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Postscript Two: Literature as Geodetic Survey Map

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Postscript Two:
Literature as Geodetic Survey Map
by
Alexander Massey* and Vincent Hevern[±]

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From alexander.massey@christ-church.oxford.ac.uk Tue Apr 22 13:54:18 1997
Date: Thu, 10 Apr 1997 13:21:39 +0100 (BST)
From: Alexander Massey
To: Ron Chenail
Subject: Re: Postscript

Dear Ron,

I thought you might be interested in a response I got from Vincent Hevern, and wondered if you would like to put it as an addition to the literature pieces. Vincent has given his okay

Date: Wed, 02 Apr 1997 17:23:18 -0500
To: alexander.massey@Educational-Studies.oxford.ac.uk
Subject: Literature as...

Dear Alexander,

I just read [your article](#) in [The Qualitative Report](#) on what literature might be. What a lovely read and provocative set of metaphors.

The metaphor I'll add is "literature as geodetic survey map". I am particularly fond of geography and texts geographical. My childhood was filled with pouring over maps and copying some of those I found in books. It probably helped to have arrived at the age of reason (7 years old in Aquinas' scheme) just prior to the beginning of the International Geophysical Year in 1956-57. Later in early adolescence I found myself as a Boy Scout fascinated by US government-produced terrain maps which one could purchase in Manhattan, NY, at a camping supply store near my home. To this day I have a fondness for almost any map I come across and have several atlases, etc. in my book collection.

I mention this as background to my sense that research literature may be compared to a geodetic survey map in a variety of ways:

-- one gets a sense of where one's intellectual concerns are located within a broader horizon in literature in parallel to what a map can tell someone;
-- one has to work constructively in interpreting the signs and symbols on the map--one has to engage actively with the map in order for it to be of use just as in literature one has to grapple with and make sense of what its language and concepts are about;
-- maps offer multiple possibilities for allowing you to choose where to go just as literature can suggest a wide number of routes in moving from where one currently finds oneself.

I hope all is going well with your work.

All the best,

Vincent

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Dear Vincent,

Many thanks for your kind words, and for your own metaphor. Ron Chenail (editor of Qual Report) and I have been discussing (email) how to present the ideas that seem to have got sparked by my piece. For example, as a result of private responses like yours, I wrote an epilogue which can now be reached by hypertext from the original article. How would you feel about my sending your post on to Ron so that he might think about adding it? It might encourage others to come forward with their own responses. It's one of the exciting possibilities of publishing on the web. Let me know what you think.

Ciao. Alexander

Alexander,

You can certainly pass my reply on to Ron. If he wants to post it, that's fine by me.

Vincent

Thanks. Will do.

Cheers. Alexander

**Alexander Massey* MA PGCE MSc, is currently working on a DPhil at Oxford University in the Department of Educational Studies where he is studying supply (substitute) teachers. His mailing address is Oxford University Department of Educational Studies, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY, England. His e-mail address is alexander.massey@Educational-Studies.oxford.ac.uk and his World Wide Web Home Page is <http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/2961/>.

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Alexander Massey and Vincent Hevern
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