

Literary and Cartographic Projections

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Abstract

Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, imaginary voyages in the setting of the antipodes were published alongside genuine exploration accounts, and competed with them for the public's attention. Both offered the novelty of glimpses into strange and exotic distant places and both were concerned with mapping, in painstaking detail, the routes taken and the lands discovered. This almost forgotten genre was remarkable for its ability to blend geographical fact with satire and fantasy in a way that captured the imaginations of readers, persuading them in many cases of the truth of its far-fetched reports of journeys into remote uncharted territory. This paper reflects on the relationship between imaginary voyage narratives and the desire to know and map the world in a systematic and verifiable way – to grasp its spatial dimensions - that was a feature of the period in which the imaginary voyage genre flourished.

Keywords: Antipodes, Cartography, Genre, History, Mythology, Narrative, Pacific, Travel

1. Introduction

The antipodes had been the subject of speculation ever since the spectre of a southern world first featured in classical literature. The antipodes took a variety of mythic forms and continued to arouse curiosity and speculation over two millennia. However, the region remained largely a figment of European imagination until the discovery voyages of the seventeenth century. The first successful Dutch voyages to touch on the Australian landmass from 1606 signalled the beginning of more than two centuries of intense exploration in the antipodes, and the gradual accumulation of reliable information. At the start of this period there was very limited knowledge of the makeup of the wider world aside from the maritime routes to rival nations and isolated colonies in other parts of the globe. Most people could never hope to travel beyond local borders, and sea travel was dangerous, requiring specialised training and willingness to brave life-threatening obstacles such as pirate attack, shipwreck and getting lost at sea in an era when even longitude could not yet be accurately measured.

Speculation and preconception, based on myths, were powerful influences on explorers. When they finally arrived in the antipodes after long sea voyages there was very little opportunity to describe things in a neutral way. In Simon Ryan's words, "The mythology of exploration constructs explorers as the 'first' to see 'new' continents," but "their production is merely a rewriting of a space which already exists in early cultural constructs of an austral continent" (1996, p. 5). The language of the explorers "is filled with pre-formed tropes, which ingest and normalise that which is seen..." (p. 7). The southern continent was viewed as "empty, unsettled, and inviting European inscription," an attitude that was "part of the imaginative preparation for empire" (p. 105). In the process of imagining the antipodes, myths had built up expectations, inspiring fears and hopes, which in turn set standards by which to interpret the unknown. In order to become comprehensible, unfamiliar places needed to be assimilated into established knowledge systems.

For John Dunmore, "the unknown is rarely totally unknown" because preconceptions "exist as part of the motivation for a voyage of exploration," even if they are "no more than a faith in the existence of something in the blank spaces of the maps or over the distant horizon" (1982, p. 109). Imaginative visions offered frameworks for eyewitness observers to make sense of a world that sometimes seemed so strange as to be beyond description. The region's nebulous reality began to be formed and measured against powerful mythic images that dominated European literature and thought. It is well known that the process of discovering the antipodes continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries until the region had been extensively charted and documented, first by the Dutch and then by British and French explorers.

It is less well known that a parallel process that had started much earlier was also continuing. It was the process of creating fictional projections for a public that was eager to conceptualise this new world, using whatever information was available, whether invented or true. The focus of this paper is on the once popular genre of the early modern novel known as the ‘imaginary voyage’. This was a kind of adventure writing that had a unique relationship with the physical geography of the antipodes. European writers developed a sophisticated literary form that simulated the common rhetoric used in genuine voyage accounts. This almost forgotten genre was remarkable for its ability to blend geographical fact with pure fantasy in a way that captured the imaginations of readers. Writers of imaginary voyages also put forward cultural critiques of contemporary life and politics in Europe using a utopian, often satirical, literary mode. The two most famous eighteenth-century British examples of imaginary voyages, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), are both known to have produced confused understandings for readers when first published (Phillips, 1997, p. 25; Stagl, 1995, p. 202). The possibility of easy distortion of truths also impaired the credibility of the most apparently reliable reports and descriptions, destabilising accepted benchmarks of authenticity (Stagl, 1995, p. 82). In a situation where the “border between factual and fictional voyages can easily be crossed and can even move” it is no wonder that imaginative fiction competed favourably with geographical facts for the interest and attention of the European reading public (Rennie, 1995, p. 73).

