Mapping the Ontologically Unreal – Counterfactual Spaces in Literature and Cartography

Barbara Piatti and Lorenz Hurni

Institute of Cartography, ETH Zurich, 8093 Zurich, Switzerland
Email: piatti@karto.baug.ethz.ch

This paper deals with the realm of alternate worlds. Although the emphasis of such creations relies on historical alteration (resulting in an alternate time stream), settings can impressively support the historical alternative: most alternate history plots come with shifted or even newly drawn political borders and are set in transformed urban and rural spaces. Not surprisingly, actual maps or at least remarkably detailed layouts of the geographical framework play a significant role. In other words, counterfactual spaces can be mapped with words or cartographic symbols; they can be both told and visualized. By including both concepts from the field of theory of the narrative and from a cartographer's point of view, focus is laid on various strategies in order to map and/or remap cities, countries, as well as entire geopolitical situations.

Keywords: alternate history, counterfactual history, novels, maps, history, World War II, Berlin, New York, Melissa Gould, Robert Harris, Rupert Thomson

INTRODUCTION

Simply stated, a counterfactual history – also called uchronia, allohistory or alternate history – is the description of a historical 'what if': a speculative historical exercise. 'Alternate histories revolve around the basic premise that some event in the past did not occur as we know it did, and thus the present has changed.' (Hellekson, 2001, p. 2). The moment at which history shifts to a parallel world is called a 'nexus event'. Perhaps the most common themes in counterfactual history are 'What if the Nazis had won World War II?' and 'What if the Confederacy had won the Civil War?', but alternate Napoleons, Roman Empires and Kennedys are also popular subjects.

Historical counterfactuals are ambitious thought experiments, acts of imagination, which include 'a leap into the ontologically unreal' (Staley, 2007, p. 115). Yet they are by no means defined as a freely invented imaginary past. To have some kind of value, the alternate version should appear as real options within the historical record. The German philosopher Max Weber recommended 'to attempt only 'minimal' or 'plausible' rewrites of history, to pursue counterfactuals that were embedded in reality'. (Herwig, 2006, p. 324).

The majority of counterfactual history is written under the conditions of deliberate fiction and is commonly classified as a sub-genre of science fiction (for scholarly non-fiction writing, see, for instance, Ferguson, 1997; Brodersen, 2002; Rosenfeld, 2005). Without doubt, Philip K. Dick's novel, *The Man in the High Castle*

(1962), is – with regard to contents and style – one of the masterpieces of counterfactual narrative, and paved the way for the whole genre by making it highly popular. The plot is set in America in 1962. In 1948, the former USA lost the war – and is now occupied jointly by Nazi Germany and Japan (see Figure 1 – the suggestive map on the cover visualizes the essence of the story yet to be told). The USA has been divided between these two powers, bringing slavery back to the South and imprisonment and death to the Jews. Meanwhile, the Germans have landed astronauts on Mars, drained the Mediterranean for farmland, and have almost entirely liquidated the black African population in an extension of the 'final solution'.

Although the emphasis of the genre relies on historical alteration (resulting in an alternate time stream), settings can impressively support the historical alternative: most alternate history plots – as in the example by Dick – come with shifted or even newly drawn political borders and are set in reorganized, remodelled urban and rural spaces. Thus, a theory of counterfactual narratives is closely related to current developments within the nascent research area of an advanced literary geography (Piatti, 2008; Piatti *et al.*, 2009). Not surprisingly, actual maps or at least remarkably detailed layouts of the geographical framework play a significant role in those narratives. In other words, counterfactual spaces can be mapped with words or cartographic symbols; they can be both told and visualized.

In this paper, focus is laid on the conception of counterfactual spaces in novels and maps, by including
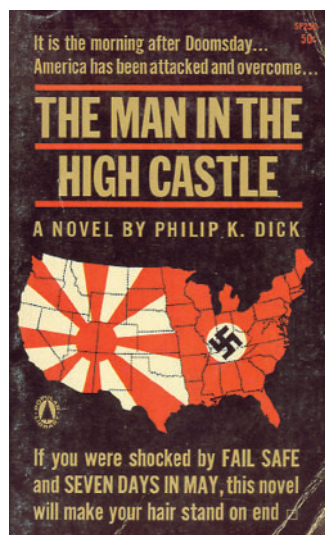
Figure 1.   Paperback cover (Popular Library, 1964)

concepts from the field of theory of the narrative, and from a cartographer's point of view. The examples chosen reflect the importance of mapping concepts, maps or map-like products within the frame of the counterfactual: the first discussed are two novels –*The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (Michael Chabon, 2007) and *Fatherland* (Robert Harris, 1992). As for the plots, both alter historical events during Word War II and its outcome. This is also the case for Melissa Gould's thought-provoking alternate history map *NEU-YORK* (2000) which can be read as a genuine storytelling cartographic product and is compared to the written counterfactuals. The analysis concludes with a look at Rupert Thomson's map-based dystopia or 'social science fiction' *Divided Kingdom* (2005), a scenario of the future, which also develops a parallel world and hence shares a couple of aspects with counterfactual experiments.

HIDDEN MAPS – THE WRITER AS CARTOGRAPHER

Michael Chabon's novel *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (2007) is a perfect example of how a writer acts as a cartographer (see the catchy title of Turchi, 2004). The plot is set in a contemporary, alternative version of history in which Israel was dismantled in 1948 and Alaska has become a temporary home to Europe's displaced Jews. Chabon took a footnote of history as his starting point, namely, a report entitled 'The Problem of Alaskan Development' (1939/1940). This report includes a proposal to move European refugees, especially persecuted Jews, to remote locations in Alaska. It is Sitka, one of the four towns actually mentioned in this document, that Chabon has chosen as his main setting: 'Aside from its geography, Sitka, a boomerang-shaped island in the southeastern panhandle of Alaska, has very little in common with the imaginary city named Sitka conjured up by Michael Chabon [...]' (Cohen, 2007). This setting supplies the story with some literal exoticism: Jews in Alaska, escaped from extermination, have now intermingled with the native inhabitants, the Tlingits, and the small settlement of Sitka has quickly grown into a teeming Jewish homeland.

