and visual figures’ (12). This chapter subscribes to Walford Davies’s flexible conceptual framing of creative cartographical practice and, in following this literary geographical lead, will suggest that the work of all three landscape writers raises ontological questions about what might be defined as a literary map. By extension, the critical discussion is informed by a preoccupation with the dialectics of surfaces and depths. Cartographic practice necessarily involves, of course, the flattening of the three-dimensionality of the world onto a plane, representational space. In the work of these three writer-cartographers, however, the map is a representational space in which tensions between horizontality and verticality, surface and depth are played out as they variously seek to locate their hybrid practices in relation to the Romantic literary history of this particular place.

‘Maps are my reading’: Alfred Wainwright’s Performatively Deep Mappings

As Julia S. Carlson asserts, it is important, when examining the spatial history of the Lakes, to avoid placing literary writing and guide books in separate, hermetically sealed spheres of cultural categorisation.⁵ As a result, it seems essential, when thinking about post-Romantic Lake District literary map-making, to begin with Alfred Wainwright (1907-91): that ‘indefatigable pedestrian’ who, between 1955 and 1966, documented a total of 214 high places across the seven volumes of his *Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells*.⁶ Wainwright’s famously fastidious practices have shaped the way the Lakes is perceived within the national geographical imagination. Yet in spite of this, Wainwright’s *oeuvre* has, to date, received little literary historical or cultural geographical consideration. Perhaps even more surprising is that Wainwright’s singular mapping methods have yet to be extensively scrutinised by cartographic historians or critical cartographers.

Wainwright's characteristic method is to dedicate several pages to each of the fells that he chooses to document. More specifically, he documents each fell through prose descriptions of natural features and a combination of self-styled 'Illustrations' including topographical drawings, maps, diagrams of ascents, details of the summit, viewfinder panoramas, and ridge routes. Through a range of visualisation practices, then, Wainwright exhaustively maps each fell from multiple angles and locations; and the cumulative effect of this multi-perspectival mapping is a textual-cartographic performance of the writer's intimate geographical knowledge of the Cumbrian uplands. Wainwright's difficult-to-categorise work thereby offers a detailed mapping of place: an exhaustive documentation of the uplands that is predicated on both a long-term personal commitment to the landscape and an attentiveness to the textural particularities of each fell. What is more, the 'Illustrations' that feed into this mapping are characterised by cartographic innovation. His 'diagrams of ascent', for instance, blend a series of perspectival shifts onto the one representational plane. The purpose is primarily practical as Wainwright's intention is to show walkers both the whole route of ascent and the outline of the summit to which they are heading. Yet, clearly, these diagrams are also creative acts as Wainwright has necessarily exerted a degree of imaginative energy, as well as practical effort, to envision the Lakeland landscape in this way. Wainwright's 'Illustrations', therefore, are, simultaneously, utilitarian guides, creative cartographies, and egocentric maps. Yet perhaps their defining characteristic is the way that various kinds of depth – perspectival, geographical, temporal, and emotional – are conveyed on the plain surface of the page.

How did Wainwright locate these cartographic innovations, however, in relation to Romantic ways of seeing and representing the Lakes? He opens *Memoirs of a Fellwanderer* by asserting that 'the small print and symbols of Ordnance Survey maps [are] always my favourite literature'.⁷ Earlier in his life, the map's integration of verbal and visual signifiers had facilitated the imagining of geographical experiences yet-to-be-had; their synthesis of place-names and symbols were read in anticipation of another weekend spent out on the fells. In his self-proclaimed 'Twilight Years', though, maps served as Wainwright's repositories of spatial memories: 'I still sit for hours with familiar maps open before me: I know them so well that the loss of detail doesn't matter, even as a blur they evoke vivid memories of happy wanderings' (1-2). Here, then, Wainwright frames maps-as-texts: they 'have always been my favourite literature. I would always rather study a map than read a book' (*Memoirs* 73). Yet, in spite of this cultural privileging of the map, Wainwright does intermittently reveal his familiarity with the canon of Lake District landscape writing. In a letter sent to Eric Walter Maudsley in May 1942, for instance, Wainwright meditates on his recent relocation to Kendal from his home town of

