Deep-Mapping Culture and Power: Gaskell's Geographies and the Spatialization of North and South *and* Mary Barton

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ABSTRACT: This essay explores how Spatial Literary Studies, grounded in the theories of Raymond Williams and Robert T. Tally, can enrich the pedagogical use of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* and *Mary Barton* in contemporary educational settings. Drawing on geocriticism, literary cartography, and spatial humanities, it argues that literature functions not merely as a cultural artefact but as a spatial practice that encodes ideological, social, and affective geographies. By analysing Gaskell's representations of industrial and domestic spaces, the essay reveals how narrative forms articulate tensions between class, gender, and environment. These insights are put into practice through a detailed lesson plan designed for Italian secondary schools, offering teachers practical tools and strategies to integrate Spatial Literary Studies into their curriculum. Aimed at moving beyond traditional literary appreciation, the proposed lesson plan equips educators to guide students in interrogating spatial imaginaries and mapping textual geographies as dynamic sites of meaning-making. Through spatialized readings, digital storytelling, and multimedia adaptations, students are encouraged to connect Victorian cultural formations with contemporary urban experiences. In doing so, the essay positions spatial literacy as a critical dimension of literary education and demonstrates how Cultural Studies can be reoriented through a spatial lens to empower both teachers' pedagogical practice and students' interpretive capacities.

KEY WORDS: Spatial Literary Studies; North and South; Mary Barton; Digital Storytelling; Deep Mapping

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INTRODUCTION

To reframe 'culture' through spatial thinking is to reopen a Cultural Studies question—how meanings are made and lived—by asking where, in what material and symbolic configurations, and across which scales, such meanings cohere, clash, or travel. In his seminal work *The Country and the City* (1973), Raymond Williams reads the spatialities of 'country' and 'city' as a historically sedimented structure through which literary texts project social antagonisms and longings. At the threshold of his inquiry, he redefines the task he sets for his own critical method as a "problem of perspective" (Williams 9) rather than a description of place, shaped by habitual contrasts—rural virtue, urban corruption—whose meanings vary across historical conjunctures. His subsequent account of pastoral and counter-pastoral establishes how literary forms mediate between lived social transformations and imagined spatial orders (Williams 13). Crucially, Williams critiques the ease with which the 'city' becomes an emblem of decline or progress, tracing how this interpretation obscures the uneven modernities of industrial urbanism and makes "knowable communities" thinkable in—and through—narrative (Williams 165). Thus, cultural analysis is inseparable from spatial critique: Williams does not treat 'country' and 'city' as static settings but as contested representational geographies that literature both inherits and remakes.

In "Spatial Literary Studies" (2020), Robert T. Tally distinguishes the humanities-anchored field he names from the social-science-oriented tradition of Literary Geography, while acknowledging their porous boundaries (Tally, "Spatial" 1-2). On the one hand, he explicitly identifies *The Country and the City* as a "famous example" of Literary Geography in the field of Cultural Studies that retrospectively appears as a prototypical instance of Spatial Literary Studies in his sense (Tally, "Spatial" 2). On the other hand, treating 'culture' spatially does not mean overlaying coordinates onto texts; rather, it entails tracing how texts produce and contest spaces through mapping tropes, urban/rural typologies, and scaled imaginaries of region, nation, and globe, without reducing these operations to cartographic description. Indeed, Tally positions Williams as a relay from historical-materialist cultural critique to a contemporary methodological ensemble—geocriticism, literary cartography, and the spatial humanities—concerned with how literature makes, figures, and intervenes in real and imagined spatial orders (Tally, "Spatial"). The resulting framework accords with Williams's analysis in which the oscillation between 'country' and 'city' encodes political economy and ideology critique, now formalized as a spatially attuned critical practice capable of extending beyond the Anglophone canon.

From these premises, the present essay aims to examine how Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855) can be employed within educational contexts as instruments for teaching literary and multimodal production, integrating the analytical perspectives of Cultural Studies and Spatial Studies to illuminate the interplay between narrative form, social meaning, and spatial imagination. While critical assessments (see, e.g., Brown) have traditionally regarded *North and South* as Gaskell's more mature achievement compared to *Mary Barton*—a novel praised for its greater structural complexity, nuanced social vision, and synthesis of romance and realism—

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both texts provide rich terrain for exploring how spatial configurations shape class relations and cultural identity. *North and South*, often lauded for Margaret Hale's mediating role and its more credible reconciliation of industrial conflict, can thus be read pedagogically alongside *Mary Barton*, not in terms of hierarchy but in terms of complementarity. Together, they articulate a continuum of industrial experience in which narrative, ideology, and spatial imagination converge.

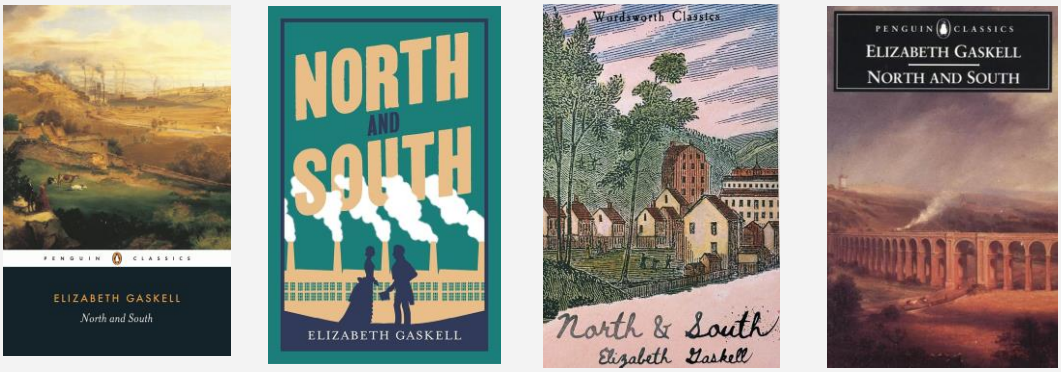

Fig. A. Different editions of *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell.
From left to right: Penguin Classics 1996, Penguin Classics 2003, Alma Books 2018, Wordsworth Classics 2025.