In his novel, Chabon renamed some of the streets and places, while he stuck to other toponyms [it is worth mentioning that Sitka and its environment already feature some 'strange' sounding place names, since the region was a Russian colony until the year 1867 – keeping this in mind, the existing Jewish autonomous territory Birobidzhan (Russia) might also have been a source of inspiration for Chabon]. It is this mixture that gives the Sitka in the novel the specific Jewish/Yiddish flavour. When the main character, Detective Landsman, stands on a rooftop, his panoramic view of Sitka is described as follows:

> *The lamps of the Jews stretch from the slope of Mount Edgecumbe in the west, over the seventy-two infilled islands of the Sound, across the <u>Shvartsn-Yam</u>, Halibut Point, South Sitka, and the Nachtasyl, across Harkavy and the <u>Untershtat</u>, before they are snuffed in the east by the Baranof range. On <u>Oyssthelung Island</u>, the beacon at the tip of the Safety Pin – sole remnant of the World's Fair – blinks out its warning to airplanes or yids.* (Chabon, 2007, p. 9; underlined, by the authors of this article, are the toponyms invented and introduced by Chabon)

Since Chabon's novel can be precisely located geographically, and it belongs to the category of so-called mappable fiction (see the crucial differentiation between mappable and un-mappable fiction in Stockhammer, 2007, pp. 67–71). The map-obsessed [as he puts it in an essay with the promising title *Maps and Legends* (2008)] author himself was tempted to turn his vision into a cartographic product. In an interview, he declares: 'I did make maps of Sitka. I sensed I could get sucked in very easily to doing beautifully rich, detailed maps of Sitka and environs, so I tried to be strict with myself and just made crude pencil sketches that aren't much to look at, to try to figure out where everything was' (quotation in Upchurch, 2007).

In fact, the cartographic pleasure is to be experienced in the text, and only in the text, where a second, alternative toponymic layer is superimposed on the existing locale. A detailed map of this creation might even turn into a threat to the carefully elaborated narrative.

HISTORICAL MAPS AS INSPIRATION FOR A COUNTERFACTUAL NARRATIVE

Robert Harris's *Fatherland* (1992) is commercially the most successful alternate history novel up to the present time. The author developed the 'what if Hitler had won World War II and were still alive' story with a profound historical expertise, and gave great attention to detail.

Both in the accompanying maps and in the evolving story, the reader is immediately confronted with a remapping of known and familiar spaces on both a micro- and macro-scale: Berlin as Hitler's 'Reichshauptstadt' and the Greater German Reich have become reality (Figures 2 and 3).

Harris made extensive use of historical material – in fact, his settings are the result of maps and plans of spatial visions described by Hitler himself and his chief architect Albert Speer (Fest, 1999). In the author's note at the end of the

Figure 2. Greater German Reich, map from Robert Harris's novel *Fatherland* (1992), Arrow Book (Random House)

Figure 3. Berlin as setting of Robert Harris's *Fatherland* (1992), Arrow Book (Random House)
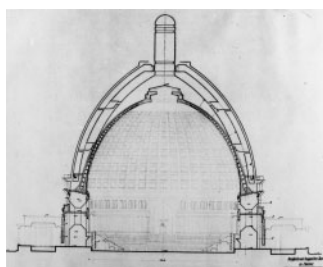

Figure 4. Historical document: original sketch of the ''Great Hall' (Albert Speer, around 1934), Prometheus, das verteilte digitale Bildarchiv für Forschung und Lehre

book. this is explicitly stated: 'The Berlin of this book is the Berlin Albert Speer planned to build' (Harris, 1992, p. 372).