Blackburn: ‘Sometimes I look in the excellent Public Library, a treasury of Lakeland lore, and bring home the books I love best to read’.⁸ Wainwright, however, does not mention the eighteenth-century topographical writings of William Gilpin or Thomas West, Thomas Gray or William Hutchinson; nor does he cite Wordsworth or Coleridge, Southey or de Quincey. Instead, he contrarily reserves his enthusiasm for J. B. Baddeley’s *Thorough Guide to the English Lake District*: a popular yet essentially functional guide book that was originally published in 1880.⁹ Yet, in spite of this apparent eschewal of the region’s Romantic past, Wainwright declared, in a separate letter to Maudsley, that: ‘Future generations, when they think of Wordsworth and Southey and Coleridge and de Quincey, will think of Wainwright also’.¹⁰ There is a degree of performativity shaping this knowingly grandiose claim; but, at the same time, it demonstrates that Wainwright *was* conscious of his prospective position in an exclusively male line of Lake District landscape writers.

It is possible to frame Wainwright’s performed disinterest – and his valorisation of Baddeley’s *Thorough Guide* – within a complex entanglement of social, political and biographical contexts and dislocations.¹¹ Yet, crucially, Wainwright does not register that Baddeley’s own account of the Lakes emerged out of earlier ways of seeing the landscape of the Lakes and earlier modes of cultural tourism. Moreover, Wainwright does not acknowledge that his conceptualisation of the area as a bounded, Edenic space – a geographical trope which runs through both his publications and private correspondence – is imaginatively, if unconsciously, indebted to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century constructions of the region. This failure to register that his own landscape practices and aesthetics are products of the complex layering of earlier cultural responses is similarly evident when he recollects his first vision of the landscape of the south Lakes from the relatively modest elevation of Orrest Head above Windermere:

We went on, climbing steadily under a canopy of foliage, the path becoming rougher, and then, quite suddenly, we emerged from the shadows of the trees and were on a bare headland and, as though a curtain had dramatically been torn aside, beheld a truly magnificent view. It was a moment of magic, a revelation so unexpected that I stood transfixed, unable to believe my eyes. (*Memoirs* 23)

It is a self-mythologising remembrance that carries clear echoes of Wordsworth’s recollection, in ‘Home at Grasmere’, of first gazing down upon the paradisaical Vale of Grasmere from an ‘aerial’ ‘station’ half-way up Loughrigg:¹²

And, with a sudden influx overpowered

At sight of this seclusion, he forgot
His haste, for hasty had his footsteps been
As boyish as his pursuits; and sighing said,
‘What happy fortune were it here to live! (lines 5 – 9)

Both Wordsworth and Wainwright turn to the language of the sacred to recall those epiphanic moments at which they first viewed the environments that they would go on to call home. There is a key spatial distinction. That is to say, Wordsworth’s lyrical poem is preoccupied with verticality as he remembers looking down into a clearly delimited space and attempts to unravel his complicated, and at times conflicted, deep-rooted attachment to a particular *place*. Wainwright, on the other hand, imaginatively reconstructs gazing horizontally across the Cumbrian uplands and his first identification with the wider *landscape* of the Lake District. Yet, in spite of this vertical-horizontal distinction, Wainwright still reinscribes an archetypally Romantic response to the geography of this corner of north-west England.

Wainwright frequently frames his own wonder-in-landscape in terms of love: a word that is, according to Clare Palmer and Emily Brady, central to this writer’s ‘environmental identity’.¹³ Yet in a letter to W. R. Mitchell, Wainwright reveals another - inextricably interlinked - aspect of his vision of the Cumbrian landscape: ‘The map of Lakeland had now become a vast territory for exploration, and I planned my walks as conducting a military campaign. You remember the war maps, the black arrows of advancing troops, the pincer movements, the mopping-up operations?’¹⁴ Once again, this letter can be read as an epistolary performance. However, the instinctively militaristic, masculinist imagery reveals much about Wainwright’s impulse to perceive the Lakes as a landscape to be conquered. By extension, then, his subsequent map-making, as well as his tireless tabulation of geographical data, can be seen to have surprising, and unsettling, correspondences with the kind of geographical imaginaries and vocabularies more ordinarily associated with colonialist cartographic projects. In his letter to Mitchell, Wainwright goes on to clarify that his ‘thoughts were not of war, but utterly at peace’ (95). The qualification, though, reads as something of an afterthought. This private letter confirms that Wainwright’s mapping project is a sustained – and, at times, even aggressive - act of imaginative appropriation. Emptying the landscape of its Romantic past, Wainwright strives to claim, through inventive forms of creative map-making, the Lake District as his own. Yet, in asserting – through a synthesis of cartography and text - the depth of both his geographical knowledge and long-term landscape-attachment, Wainwright ultimately slips over the surfaces of the region’s literary past.