There was a “parallel evolution of two views of the antipodes,” as David Fausett puts it, “one empirical and the other imaginary” (1995, p. 4). The distinction between the two in early descriptions of the antipodes is very difficult to make in retrospect. It would have been even more difficult for the earliest European visitors to the antipodes because the reality remained so open to preliminary interpretation. The challenge was “to tell fact from fiction...when there is no certain knowledge of the object” (p. 10). Sometimes the truth effect was so successful that far-fetched accounts of journeys into remote uncharted territory would be accepted as genuine. As Fausett puts it, “it was impossible to disprove what a novelist might claim to be a true story, and many did believe them” (1993a, p. xxvi). An extraordinary feature of the imaginary voyage genre was its ability to survive and flourish in spite of the massive quantities of real scientific data about the antipodes that were being delivered to Europe during the ‘age of exploration’.

2. Antipodean imaginary voyages in the seventeenth century

The imaginary voyage genre, despite its deliberate disregard for facts, played its role in the long process of transforming the region of the antipodes from a series of myths into a reality finally accessible to Europe and open to its direct influence and occupation.¹ Typically, a European traveller or a group of travellers led by an adventurer, leaves Europe by ship, reaches the margins of the known world and then, in a severe storm, by shipwreck, through pirate attack, or by some other dramatic natural event, is transported from the realm of reality into a fantasy world. The strange and exotic space of the antipodes is geographically located by being plotted in relation to the boundaries of the world known to Europe – a symbolic gesture of order and control achieved through a confusing augmentation of existing contemporary knowledge. If they are read with a focus on the images of colonial contact they arguably helped to produce and perpetuate, these popular stories of European travels to the antipodes also reflect and illuminate widely held colonial aspirations. Justin Stagl writes that the “boundless desire of the public to enter vicariously into other regions of the world was no doubt a symptom of the mentality which called forth the West to world domination” (1995, p. 199). The fact that imaginary voyages continued to be published over the course of more than two centuries at the same time as the antipodes were being observed and described at first hand, is evidence of the ongoing function of imaginative travel literature as a forum for registering Europe’s changing ideas about the antipodes and European nations’ changing perceptions of their own role as colonisers.

The term ‘armchair traveller’ describes the mental flights of those anchored by the non-practicality of real travel.² Travel fiction had its most powerful influence on Western culture from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, when it also had its largest ever share of the book market (Stagl, 1995, p. 199). Before there was reliable empirical knowledge of the antipodes available, readers in Europe were able to make some provisional sense of this distant part of the world by willing it into existence through engaging with imaginative literature. Novelists may have been writing at a distance from the physical setting of the antipodes, but they helped to form and sustain fantasies that in some cases were ultimately translated into stereotypes of the land ‘down under’. Literary depictions of cross-cultural contact set the scene for colonial expansion as a necessary and logical attempt to secure a place in newly discovered lands.

Actual early contact with distant lands and their peoples was often initiated in the interests of trade, and the reports of these interactions – involving cultural as well as material exchange – provided ample subject matter for literary fiction that glorified the coloniser. Being at a distance, European readers could not know what the antipodes were like in reality but there is no doubt that they absorbed and enjoyed imaginatively entering the alien worlds presented, whether they believed in them or not. Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, imaginary voyages in the setting of the antipodes were published alongside genuine exploration accounts, and competed with them for the public's attention. In *The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction: A History of Its Criticism and a Guide for Its Study* (1941), Phillip Gove lists 215 examples of imaginary voyages published in the period 1700-1800, many in the setting of the antipodes. This survey work remains the most comprehensive study of the evolving usage of the term. Both real and imaginary voyages offered the novelty of glimpses into strange and exotic distant places and both were concerned with mapping, in painstaking detail, the routes taken and the lands discovered.