During the author's visits to archives and libraries, history itself provided him with all the necessary information: on the one hand, there are models for the capital of the Third Reich – Germania – (former Berlin, Figures 4 and 5), and on the other hand, there are the political statements to extend the German Reich far to the East. Hitler's plan was precisely to take 'control of the Eurasian land mass stretching from the Rhine River to the Ural Mountains. [...] Conquest of *Lebensraum* in the east went hand in hand
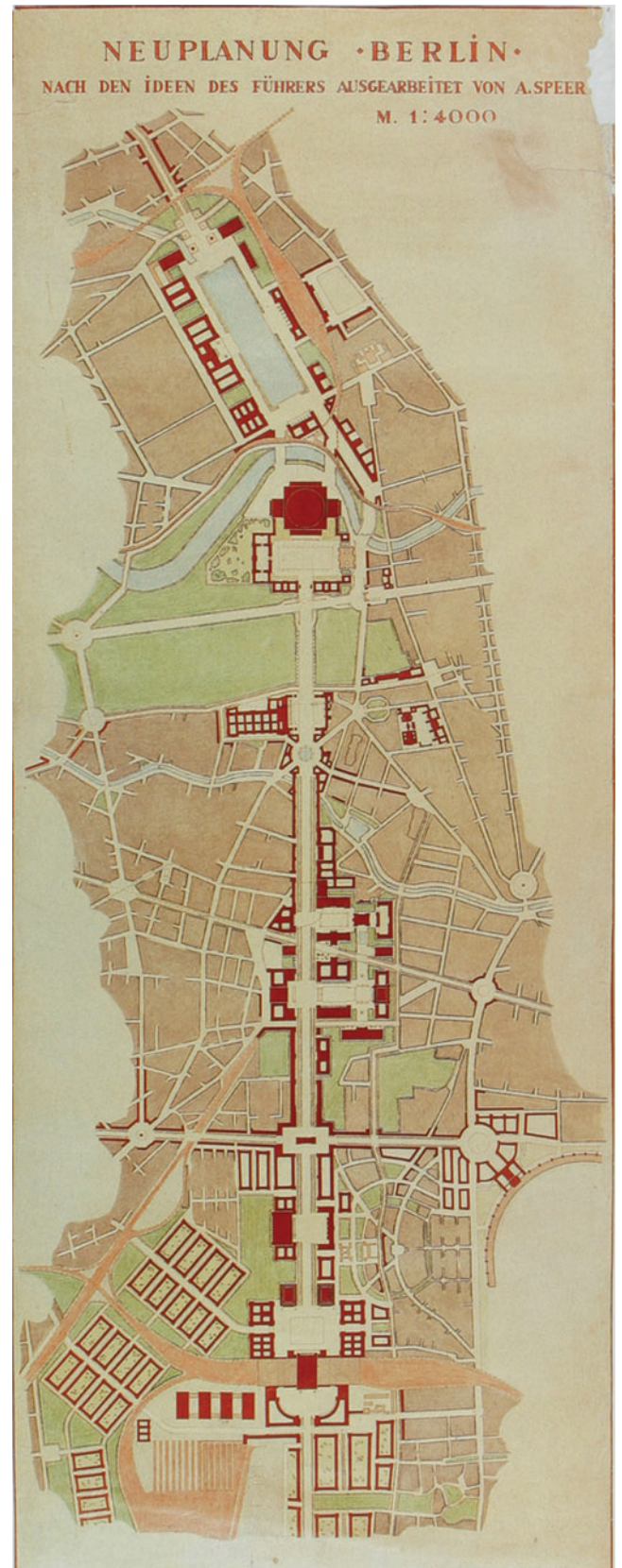

Figure 5. Historical document: plan of a new Berlin by Albert Speer (1937), Prometheus, das verteilte digitale Bildarchiv für Forschung und Lehre

with the biological extermination of 'lesser' races' (Herwig, 2006, p. 326). It is exactly this scenario which is depicted in Harris's novel (Figure 2). As early as 1941, Hitler's military leaders fully agreed with his suggestion 'that the conquered territories be ''dissolved'' at one and the same time as the geographical thrust of the German attack (north, centre, and south) – that is, into Reichs-Commisariats Baltic, White Russia, and Ukraine' (Herwig, 2006, p. 326). The expansion to the East is directly linked to the plans of building a new Berlin: in Hitler's opinion, the Greater German Reich called for a suitable 'world' capital, and while planning it, Hitler and Speer were thinking along the lines of vastness of scale and gigantomania.

The first two maps presented within the frame of the novel give hints and reading instructions, but their artistic quality is rather poor. Is this because the maps are supposed to be inferior to the remarkably rich and densely woven narrative? On the other hand, they actually supply the friction with some authenticity, as their style resembles press or information maps which are widely used today in newspapers, magazines or in non-fiction books. Finally, the maps render a service to the reader, for instead of being forced to undertake some research of their own, the two maps offer the most important bits and pieces of spatial and political information in a dense and comprehensive form.

It adds to the spookiness of the spatial arrangement that what is described in the novel and evoked by the power of words is precisely what was planned by Nazi rulers. For a short time, Europe was more or less on the brink of the realisation of these visions. Harris delivers a plot for the historical maps, models and plans of Speer and Hitler. His counterfactual – paradoxically – infuses those never realized plans with a sort of (fictional) reality. Fortunately, Berlin-Germania was never built, but in Harris's vision, it comes gradually into being; in a way only literature can build up a space, its streets are filled with characters, its public transport system works and the economy and everyday life are prospering. In other words, it is the novel that brings to life the collection of historical maps, stored somewhere in archives and libraries.

Rather late in the story, on page 303, a third map appears (Figure 6), which provides evidence of how thoughtfully real and counterfactual space are combined within this novel. It offers a glimpse into a world which is not (yet) known to the society within the novel and where some of the characters try to hide and keep secret using all possible means: the world of the concentration and death camps. The actual clue to Harris's sinister and grim vision of a Nazi-dominated Europe 20 years after the end of World War II is the fact that the Wannsee Conference in 1942 has never become public knowledge – and that only a few high-ranking men know about the final solution, the 'Endlösung', the extinction of millions and millions of Jews as well as countless others who did not fit into the Nazi concept of an ideal society (the mentally and physically handicapped, homosexuals, Sinti and Roma people, political opponents and many others). The small black-and-white map occupies only the bottom third of the page, showing a sketch of a camp, which can easily be identified as Auschwitz. Berlin detective Xavier March, the disillusioned protagonist, and an American journalist, Charlie, start to
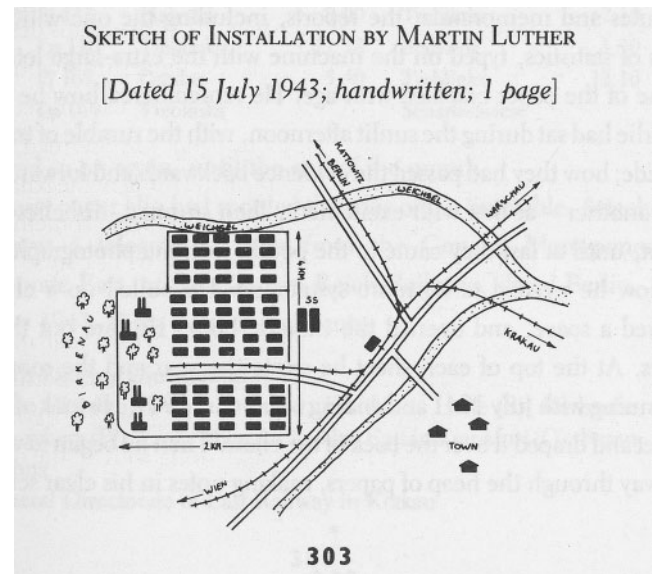

Figure 6. Map from Robert Harris's *Fatherland* (1992, p. 303), Arrow Book (Random House)

investigate and unleash the true story: the death transports to the camps in the East and the gas chambers. They go through a pile of old documents – timetables, minutes, letters and the aforementioned map, which are attached to a document entitled 'Notes on a Visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau by Martin Luther, Under State Secretary, Reichs Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (p. 311) – and get an unbelievable picture of what has happened in the years after 1942.