‘Walking to Paradise’: Sean Borodale’s Surface Mappings

In contrast, Sean Borodale’s ‘Walking to Paradise’ (1999) is a textual mapping that is preoccupied with surfaces, of various kinds, but remains underpinned by the artist’s acute awareness of both the region’s literary history and mapping-as-process. In 1999, Borodale – an artist who moves restlessly between poetry, visual art, and film – was Northern Arts Fellow at the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere. During this Fellowship, Borodale curated *Walking to Paradise*: a multi-media installation for which four artists – Luke Dickinson, Jane Hill, Kabir Hussain, and Borodale himself - reflected upon the Wordsworths’ domestic place-making following their move to Dove Cottage in December 1799. Borodale based his own response upon the 137-mile walking tour of the Lakes undertaken by Wordsworth and Coleridge (and, in part, Wordsworth’s brother John) between 30 October and 17 November 1799, during which Wordsworth spotted Dove Cottage for the first time. In preparing ‘Walking to Paradise’, Borodale retraced the route taken by Wordsworth and Coleridge: a ramble which took them from Temple Sowerby to Pooley Bridge, via Kentmere, Hawkshead, Grasmere, Keswick, Ouse Bridge, Buttermere, Ennerdale, Wasdale, Rosthwaite, Threlkeld and Patterdale. In the exhibition catalogue, however, Borodale explains how the original ‘route was divided into short stretches and their order shuffled, allowing seasonal and chronological irregularities to occur in the final edited shape, in which the original sequence of the Wordsworth-Coleridge tour was restored’. ¹⁵ It is a knowingly ludic act in which geographical space is made analogous to a pack of playing cards and through which the reader’s expectations of the temporal sequentiality of landscape writing is destabilised. Furthermore, it is a non-linearity that problematizes the sense of teleological progression implied in the title, ‘Walking to Paradise’, and that similarly underpins the overarching spatial trajectory of Wordsworth’s ‘Home at Grasmere’. The resultant, ‘restored’ text consists of the exhaustive field notes that Borodale recorded as he walked through the Lake District landscape. These notes were later transferred from pocket-books to twelve sheets of paper which were then folded to replicate a series of 800 x 1100 millimetre Ordnance Survey-style ‘Maps’.

Map 01 begins with a sequence of staccato sentences that establish Borodale’s methodological approach:

A circle of stones set into the ground like teeth. One larger stone in the ring, marks scratched over its face, the scratches paler than the stone’s weathered crust. Walk. Dark

morning. Green levels behind you. Trees uphill, your left-hand view. Copse of black spiky trees. Ounces of pale blue sky. The wind facing you.¹⁶

The reader is not furnished with information that might locate the speaker in either space or time: there are no place-names to anchor the text in real-world geography; nor is there any indication as to when this walk was undertaken. Instead, the reader is bombarded with environmental images as Borodale tirelessly notes the phenomena he encounters when moving through the Cumbrian landscape. Yet, amidst what Tim Edensor refers to as the ‘flow of experience’ generated by the rhythms of walking, the reader is able to discern certain topographical features.¹⁷ The text begins, for instance, with the speaker noting the formation, and telluric rootedness, of a stone circle that stands before him. This is followed by a sentence that zooms in to focus on the ‘weathered crust’ of the stone that is placed at the centre of this circle: a perspectival shift that signals Borodale’s intention to document textural surfaces as he travels through the Cumbrian terrain. The reader may speculate as to whether Borodale is here referring to the late Neolithic Castlerigg Stone Circle near Kewstic; but, if that is the case, the text deliberately withholds the precise co-ordinates. It is a method, then, that privileges phenomena over place.