The earliest examples of imaginary voyages from the seventeenth century set in the antipodes in the British and French traditions are Joseph Hall's *Mundus alter et idem* (first published in Latin in 1605 and translated as *The Discovery of a New World* in 1609) and Gabriel de Foigny's *La Terre Australe connue* (first published in French in 1676 and translated as *A New Discovery of Terra Incognita Australis, or the Southern World* in 1693). In a recent English translation, Foigny's work is more correctly renamed as *The Southern Land, Known*. Fausett, the translator, reads the book as a successor to More's *Utopia* and forerunner of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (Fausett, 1993b, p. xi). Intriguingly, the earliest known use of the word 'Australian' is in the original English translation of Foigny's story (Spate, 1988, p. 83). These examples, written more than 70 years apart but during a period when very little was yet known about the antipodes in Europe, include fictionalised visions of European adventurers exerting their influence over the inhabitants of vast southern lands. The works gesture thematically backwards to the ancient mythology of the antipodes, and they also look forwards to the prospect of colonisation.

The long title of Hall's work in English translation refers to the blending of fact and fiction, and the creation of a sense of intriguing paradox that characterised knowledge of the antipodes in the early seventeenth century:

A discoverie and no discoverie, of a world and no world, both knowne and unknowne, by a traveller that never travelled. Written first in Latine, and no Latine, and now translated, and yet not translated, by the same man, yet not the same man that first of all pend it.

The longer title of the original English translation of Foigny's text promises exciting revelations:

A New Discovery of Terra Incognita Australis, or the Southern World, by James Sadeur, a French-Man Who Being Cast There by a Shipwreck, Lived 35 Years in That Country, and Gives a Particular Description of the Manners, Customs, Religion, Laws, Studies, and Wars, of Those Southern People; and of Some Animals Peculiar to That Place.

Both Hall and Foigny populated the fictional southern continent densely with all kinds of life forms, human and otherwise. There are different belief systems, laws, customs and histories as well as dramatically different physical terrains. These narratives are filled with sensational descriptions of cultural difference and variety that compete at each turn for the reader's attention.

Hall's satirical story tells of the adventures of a lone European voyager, Mercurius Britannicus, who travels on the appropriately named ship *Fancie* to *Terra Australis* and spends 30 years there. This work can be considered as a dystopia, a place where life is disagreeable and unappealing as opposed to being a blueprint for a perfect society. The political satire is directed at European national traits, parodying contemporary English, French, German and Italian stereotypes. Foigny's imaginary voyage follows the adventures of a fictional French navigator named Nicolas Sadeur, who leaves France in protest at its social systems. Sadeur is shipwrecked on *Terre Australe* and find himself in a world full of opposites, a land of 15,000 separate provinces that are evenly populated. The Australians are powerful, stand tall, and most intriguingly of all, they are hermaphrodites. While Fausett makes the point that "Sadeur's voyage to the Southern Land thus allegorises his age's experience of the discovery of Australasia, the last great geographical unknown," in his analysis he is mostly concerned with the critique of European society (1993b, p. xiii). The text, he writes, "uses the southern continent legend to address problems of freedom and dissent – of ideological and cultural frontiers" and "expresses the experience many at the time...shared as they migrated across the rapidly changing ideological landscape of Europe" (p. xiii).

Fausett also notes that Hall's text deserves special attention because it drew together "an explicit relation between hermaphroditism and travel to unknown places, particularly to the antipodes". The southern land, because it had not yet been discovered by Europe, "symbolises the New World in general" (p. xl). Linking the adventures of a fictional traveller to a real voyage of discovery was to become one of the most common strategies used in eighteenth-century imaginary voyages to lend historical realism. In Foigny's early example there is a stated connection with Quiros. However, this imaginary voyage was likely to have been based on accounts of contemporary travels to the antipodes that followed a different course from that of Quiros, who had crossed the Pacific from the Americas. The route taken by Foigny's traveller, Sadeur, is via Africa and the Indian Ocean. In later examples of imaginary voyage literature, Denis Vairasse made *The History of the Sevarites or Sevarambi* (1675) convincing by linking the adventures of his fictional traveller, Captain Siden, to the 1656 shipwreck of the *Vergulde Draeck*, on the west coast of the Australian landmass. In the following century, Swift claimed that Gulliver was Dampier's cousin, travelling with Dampier on the *Roebuck*. Defoe based his character Robinson Crusoe on the real-life experience of Alexander Selkirk, marooned from August 1704 to January 1709 on Juan Fernandez Island off South America.