To the reasonably well educated reader, of course, this map serves as an icon, a gateway to the collected knowledge about the darkest side of the Third Reich. Suddenly, the reader knows much more about the horrifying reality than March and Charlie do. Whereas in the book, a small, straightforward, innocent looking sketch map is included, in order to depict rudimentary knowledge about the camps; in the average reader's reality, almost no subject is better covered with visual materials such as documentaries, photographs and maps, than the concentration and death camps. There is an overwhelmingly rich store of collective images, which will be recalled at the sight of the small map.

Harris's novel is last but not least an excellent example of the combination of space types in a counterfactual world: an ontologically unreal Berlin is combined with the historic reality of the death camps.

VISUALIZING THE COUNTERFACTUAL: A NARRATIVE MAP

New York-based artist Melissa Gould (MeGo) produced a narrative map, whose storytelling potential is more than obvious (Figures 7–9). The viewer is invited to walk around in a counterfactual New York, called *NEU-YORK*, a city map designed as if the Nazis had defeated and conquered this highly symbolically-charged site of American urban life and culture. Gould herself calls it a 'cautionary mediation' and 'an obsessive exercise in cartography' (Gould, 2000). She invented a whole system of renaming streets and

Figure 7.   Melissa Gould: *NEU-YORK* (2000), detail, Melissa Gould, New York
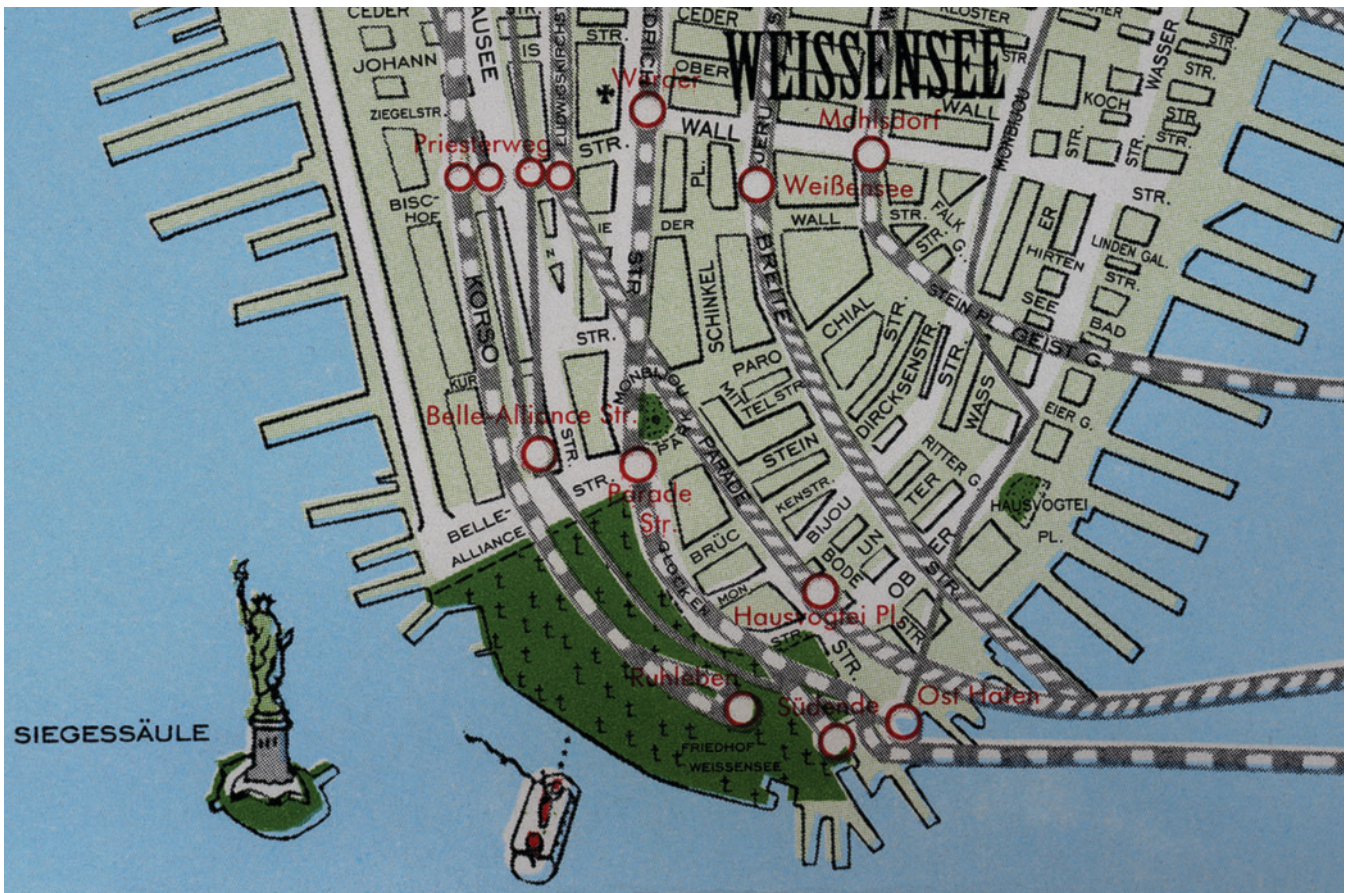