In the exhibition catalogue, Borodale explains his creative process: ‘Making studies [. . .] whilst walking is a deliberate attempt to get back to the basics of looking’ (15). In other words, he calls attention to his phenomenological impulse to remain unflaggingly attentive to the ‘thingness of the thing’ as the environment unfolds within the immediate orbit of his own body.¹⁸ Over the course of the twelve maps, the speaker’s eye is consistently drawn down to the flora and fauna at his feet as he walks across the landscape: in the textual space of just a few lines in Map 03, for instance, he documents ‘bougainvillea’, ‘stiff-petalled sweet peas’, ‘pineappleweed’, ‘red-elderberry umbels’, and ‘rose-tinted haws’. Moreover, he invariably moves beyond visual perception to record what the phenomenological geographer, Paul Rodaway, describes as the ‘sensuous geographies’ that unfold through the practice of pedestrianism.¹⁹ On the opening lines of Map 01, he responds to the embodied situatedness of being-in-landscape by describing the wind ‘filling up your ears’: an articulation of a ‘kind of intimate geography’ (Rodaway x) in which the boundary between self and world is dissolved. Elsewhere, Borodale demonstrates his interest in documenting ‘auditory geography’ (Rodaway 84): ‘Wet noises all around you. Ticking, popping, glugging’ (Map 01); ‘Sound is the changing tempo of falling raindrops which mass up on leaves and fall again bigger’ (Map 01). As a result, Borodale onomatopoeically records how his sense of place is shaped, at least in part, by the ways ‘auditory phenomena penetrate us from all directions at all times’ (Rodaway 92).

Although the approach is phenomenological, however, the creative method of notation simultaneously maps back onto the place-specific Romanticism that Borodale is explicitly retracing. Borodale's catalogue notes are prefaced by two epigraphic quotations. The second is Henry David Thoreau's assertion that: 'It is the bog in our brain and bowels, the primitive vigor of Nature in us, that inspires our dream' (14). More pertinently, the first quotation is an extract from *Biographia Literaria* (1817), in which Coleridge reflects on his use of the 'pencil and memorandum-book' on his 'almost daily' walks through the landscape: 'I was making studies, as the artists call them, and often moulding my thoughts into verse, with the objects and imagery immediately before my senses' (14). The 1799 walking tour was 'Coleridge's first visit to the north' and Wordsworth's primary intention was to introduce his friend to the 'grand mountain scenery' of his native Cumbria.²⁰ Throughout the walk, Coleridge carried a pocket-book into which he jotted on-the-spot observations of an always-emerging topography: 'close by my left hand a rocky woody Hill, & behind it, half hidden by it, the violet crag of Grasmere'; 'I climb up the woody Hill & here have gained the Crummock Water'; 'Buttermere comes upon us, a fragment of it – the view enclosed by a huge Concave Semicircle'.²¹ By placing the two difficult-to-categorise texts side-by-side, therefore, it becomes evident that there are parallels between the in-the-field note-taking practices of Coleridge and Borodale. To be more precise, Borodale inherits Coleridge's preoccupation with the use of the note – that 'necessarily imperfect and fragmentary' form – to capture the processual, polysensory experience of moving-through-landscape: 'the constant pull', as Borodale puts it, 'of the distance ahead that moves us on' (15).²² By extension, Borodale follows Coleridge's speculative interest in the possibility of the note as a literary form in its own right; a mode that allows for the textual mapping of the sequentiality of embodied experience.²³

There are also clear methodological distinctions between the two accounts. Revisiting the 1799 pocketbooks after encountering the nameless landscapes of Borodale's narrative-less 'Walking to Paradise', the reader becomes hypersensitive to Coleridge's predilection for noting the many toponyms that he has been taught by Wordsworth. Read in broadly psychological terms, this textual practice can be understood to be Coleridge's earnest attempt to deepen his understanding of the topography that had such a profound influence on the imaginative growth of his friend and collaborator. Rev. George Hartley Buchanan Coleridge, on the other hand, offers a more practical explanation when he asserts, with excessive confidence, that: 'No doubt he [Coleridge] intended to make a consecutive narrative of these memoranda, and publish it as a picturesque tour' (137). Ultimately, it is only possible to speculate on the reasons for this toponymical compulsion. What is of greater interest, then, is the way that, through the absence

of nomenclature, Borodale's 'Walking to Paradise' draws attention to Coleridge's practice of developing his geographical knowledge and understanding of the Lakes through the identification and documentation of place names. A reading of Borodale's act of creative remapping, therefore, provides a critical context for interpreting the textual geographies located within Coleridge's original pocketbooks.