Look carefully at the book covers that publishers have chosen for this novel and answer the following questions.
1. Describe each book cover through two adjectives or keywords.
2. What are these book covers trying to communicate about the setting of the novel?
3. Almost thirty years have passed between the 1996 edition and the 2025 one, but something has never changed. Looking at the covers, what is the common theme in your opinion? What kind of role do you think the setting is going to play throughout the novel? Relevant or minor? Make hypotheses.

CULTURAL CARTOGRAPHIES: SPACE, PLACES, MEANINGS, AND PRACTICES

In the foreword to Tally's *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies*, Bertrand Westphal argues that geocriticism is best understood as a geo-centered method that refuses a single, privileged perspective and instead works through "multifocalization", bringing endogenous, exogenous, and allogeneous views into analytic relation so that stereotypes are overcome and the sensory thickness of place is restored as "a polysensuous approach" to concrete spaces (Westphal in Tally, *Geocritical* xiv). Geocritical inquiry also operates on a spatiotemporal register, insisting on reading places in "temporal depth", while the operative triad—spatiotemporality,

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transgressivity, and referentiality—keeps representation tied to worldly referents without reducing texts to reportage (Westphal in Tally, *Geocritical* xv). [please check bibliography, where you list another Westphal]

The commitments outlined above do not exhaust the spatial humanities, yet they clarify why a spatial turn in literary and cultural analysis cannot be reduced to cartographic illustration. Operational traction emerges by linking discourse to material spatial arrangements. Tim Richardson and Ole B. Jensen propose a "cultural sociology of space" in which socio-spatial relations are grasped through a dialectic of practice and meaning that runs from the body to the global, so that space is "simultaneously a field of action and a basis for action" rather than a neutral container (Richardson and Jensen 8). Their discourse-analytic framework explicitly bridges textual representations and "material places", treating literature as a privileged space where language, practices, and power-rationalities are interlocking spheres of analysis that reveal how spatial imaginaries become performative in everyday life (Richardson and Jensen 17). From this perspective, spatial discourses do not merely describe space; they both "create the conditions for a new set of spatial practices" while reproducing new systems of meaning (Richardson and Jensen 21) and underscore a basic premise for cultural analysis. Brian Rusted reminds us that writing about space and literary spaces requires attention to positionality, since the question "whose space" is never trivial once spatial meanings and attachments are socially produced and contested (Rusted 5). Moreover, Rusted's rearticulation of Rob Shields's notion of 'social spatialization' positions place-images and place-myths as discursive formations that organize hierarchies and imaginaries, offering Cultural Studies a vocabulary for linking representational geographies to the unequal social relations they help to sustain (Rusted 6). Taken together, these approaches support the view that a geocritical reading begins from understanding place as a nodal scene of intersecting discourses and practices. However, it also draws on topographical theory to treat literary forms as spatial techniques and on cultural-sociological models to analyse how discourse sediments into practices, infrastructures, and scales. In this way, approaching 'culture' spatially means tracing how texts, policies, and everyday repertoires co-produce spaces and places, with interpretation keyed to comparative perspectives, multisensory evidence, temporal layering, and the power-laden circulation of spatial images and myths.

It is no coincidence that in her analysis of accounts of the topographical turn (Longhurst *et al.*; Rybicka), Sigrid Weigel traces how the respective traditions mobilize maps and spatial concepts both as explanatory metaphors and as analytic procedures (Weigel 187-189). While her analysis foregrounds a recurring tension concerning the status of the map (as authoritative representation or technical artefact) and the status of spatial analysis (as epistemic claim or cultural technique) (Weigel 189), Tally's own articulation of "literary cartography" defines mapping as an interpretive practice. Rather than the translation of narrative into coordinates, it is the elucidation of how texts organize space and generate routes and boundaries (Tally, "Spatial" 1-2). This bears directly on 'culture', understood as lived meanings structured by institutions, practices, and representations: if cultural forms encode spatial orders (streets, factories, parlours;

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borders, regions, empires), then reading for maps within texts reveals how those orders are apprehended or even contested.

Indeed, Williams's cities are never only industrial agglomerations; they are felt as labyrinths, intimate circuits or massed crowds, whose codings are shaped by class positions and genre expectations. Literary cartography, then, extends Williams's insight by treating narrative space as a dynamic modelling of social space—something that happens at the levels of plot (mobility, encounter), description (landscapes, interiors), and discourse (key spatial metaphors and scales). Accordingly, Tally accelerates the pivot from classic cultural critique to a method capable of switching scales and objects: from urban novels to regional tales; from realist plotting to the fantastic; from nineteenth-century Manchester to twenty-first-century cosmopolitan fiction (Tally, "Spatial" 2-3). Shields highlights a second Williamsian thread, namely the social production of spatial margins and centres. In *Places on the Margin*, Shields shows how 'marginal' places—coastal resorts, northern 'heartlands', peripheral neighbourhoods—acquire symbolic power in national imaginaries precisely because they are positioned as exceptions to metropolitan norms. Their marginality is not purely locational; it is historically manufactured, discursively stabilized, and yet constantly renegotiated (Shields 3-5). Read along with Williams and Tally, this clarifies how cultural narratives (e.g., 'the North', 'the provinces', 'the East End') do not simply mirror a centre–periphery model but actively make it felt and thinkable. For literary cartography, this means that mapping 'the novel's space' refers not only to urban grids or rural vistas but also to zones of valuation and stigma; maps of meaning overlay maps of infrastructure.