Figure 8.   Melissa Gould: *NEU-YORK* (2000), detail, Melissa Gould, New York
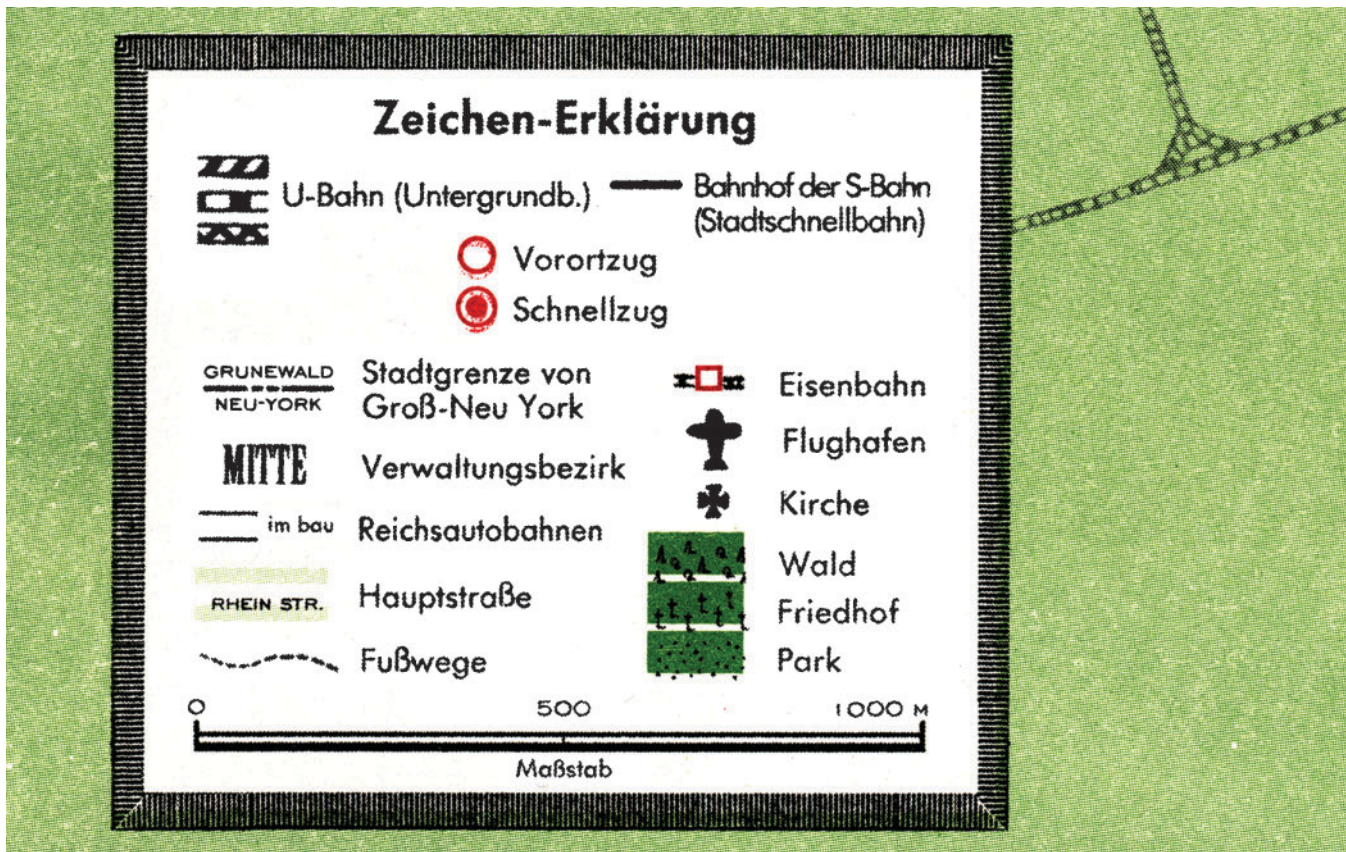
Figure 9.   Melissa Gould: *NEU-YORK* (2000), map legend, Melissa Gould, New York

districts in order to link New York with Berlin and hence to produce a map of an 'unbuilt city' (Gould, 2000). There are a few examples: the Hudson River becomes the Havel; the East River becomes the Spree; the Statue of Liberty is labelled as Siegessäule; the Brandenburger Tor stands at Columbus Circle; Tiergarten (Central Park), with the Reichstag (the Metropolitan Museum of Art) stationed at its edge, contains the Wannsee Lake.

Interestingly enough, the artist herself was not inspired by counterfactual novels; instead, her inspiration has a more personal background: 'In 1999 I was vacationing in Berlin, a city I knew quite well from a year's residency during the previous decade. While on my cellphone talking to my father in Manhattan I walked along Unter den Linden, eventually passing a Volkswagen showroom. I told my father my location – I love such geographic disconnects and juxtapositions. On the sidewalk nearby a vendor was selling old books and Berlin atlases, the type of items I collect. Then I made another call, to check messages on the answering machine in my Manhattan apartment. There was a request to contact the Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper regarding a commission to produce a lithograph. I immediately responded, spontaneously proposing a map of Manhattan as Berlin, but as if the Nazis had won – undoubtedly influenced by the antique Berlin maps which I leafed through as I spoke with the Rutgers people, as well as by my two earlier Berlin–Manhattan phone calls. Rutgers

loved the idea. So, that's how NEU-YORK was born, the proverbial light bulb moment' (Melissa Gould by e-mail, June–July 2009).