A reading of 'Walking to Paradise' also opens up questions about the place-specific text that, perhaps surprisingly, does not explicitly inform Borodale's response to the bicentenary celebrations. The vision of a constantly unfolding Lake District landscape, that Borodale borrows from Coleridge, implicitly contrasts with the images of finality that are scattered through Wordsworth's 'Home at Grasmere'. On the one hand, Wordsworth's poem is a retrospective celebration of setting up a new domestic life in a seemingly utopian space. As Raimonda Modiano observes, however, the poet's recollections are almost invariably destabilised by 'a darker vision of Grasmere' in the form of a 'premonition that this newly found Eden is ruled by sacrifice and its corollary, violence'.²⁴ In other words, 'this paradise holds out the possibility of death as surely as the promise of life, and more disturbingly, cancels the very boundary that separates the living from the dying' (Modiano 485). Looking back, then, Wordsworth's remembrance of his relocation to Grasmere is characterised by dialectical pulls of space and place, potentiality and at-homeness. To return to Borodale's practice, the different models of space and spatial experience that are articulated by Coleridge (in 1799) and Wordsworth (in 'Home at Grasmere') are visually encoded in two maps that appear in an Appendix in the *Walking to Paradise* exhibition catalogue. These line-drawings map out two journeys: the tour of the Lakes undertaken by Wordsworth and Coleridge in October and November 1799; and the route from Sockburn to Grasmere followed by Wordsworth and Dorothy in the following month. Visually, the first drawing maps out a near figure-of-eight tour that playfully loops into and back out of the Lakes. The second, however, charts a linear journey with a clear start-point and, most crucially, a final resting-place. In other words, the line-drawing calls attention to Wordsworth's own retrospective description of the Vale of Grasmere, this 'small abiding-place of many men', as a 'termination, and a last retreat' ('Home at Grasmere', lines 165 – 66). By extension, these drawings also act as visual reminders of the significant shift that was to take place in Coleridge's geometric imagining of the Lakes: by the time of his walking tour of August 1802, his use of the neologism, 'circumcursion', indicates how, following his move to Keswick, the Lakes had become a site of entrapment as well as enrapture.²⁵

The question remains, though, as to how ‘Walking to Paradise’ functions as a series of *material* mappings. Borodale’s in-the-moment note-taking encapsulates the phenomenological polysensoriality of being-in-landscape in a way that cannot be achieved via the detached Cartesianism of conventional cartography. By extension, then, ‘Walking to Paradise’ can be read as an apparent privileging of the textual over the cartographic. This reading becomes problematised, however, when reflecting on the ‘spatial event’ of reading Borodale’s textual maps.²⁶ During the winter of 1999-2000, the twelve maps were unfolded to form one large text covering the length of a gallery wall in the Wordsworth Museum. The experience of encountering the work within the white cube of the gallery felt – in marked contradistinction to the sense of ongoing movement that characterises the textual content – disconcertingly static and fixed. Moreover, the visitor was implicitly invited to reflect upon the reading processes as no authorial guidance was offered as to how to approach such a large amount of documentary text. Was the reader expected to begin with Map 01 and to follow the text in a linear manner? Or was Borodale affording the reader the opportunity pick fragments of text at random in order to create an individual, serendipitous path through this textual thicket stripped of all temporal and spatial markers? The overall effect could be overwhelming as the viewer became lost within the ‘forest of signs’ – a term that Simon Morley applies to the comparable textual practices of the contemporary artist, Fiona Banner – on the gallery wall.²⁷ In the absence of cartographic conventions – ‘signs and collections of signs, laying out in graphical form indications of spatial relationships or placing into spatial other information with a locational attribute’²⁸ – the gallery wall was a blur of words.

