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“The Spirit of Observation”: The Early Ordnance Survey and the British Culture of Patriotism

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ABSTRACT

The French Revolution exerted a profound influence on the function, representation, and meaning of space across Europe. One of the Revolution’s most tangible effects regarding this influence on space, and on English cartographical history, was the founding of the Ordnance Survey, Britain’s national mapping agency, in 1791.

My paper will explore how the OS functioned within the culture of early-nineteenth-century Britain, particularly in light of the cultural understanding of national space and landscape. It will explore how the OS was construed and responded to by civilian map-readers; and how such patriotic interpretations of cartography related to wider debates surrounding British national identity during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic War years. The Ordnance Survey fulfilled a crucial role in nationalist practice and propaganda. The paper will discuss responses and correlatives to the OS’s representation of space in the work of canonical writers (including William Wordsworth and Jane Austen). It will explore how OS maps functioned as icons for a newly-united kingdom; and were symbolic and real forms of surveillance, across private and public spaces alike. The Ordnance Survey sought to present a united British front to everything that sought to destabilise it.

TEXT

The French Revolution exerted a profound influence on the function, representation, and meaning of space and landscape across Europe, an influence which continued to reverberate well into the nineteenth century. One of the Revolution’s most tangible effects in terms of this influence on space, and on English cartographical history in particular, was its provocation of the founding of the Ordnance Survey, Britain’s national mapping agency, in 1791. William Roy, who acted as Inspector of Coasts in the years following his participation in the mid-eighteenth-century Military Survey of Scotland, had repeatedly called for the instigation of such an accurate national map of the United Kingdom, adamant that “the honour of the nation is concerned in having at least as good a map of this as there is of any other country.”¹ Roy petitioned King George III that it was “necessary, for the good & safety of the State,” that accurate geographical knowledge of the nation’s interior should be acquired, and that “the only Method of attaining this Knowledge, seems to be, by making a good Military Plan or Map of the whole Country.”²

William Roy’s colleague in coastal defence, Charles Lennox, the third Duke of Richmond, became sympathetic towards Roy’s assertions of the crucial importance of a military survey, after the disastrous failure of Lennox’s own schemes for improving fortifications along England’s south coast. And, in the wake of the outbreak of the French Revolution, and Roy’s death in 1790, Lennox, as Master-General of the army’s Board of Ordnance, oversaw the official instigation of a

national military survey. The Ordnance Survey was officially put into practice in June 1791, when the Board of Ordnance paid the first sums towards a theodolite and its initial staff.³ It would begin by mapping the south coast, which was considered to be particularly vulnerable to a French invasion, and then continue until the entire nation was surveyed. The Ordnance Survey's first map, a presentation map of the county of Kent, was published on 1 January 1801, and from 1805 individual sheets were made available to the public.

What I am concerned with in this paper, is the way in which the Ordnance Survey functioned within the culture of early-nineteenth-century Britain, particularly in the light of the profound effects exerted by the French Revolution on the understanding of space and landscape, that I will briefly describe. By "culture," I do not refer only to the productions and producers of the arts, but to what Raymond Williams has described as "the institutions and practices of meanings and values."⁴ In short, this paper is interested in how a military survey that was set in motion to defend the British nation against French invasion was construed and responded to by its civilian map-readers; and how such interpretations of the Ordnance Survey related to wider debates surrounding the nature of British national identity during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic War years, and the role of the British landscape within those constructions of national identity and patriotism.

The paper's first section will describe the effects exerted by the French Revolution on the understanding and representation of space, geography, and landscape, before exploring the absorption of the Ordnance Survey, and cartography more generally, into the patriotic culture of the early nineteenth century. I will describe how the Ordnance Survey's maps functioned as icons for the newly-united kingdom; and how the aesthetic unity that was provided by their underlying triangulation was considered to provide a foundation for national social harmony. These illustrations of Britain's unity and stability sought to defend the nation against the rapid changes and fragmentation inflicted on Continental geography by the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. The Ordnance Survey could also be interpreted as one particular manifestation of the culture of surveillance that developed in Britain in the wake of the French Revolution. The national mapping agency was evidence of the quotation that provides the title of this paper: that is, "the spirit of observation" that motivated the state's eye to scrutinise every inch of the national landscape, in the effort to root out evidence of Revolutionary radicalism. Such surveillance was ubiquitous and indiscriminate: it was applied to private and public spaces alike, and maps and spying were considered to materialise the breakdown of the real and conceptual boundaries between the private and the public.