NEU-YORK would be a perfect starting point for a counterfactual novel, since the power of maps 'to fire the imagination is well known' (Chabon, 2008, p. 30). Looking at this map, not only one, but several stories could be told and plots evolved. But how to define the specific narrativity of this map? According to Ljungberg, maps are invitations to imaginary journeys by being non-sequential forms of representation, 'i.e. the information on the map can be read in whatever order one likes. This makes the possibilities of mapreading closer to those of interactive computer games and hypertext navigation' (Ljungberg, 2003, p. 159). Nevertheless, as Çöltekin *et al.* (2009) show by eye-tracking methods, the map layout, i.e. the arrangement of different map segments, has a significant influence on the perception of the map elements, and thus prioritizes areas of interest; this is true in the case of interactive maps, but can also be applied, to a limited extent, to the static elements in a printed map. In the case of *NEU-YORK*, the immediate powerful vision of an ontologically unreal space is based on a wealth of details, each of them highly significant: from a cartographic point of view, the map looks intentionally old-fashioned, retro-stylish, even registering differences typical of historical lithography techniques. The colours are rather muted or greyish, the building blocks

Figure 10. Historical propaganda map/recruiting poster, *Daily Mail*, 3 July 1917, p. 8 (Airminded, http://airminded.org/category/counterfactuals/)

have a shadowed appearance and the lettering is done using copperplate-like fonts. It was Gould's intention to 'replicate the tones of an old map' (Gould, 2000).

The *NEU-YORK* map is available online (http://www.megophone.com/neuyork.html) – there, the index function represents a sharp contrast to the historical appearance of the map, since it is what we expect in a modern information system. But the original format is a limited edition of 20 four-colour lithographs – a real and tangible product with the special qualities of paper, surface structure and the smell of printing fluids. Owing to the deliberate vintage appearance of the map, an uncanny experience is guaranteed: ultimately it appears, as something thoroughly real, physical that comes – like a message – from an ontologically unreal epoch, and it is precisely this interplay between real and unreal which is one of the beauties of Gould's work.

Conceptually, Melissa Gould's work is embedded in a wider cartographic context[1]. The way an authentic, historical map of a 'what-if-scenario' could look is presented via a map example of Australia. Here, the same technique of re-labelling an existing territory is performed – for very different reasons, and, in terms of map aesthetics, in a rougher style.

The illustration (Figure 10) presents an original recruiting poster, which was used with great success in South Australia. It shows how the map of Australia might have been redrawn if Germany had won World War I. Australia itself becomes 'New-Germany'; Perth becomes Tirpitzburg; Adelaide becomes Hindenburg; Brisbane becomes Bernhardiburg; Sydney becomes Nietscheburg [sic]; Tasmania becomes Kaisermania; Melbourne would be renamed Zeppelinburg. From a present-day perspective, it looks like a counterfactual map, but it is an authentic map, depicting a once detestably possible future scenario. Nor should one forget, that many cities in Europe had to go through the sometimes painful process of renaming; during the Third Reich, in many occupied European cities, an 'Adolf-Hitler-Platz' or 'Adolf-Hitler-Strasse' dominated the centre.

Such examples show that Melissa Gould's works are not only beautifully crafted pieces of art, but also a starting point if one wishes to think about geographies of belonging, identity and political power.

RE-ARRANGED SPACES

'Science fiction asks, "What if the world were somehow different?" This question is at the center of both science fiction and the alternate history' (Sokoloff, 2006, p. 306). At this point, counterfactual and dystopian novels share common grounds: whereas one genre explores what might have been (but never happened), the other devotes itself to visions of what could be imagined and was never to become real.

Staley points out that 'a counterfactual and a scenario, while not real, are nevertheless an adjunct to reality' (Staley, 2007, p. 116). This is true for Rupert Thomson's *Divided Kingdom*, especially when it comes to the spatial context. Following the storyteller, the novel – a strikingly powerful tale, a true page-turner about belonging, exclusion and inclusion, border-crossing, manhunt and flight – unfolds into a horrifying tour through a recognisable near-future UK. The country has been – along with its entire population – 're-arranged'. British people have been divided into four distinct groups of personality, according to the philosophy of the four humours: the sanguines live in the Red Quarter, the cholerics in the Yellow Quarter, the melancholics in the Green Quarter and the phlegmatic in the Blue Quarter: 'The new racism is psychological' (Thomson, 2005, p. 196). It is strictly forbidden to cross the borders between the quarters, and these consists of concrete walls and are equipped with barbed wire, watchtowers and armed guards.

The plot provides only little hints of a past that resembles ours, e.g. the current members of the Royal Family have also been 're-arranged' according to their personalities: the Queen 'had been classified as a phlegmatic during the Rearrangement, and now, twenty-seven years later, she was still alive, having outlasted both her choleric husband and her melancholic eldest son' (Thomson, 2005, p. 104). But in fact, no explanations are offered (there is no nexus event as in the counterfactual plots), and the only direct link to the world we know is the map, with the familiar shape of England. This map, at the beginning of the text, represents this radically transformed UK (Fig. 11, see also the interactive version 'Divided Kingdom'). In an interview, Thomson explains about the interaction between real and fictional geographies: 'Part of my research for the book involved driving around Great Britain looking for these locations, trying to root my fiction in fact. I located "The Wanings" in that wild tract of country to the north-west of Carlisle. I found "The Church of Heaven on Earth" in the Isle of Purbeck. The Axe Edge Inn is in the Peak District' (http://www.dividedkingdom.co.uk/).