Today, ‘Walking to Paradise’ can only be encountered in the reading rooms of the British Library or the Wordsworth Library, Grasmere. In the latter, the reader is permitted to unpack the maps from archival boxes and to unfold them onto the flat surface of the library reading table. It is an experience that acts as a reminder of the embodied, tactile pleasures of traditional map use. In spite of their apparent portability, however, a Borodale map does not function as an “‘immutable mobile’” that can contribute to the ‘spatial transfer of knowledge’.²⁹ Rather, once read, the ‘Walking to Paradise’ map is necessarily folded back into place and returned to the archival box. It is an act that assumes symbolic significance as Borodale’s fragmentary words are collapsed in on themselves, compartmentalised, and returned to the stacks. These are yet more words – and lots of them – to be added to the ever-expanding intertext of Lake District literature held within a library that is dedicated to the ongoing legacy of British Romanticism and, more specifically, the poetics of this particular landscape.

The 'Isness' of the River: Richard Skelton's Deep Mapping of Dunnerdale

If Borodale's 'Walking to Paradise' is informed by a preoccupation with surfaces, then the experimental practices of Richard Skelton are based on digging deep – imaginatively, historically, linguistically – into the landscape. Skelton's interest in constructing mixed-form deep mappings of place was first signalled by *Landings*: a body of work, concentrating on Anglezarke Moor in Lancashire, that Martyn Hudson describes as 'one of the most sustained, experimental musical and literary projects of recent years'.³⁰ In 2008, Skelton relocated – with his partner and creative collaborator, Autumn Richardson – to a cottage at Ulpha, Dunnerdale, in the remote south-west of the Lakes. It is a landscape with Romantic associations: Coleridge became lost here during his 1802 'circumcursion'; and, almost two decades later, Wordsworth, in Sonnet XX of *The River Duddon*, was entranced by the water as it flowed through 'The Plain of Donnerdale'.³¹ After moving to Ulpha, Skelton and Richardson 'began to close-map the area around their cottage and further up the Dunnerdale valley, making new works out of this old place'.³² Although it is still a work that characteristically resists rigid generic categorisation, perhaps the most conventional manifestation of this excavation of a deliberately circumscribed place is *Beyond the Fell Wall* (2015): 'a distillation', through poetry and prose, of Skelton's 'thoughts and observations on this particular patch of land'.³³ In the same year, Richardson and Skelton published *Memorious Earth*: a gathering of 'written and assemblage works' rooted in 'field work and [extensive] research in the area' following the artists' return to Cumbria in 'late 2011'; a body of work which, significantly, was framed as 'A Longitudinal Study'.³⁴

Collectively, these collaborative and sole-authored works present a portrait of place that is disorientatingly distant from the landscape aesthetics of Wainwright or even Borodale. Skelton envisions a hard terrain of 'savage remembering'; a landscape of fell walls and dwelling places but, at the same time, a territory through which '[w]olf, bear, lynx, cave lion, elk and wolverine once moved' (*Beyond the Fell Wall* 65). According to Macfarlane, through the eschewal of the imaginative and formal strategies ordinarily associated with 'conventional eco-elegy', as well as the boundless movement 'back through the Holocene and into its prior epochs' and 'forwards to imaginary far futures', 'categories such as the picturesque or even the beautiful congeal into kitsch' in Skelton's deep mapping of place.³⁵ The overall effect is an unsettling ecological imagining of the Cumbrian landscape that radically disturbs many post-Romantic assumptions about the cultural geographies of the Lake District but that is entirely apposite for the anxieties of the Anthropocene. What Skelton implicitly identifies to be the imperative to look outside and beyond Romanticism is

underscored by the ten titles that are listed in the 'Bibliography' for *Beyond the Fell Wall*. It is a list that includes *Dry Stone Walling: A Practical Handbook*, and a scholarly article on 'Pollen Analyses from the Deposits of Six Upland Tarns in the Lake District'; but, strikingly, it finds no room for *The River Duddon* nor Coleridge's Notebooks.