3. Corresponding cartographic projections

The relationship between imaginary voyage narratives and the desire to know and map the world in a systematic and verifiable way – to grasp its *spatial* dimensions – was a notable feature of the period in which the imaginary voyage genre flourished. This spatial impulse, which was a fundamental driver of contemporary exploration, discovery and colonialism, can be seen on a variety of levels in these texts. The early novel was based upon and drew upon the textual traditions of descriptive travel writing, with the narrative structure of the novel mimicking the activity of travelling.³ The connection is so strong that travelling can be aligned with characteristics of narrative itself. As Paul Carter puts it, "voyaging and storytelling go together" (1998, p. 19). According to another critic, novels share a "spatial metaphor" with the accounts of voyages. The early novel, "more than any other genre," is "spatial" (Freedman, 1968, p. 72). The spatial impulse is also illustrated when the protagonist takes on the role of the intrepid explorer, a position that removes the character from the familiarity of home and its known geographies and places them in unknown geographies as a discoverer. Accounts of imaginary voyages tend to be meticulously detailed and they are made to appear trustworthy through devices such as giving actual coordinates to purportedly discovered places. Indeed, the spatiality is regularly illustrated in accompanying maps that lend authority to the written accounts but are typically visual fictions overlaying unknown spaces with convincing projections. The spatial impulse is also demonstrated in the themes of imaginary voyages, which modeled the spatial penetration that was at the heart of colonialism.

In order to more closely examine the nexus between physical exploration, colonial ideology and the writing of literary fiction, it is useful to draw a parallel between imaginary voyage writing and speculative cartography, which performed a similar function of *filling in* the unknown. When large parts of the earth were yet to be explored and charted by Europeans, map-makers often helped to fuel speculation by adding their own imaginative touches without always indicating the point at which reported fact blurred with their personal guesswork. The flexible attitude of many cartographers towards the hierarchy of knowledge they presented on maps offers a comparative model that can help to make sense of the unique way in which imaginary voyage narratives consolidated accepted knowledge of new worlds beyond European boundaries at the same time as presenting uncharted domains as though they were already known. Like the maps that often claimed to show a 'complete' picture of the world but actually filled the gaps in knowledge with imaginative guesswork, imaginary voyages typically purported to be genuine accounts of travels to real places. Both forms of speculative projection were often received as channels of truth in the absence of trustworthy benchmarks by which to measure their accuracy.

The less knowledge there was of the world beyond Europe's boundaries, the more scope there was for maps and novels to be speculative, combining received knowledge with fictional projection. On maps, knowledge seemed to be presented fairly and is ordered accessibly, offering "a seemingly indisputable representation of the world" (Ryan, 1996, p. 97). Maps are not narrated and therefore appear to be disconnected from human fallibility and limitation.⁴ Speculative maps, like imperialism more generally, not only encouraged trade but also instilled a mental attitude towards the possession of faraway land spaces. The speculative map "invents even as it attempts to document" (Huggan, 1994, p. 22).

Michel de Certeau refers to this inclusive power as the “cartesian attitude”, “whence the eye can transform forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and ‘include’ them within its scope of vision” (1984, p. 36). The antipodean unknown was a “fantasy frontier” that invited writers and cartographers alike to pre-construct realities that were only just beyond European reach (Engberg, 1996, p. 11). Their novels and maps were complementary modes of imaginatively penetrating unknown spaces. Both sought to enable imaginative access and entrance to frontier regions by incorporating the unknown on accepted, familiar terms.