A couple of aspects are noteworthy: first, the map looks as if it has been taken either from a children's book or comic strip, in bright colours with hand-written toponyms and just a few clumsy symbols, for example, two crosses side by side symbolize a point of legal or illegal border-crossing.
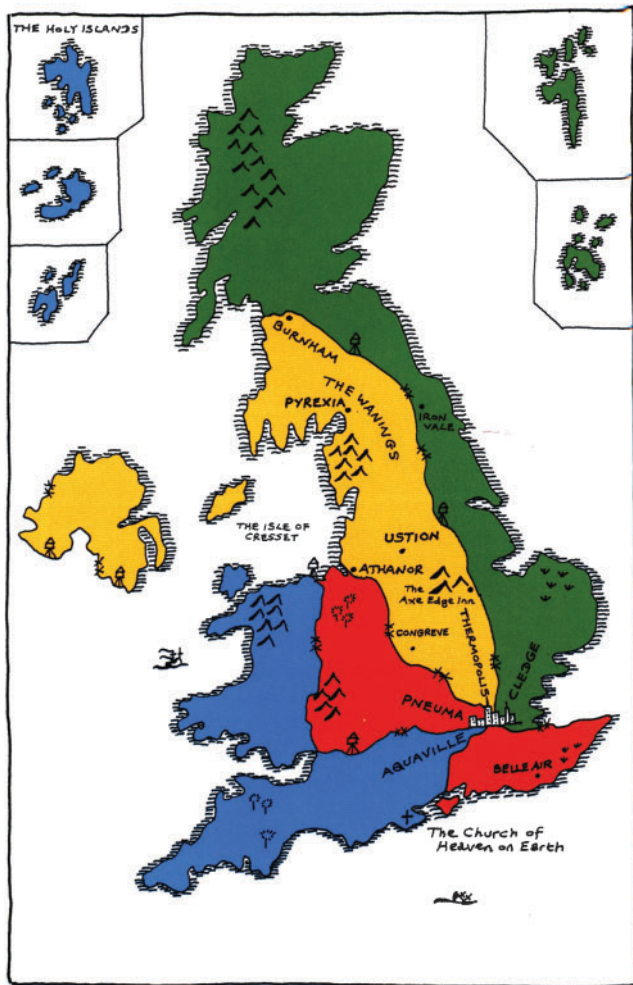
Figure 11. Map of Rupert Thomson's *Divided Kingdom* (2005), Bloomsbury Publishing

There are also symbols for mountains and for watch-towers along the border and a couple of houses indicate the four capitals (former London): Aquaville, Pneuma, Thermopolis and Cledge. All in all, the map looks rather like a sketch map drawn by the author, which he used to conceptualize his novel. Such a procedure is quite common among novel writers (one of the most famous examples is given by Robert Louis Stevenson – he first drew a map of an imaginary island, then wrote the novel *Treasure Island*, based on that sketch).

Second, the divided kingdom is designed as a microcosm. There are no allusions whatsoever to Ireland (besides the remarkable fact that today's Northern Ireland belongs to the choleric yellow territory, while the rest of Ireland remains invisible), nor to continental Europe or former British colonies. The divided kingdom is an island and as such stands by, and for itself.

Third, the spatial division between the four quarters seems to be rather arbitrary and we can perceive only little correlation between the real geography and the four types of humours (for instance, the position of the choleric yellow quarter – polluted with smog and litter – corresponds with the industrialized area between London and Liverpool). The map could be characterized as an overlay of two map

concepts. An 'allegoric map' (like the famous *Carte du Tendre*, around 1660) and a conventional overview map with the outlines of the UK. According to Reitinger (2008), allegoric maps replace all toponyms by descriptive ones, which is not the case for all the names in Thomson's *Divided Kingdom* (at least only for the self-explanatory capitals 'Aquaville', 'Pneuma' and 'Thermopolis', while 'Cledge' remains an unsolved riddle). In fact, the allegorical ancient concept of the four humours becomes geo-referenced.

Finally and most important, a legend or comment, which belongs almost by definition to a map, is apparently missing. Only by starting to read will you also start to understand the map, which gradually fills with information. In other words, the main text is both an extended legend and a comment to the map. And you would be totally lost without the map. Geography never becomes a simple backdrop within the fiction; the different settings in the quarters have almost protagonistic qualities. It is of the utmost importance, where the main character stays, where he tries to cross the borders, and so on. According to Christina Ljungberg, maps offer writers 'versatile tools for producing new 'realities' in fiction. […] it seems to be such an efficient strategy for engaging the reader in the production of meaning. That is, after all, the very essence of literature' (Ljungberg, 2003, p. 174). Under this perspective, it is notable that the main character – coming from the red quarter and hence feeling totally disorientated in the other three – needs maps as desperately as the reader, in order to gain some orientation (a map of Aquaville, a map of the yellow quarter, a map of the red quarter coast, etc., see Thomson, 2005, p. 122, 150, 223, 300).

Rupert Thomson's dark vision of a near-future England features a predominant spatial aspect. This is exactly what literary scholar Frederic Jameson observes for the entire genre of science fiction, which he starts to call 'a spatial genre' for good reasons: '[...] the collective adventure accordingly becomes less that of a character (individual or collective) than that of a planet, a climate, a weather and a system of landscapes – in short, a map. We need to explore the proposition that the distinctiveness of SF as a genre has less to do with time (history, past, future) than with space' (Jameson, 2005, pp. 312–313).

CONCLUSION

The magic of alternate history as well as future scenarios, complete with their respective settings, works because of their confusing intermediate status: they are by no means totally imaginary worlds, but altered ones. They are doubtlessly close enough to our world in order to send shivers down the spine. In fact, they function as permeable membranes between our world and a slightly alien world in which familiar objects and sites – among them whole buildings and entire cities – are still recognisable to a certain extent. A scene like Trafalgar Square in *Divided Kingdom*, with Lord Nelson's famous column in the centre of a death zone, is a good example: 'On the other side of the concrete wall lay the choleric capital, Thermopolis. […] I gazed down into the narrow strip of no man's land. To the left,

the border moved in a north-westerly direction, incorporating a square where people used to get drunk on New Year's Eve. The famous admiral now stood in a mined wasteland, peering out, one-eyed, over a tangle of barbed wire' (Thomson, 2005, p. 77).