It is important to state at this stage that during the course of this paper I will not be concerned with the resistance to the trenchant nationalism that the Ordnance Survey may be considered to embody. But that resistance did exist, and it was almost as vociferously expressed as its opposite, the patriotic resonance of national maps that provides the subject matter for this paper.

As I have suggested, the French Revolution had profound implications for space, and the metaphorical function of space, in France and Britain alike. The way in which this spatial influence was represented rested upon a tradition in which geography and politics were considered to be closely related. During the Civil War over a century earlier in England, the substitution of Oliver Cromwell for King Charles I had been culturally construed as a "topsy-turvy" of the traditional social hierarchy. Geographical imagery was used prevalently in representation of such political disruption. In visual and verbal satires, images of upside-down worlds had abounded to illustrate the constitutional upheaval of the Interregnum. For example, in his 1813 history of caricature, James Peller Malcolm described how, in a 1642 print entitled *Mad Fashions, Odd Fashions, All out of Fashions; or, the Emblems of these Distracted Times*, "a horse erect upon his hind-legs drives the cart, a church is inverted, fish sail in the atmosphere, a candle burns with the flame downwards, a labourer is wheeled by his own barrow, and several timid animals chase the more ferocious." Malcolm interpreted these images as emblems of the mid-seventeenth-century

revolutionary zeitgeist. "Unhappily," he explained, "these emblems were fatally derived from existing circumstances, which to the truly peaceable were dreadful beyond all former example."⁵

This use of geography to encapsulate political and social topsy-turvyness resurfaced during the Bute crisis in 1762 and 1763, when King George III's apparent favouritism for his Tory tutor, confidant, and First Minister John Stuart, the Earl of Bute, provoked commentators to accuse the King of encouraging a topsy-turvy relationship between himself and his subject. Consequently, during Bute's time in office, he and his Tory supporters were bombarded with satirical images of social and political topsy-turvyness, and geographical imagery – maps and globes, in particular – abounded in representation of what some considered to be a mixed-up world. For example, the print *The Author Run Mad* was a satirical representation of the Tory artist William Hogarth, engaged in drawing a madly distorted map on the wall. In the print, topsy-turvy geographical imagery was used to illustrate distorted political principles, and it is revealing that the artist responsible for *The Author Run Mad* was Paul Sandby, who had acted as draughtsman on William Roy's Military Survey of Scotland.⁶ The cultural applications of cartographic imagery were clearly evident to mapmakers themselves, as well as the consumers of geographical artefacts: such imagery was evidently a widely understood representational language.

Taking this tradition of the geographical figuration of politics into account, it is unsurprising that, in the late eighteenth century, the disruption of French social order that was set in motion by the French Revolution, was similarly subject to such topsy-turvy representation in England. Horace Walpole wrote of "that topsy-turvy-hood which characterizes the present age."⁷ Fanny Burney's novel *The Wanderer*, published in 1814, described one radical character as "an adept in turning the world upside down." The political disruption was represented in terms of the disruption of horizontal as well as vertical space, a shift from right- to left-wing, a "twist" to the "wrong side" of politics, as Fanny Burney also put it.⁸ Indeed, this use of geographical imagery to represent political change was itself legitimized by the French National Assembly's own conscious spatialization of politics. The very terminology of "right wing" and "left wing," to denote opposing political stances, derived from the positioning of conservatives and radicals on the respective right and left sides of the President in National Assembly debates that took place in the *Manège* in Paris from 1789.⁹