In this regard, when Tally proposes Spatial Literary Studies as a humanities-based practice, the claim is that evaluative and affective meanings are constitutive of space and therefore require interpretive methods (Tally, "Spatial"). Richardson and Jensen's "cultural sociology of space" thus corroborates the methodological stance from a different register, since their analysis of European spatial policy shows that discourses of polycentricity, flow, and competitiveness do not merely describe territorial arrangements but actively configure and authorize new spatial practices and meanings (Richardson and Jensen 14-16). In other words, spatial discourse is performative: the language of strategy, cohesion, or mobility reshapes imaginaries and legitimates interventions. For Cultural Studies, this underscores that the spaces literature 'maps' are structured and mediated by policy discourse, planning schemas, and media narratives that circulate beyond the page. When tied back to Williams's analyses—for instance, his discussion of Charles Dickens's and Thomas Hardy's London—the dialectic of country and city appears as a dialectic of policy and perception—enclosure, improvement, industrial expansion—mediated by narrative forms that render such changes sensible, disputable, or desirable (Williams 215).

In a related theoretical development, Simon Susen's defence of "the place of space in social and cultural theory" extends this reasoning by demonstrating that spatiality is not a detachable variable but a constitutive dimension of social life, ranging from the micro-politics of bodies to the macro-organization of territories. What follows is a multi-level framework in which symbolic imaginaries of space, empirical spatial practices, and the critical analysis of power are mutually entangled (Susen 2-5). Moreover, he recentres

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space without collapsing it into metaphor and consolidates the transdisciplinary link between Cultural Studies and spatial inquiry, a link Tally operationalizes in humanities terms and one that Williams anticipates when he reads literary landscapes as ideological terrains.

Taken together, these coordinates elucidate how, building on Williams, literary representations of 'country' and 'city' function as historically contingent figurations that shape perception and value rather than serving as neutral backdrops. Tally, in turn, enables the formulation of Spatial Literary Studies as a humanities-based framework that integrates geocriticism, literary cartography, and related approaches into a critical practice attentive to mapping, scale, and movement within texts. In dialogue with Weigel, such a practice demands a carefully calibrated use of spatial methodologies that treat places and spaces as comparative loci while critically examining the discipline's dependence on cartographic metaphors and instruments. When read alongside policy-oriented work, particularly that of Richardson and Jensen, Spatial Literary Studies also requires tracing how public discourses of space circulate within literary forms while reshaping urban imaginaries. Within this expanded framework, 'culture' becomes intelligible as a spatial practice through which communities imagine, inhabit, and contest social orders—an analytic capable of traversing the distance from the foundational debates of Birmingham to contemporary Italian seminar rooms and secondary classrooms. To reframe culture spatially, then, is to position cultural analysis at the intersection of representation, practice, and policy, where discourses map, bodies move, and institutions distribute resources and meaning.

CULTURES IN SPACE, TEXTS IN PRACTICE: TOWARDS NEW PEDAGOGIES OF SPATIALIZED CULTURAL STUDIES

In comparatively recent years, the interpretability of spaces, places, and culture has had a concrete bearing on pedagogy and research in the Italian context because it specifies what it would mean to teach 'culture' as spatial practice in secondary school curricula. Nicoletta Vallorani's insistence that Cultural Studies in the UK tradition is structurally engaged with education and with everyday cultural forms, particularly those of the working class, foregrounds the relation between cultural analysis and formation (Vallorani 15-18). Reading this emphasis through a spatial lens clarifies why geocritical and cartographic approaches are pedagogically productive. They offer procedures for situating texts within the lived geographies of class, gender, and migration and for tracking how such geographies are represented or contested in literature and media.

The integration of culture into school curricula has long been a subject of debate, reflecting broader societal concerns about identity, values, and the role of education in shaping future generations. David Buckingham and Julian Sefton-Green have emphasized that the school curriculum has historically functioned as a gatekeeping mechanism, marginalizing a range of cultural forms—such as media texts and popular genres—and that schools themselves still struggle to legitimate cultural forms beyond the literary canon (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 77-79). Such struggles have

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consequences, particularly in societies that are increasingly multicultural and mediated. When students encounter a curriculum that excludes their cultural repertoires, their identities risk being devalued within the very institution that claims to educate them. Consequently, a spatialized Cultural Studies approach that encompasses the geographies of everyday life, including media consumption and urban experience, can restore legitimacy to student cultures.

It is precisely at this juncture—where literature risks being deployed as a curricular gatekeeper—that Rossella Ciocca's position offers a productive counterpoint. In an interview with Serena Guarracino, Ciocca argues that literature is "not a closed and self-referential system but a primary cultural agency, placed at the intersection of art and communication" (Ciocca 52, translation mine). Her perspective gestures toward a way out of the restrictive dynamics identified by Buckingham and Sefton-Green, by reframing literature not as a repository of stable values but as a medium through which social realities, power relations, and collective identities are negotiated. Ciocca further contends that reading novels or poems entails recognizing their embeddedness in broader cultural networks. Because literature must be understood as a cultural practice situated in time and space, integrating Cultural Studies into school curricula entails a redefinition of teacher identity, with educators functioning not as transmitters of established knowledge but as mediators of cultural difference. Seen from this vantage point, the spatial turn in Literary Studies extends Ciocca's conception of literature as a relational practice by emphasizing how texts both construct and are constructed by spatial imaginaries (Ciocca).