More broadly, there was, in this period, a historically specific relationship between space and time that forms a background to many discussions of the literature and history of exploration and discovery in the eighteenth century in particular. Once discovered, the fact that the space of the antipodes was so physically far removed from Europe led to a range of myths being established in which the extent of distance was used to measure cultural difference and degrees of social development. Joseph-Marie Degerando, writing in 1800, put it in these words: “The *voyageur philosophe* who sails till the end of the world actually travels in time; he explores the past; every step he makes corresponds to the course of an age” (Degerando, 1800, p. 1).⁵ This passage is taken from the opening pages of *Considerations sur les Methodes a suivre dans l’Observations des Peuples Sauvages* [*The Observation of Savage Peoples*], now considered as one of the earliest methodologies for anthropological fieldwork. This extract from Degerando illustrates how, in David Spurr’s words, “the primitive is thus conceived of in space as well as time” (1993, p. 127).

4. Critical reception of imaginary voyages

Imaginary voyages were a popular literary form in eighteenth-century Europe. And yet, there has never been common agreement on what exactly constitutes an imaginary voyage beyond its origin in forms of literary romance and utopian projection. Percy Adams’ *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800* (1962) – a study of a range of fictional texts received as documentary accounts – features discussion of various seventeenth- and eighteenth-century imaginary voyages in the context of literary fraudulence, read as a body of texts whose object was to deceive. Other critics have offered different interpretations, ranging from utopian to gendered readings. There is wide acceptance of the genre’s status as prototype for the modern realist novel and precursor to the nineteenth-century genres of science fiction and fantasy. However, there is perhaps only one point upon which critics who have given recognition to the genre are in unanimous agreement and that is that the imaginary voyage is related to earlier forms of literary romance – in that it shares common features with more traditional romance forms, including quest motifs, heroism, and the overcoming of obstacles and dangers (Clark, 1999, p. 16).

Literary criticism of the genre in the latter part of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century does not make up an established body of thought on the topic of imaginary voyages. Interest has centred on the value of individual texts as bibliographical curiosities and there has been little attention paid to categorising the literary form since most texts are automatically grouped together by virtue of their rarity. Many are accessible only through special collections, if at all. Critic, editor and translator, Dunmore, has been especially active in drawing attention to forgotten examples in the French *voyages imaginaires* tradition. He has produced the first translation into English, for example, of the rare and anonymously published pamphlet *Fragments du dernier voyage de La Pérouse* (1797) (see Dunmore, 1987). In ‘Dream and Reality: French Voyages and Their Vision of Australia’ (1982), Dunmore divides imaginary voyages into two kinds. Some utopias and imaginary voyages are “fanciful and satiric,” such as Hall’s *Mundus alter et idem*. Others are “carefully structured and serious in intention,” such as *Fragments du dernier voyage de La Pérouse* (1982, p. 9). Dunmore also discusses a selection of imaginary voyages in his book on the broader topic of *Visions and Realities: France in the Pacific, 1695-1995* (1997).

The only wide-ranging, full-length published study of the imaginary voyage as a genre since Gove’s survey in 1941 is David Fausett’s *Writing the New World: Imaginary Voyages and Utopias of the Great South Land* (1993). In his subsequent book, *Images of the Antipodes in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Stereotyping* (1995), Fausett discusses the literature of imaginary voyages amongst other literary forms rather than as a distinct genre, although he refers to examples of texts he classifies as imaginary voyages in the earlier book. Read together, Fausett’s books represent a significant historical overview of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century social settings in which imaginary voyage literature was produced. The strength of Fausett’s readings is in the way he makes an explicit connection between imaginary voyage writing and European exploration and discovery in the region of Australia and the Pacific. Each of Fausett’s books concentrates on literature written during a different time period: the first, 1668 to 1708, and the second, 1708 to 1800.

Fausett discusses the writing of imaginary voyage texts primarily as an episode in European utopian thought, noting the influence of literary traditions on changing European social structures (on individualism in particular). His readings of texts provide a detailed reference source for understanding the portrayal of imagined societies in the antipodes in terms of their relationship to the contemporary world of domestic European socio-cultural politics. Fausett argues that “two modes of discourse and reception overlapped,” that is, the real and the imaginary, but only “as long as the places referred to remained empirically unknown.” He goes on to claim that a “progressive separation” occurred between fact and fiction and that empiricism, as a result, was raised “into an end in itself,” displacing myth “in favour of today’s dichotomised, dismembered forms of knowledge” (1993a, p. 6).