This overt spatialization of political debate meant that geographical images could be invested with political meaning in the way I have described, and particularly in the wake of the French Revolution, from the 1790s onwards. Jane Taylor's *Signor Topsy-Turvy's Wonderful Magic Lantern; or, the World Turned Upside Down*, published in 1810, was a collection of childrens' fables that narrated the reversal of social hierarchies: "the servants turned masters" or "the fish turned fishers." These role-reversals were heavily politicized. Taylor demonized revolutionary activity and affirmed the preservation of a conservative status quo. Her collection articulated the "simple moral" and command that "whate'er thy station, be content." Hard repentance was inevitable for "every one...who will seek admiration, / In ways that can never belong to his station."¹⁰ Geographical imagery was used by Taylor to naturalize her demonization of Revolutionary disruption of social hierarchies. *Signor Topsy-Turvy's* frontispiece showed an upside-down globe supporting a man on his head, visualizing the book's subtitle *The World Turned Upside-Down*, illustrating the unmistakable ludicrousness of the world that the book described. In Jane Taylor's formulation, Revolutionary radicalism – the servants turned masters – became equivalent to denying the authority of modern cartography; it was equated with the wrongness of an upside-down map.

The French Revolution, and the ensuing Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, directly provoked real geographical change in Continental Europe, so it is important to emphasize at this stage of the paper that the geographical representations of constitutional change that I have been talking about

reached far beyond a solely metaphorical function. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic armies' rampage across Europe played real havoc with real geographical boundaries. Within France, principles that lay at the heart of empirical measurement and contemporary cartography were also at the heart of the post-Revolutionary redistribution of internal regional boundaries. Edmund Burke described what he saw as the mayhem inflicted by the ultra-rationalism of the French National Assembly's "state surveyors" on the French landscape and its official boundaries in the following way:

They divide the area of their country into eighty-three pieces, regularly square, or eighteen leagues by eighteen. These large divisions are called Departments. These they portion, proceeding by square measurement, into seventeen hundred and twenty districts called Communes. These again they subdivide, still proceeding by square measurement, into smaller districts called cantons, making in all 6,400.

At first view this geometrical basis of theirs presents not much to admire or to blame. It calls for no great legislative talents. Nothing more than an accurate land surveyor, with his chain, sight, and theodolite, is requisite for such a plan as this.¹¹

So, as I have said, it is crucial that the cultural functions of cartography and geographical imagery that I am talking about in this paper, are understood to transcend the level of metaphor, and to tap into the very real significance that geographical matters held during the post-Revolutionary period. Furthermore, what I will be arguing – namely, that maps were construed as representations of the English landscape as an inherently orderly, stable, and counter-revolutionary space – must be traced back to causes that included, but also went beyond, the French Revolution alone. Like the literary historian Marilyn Butler, I want to emphasize that the latter half of the eighteenth century was "a period of rapid change or expectation of change, and its restiveness is conveyed in literature and the other arts long before there is violence in the streets of Paris."¹² The English landscape and its representations were particularly subject to radical changes long before the French Revolution. Eighteenth-century Enclosure Acts, burgeoning industrialisation, proposals for parliamentary Reform in the 1780s, the militarization of the landscape through the construction of extensive fortifications, and, crucially, the fractive unions between Scotland and England in 1707 and England and Ireland in 1800, all helped to formulate the new United Kingdom as a territory subject to many fraught internal contests. The relationship between the land and the national constitution was of fundamental importance, and subject to fundamental disagreement and debate, throughout the eighteenth century, and not just in the direct aftermath of the French Revolution. Consequently, the cultural functions of cartography in the period that this paper is largely concerned with, the early nineteenth century, are symptomatic of all of these chronic disruptions of Britain's space and society throughout the preceding century, and not just of those at its climatic end.

Throughout the eighteenth century, cartographical imagery was often construed culturally to encapsulate what has been termed the "debateable" nature of the eighteenth-century British landscape.¹³ For example, Henry Brooke's novel *The Fool of Quality*, published in 1765, used the image of a map to demonstrate the relativity of geographical truth, and to illustrate the changeable appearance of the national landscape, and the lack of shared experience it affords.¹⁴ Cartography did not provide the basis for national cohesion in Brooke's vision of the nation, but rather its opposite. One also thinks of a 1685 map of London attributed to Wenceslaus Hollar, which bore the motto "the Scale's but Small, / Expect not Truth in All." Cartography and the aspiration of truthful representation of space, this map suggested, did not necessarily go hand in hand. This paper will explore how, during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic War years in England, cartographical imagery in literature took on very different associations from these earlier correlations of maps with relativism and disharmony. And the anxiety in English culture that I will be identifying, to present English land as calm, orderly, uniform and known, was as much a response to the chronic traumatic alterations that had been building up in the relationship between

land and occupant throughout the entire eighteenth century, as it was a reaction to the acute final catalyst of French Revolutionary and Napoleonic disruption.