A sceptical interest in cartographic practice informs Skelton's deep historical understanding of place. In *Landings*, Skelton recognises that: 'Maps are vital repositories of place. They enshrine the collective memory – recording not only what is current, but what is deemed worth holding onto from the past'.³⁶ Here, then, Skelton's interest in conventional cartography is primarily temporal as he suggests that the surfaces of maps can reveal much about the communal handling of history in a particular location. This awareness of the potential of the map is further suggested by the way that the *Memorious Earth* exhibition - shown at Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, in early 2015 - featured sections of two historic Ordnance Survey maps of Dunnerdale. On one level, these documents simply helped to locate the viewer in a real-world geography; but, moreover, their inclusion illustrated how conventional cartographies might feed into a holistic deep mapping of place. Yet, although Skelton does not completely reject the map, he is acutely conscious of what Cartesian cartography does not reveal:

[Maps] enforce a mononymous relationship between name and place – rarely does any location receive more than a single epithet. Yet this fact belies the complex relationship we have with our surroundings, and the many different ways in which we express our sense of place. Shouldn't there be room on maps for local names, folk-names and familial names; for narrative, personality any myth? What happened to the polyonymy of place? (*Landings* 121)

Here, Skelton articulates a frustration that the material two-dimensionality of the map necessarily leads to a reductively fixed and impoverished toponymical understanding of place. The cartographic naming of places, then, might open up thinking about what has been privileged within 'the collective memory' of a particular landscape; but, at the same time, the limitations of the representational surface results in the marginalisation of other forms and acts of naming. Given these preoccupations, it is not surprising that Skelton has emerged as a major figure, 'a keeper of lost words' (*Landmarks* 181), in Macfarlane's ongoing project to counter the diminishing of contemporary geographical vocabularies.

To frame Skelton's practice as mappings, therefore, necessarily requires a conceptual movement beyond the conventionally cartographic. Whilst living in Dunnerdale, Skelton issued

Limnology: ‘a book’ of words about rivers, streams, lakes and other inland waterways’ that takes the form of a ‘scattering of lists and *text rivers*, and [. . .] poems.’³⁷ Central to the project is the ‘gathering’ of over 1000 ‘water-words’ from Cumbrian dialect: a linguistic assembling that takes in, as Skelton explains in an unpaginated end note, ‘tributaries from Icelanic, Anglo-Saxon, Gaelic, Manx, Irish, Welsh, Old Welsh and Proto-Celtic’ and which is then presented in a sequence of visual forms that typographically imitate riverine processes. Skelton revisited and refined this attentiveness to the lost languages of Cumbria’s ‘inland waterways’ in his contribution to ‘Wordsworth and Bashō: Walking Poets’: a group exhibition held at the Wordsworth Trust in 2014. His first contribution, ‘I Know Not Where’, is a ‘distillation’ of two hundred key words extracted from Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Alfoxden Journals*. The result is a textual mapping of Dorothy’s journal entries that invites the reader - as with Borodale’s ‘Walking to Paradise’ which was exhibited in the same space - ‘to find their own routes and, in so doing, to write their own topographical narratives’.³⁸ In ‘Still Glides the Stream’, his second contribution, Skelton shifts his creative-critical focus to Wordsworth’s *The River Duddon*. In the first part of this work, the artist ‘collates all thirty three original sonnets into a single text and erases each occurrence of a water-word’: ancient terms, ‘in the Germanic and Celtic language families, [which] would have been spoken in the British Isles long before Wordsworth’s time’ (McKay, p. 128). The second part of ‘Still Glides the Stream’ is, as Carol McKay puts it, ‘a negative image of the first’ as the ‘lost water-words’ – ‘a’, ‘an’, ‘ar’, and so on – are re-presented to produce an etymological mapping of Wordsworth’s apostrophic poem. It is a creative work that unconceals the geographic unconscious in Wordsworth’s lyric sequence as Skelton digs down to excavate those ‘ancient’ words that are indelibly embedded within the sonnet sequence that famously traces the Duddon from source to sea. As a result, Skelton offers a creative mapping that alerts the reader to the possibility that *The River Duddon* can be read as a poem that is constructed out of the lost, ancient words for water in this particular place.

Clearly, Skelton’s creative practice is far removed from uncritically positivist framings of cartography as acts of geographical verisimilitude. ‘Still Glides the Stream’ does correspond, however, with Denis Cosgrove’s assertion that cultural geographers have increasingly come to use the term ‘mapping’ to refer to heterogeneous practices and projects that are loosely based on ‘organizing, documenting and representing spatial knowledge in graphic form’ (177). Richardson and Skelton have acknowledged that: ‘Both our written and assemblage work is [. . .] involved in a critical dialogue with its own contexts and historical precedents’ (*Memorious Earth*, p. 12). In the solo work, ‘Still Glides the Stream’, then, Skelton removes the entanglements of poetic conceits that have often attracted critics to Wordsworth’s sonnet sequence including, for

