النقد الجغرافي: قراءة الأدب في الدور المكاني

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الملخص

تماشيا مع الموجة الجديدة التي تجتاح الدراسات المشتركة   ، يحاول النقد الادبي جاهدا تجريب ادوات ونتائج انظمة المعلومات الجغرافية لاثارة اسئلة وقضايا نقدية جديدة في الاعمال الادبية المبنية على عنصر المكان . لهذا نشأ نوع جديد من النقد الادبي الجغرافي كطريقة محدثه في تحويل النص الادبي الى خريطة جغرافية   . الخرائط وقاعدة البيانات الجغرافية التي ستظهر بالنتيجة تشير الى انه مازالت هناك معاني مبهمه ومجهوله في الادب الكلاسيكي القديم ، ادب التوراة، واداب كل عصر وزمن. مما لاشك فيه ان ليس كل نص ادبي يمكن ان يعطى بعدا جغرافيا، ولكن اذا اصبح للنص بعدا صوريا ، يتكون لدينا نصا جديدا ممثلا بخريطه ترسمها التفاصيل المذكوره في النص الاصلي يمكن قراءتها كنص تفاعلي جديد يضيء معاني جديدة في النص الاول .

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجيوقراطية ، نظم المعلومات الجغرافية ، التخصصات ، لأدب ، البيانات الجغرافية ، الخرائط ، نص"كتابي"

Geocriticism: Reading Literature in the Spatial Tur

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Abstract

Corresponding with the new wave of interdisciplinary studies, literary research tries its hand at experimenting with the instruments and findings of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to stir novel questions and issues in the territorially-oriented literary works. Hence, a recent kind of literary GIS has emerged as a methodology of mapping literature. The maps and geo-data which are produced in the aftermath prove that there are still dark spots/aporias which have not yet been clarified in the oldest classics, Biblical literature, and literary works of all times and all kinds. Of course, not all literary works can be mapped, however GIS can recommend the proximity of visualizing literary texts and inspire new research questions. The GIS-map, which turns to be a substitutive text built on the original written or spoken text, a Derridean 'detour' from the origin which is gradually lost, might be feasible to see if GIS can be incorporated as an integral part of the original text so that no information will remain undiscovered, or it becomes a highly demanding supplement to the original text that both should be studied carefully in the light of each other in order to implement a meaning. Hence, the GIS-map would naturally be a 'writerly' text for the active 'reader' to grasp new meanings unfathomed before.

1. Introduction

1.1. Geocriticism: Essentials and Potentialities

GIS provides a new paradigm for research in human studies, especially in literature which involves 'spatial experience'. Coinciding with the issue of place, space, or territory, which is one of the oldest concerns of literary men, the technological transformations in 'what is known as the post-industrial age'[1] paved the way for the emergence of a new 'literary GIS'. Its goal is to consider 'the realistic possibilities and issues of mapping within literary research'.[2] Pioneer studies were built on geo-data and many maps were made to cover new topics in the oldest classics, Biblical literature, and literary works of all times and all kinds. Of course, not all literary works can be mapped, however GIS recommends the proximity of visualizing literary texts and inspire new research questions. The GIS-map, which turns to be a substitutive text built on the original written or spoken text, a Derridean 'detour'[3] from the origin which is gradually lost, might be feasible to see if GIS can be incorporated as an integral part of the original text so that no information will remain undiscovered, or it becomes a highly demanding supplement[4] to the original text that both should be studied carefully in the light of each other in order to implement a meaning. Hence, the GIS-map would naturally be a 'writerly' text[5] for the active 'reader' to grasp new meanings unfathomed before.

The knowledge gained by turning a literary text into a map directs our attention to how we should 'read' our books of literature. Cartographic mapping of texts ignites the sense of (re)discovering the epic atmosphere **grasped from the extra dimension of 'place.' It opens doors to new perspectives and potential patterns that might otherwise be missed.** As language, maps can be used as an important semiotic system of communication, which supply their own Saussurean signs and symbols to convey specific messages, and as language also, maps shape man's way of thinking. They impose their own epistemological rules on our production/perception of textual information. Instead of mere words, geo-data provide further visual patterns as bases to explore geo-analysis. Geo-spatial data create a better insight for the sort of philosophical 'dwelling thinking' that man possesses on earth.[6] According to Heidegger, 'the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan,* dwelling'. Land is the 'domain to which everything that *is belongs'.*[7] Being land-bound means staying with things as things, 'in their presencing'. Land is occupied by mortals and things, so it comes to existence only by virtue of those beings or things. Thus, there are 'dwelling' peculiarities that humans share with other organisms like animals and plants which re-appropriated

themselves to survive in specific local areas. In this sense, geo-criticism and echo-criticism work hand in hand to implement new perspectives of literary analysis.