There has been a recognised spatial turn in critical thinking across the disciplines that has encouraged spatial analyses from a variety of perspectives. In *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure* (1997), Richard Phillips makes reference to imaginary voyage texts from the unique angle of cultural geography, a discipline particularly concerned with issues of spatiality. As the title of *Mapping Men and Empire* suggests, Phillips is concerned with the masculinist presentation of adventure narratives. He analyses Canadian and Australian texts, mainly from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but including some earlier examples, including Foigny’s *La Terre Australe connue* (1676). Imaginary voyages are always open, on a general level, to this kind of gendered critique, since, without exception, they are stories told of men conquering new worlds in one form or another. Phillips’ focus is on how adventure writing alternately transgresses and supports dominant ideologies. He gives a useful summary of the many ways in which critics have interpreted the imaginary voyage genre through its history when he writes:

Critics locate the extraordinary or imaginary voyage within a critical tradition – the philosophic adventure novel in a realistic setting.... Its principal literary ancestors, they argue, include utopias (the overtly critical, philosophical element), travel accounts (the realistic, geographic element) and adventures (elements of physical action, danger, heroism, exotic setting). Previously, adventures and utopias had been set in mythical places, before or after time and outside real geography; adventures had involved journeys without destinations; utopias had described destinations without journeys. Histories of the imaginary voyage begin with Foigny and trace the coming together of these disparate traditions, in the combination of adventurous journeys and utopian destinations grounded in realistic travel and realistic geography. (Phillips, 1997, p. 120)

Phillips’ book is important for the way it draws attention to examples of selected adventure narratives from different time periods and puts their ideological orientation under close scrutiny.⁶ It is also important for the reason that one of his main interests is in the use of the ‘mapping’ motif in travel fiction. “Many adventures have begun...as outline maps,” he writes, “or *terra incognita* on larger maps.” They “chart spaces in which anything seems possible and adventure seems inevitable. In these malleable spaces, writers and readers of adventure stories dream of the world(s) they might find, the adventures they might have, the kinds of men and women they might become” (p. 3). This range of identities includes the guise of the proto-coloniser: “Cartographers and other mapmakers, including adventure story writers, charted areas of geographical knowledge and *terra incognita*, and through their maps they possessed real geography” (p. 6). Phillips writes, “Adventure stories share with other maps, particularly cartographic maps, a measure of authority, a power to naturalise constructions of geography and identity” (p. 14).

Also writing in the closing years of the twentieth century, Neil Rennie discusses a history of European representations of the Pacific in relation to imaginative travel fiction and mentions a selection of imaginary voyages, although he does not consider them generically. The focus of his book, *Far-Fetched Facts: Literature and Idea of the South Seas* (1995), is on “the history of the literature of travel, real and imaginary, from classical times, via the early accounts of the New World, to the accounts of the South Sea islands that lay beyond,” tracing “the interplay of fact and fiction in a literature with a notorious tendency to deviate from the truth.” The book is pitched as “the first full account of the Western idea of the South Seas as it evolved from the lost paradises of biblical and classical literature to end in the false paradise found by the tourist” (cover text). With the stated aim of demonstrating the confusion between fact and fiction and new and old in the literature of travel, Rennie’s book offers a vast collection of examples of confusion and misrepresentation – demonstrating the slippery divide between the authentic and imaginary.