Alexander Beaumont identifies the growing centrality of space in Literary Studies and portrays writers as "cartographers of a unique kind", whose works grant access to imagined yet socially resonant worlds (Beaumont 396). The emphasis on cartographic reading highlights the interpretive potential of spatial analysis, enabling students to approach novels not merely as narratives but as inquiries into how communities construct, contest, and inhabit space. As a result, the classroom focus shifts from the appreciation of aesthetic form to the analysis of social geography. Further specification emerges from Lieven Ameel, who develops Literary Urban Studies through the concept of "citiness", a term that designates the constitutive features of the urban experience—density, diversity, simultaneity, contingency, and temporal layering—and explains how those conditions shape both city spaces and their literary representations (Ameel 3-5).

These two frames are taken from the TV series North and South (BBC Radio 4, 2004) and display each two characters talking. On the left, Margaret Hale and Mr Lennox are seen in Helstone, in the South. On the right, Margaret Hale and John Thornton are seen in Milton-Northern, in the North.

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Fig. A. (Episode 1, min. 00:04:51)

Fig. B. (Episode 2, min. 00:05:23)

Now, look carefully at the two pictures and answer the following questions:
1. What kind of relationship do the people in the pictures have?
2. What are they doing in Fig. A? And in Fig. B.?
3. Can you tell any difference regarding the characters' mood? Are they relaxed or are they tense?
4. Can you tell any difference between the two pictures regarding the contextual atmosphere?
5. What can you tell about the setting?
6. How can you describe the background? What emotions does it convey?
7. In your opinion, what are the cornerstones upon which the societies depicted in the two frames stand? Work ethic and productivity or tranquillity? Social mobility or traditional social hierarchy?

Therefore, cities and peripheries operate as narrative engines rather than static settings, since intersecting trajectories and stratified temporalities organize the plot, focalization, and readerly orientation.

From this perspective, recent developments in the spatial humanities offer digital methodologies that significantly enrich classroom practice. Among these, 'deep maps' provide a paradigmatic model in which narrative, archival evidence, and geospatial data converge to visualize places as multi-layered and multi-temporal assemblages (Bodenhamer *et al.* 170-173). Although such methods may appear technical at first, they reveal the temporal and cultural complexity embedded within specific locations. In pedagogical contexts, deep mapping can be adapted through exercises that invite students to construct layered interpretations of literary settings, combining textual analysis with historical and spatial inquiry. These activities reaffirm the notion that literature functions simultaneously as a cultural artefact and as a spatial practice. The point is not technological determinism but the design of interpretive environments in which literary cartographies intersect with policy documents, demographic data, or collective memory work, enabling students to test how textual geographies relate to other spatial registers.

In this regard, recent developments in digital storytelling, such as The MapTool devised by Anindita Sempere and Andrew Sempere, extend this interpretive potential by providing platforms for co-constructing spatial narratives through multimodal layering. The MapTool, a custom software environment for web and mobile

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applications, integrates interactive maps with textual, visual, and audio content, allowing users to create stories that embed narrative within place. Each project developed with The MapTool functions as a deep map in itself, presenting multiple perspectives and temporal strata that contest any singular, authoritative geography. Rather than producing fixed representations of space, these tools foster participatory acts of meaning-making, where students and researchers collaboratively author spatial narratives that highlight how places acquire significance through experience, memory, and discourse. In their case study, "Mapping Dillard", Sempere and Sempere employed The MapTool to spatialize Annie Dillard's memoir *An American Childhood*, using geolocations mentioned in the text—such as churches, baseball fields, and roads in 1950s Pittsburgh—to construct an interactive deep map that integrates literary passages, geo-tagged photographs, and annotation.

The authors outline three primary use cases for The MapTool when mapping texts like *An American Childhood*. The first is the "direct use" scenario (Sempere and Sempere 5), where locations mentioned in the text are pinned on a map, linked to media, and layered with author-generated field data. For example, Dillard's childhood landmarks in Pittsburgh were geo-tagged and photographed, adding a contemporary layer to the literary map (see Fig. 1). The second step, the "wayfinder" mode (Sempere and Sempere 7), transforms the map into an interactive adventure by directing users to real-world locations associated with the text, linking each coordinate to multimedia content such as 360-degree videos or audio and thereby engaging physical movement through space as part of the narrative experience (see Fig. 2). The third step, the "authoring tool mode" (Sempere and Sempere 10), gives creators full control to compile collections of media (images, audio, text) tied to geographic coordinates and then distribute them via web or mobile apps, enabling readers to experience the narrative spatially and interactively rather than passively (see Fig. 3). Each step illustrates how The MapTool supports deep mapping as a methodology for co-constructing place-based stories by layering time, media, and narrative onto geography.

Such practices affirm that literature functions as both a cultural artefact and a spatial practice. The textual world becomes a catalyst for critical engagement with past and present spaces, while the map—be it digital or literary—becomes a site for argument where claims about social inequality, mobility, and belonging can be posed, revised, and defended. Accordingly, the same logic calls for a move from interpretive insight to classroom enactment, so that the procedures of reading, annotating, mapping, and presenting become the vehicles through which spatial arguments are learned and refined. This linkage underlines that interpretive activity is a process not of passive reception but of active identity construction. In practical terms, when students analyze a text like *North and South*, they are not only interpreting Victorian industrialization but also recognizing how literature encodes class conflict, gender relations, and regional identities. The cultural curriculum emerges, then, as a "terrain of struggle" because what counts as legitimate knowledge is negotiated (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 7). Moreover, by bringing them into dialogue with canonical literature, students are empowered to perceive their own lives as worthy of critical reflection.