example, the passage of the river as a metaphor for the temporality of human life and the use of the Duddon as an unlikely symbol for the exploration of national identity. Instead, the artist – through the representation of ‘spatial knowledge in graphic form’ – strips *The River Duddon* back to topographical and linguistic basics. As a result, Skelton implicitly challenges the critical preoccupation with Wordsworthian ‘*concepts*’, rather than ‘*things*’, to draw upon ideas articulated in the introduction to *Memorials of Earth*, by mapping ‘the *isness*’ of the River Duddon that flows through the sonnet sequence of 1820 (12). Skelton’s creative mapping, then, offers a way of reading the Romantic text. By extension, Skelton, through this act of creative-critical mapping, situates Wordsworthian Romanticism as a momentary intervention within the long, deep histories of this south-western corner of the Lakes.

Conclusion: Towards Critical-Creative Mappings

A more expansive post-war literary geographical investigation would need to consider the work of a wider range of post-Romantic writers who have turned to maps and mapping practices to situate themselves and their work within the Lakes. This would necessarily involve the exploration of references to maps in a range of texts: from Clive Linley’s use of Wainwright’s *The Southern Fells* in Ian McEwan’s *Amsterdam* to the map that the west Cumbrian poet, Norman Nicholson, imagines falling out of a carriage window in his allusive poem, ‘Askam Unvisited’.³⁹ Such a study would also consider the paratextual maps embedded within the pages of Lake District novels, including the geographical illustrations that Wainwright contributed to Richard Adams’s dystopian fiction, *The Plague Dogs*.⁴⁰ It would also involve examining the work of writers – including the Canadian concrete poet, bpNichol – who have played with the possibilities of textual-graphic mappings. As a starting-point, however, this chapter has deliberately focused on three landscape writers whose textual-mapping practices reveal contrasting ways of responding, through word and image, to the Lake District as a Romanticised landscape. Moreover, the work of each writer reveals a contrasting attitude towards the nature of maps. Wainwright develops cartographic innovations to geovisualise his deep personal familiarity with, and love for, the landscape of the Lakes: a performatively egocentric project in which mapping is practised as an act of creative requisition. In contrast, both Borodale and Skelton turn to mappings, of differing kinds, to think about the Lake District as a richly, and perhaps problematically, textualised topography. Borodale self-consciously skims over the surfaces of things in making material maps that retrace a seminal walking tour in the spatial history of British Romanticism. Skelton, on the other hands, expands the definition of the literary map via a deep topo-linguistic reading of

Wordsworth's *The River Duddon*. All three writer-cartographers, then, playfully explore what maps can be and what maps can do. Crucially, though, both Borodale and Skelton gesture towards the ways that creative cartographic practice can open up critical thinking about the Romantic representation of this particular landscape.

This chapter has had a clear place-specific focus. In conclusion, though, it contends that the discussion of post-Romantic mappings of the Lake District has two wider critical implications. First, the exploration of the work of Borodale and Skelton has highlighted how critical thinking can be held, both overtly and latently, within creative practice. By extension, it has indicated how the thinking of the Romantic scholar might be reconfigured through a critical engagement with such imaginative rewritings of Romantic texts: an argument that Simon Kövesi has recently and persuasively articulated in relation to the presence of the life and poetry of John Clare in 'contemporary literary culture'.⁴¹ Second, the chapter has highlighted how a critical attentiveness to such creative work might recalibrate the practices of the scholar who is interested in making his or her own maps of Romantic literature. In their manifesto for map studies, cited at the beginning of this chapter, Dodge et al urge scholars to examine how a critical engagement with creative cartographies might open up new ontological thinking about maps and mapping practices. Crucially, however, Dodge et al also move beyond the purely interpretative to propose that scholars might also *employ* the playfully experimental practices showcased by creative map-makers. As other chapters in this collection illustrate, there has been a proliferation of projects, over recent years, exploring the possibilities and potentialities of mapping Romantic writing through digital technologies. There remains scope, however, for such critical literary cartographers to draw upon the imaginative responses to earlier writing that shapes the practices and processes of some creative map-makers. That is to say, there remains scope for creative-critical cartographies to inform the making of new critical-creative maps of Romantic literature.

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