The works discussed in this paper make use of various strategies in order to map and/or remap cities, countries, as well as entire geopolitical situations. The primary material discussed above was arranged according to a scale: from hidden maps (a predominance of words) up to a single narrative map (a predominance of cartographic symbols). While Chabon's narrative gets by without any maps, Robert Harris's *Fatherland* (1992) includes three rather different info maps, and Melissa Gould's alternate history map is the fictional product itself.

By comparing the alternate worlds so far discussed, one becomes aware of opposing strategies: While Harris uses the maps as proof of a 'fictional authenticity', Chabon avoids the use of any map which might turn into competition or a threat to the storytelling.

Moreover, Melissa Gould starts where Chabon stops – he produced an alternative Sitka, built exclusively from words and deliberately left out the possibility of mapping his creation. Melissa Gould's point of departure was a counterfactual situation, a thought experiment that called for artistic visualisation. One of her steps within the working process was to erase all Jewish symbols from her Manhattan base map material (Gould, 2000). Chabon did, in words, the opposite: he included synagogues and Yiddish place names in his 'hidden map' of Sitka.

A closer look at Gould and Harris also offers some insights: Harris transformed historical maps into a fictional reality (his scenes of action in ontologically unreal Berlin), while Gould brings an ontologically unreal epoch to the physical reality of a map that looks as if it was actually produced in that epoch.

While in the literature, the counterfactual has become a prosperous and well established field (for an overview of this prolific genre, check the Uchronia website: http://www.uchronia.net, which currently lists more than 2900 titles), counterfactual cartography seems to be rather uncharted territory. In fact, Melissa Gould's map seems to be almost unique in its artistic quality, compared to some random finds on the web (North America, the Balkans Version, http://strangemaps.wordpress.com/2007/11/19/205-north-america-the-balkans-version; Alternate history, http://www.alternatehistory.com). Doubtlessly, counterfactual cartography is a chapter yet to be written and calls for a more thorough investigation than is carried out within the limits of this paper.

One reason for this lack of a counterfactual culture in cartography may lie in the very understanding of the subject: traditionally, cartography is seen as a discipline in the service of other fields and topics. Yet there is a genuine affinity to alternate worlds as Imhof (1981) put it in a radio interview. According to him, maps are always implemented in virtual and therefore illusory worlds. However, they strongly correlate with the real world with respect to geometry and pictorial quality, in order to fulfil the aim of the map. In fact, cartography could easily go some steps further, as suggested by Tom Lubbock: Why shouldn't we have 'a counterfactual geography, a sci-fi genre that imagines the planet with alternative geological outcome' (Lubbock, 2007)? Attempts in this direction have been made using programs like 'Fractal Terrains' (http://www.profantasy.com/products/ft.asp). As far as we can see, in contrast to counterfactual maps, one can find quite a number of future scenario maps, like for instance, *Les carnets de voyage d'Imago Sekoya* (http://www.wbrecup.com/BE/beFR.html), describing and mapping our world 240 years after a sea-level rise of 1000 m. But in the end, our guess is that the realms of counterfactual and future scenarios will be explored by artists and writers and not by cartographers.

The double perspective in this paper clearly reveals that counterfactual spaces are a prosperous and by no means fully explored field at the crossroads of history, literature, cartography and art – an invitation to meditate further on the intriguing coexistence of past and present, and fiction and reality.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Barbara Piatti has obtained her PhD in literary studies in 2006 and is currently working as a project leader at the Institute of Cartography, ETH Zurich. She is specialized in the theory of literary settings and their interactions with real places and spaces, and has published and lectured widely about methods of a new literary geography. As a visiting researcher, she has worked at the universities in Stanford, Prague and Kiel. Since 2006, she and Lorenz Hurni have led a research project, dealing with a prototype version of an interactive *Literary Atlas of Europe*, organized as an interdisciplinary network with teams at ETH Zurich, Charles University, Prague and Georg August University, Goettingen and other international partners. In 2008, she was elected co-chair of a newly-founded working group dedicated to 'Art and Cartography' within the International Cartographic Association. Recently, she has been awarded a fellowship by the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Institute for Advanced Studies, for the academic year 2010/2011.

Lorenz Hurni is Professor of Cartography and director of the Institute of Cartography at the ETH Zurich since November 1996. He is managing editor-in-chief of the *Atlas of*

Switzerland, the Swiss national atlas. From 1983 to 1988, he studied geodesy at ETH Zurich. As assistant at the Institute of Cartography, he implemented a digital cartographic information system for teaching and research purposes. In his PhD, he developed methods enabling the entirely digital production of topographic and geological maps, and derived three-dimensional visualisations. Thereby, he developed the first program for the automatic generation of cartographic cliff drawings. From 1994 to 1996, he was project leader for computer-assisted cartography at the Federal Office of Topography (swisstopo) in Wabern. His current research focus is on cartographic data models, tools for the production of printed and multimedia maps, as well as interactive, multidimensional multimedia map representations. He is a member of numerous national and international scientific and professional commissions and of the 'Leopoldina – German Academy of Sciences'.

NOTES

[1]See for a comparison also No. 14 of the magazine *The New Yorker* (10 December 2001). This cover illustration by Maira Kalman and Rich Meyerowitz features a map of 'New Yorkistan' where the various parts of the city are re-labelled with Middle Eastern sounding expressions, some of them clearly meant as jokes or onomatopoetic creations.

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