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In the Italian educational context, specific challenges and opportunities arise for integrating Cultural Studies with spatial approaches to teaching and learning, since a spatialized Cultural Studies framework can address such challenges by linking canonical texts to contemporary cultural geographies. Spatial analysis, in this sense, does not merely supplement interpretation but constitutes a critical mode of inquiry that exposes how fiction encodes cultural, political, and ideological formations through its organization of space. Understanding how literature constructs space is particularly relevant when considering the historical processes that first made spatial representation a central concern of English realism. Following the Industrial Revolution, the nineteenth century witnessed an unprecedented expansion of cities and rapid urbanization. The census conducted in England in 1851 revealed that, for the first time, over half of the nation's citizens resided in urban areas. The transformation occurred within a few decades: in 1831, approximately seventy-five per cent of the English population still lived in the countryside (Davis 13), whereas by 1871, only a quarter remained in rural regions (Purchase 19). This demographic shift was propelled by the rise of industrial cities in the Midlands, where technological innovation and economic modernization converged to produce new forms of labour, mobility, and social experience. In this tumultuous vortex of industrialization, London revealed itself as an uncontrollable urban organism, consuming space, populations, and social relations. Asa Briggs documents the city's frightening transformations in *Victorian Cities*. Within a few decades, London and Manchester evolved from their ancient, compact cores into tangles of railways, sewers, new thoroughfares, peripheral slums, and emerging suburbs. Likewise, Bruna Mancini's *Sguardi su Londra* reinforces the image of the British capital as an urban machine expanding beyond measure, with movement, infrastructure, and sprawl stretching its boundaries to the point of rendering it "ungovernable". Mancini argues that London, as a "monstrous city", becomes both a textual subject and object, namely "a text waiting to be read, written, and rewritten in literary or, more simply, narrative terms", but also that "the footsteps of those who wander through the city" can be compared "to words, phrases, serpentine poems often left unheard" (Mancini 11-13, translation mine): an image incessantly reshaped by literature and perception, capable of erasing the boundary between vital space and urban abyss.

The Victorian period offers a privileged field for this inquiry. Narrative settings in nineteenth-century fiction—city streets, industrial regions, domestic interiors, and colonial outposts—function as symbolic and material articulations of class relations, moral values, and national identity. The spatial turn thus reorients how such texts are taught, making the analysis of place central to understanding both literary form and social history. In "Teaching Victorian Literature through Cartography", Susan E. Cook argues that teaching students to map literary settings "changes the process of reading itself by transforming description into orientation", prompting readers to visualize and interrogate the text's spatial logic (Cook 72). Mapping, in this context, becomes an interpretive act that exposes how space and place operate within fiction. Victorian literature, Cook observes, is particularly suited to cartographic approaches because its

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authors "construct elaborate spatial worlds that mirror the tensions of modernization, industrial growth, and imperial expansion" (Cook 72).

Few writers illustrate literary spatialities more profoundly than Charles Dickens, whose novels transform London into a fog-shrouded cartography of inequality where urban space itself becomes a vehicle of social critique (Cook 75). A similar spatial consciousness informs Thomas Hardy's reimagining of southwest England as Wessex, a symbolic geography that narrates social change and moral conflict, turning rural landscapes into dynamic sites shaped by enclosure, migration, and mechanization (Cook 75). Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) likewise foregrounds the spatial politics of gender, tracing a woman's struggle to claim creative and intellectual space across national and urban geographies, while George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871) uses the spatial organization of provincial life to map the moral and social boundaries that structure community. These Victorian works demonstrate how literary space functions not merely as setting but as a medium through which power, identity, and social relations are negotiated. Spatiality also encompasses the imperial and domestic geographies of English fiction. In Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901), the Indian subcontinent moves from abstract space to meaningful place through the protagonist's encounters and emotional investments (Tuan 6). Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) charts a comparable trajectory, as Jane's movement through successive environments—school, manor house, moor, and final dwelling—renders space a register of autonomy, constraint, and belonging. In both texts, geography dramatizes the human need to transform abstraction into lived experience. Taken together, these examples illustrate how Victorian literature maps the processes through which characters—and readers—convert spatial abstraction into meaning, revealing the ideological work space performs within narrative. As Cook argues, to teach literature cartographically is to "teach the politics of space itself," a politics that links nineteenth-century representations to the lived geographies of contemporary readers (Cook 76).

Among Victorian novels and poems, "Goblin Market" (1862) by Christina Rossetti provides the readers with food for thought as far as spatial mapping and its significance are concerned. Now, read the following extracts from the poem and answer the questions.

Lines 3-19
Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpeck'd cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheek'd peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;--
All ripe together
In summer weather,
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy.

Lines 71-76
One had a cat's face,
One whisk'd a tail,
One tramp'd at a rat's pace,

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One crawl'd like a snail,
One like a wombat prowl'd obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.

Lines 184-198
Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtain'd bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipp'd with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gaz'd in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapp'd to and fro
Round their rest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Lock'd together in one nest.

Lines 215-225
At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie pluck'd purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homeward said: "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep".

Lines 562-567
For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands.