And there was an overwhelming anxiety in British culture between the outbreak of Revolution in 1789, and the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, to represent the nation's land in a stable, measured, and internally harmonious fashion. The materials of geography and cartography assumed literal and figurative potency in the shoring up of Britain's defences against Continental fragmentation, and against the long-term disruptions to the national landscape that I have described. The Ordnance Survey, the cartographical agency that is still today the national mapping service of Great Britain and Ireland, directly owed its instigation to this nationalist potency of geographical imagery. The quality of its cartography directly provoked patriotic reactions that commented on its demonstration of Britain's scientific pre-eminence. On the publication of its first map, of Kent, on 1 January 1801, General Andreas enthused to the Duke of York that it was "by much the finest piece of Topography in Europe," and it was generally felt that the Ordnance Survey had brought cartography "to a degree of perfection surpassing that of any other country in Europe."¹⁵ But the Ordnance Survey's role in patriotically encapsulating Britain's national superiority extended beyond the immediate reactions it provoked into more complex analyses of the maps' contributions towards national harmony and stability.

The Ordnance Survey began by conducting a Trigonometrical Survey, or triangulation, of England. The resulting skeleton framework of measurements was considered by some to draw out the intrinsic order and rationality of the landscape. The poet William Wordsworth described how a knowledge of cartographic triangulation meant that

...Oft did he take delight
To measure the altitude to some tall crag
That is the eagle's birthplace, or some peak.

Triangulation, Wordsworth felt, allowed him to perceive the essential "spirit of [nature's] forms" and her "austere truth": the cartographic process revealed the intrinsic unity of a landscape.¹⁶ This response to the aesthetic effect of triangulation was similar to the "picturesque" theory of landscape observation that was prevalent from the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The picturesque theory's chief exponent, William Gilpin, felt that picturesque instruction allowed the observer's eye to discern the inherent composure of England's land. In his words, the "ornaments" of the natural scene might be scientifically classified "under four heads – ground – wood – rocks –

and buildings."¹⁷ Deprived of such observational guidance as the picturesque, or the Ordnance Survey's triangulation, "the eye" was in danger of getting "lost in the profusion of objects, which were thrown at once before it; and [running] wild, as it were, over the vast expanse, with rapture and astonishment, before it could compose itself enough to make any coherent observations."¹⁸ The scientific and aesthetic structures of the picturesque and cartographical triangulation were considered to allow the landscape's orderly, harmonious nature to be revealed.

Gilpin's description of the aesthetic function of picturesque observation emphasized the unity that such techniques served to discern within a discrete scene, and it was precisely this discernment of unity that was crucial to the Ordnance Survey's project to map the nation. The United Kingdom was coming into being at exactly the same time that the Ordnance surveyors were traversing the national landscape, and the resultant maps acted as propaganda for the fraught regional unions between England and Scotland, England and Ireland, and, to a lesser extent, England and Wales. The maps naturalized these unions by emphasizing the natural qualities that straddled constitutional boundaries, and by allowing mapreaders to visualize themselves within a coherent national framework. The maps provided a single language which simultaneously described the landscape of the Scottish Highlands and the Fens of East Anglia. Through this shared national

cartographical code, mapreaders in the south could perceive themselves in conceptual proximity and allegiance to even the northernmost landscapes of the British Isles. Because of the Ordnance Survey's maps, distance was no longer a seemingly insurmountable obstacle, but it was able to be rationally understood and overcome. The Ordnance Survey knitted the United Kingdom into a single, traversable, familiar whole.