Also relevant is the work of Tom Conley, a literary critic whose conception of ‘cartographic writing’ resonates with Gove’s ‘geographical fiction’. In *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France* (1996), Conley gives close readings of examples of texts that constitute this field. Cartographic writing, Conley suggests, is a specific type of fictional literature that was especially popular in France from 1460 to 1640 and is identifiable by virtue of its commitment to spatialising the fictional terrains it sought to create.⁷ Conley is not concerned with pinning down a single genre by giving concise definitions. Instead, he presents a wide-ranging discussion of the influences of human mobility and travel on the writing of fiction in a particular time period. His study demonstrates that ‘cartographic thinking’ was a part of the process by which the physical world was imaginatively constructed by writers as well as by map-makers. The question Conley asks throughout is whether “words and figures are measured, ‘compassed’, or gridded according to procedures that develop on cartographers’ tables or in engravers’ workshops” (p. xi). “Rhetorical orders,” he suggests, “are not unrelated to diagrammatic processes,” implying “a mapping impulse in language and picture” (pp. 4, 23). Conley argues that “because the unknown was located by being named, it became a form of a relation rather than an unfathomable menace or delusion” (p. 8). Neither Conley nor Gove is specifically concerned with the influence of colonialism on the writing of European fiction. However, by choosing the terms ‘geographic’ and ‘cartographic’ to designate forms of writing, both critics, in different ways and for different reasons, indicate that a stronger connection needs to be made between mapping and the writing of travel fiction.

5. Conclusion

Imaginary voyages, in the way they freely fictionalised the antipodes, provide a model for understanding the role that fiction plays in generating powerful mythologies of place and culture anywhere and at any time. In the case of imaginary voyage fiction, the model was also historically specific in that it was tested against an emerging reality even as it generated its mythologies. On the one hand, imaginary voyages are stories that include painstakingly detailed references to the emerging reality of the antipodes as it was slowly pieced together by explorers. On the other hand, they are a form of consciously fictional literature that utilised the antipodean setting to utopian and satirical ends.

Conventional histories of European exploration in the antipodes often describe it as a process that fulfilled its aims of discovering new worlds, in the manner of a sudden revelation, as though a whole new region had simply appeared for Europe to enter and exert control over. However, as this chapter has shown, literary fiction developed simultaneously with empire, “not in a simple correspondence,” but “in a complex and symbiotic relationship” (Perera, 1991, p. 5). Cartographers put Europe’s stamp on newly discovered lands, and the popular fiction of travel played its role in the imaginative claiming of the antipodes, preparing the ground for colonialism. As Edward Said put it, the struggle over geography “is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about form, about images and imaginings” (Said, 1993, p. 6). Even genuine accounts of travel and exploration did not immediately abandon the mythic dimension. Voyagers, in the privileged position of eye-witness, often embellished their records of travels, in some cases going to imaginative extremes despite knowing that their stories could only have a very tenuous and short life in an environment of rapidly increasing scientific knowledge. At a deeper level, it can be argued that the power of mythology was such that it was difficult to let it go.

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Notes

¹ On the evolution of ideas about the antipodes in the context of European exploration in Australia and the South Pacific, see: Clancy & Richardson, 1988; Edmond, 1997; Eisler, 1995; Estensen, 1998; Frost & Williams, 1988; and Spate, 1988.

² The concept of the armchair traveller only became institutionalised as a leisure form in the nineteenth century. See Hanne, 1993, p. 5, and Henisch, 1967, p. 5.

³ See Bakhtin, 1981, for a discussion of the stylistic features of the early novel, with particular reference to the “alien world in adventure time” in Greek romance (86-95) and also to the “chronotope of the road” (98, 120).

⁴ Maps may seem ‘plotless’, but they can arguably ‘gain’ a plot. Semiotician Yuri Lotman explains, “If we draw a line across the map to indicate...the possible air or sea routes, the text then assumes a plot: an action will have been introduced which surmounts the structure” (1977, p. 239).

⁵ Passage translated by Justin Stagl (1995, p. 289). Degenerando was known before and after the French Revolution as ‘de Gerando’.

⁶ Imaginary voyage texts mentioned include: Coyer, 1750; Longueville, 1727; Neville, 1668; Vairasse (Veiras) d'Alias, 1675; and the anonymously published *The Voyages Travels and Wonderful Discoveries of Captain John Holmesby*, 1757. See Phillips, 1997, p. 126.

⁷ Drawing similar connections in a different language tradition, Padrón explores the association between maps and writing in his book *The Spacious Word: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain* (2004).