1) How did Christina Rossetti describe the atmosphere of the sisters' country home in lines 215-225? What emotions do "the brook", "the golden flags", "the sunset flushes" evoke?
2) How did the poet express the comfort of the domestic relationship in lines 184-198 and 562-567?
3) On the other hand, what do you think about the city market as described in lines 3-19? Does it seem a safe place or a sinister one? Also, do you feel like it is a calm place or rather chaotic and hectic?
4) How are the vendors described in lines 71-76? Are the adjectives and the metaphors used flattering? Why do you think the poet used these metaphors?
5) Now, look carefully at Figures A and B, two frames taken from the above-mentioned TV series *North and South*. What similarities can you find between the city market in "Goblin Market" by Christina Rossetti and the Milton market in *North and South*?
7) Bearing Figures 4 and 5 in mind, what do you think about the vendors? How do the ones in "Goblin Market" try to attract customers? What about the vendors in Milton?
8) Last but not least, how do Margaret and the sisters from Goblin Market feel respectively?


Fig. A. (Episode 1, min. 00:07:12)

Fig. B. (Episode 1, min. 00:07:15)

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DEEP-MAPPING SPATIALITIES IN ELIZABETH GASKELL'S *NORTH AND SOUTH* AND *MARY BARTON*: A LESSON PLAN

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Analyse how Gaskell uses narrative perspective to charge physical spaces and places with political, social and emotional meaning.

LEARNING METHODOLOGIES AND ACTIVITIES

- TEAL (technology-enhanced active learning): MentiMeter, Canva, Instagram, The MapTool
- Active Participation: Icebreakers, interactive lessons
- Cooperative Learning: Pair activities, group activities
- Discussion: Recaps, comments, personal thoughts
- Linguistic Skills Involved: Writing, listening, speaking and reading

CLASS PROFILE

The class consists of 24 final-year students attending a *liceo linguistico*. Students generally demonstrate a strong motivation to learn English, as it is one of their core subjects, and show a solid command of language skills appropriate for their level. The lesson is part of the English Literature curriculum for the final year of secondary education. Students are familiar with literary analysis, textual interpretation, and the discussion of historical and cultural contexts. Lessons often combine reading, discussion, and multimedia materials to enhance both linguistic and critical skills.

LEARNING NEEDS

Among the students, one student has mild hearing loss. This student may have difficulty following purely auditory input, especially during listening activities or video-based lessons. To ensure accessibility and inclusion, the following compensatory tools and strategies are implemented:

- Subtitles are provided for video materials.
- Scripts or transcripts are made available for audio and listening activities.
- Whenever possible, these materials are shared with the entire class to promote inclusivity and benefit all learners.
- The teacher also ensures clear articulation by maintaining visual contact and using written support on the board or slides to reinforce oral input.

DURATION

Three 120-minute lessons.

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First Lesson: Multimedia Adaptations of the Novels (Three Steps)

STEP 1: Icebreaker

The prerequisites for this lesson include a prior explanation of the historical and literary context of the Victorian Age, an overview of Elizabeth Gaskell's biography, and the contextualization of *North and South* and *Mary Barton*. Building on this foundational knowledge, the following lesson employs a preliminary brainstorming activity using a Mentimeter word cloud, or any other digital tool allowing for the creation of word clouds, to introduce students to key themes and vocabulary they have already studied related to the Victorian Age and the works of Gaskell and other authors related to spatiality and social inequality.

The word cloud serves as a visual stimulus for discussion. Students are divided into small groups and asked to select and categorize words according to specific topics (e.g., Victorian society, city life, country life, Gaskell's novels). Each group then justifies their choices, promoting both lexical awareness and critical reflection on the social and spatial dimensions of nineteenth-century Britain. The collective sharing of ideas encourages connections between historical context, literary themes, and contemporary issues, effectively preparing students for deeper textual analysis of *Mary Barton* and *North and South*. The teacher should show the word cloud to the classroom and ask the students: "What words do you recognise, and which are completely new? Which ones seem connected?"

- Space, Place, and Environment: space; place; movement; pause; belonging; identity; environment; landscape; city; country; rural; urban; contrast; values; freedom; stability; change; modernity; tradition; connection; roots
- Victorian Age, Historical and Social Context: Industrial Revolution; factory system; class division; poverty; wealth; social inequality; child labour; urbanization; working class; middle class; reform; progress; technology; morality; gender roles; religion; education; charity; philanthropy; Victorian society
- Elizabeth Gaskell: Elizabeth Gaskell; biography; writer; novelist; Manchester; social realism; female author; empathy; criticism; compassion; domestic life; social reform; industrial novel
- *North and South* and *Mary Barton*: *North and South*; *Mary Barton*; industrial conflict; factory workers; masters and men; class struggle; love and duty; North vs South; poverty and wealth; women's perspective; social justice; sympathy; working conditions

Divide the class into 4 small groups (6 students each). Assign each group a different mini-task:

- Group 1: Choose 5 words that describe *Victorian society*.
- Group 2: Choose 5 words that describe *city life*.
- Group 3: Choose 5 words that describe *country life*.
- Group 4: Choose 5 words that describe *Elizabeth Gaskell's novels*.

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Each group should briefly explain why they chose those words (1–2 sentences per word).

STEP 2: Lead-in Activity

Objective: Explain Yi-Fu Tuan's distinction between spaces and places and Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* as a work that explores the relationship between rural areas and urban centres in England throughout a process that would culminate in full-blown urbanization.

Exercise: Read Yi-Fu Tuan's definition of space and place, then answer the questions:
"What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. […] The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place." (Tuan 6)

- According to Tuan, what makes a 'space' become a 'place'? Can you think of a personal example of this transformation in your own life?
- How does the idea of *movement* and *pause* help us understand the relationship between people and their environment?