Consequently, GIS-maps become interactive with verbal texts by engaging its users, and allowing them to experience the sense of adventure which produces greater curiosity to put the context in its 'place'. In this sense the map becomes more communicative, it tells a more informative tale by totalling the 'what *is*' to the 'where *is*.' We will have a better picture of how the characters move and why. Maps re-present quantitative data in clear and understandable abstract concepts provided by the articulation of subjective spatial experiences. Thus, geography is very functional when location is an essential part of the meaning we try to discover, or a key constituent in the story that we try to tell. The literary geo-critic needs to develop a new kind of spatial analysis predicated on the use of GIS technology.

2. GIS-Technology and Classical Literature of Place

This paper maps out two textual accounts of epic-journeys through the landscapes of ancient Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean: *Gilgamesh* and *The Odyssey*. It provides GIS-representations of the two accounts of place and recommends ways in which the mapping process suggests spatial thinking of these 'geo-specific texts.' Our methodology to achieve this aim consists of several steps. First of all, we create a GIS-readable version of the routes documented in *Gilgamesh* and *The Odyssey* by adopting Internet-based digital versions of the two tours.[8] Once we segregate the extracts which deal with place-names (toponyms) that the two heroes ventured through, our next step started. The place-names were geo-referenced by using coordinate Gazetteer-data. Finally, the whole data was uploaded into GIS-maps to create cartographical simulations of the two texts adopted in this study. A GIS-based study of these ancient Mesopotamian and Greek classics tends to deal with the heroes' movement through place by mapping the two texts, seeking a spatial analysis, which sheds light on the meaning of being in a specific place of the world. Thus, both Gilgamesh and Odysseus become icon-travelling figures. Since antiquity, their travelogues inspired long generations of travellers and travelling literature.

2.1. The Epic of Gilgamesh

He went on a distant journey, pushing himself to exhaustion,
 but then was brought to peace.

<div align="center">(6-7, Tablet 1)</div>

Gilgamesh (c. 2700 BC), is the King of Uruk, a capital city in ancient Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq). The Prologue tells us that, like Achilles, he is one-third man and two-thirds god due to his being the son of a mortal father and some maternal deity. He is also a travelling man who had made a lot of stops between Mesopotamia, Lebanon, and Delmon (present Bahrain). As a nomad, he ventured into the wilderness in an ordeal to prove his heroism, a technique which survived all times with heroes whose mythological quests are structured to visit places no one had ever seen before. However, the aims of their journeys differ. For Gilgamesh, the aim which he set for his journey is to kill a ravishing monster, Humbaba, and to 'learn how to avoid death'.[9]

Figure 1: Gilgamesh defeating a monster

Gilgamesh is also a creator of cities; he puts Uruk on the map. It "was not always so great," so the Prologue tells us. Under his kingship, Uruk was epitomized as one of the highest urbanized human metropolis, coupling religious significance and human craftsmanship.

Map 1: The Extent of Ancient Mesopotamia

The Gilgamesh who we meet in the first cuneiform tablet, "The Coming of Enkidu," is an egotistical, self-absorbed despot who has taken the city by force and seized the people as slaves. The whole story of the epic is how Gilgamesh learns to be a wise king. He comes to understand his civic responsibilities and thus he becomes more capable of seeing his relationship with the populace of Uruk as defined by something more worthy than a will to power and oppression.

The tale is not all human, the polytheistic gods of the Mesopotamian Pantheon have a major role in the progress of its actions. The gods create a wild man, Enkidu, to challenge Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh has a prophetic dream about the coming of Enkidu. Enkidu and Gilgamesh fight at first but finally they develop into friends. Gilgamesh suggests their having an adventurous journey to the far-off cedar woods (present-day Lebanon) in order to fight a fearsome wood demon. On the journey to the woods, Gilgamesh has seen a series of dreams. As Enkidu grows reluctant to combat, Gilgamesh begins to fight the wood demon alone. Later on, Enkidu realizes his mistake, and takes the lead in the epic battle with the wood demon, who curses Enkidu, foretelling that his life will be short. Enkidu and Gilgamesh cut down the forest to celebrate their victory. They realize that "standing together, two can prevail." After the two return to Uruk, Gilgamesh rejects the advances of the goddess Ishtar, who has her father send down a bull to destroy the royal city. Enkidu takes