That this literal and metaphorical function of the Ordnance Survey was widely felt in the contemporary cultural life of Great Britain was evinced in the period's literature. Imagery of patriotic maps was prevalent in Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*, first published as an introduction to Joseph Wilkinson's *Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire* in 1810.¹⁹ The *Guide* placed the Lake District region within its larger national context, and Wordsworth was particularly preoccupied with the Ordnance Survey's role in this placement of the region in the nation. In the *Guide*, Wordsworth described the Ordnance Survey's first director William Mudge as "that experienced surveyor" and as "the best authority" on topography.²⁰ He imagined Mudge standing on the summit of the Lake District mountain of Black Combe, which, Wordsworth explained, commanded "a more extensive view than any other point in Britain."²¹ Mudge was even able to see Ireland "more than once."²² From Black Combe's summit, the Ordnance surveyor could picture precisely the relationship of the region to the nation. The comprehensive bird's-eye view revealed how Britain's regions were not independent enclaves, but were knitted together into a coherent, unified state.

The panorama available from Black Combe's summit, and its importance to patriotic poetry, was described further in two poems that Wordsworth composed about the mountain in the first two decades of the nineteenth century: "View from the Top of Black Comb" and his "Inscription: Written with a Slate Pencil on a Stone, on the Side of the Mountain of Black Comb." Both pieces emphasised the extensive 360° view afforded by Black Combe's summit.²³ In Wordsworth's words, the mountain's view revealed "the amplest range / Of unobstructed prospect" that "British ground commands"; a "grand terraqueous spectacle, / From centre to circumference, unveiled!"²⁴ Mudge could see from Britain's "south-west" up to "the hoary peaks of Scotland" from the mountain-top.²⁵

In Wordsworth's Black Combe poems, this view was imprinted by William Mudge onto what he

described as "the whole surface of the out-spread map". That map – the Ordnance Survey map – was a patriotic map for Wordsworth, in that it affirmed the united nature of the British Isles, and it described that nationalistic prospect in superlative terms: the surveyor whose job it was to visualise it for the nation's mapreading public was the "best authority" on British topography.²⁶ The Black Combe poems related how Mudge beheld an emphatically united nation from his privileged position. The nation in fact became united through the comprehensive vision of the national territory "at once" that was afforded to the surveyor during the course of his work.²⁷ The surveyor's eye united local regions into one national space. The map's aesthetic unity was intrinsically associated with the landscape's social stability, the peaceful nature of the internal unions between Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales. As Wordsworth put it, Mudge witnessed "Britain's calm felicity and power" in Black Combe's panorama and the Ordnance Survey map that captured it. This interior peace and unity of the British Isles may have been a myth, but it was a myth that carried profound weight as Europe violently fragmented around the turn of the nineteenth century. The Ordnance Survey map was an important component in that myth's cultural propagation.

William Wordsworth was not the only canonical cultural figure who displayed an interest in the Ordnance Survey as an icon of patriotism, against the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars. For Jane

Austen, the Ordnance Survey maps specifically, and the wider principles of accurate measurement and national unification that they embodied, provided a source of imagery that recurrently cropped up in her writings to represent a conservative nationalistic stance.

In January 1813, whilst composing her novel *Mansfield Park*, Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra that "we are quite run over with Books." She described that

I am reading a Society-Octavo, an Essay on the Military Police & Institutions of the British Empire, by Capt. Pasley of the Engineers; a book which I protested against at first, but which upon trial I find delightfully written & highly entertaining. I am as much in love with the Author as I ever was with Clarkson or Buchanan, or even the two Mr Smiths of the city. The first soldier I ever sighed for, but he does write with extraordinary force & spirit.²⁸

Austen's reading-matter, Charles Pasley's *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire*, had been published two years before she wrote so ecstatically to Cassandra. Pasley was intrinsically involved with the Ordnance Survey. By 1825 he would be a Lieutenant-Colonel, and an instructor at the Chatham School of Military Engineering, training soldiers for the Ordnance Survey's mapping of Ireland. Later he would become embroiled in the inspection of the Irish Ordnance Survey's director, Thomas Colby, following allegations of the latter's overenthusiastic zeal for cartographic accuracy, a zeal that caused delay after delay in the mapping of Ireland. Pasley would fully support Colby's obsessive emphasis on accuracy.²⁹ The nationalistic importance that Pasley and the Ordnance Survey placed on accuracy in cartographic measurement would be crucially important for the representation of space in Austen's novels, which is meticulously accurate in its own right.