Read the following quotation from *The Country and the City*, then answer the questions:

> On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation. A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times. (Williams 1)

- What positive and negative ideas are traditionally associated with the city and with the country, according to Williams? Do you agree with him?
- How do modern cities and rural areas still reflect (or challenge) these old contrasts between urban and rural life?

STEP 3: Reading Spaces and Places in the BBC Film Adaptation of North and South *and the BBC Radio Adaptation of* Mary Barton

Objective: To analyse how spaces and places are represented in *North and South* and *Mary Barton* through both visual and auditory media and explore how narrative techniques convey movement, perception, and atmosphere in different formats.

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A. Visual Analysis: Watching the BBC Adaptation
Activity Description:
Students watch selected scenes from *North and South*, the four-part BBC adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel, written by Sandy Welch and directed by Brian Percival, with a particular focus on Episode 1, in which Margaret Hale first encounters the industrial city of Milton.
In order to encourage students to read cinematic spaces critically and pay attention to how visual and auditory cues shape social and spatial dynamics, they should take notes and respond to the following questions while watching [Video link: https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x986dtk]:

- Who can move where?
- What is seen or hidden?
- How are air, light, sound, and crowding narrated?
- Which borders (factory gates, streets, thresholds) structure or symbolize conflict?

B. Auditory Analysis: Listening to the BBC Radio Adaptation
Activity Description:
Provide students with an excerpt from the BBC radio script. Ask them to identify and highlight the following elements [Audio link: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00d6h1y/episodes/guide]:

- Dialogue: Lines spoken by characters
- Character Names and Stage Directions: Often written in capital letters or parentheses
- Sound Effects: Indications of environmental or action-related sounds
- Narrator or Voiceover: Descriptive or reflective passages
- Spatial Description: How locations are evoked and imagined through sound and narration

In order to help students understand the formal structure of an audio drama script and how auditory storytelling constructs the spatial experience, they then listen to selected episodes from the BBC Radio 4 adaptation of *Mary Barton*. After listening, they can discuss the following reflective questions:

- What can you 'see' in your mind's eye?
- What elements helped you visualize the story?
- How did sound effects, music, or particular voices shape your emotional response?

SECOND LESSON: APPROACHING THE LITERARY TEXTS

STEP 1: Reading and Commenting on Two Extracts from the Novels

The class reads both passages in pairs, focusing on spatial details and narrative perspective.

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Passage A: Industrial Arrival
Text. *North and South*, ch. 7 ("New Scenes and Faces")[1]: Margaret's first view of Milton—factories "puffing out black 'unparliamentary' smoke". The chapter focuses on the Hale family's arrival in the industrial city of Milton, highlighting the stark contrast between the south's natural environment and the north's smoky, brick-filled landscape. It introduces key figures, such as the manufacturer John Thornton and his family, and begins to establish the central conflicts between Margaret's southern perspective and Milton's northern industrial ways. It also sets the stage for escalating tensions between workers and owners, which will lead to a strike. Margaret's first view of Milton, the fictional Manchester, is characterized by disorientation and shock.
Focus. Visual field, verticality (chimneys), motion (smoke), metaphors of legality/illegality ('unparliamentary').
Task. Highlight spatial nouns/adjectives; sketch a plan view of the scene; infer how perception encodes class relations and environmental harm.

Passage B: Working-Class Interior
Text. *Mary Barton*, ch. 6 ("Poverty and Death")[2]: the cellar with the fire that "smoked and puffed … up the damp, unused chimney", thick air, hunger, bodies. This passage describes the cramped cellar dwelling where a family faces hunger and illness. The fire "smoked and puffed … up the damp, unused chimney", contributing to "thick air", and highlighting the presence of hungry bodies.
Focus. Working-class interior and atmospheric constraint; interior's micro-geography (cellar, chimney, doors), sensory load (smoke/air), light.
Task. List barriers and flows; annotate verbs of stuckness vs circulation; connect to public health and classed space.

Writing While Reading:
Ask the students to make a list of all the words and expressions they can find in the two passages that describe places, spaces, or environments (e.g., factory, smoke, house, street, countryside, home). Encourage them to notice adjectives and verbs that show how people feel or move within these spaces. Then, ask each pair to:

1. Classify their words and phrases into two columns:
    - City or industrial space
    - Home/domestic or rural place
2. Write a short paragraph (5–6 sentences) by answering some cultural critique questions, for example:
    - How does *North and South* show the industrial city as a new kind of space or place?

[1] The full excerpt is provided in Appendix A so that teachers may select the passages and descriptions they wish to present to students.
[2] The full excerpt is provided in Appendix B so that teachers may select the passages and descriptions they wish to present to students.

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- How does *Mary Barton* represent the working-class home as a meaningful or constrained place?
- What senses are immediately assaulted (sight, smell, hearing)?
- The smoke is termed "unparliamentary". What does this legalistic language imply about the middle-class narrator's perspective on industrial pollution and the culture of the north? (It frames the industrial scene not as a natural disaster but as a deliberate political or social transgression.)
- How are different social classes represented through the description of these spaces and places?
- What can we learn from the contrast between the working-class and middle-class environments in the two passages?

Finally, invite students to compare their lists and paragraphs in pairs.