the lead again in killing the bull. The gods decree vengeance on Enkidu, who falls ill and dies. Gilgamesh is devastated. He mourns the loss of Enkidu and builds him a monument. In his desolation, Gilgamesh decides to embark on a journey to the Underworld to seek the meaning of life and death. Gilgamesh encounters and defeats various obstacles on his journey; such as monsters, mountainous ground, and frightening dreams. But he finally meets a wise man who tells him that death cannot be evaded. He resumes his travels until he meets the Lord of the Underworld, a survivor of the Great Flood. Gilgamesh hears his story and fails a test put to him when a snake ruins his chance at immortality. Gilgamesh meets Utnapishtim, who was granted immortality by the gods after he built a giant ark to survive an ancient flood. Utnapishtim advises Gilgamesh to return home to Uruk and rule. Gilgamesh dies a beloved king, having never achieved his dream of immortality.

Map 2: The Epic journey of Gilgamesh

2.2. The Odyssey

Many cities of men he saw and learned their minds,
Many pains he suffered, heartsick on the open sea,
Fighting to save his life and bring his comrades home.

(4-6, Book 1)

In his work on the Oriental impact on Greek literature, Walter Burkert claimed that the storyline of the *Odyssey* bears copious similarities to that of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.[10] Both Gilgamesh and Odysseus commit themselves for having a journey in which they encounter a woman who can transform men into animals: Ishtar (in the case of Gilgamesh) and Circe (in Odysseus). In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus slays a giant monster, an incident which bears similarities to Gilgamesh's slaying of Humbaba in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Both Gilgamesh and Odysseus visit the Underworld and both have a prospect for immortality but miss it (Gilgamesh when he loses the supernatural plant, and Odysseus when he abandons Calypso's island).

Gilgamesh and Odysseus created the 'sense of place' in literature; i.e., how individuals are connected to a specific place. Their 'sense of place' enables us to examine their impact on the places where they move, so that the stories are unfold and characters are developed with reference to territorial changes. The heroes undergo quests in order to achieve supreme goals and important tasks, then they come back home.

Figure 2: Odysseus

The journey presents a complex relationship between our protagonists and their places. Both are kings who are directly involved with the 'ethics of place', or the moral responsibility to act rightly towards their cities: Uruk and Ithaca. They always return back to their hometowns, the act of 'return' is essential to their two journeys. It sheds light on the purpose of epic poetry, which is national by nature. National epic implies 'a long narrative composition that relates to the origin or identity of a people. The aim of an epic is usually to shape an awareness of a national identity'.[11]

Map 3: The heroic journey of Odysseus

3. Conclusions

A careful reading of Maps 2 & 3 shows us essential similarities as well as differences between these two heroes and their epic journeys. Both are historical figures whose names are connected with specific topological standardized place names or local place-names (toponyms) mentioned in famous Gazetteers.[12] However, while Gilgamesh's quest is totally land-bound, the protagonist of *The Odyssey* prefers to roam by sea. The Mesopotamian hero is an earth-navigator, whereas the Greeks tend to enjoy following heroic voyagers or seafarers. This fact presents the impact of geography on the literary taste of people and how does geography shape our sense of being as well as our way of thinking if not our way of expanding. The piece of occupied land determines 'the localities and ways by which a space is provided for'. Land provides a space cleared for dwelling and structured within a boundary not to stop it, within land's structures emerges 'that from which something *begins its presencing*'.[13] In this sense, the earth-bound is different from the

sea-bound, which is clear in the two maps drawn in this study. While Gilgamesh's journey is unswerving and straight, Odysseus's journey is subject to the haphazard whims and fluctuations of the sea or sea-god. This makes Odysseus' journey unintentional, he is forced to endure an ordeal. He is not free to act in some different way.

Map 4: Odysseus' unintentional journey

Odysseus' quest is the result of a destined punishment by a supernatural power beyond his control which destroyed his ships and crew, leaving him forlorn and desolate. On the other hand, Gilgamesh submits himself to his test willingly, or may be, like a Shakespearean Hamlet, he was partly destined to set right 'a time out of joint' and fight Humbaba, a giant monster which ravished the cedar-forest and its people. More emphatic is his self-willed second ordeal in which he decided to discover the source of immortality and went South to meet the only survivor from the Great Flood.

In both epics, the gods are aggressive and intriguing against man. Poseidon, in *The Odyssey*, as Anu, in *Gilgamesh* are too vengeful against human protagonists. The question of man's geographical 'being' on earth confirms that, although mortal, his 'presence' as an actual entity develops man's self-conscious awareness of his place in the universe.

Notes

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