Pasley's *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire* has been described as "one of the most outspokenly and stridently patriotic and militaristic books to appear during the period of the Napoleonic Wars."³⁰ It openly articulated the principles that were at the heart of the early Ordnance Survey, that the acquisition of accurate information about the national landscape was crucial to counter-revolutionary defence. Pasley shared Roy's earlier emphasis on the patriotic importance of cartography, and he was adamant that "wherever we act, we must have proper plans and information, if we wish to succeed."³¹ Pasley believed that, like its landscape, England's social constitution was in theory stable and ordered enough – "well known and already partitioned," in his words – to render England eminently mappable; although he was highly critical of the poor quality of geographical intelligence that Britain possessed of foreign terrains, declaring it to be "too serious a subject for merriment."³² Accurate cartography was considered by Pasley to be the perfect expression of Britain as a counter-revolutionary nation.

Pasley's *Essay* explicitly encouraged the breakdown of the boundary between public and private spaces. In his view, the way in which even private spaces were used, the way in which private individuals behaved in their own homes, possessed profound implications for the security of the entire nation space. In her novel *The Absentee*, the Anglo-Irish novelist Maria Edgeworth directly quoted a passage from Pasley's *Essay*, that dealt with exactly this collapse of the boundary between public and private.³³ The relationship between the Ordnance Survey and this convergence between public and private that Pasley so encouraged can be understood in a number of ways. Pasley's enthusiastic employment of a rhetoric of empirical accuracy in his *Essay*, and his own personal attempts to increase the accuracy of the Ordnance Survey's maps during the mapping of Ireland, can be understood as an attempt to impose a certain uniformity onto the national landscape. All regions would be knit together, their landscapes equally subject to the same numerical language of description. The impulse to accurately measure space could be felt in private and public scenes.

In Austen's novels, the accurate measurement of domestic surroundings possessed much larger national reverberations. For example, in *Mansfield Park*, the novel she was writing whilst reading Pasley, Austen makes her character Mary Crawford express a wifely disregard for the principles of

empirical accuracy. "I know nothing of your furlongs," she declares to Edmund, who is trying to accurately estimate the distance the couple has walked, and, when he consults his watch to gauge for how long they have been walking, she cries "Oh! do not attack me with your watch. A watch is always too fast or too slow. I cannot be dictated to by a watch."³⁴ Mary Crawford's laissez-faire attitude towards the same principles of accuracy that fired Charles Pasley and the early Ordnance Survey, functioned within Jane Austen's novels as a potential stimulus to social anarchy. Accurate measurement of time and space provided the bedrock for the idea of the timetable, and Mary Crawford dismissed that idea along with that of accurate measurement. "It is safer to leave people to their own devices," she argued, than to try to persuade them to act collectively.³⁵ In Austen's *Mansfield Park*, such rejections of accurate measurement and timetables in domestic situations, functioned as catalysts for a much more serious social fragmentation, which would occur should such foundations of collective harmony be similarly swept away. Domestic spaces were undoubtedly construed by Austen as microcosms of the nation space, inherently allied in the relationship described by Edmund Burke, that "to be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country and to mankind."³⁶

In both Wordsworth and Austen's texts, the national unity of landscape could be achieved through a shared scientific language of measurement. Such a language subjected even the most private nooks and crannies of the nation to scrutiny. In this way, the cartographical vocabulary of measurement, scale, and co-ordination acted as authorized forms of surveillance, a notion with which the Ordnance Survey was inextricably associated. The very terms survey and surveillance, of course, derive from exactly the same root. And cartographers did often function as spies, as the Board of Ordnance's military engineer Hugh Debbieg described in his accounts of working on "a Secret Service to Survey the principle seaports of France & Spain & to make Sketches and Drawings and to take Plans thereof with a view to Discover and State the Strength and weakness

of those places & the most accessible parts where attacks might be made and Troops safely Imbarked in Case of any future Rupture with those Powers."³⁷ The poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge also provided a, perhaps apocryphal, account of the state's surveillance of his and Wordsworth's amateur mapmaking activities in 1797, on suspicion of the two poets being foreign intelligence agents. Coleridge and Wordsworth were, in fact, in Coleridge's words, "making studies, as the artists call them, and often moulding my thoughts into verse, with the objects and imagery immediately before my senses." They were drawing maps as aids to writing poems.³⁸

Maps were images and facilitators of the convergence of domestic and public life, and the equal subjection of both to state surveillance, that occurred in the wake of the French Revolution, in Britain, during William Pitt's so-called "reign of terror." The extent of this convergence of private and public spaces, and the subjection of both to systematic state surveillance, has been widely documented, most recently by John Barrell in *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s*, in which he delineated how "activities and spaces which had previously been thought to be private, in the sense not just that they were 'outside' politics but were, by general agreement, positively insulated from it, suddenly no longer enjoyed that protection."³⁹ Whilst for the liberal writer Vicesimus Knox, such surveillance exemplified the state's "spirit of despotism," for conservatives, the type of national cartography represented by the Ordnance Survey, and the surveillance mechanisms it was involved with, were directly associated with increased national security.⁴⁰ In Jane Austen's novel *Northanger Abbey*, Henry Tilney enthusiastically celebrated "the country and the age in which we live" as one in which "every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies; and where roads and newspapers lay every thing open."⁴¹ Surveillance, by maps, spies and science, was considered to be the foundation and expression of a unified society, immune to revolution.

This paper has described how, during the Revolutionary years, cartography was absorbed into English fiction as a system of images and a language within which a particularly trenchant form of patriotism was encapsulated. This type of cultural cartography defined and coerced the re-creation of the English nation-space as orderly, open, presided over by the military, and watched over by ubiquitous mechanisms of state and informal surveillance. Cartography became one component of a nationwide endeavour to preserve the English social hierarchy. In a period dominated by change – enclosure, industrialization, parliamentary Reform, revolutionary spatial disruption – maps, and the mapping metaphors used within contemporary British cultural forms of representation, attempted to set the nation's lands in order. In particular, the Ordnance Survey fulfilled a crucial role in practice and propaganda. It was a symbolic and real mode of surveillance, a reminder that the state's eye was on every Briton, across every private and public territory. It created an iconic image of the nation as a minutely managed, ordered space, an order that was in large part dependent upon the accuracy of the information its surveillance mechanisms provided. The Ordnance Survey's rhetoric of spatial accuracy, precision, and candour contributed to a language of patriotism that was constructed through the Revolutionary and Napoleonic War years, a spatial language that sought to present a united front to everything that sought to destabilise the English landscape and its associated national identity. "Maps," Wordsworth declared in *The Prelude*, are "ensigns of empire."⁴² As we have seen both cultural and cartographical history testify, maps were also potent ensigns of British patriotism.

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¹⁷ William Gilpin 1789. *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, &c. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770*. Second Edition, London: Blamire, p. 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁹ William Wordsworth, introduction to *Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire*, by Joseph Wilkinson (London: Ackermann, 1810), pp. i-xxxiv.

²⁰ Wordsworth, *Guide to the Lakes: Fifth Edition (1835)*, ed. Ernest de Sélincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 8; Wordsworth, *A Guide through the District of the Lakes: Appendix II: [An Unpublished Tour]*, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W.J.B. Owen and J.W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), ii: p. 302.

²¹ Wordsworth, "Inscription: Written With a Slate Pencil on a Stone, on the Side of the Mountain of Black Comb", in *Poems by William Wordsworth* (London: Longman, 1815), ii, 286 (footnote 1).

²² Wordsworth, *Guide: Fifth Edition*, 8.

²³ This has been explored more fully elsewhere. See John Wyatt. 2001. "Wordsworth's Black Combe Poems: The Pastoral and the Geographer's Eye," *Signatures* 3, pp. 1-20 <www.chiuni.ac.uk/information/documents/signature_pdfs/Signatures_Vol3.pdf>; Michael Wiley, *Romantic Geography: Wordsworth and Anglo-European Spaces* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1998), 1-17, 143-176; Rachel Hewitt, "'Eyes to the Blind': Telescopes, Theodolites, and Failing Eyesight in Romantic Landscape Poetry," *Journal of Literature and Science* 1 (2007), pp. 5-23 <<http://literatureandscience.research.glam.ac.uk/journal>>.

²⁴ Wordsworth, "View from the Top of Black Comb," in *Poems by William Wordsworth*, i, 305; "Inscription," ii, p. 285.

²⁵ Wordsworth, "View from the Top of Black Comb", i, p. 305.

²⁶ Wordsworth, "Inscription," ii, p. 286.

²⁷ Wordsworth, *Guide: Fifth Edition*, p. 21.

²⁸ Jane Austen, Letter to Cassandra Austen, 24 Jan 1813, in *The Letters of Jane Austen*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (London: Folio Society, 2003), p. 198.

²⁹ Pasley, Diary, British Library, Add. MS 41985 [n.d.].

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- ³⁰ Warren Roberts. 1979. *Jane Austen and the French Revolution*. London: Macmillan, p. 95.
- ³¹ Charles Pasley. 1811. *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire*. Second edition, London: Valpy, p. 184 (footnote 2), 181.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 183 (footnote 2).
- ³³ Maria Edgeworth, 1988. *The Absentee*, eds. W.J. McCormack and Kim Walker. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 117.
- ³⁴ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson. 1998. New York and London: Norton, pp. 67-68.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.
- ³⁶ Burke, 202.
- ³⁷ Treasury Solicitor Papers: Debbieg vs Howe, 5 February 1782, National Archives TS 11/944/3236; and see also PRO 30/8/129 ff. 2-31 for further material pertaining to Hugh Debbieg's employment on such "secret service".
- ³⁸ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), I, 193-97.
- ³⁹ John Barrell. 2006. *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790.s* Oxford: Oxford University Press, p 4.
- ⁴⁰ Vicesimus Knox. 1799. *Spirit of Despotism*. Morris-town: Mann.
- ⁴¹ Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Susan Fraiman (New York and London: Norton, 2004), 136.
- ⁴² William Wordsworth, *Prelude (1805)*, in *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York and London: Norton, 1979), 168.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Rachel Hewitt is currently Research Fellow in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (English Literature Division), at the University of Glamorgan. She is also co-director of the Research Centre for Literature, Arts, and Science (RCLAS) at the University, and associate editor of the *Journal of Literature and Science*. Rachel Hewitt completed her PhD at the University of London in July 2007: "'Dreaming o'er the Map of Things": The Ordnance Survey and Literature of the British Isles, 1747-1842'. She is currently writing a history of the Ordnance Survey, which will be published by Granta in 2010. *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey* will trace the Ordnance Survey's early history, from the circumstances leading up to the commencement of the Military Survey of Scotland (1747–1755) up until the completion of the first series of maps in 1870. The Ordnance Survey's story is the story of the political revolutions, rebellions, and regional unions that altered the shape and identity of the United Kingdom over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Initiated as a form of military defence in the aftermath of the French Revolution, the OS inspired the cultural imagination too. William Wordsworth and Jane Austen loved the maps' visualisation of a stable, harmonious nation, and the British public were equally swift to adopt the Ordnance Survey as a patriotic icon. *Map of a Nation* will explore the role played by the Ordnance Survey and its mapmakers – whose arduous, relentless task is as yet untold – in the formulation of modern British national identity.

Rachel has published articles on the relationship between the Ordnance Survey and cultural constructions of British national identity in *Wordsworth Circle* journal, the *Journal for Literature and Science*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*; and reviews of texts dealing with the interaction between literature and landscape. She currently has four articles being considered by journals in the fields of cartographical history, literary history, and eighteenth-century history; and two articles forthcoming in the *Literary Encyclopaedia* on the subject of the Ordnance Survey and the Military Survey of Scotland. She presents her work regularly and often at seminars and conferences, across a range of disciplines. Rachel is always delighted to hear from anybody with shared interests: for more information about her research, her e-mail address is rhewitt@glam.ac.uk and her webpage is <http://literatureandscience.research.glam.ac.uk/people/rachelhewitt/>