After Reading Activity:
Discussion Through Role Play—*Instagram Lives of Gaskell's Characters*
Before starting the activity, write these two passages on the whiteboard in order to remind students that Passage A describes Margaret's first sight of Milton/the north and that Passage B contains Gaskell's description of the Bartons' home:
Passage A - Industrial Arrival (from *North and South*, Ch. 7), Margaret Hale first sees Milton-Northern:
"The air had a faint taste and smell of smoke; perhaps, after all, it was only fancy, for they saw no chimneys yet... The long, straight, hopeless streets of regularly-built houses, all small and of a similar pattern, gave a dull uniformity to the scene".

Passage B - Working-Class Interior (from *Mary Barton*, Ch. 6), Gaskell describes the Bartons' home:
"The room was small, and very scantily furnished; yet it was clean and neat, as such houses often are... The little round table stood near the fire; a tea-cup or two were ranged on the dresser, bright and ready for use".

Objective: To explore Gaskell's representations of industrial and social spaces through a creative lens.

Activity Description:
1. **Group Formation:** Divide the class into 4 groups of 6 students.
2. **Character Selection:** Each group chooses (or is assigned) a character from *Mary Barton* or *North and South* (e.g., Margaret Hale, John Thornton, Mary Barton, Jem Wilson, Nicholas Higgins).
3. **Task:** Imagine your character has an Instagram account. Using Canva (or a similar digital tool), students design a mock Instagram post that includes an image, a caption, and hashtags reflecting their emotions, perspective, or experience in a specific scene. Each student must comment as another character on the

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Instagram post, imagining how Gaskell's characters would interact with one another and how Gaskell herself might comment.

4. **Sharing:** Groups present their posts and discuss how modern 'social media discourse' might echo nineteenth-century social divisions.

Example 1 (see Fig. 4): Margaret Hale's First Impression of Milton (*North and South*)
Image: A smoky, industrial skyline with factory chimneys, seen from a train window.
🧍 **@MargaretFromHelstone**
"Arrived in Milton today. The air feels thick, as though even the wind carries the weight of labour. I miss the green stillness of Helstone—every leaf there had a voice; here, even the sky seems silent beneath the smoke. 🌫🌿#FromGreenToGrey #HelstoneHeart #IndustrialReality #SpaceAndPlace #CityVsCountry #FindingMeaningInSmoke"
💬 **Comments:**
@MrThornton_MillMaster:
"Those chimneys are the breath of progress, Hale! 💪 You'll find beauty in hard work if you look closer. #PrideInProduction #CityStrength"
@Nicholas_Higgins:
"Aye, but the air ye breathe is what we live in daily, Miss. Hard to find beauty when every breath tastes of smoke. 😓 #WorkerTruth #EverydaySpaces"
@MrRichard_Hale:
"My dear Margaret, perhaps every place teaches us a different lesson. Even the darkest smoke may reveal the light of understanding. ✨ #FaithInReflection #MeaningOfPlace"
@Henry_Lennox_LondonLaw:
"Milton sounds dreadfully grey, Margaret! Perhaps you just need a London dinner party to see some colour again. 😉🍷 #CityContrast #SocialSpaces"
@ElizabethGaskell_Official:
"'Helstone was a village in a poem,' (Margaret). Milton is the air that, though thick with smoke, compels the soul to breathe reality. We cannot live only on roses and verses. True progress is found in the air we share. 🌹💨#HelstoneVsMilton #LiterarySetting #PoemOrProse"

Example 2 (see Fig. 5): Mary Barton Reflecting on City Life (*Mary Barton*)
Image: A narrow street with rows of brick houses and a child sitting near a factory gate or a very damp cellar.
🧍 **@MaryBarton_Mcr** "We've reached the point where the air in our cellar feels like something you could actually touch. The fire, which is supposed to warm us up, just keeps 'smoking and puffing up the damp, unused chimney.' We breathe this heavy, choked mess every day. The walls feel like they're closing in, the hunger is constant, and the tiny space is packed with tired, starving bodies. There's no way out. 😩 #LivingOnTheEdge #CellarLifeSucks #IndustrialVibes #AllSmokeNoAir #WorkingClassRealities #ThickAir #NoEscape #PovertyAndSpace"
💬 **Comments:**

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@JohnBarton_Weaver: "You're right, kid. That blocked chimney is basically our life in this town: any hope gets choked before it even starts. The air you breathe is our sad, daily reality. Nothing poetic about it, just the struggle. 💪 #DemandRespect #WorkAndWorry #EverydayStruggle"
@Esther_FactoryGirl: "I remember those cellars so well, Mary. The cold sinks into your bones, and that coughing never stops. It's a total prison, honestly. Makes you desperate to run anywhere, just to find a breath of decent air. 💔 #RoughLives #CellarLife #SeekingEscape"
@MrCarson_MillOwner: "I get the frustration, but the mills provide jobs for everyone, even if the environment isn't always perfect. Improvements cost money, and the economy is complicated. STOP COMPLAINING!!!!🤷 #WorkFirst #UrbanChallenges #EconomicRealities"

THIRD LESSON: DEEP-MAPPING DIGITAL ACTIVITY

Tools and Materials

- Copies of both passages from the novel
- Maps of a Victorian industrial town or a schematic of a typical working-class house (optional)
- Internet access and a shared digital folder
- The MapTool

Step 1: Annotating 'Map Data' and Creating Deep Maps in MapTool

Students are divided into 4 groups to reread the passages and mark every textual detail that refers to spatial elements, movement, or social identity—for example:

- "Long, straight, hopeless streets" → industrial uniformity, alienation
- "The little round table stood near the fire" → domestic intimacy within poverty
- Fictional or real cities, roads, etc.

Students then use The MapTool to create a new project titled 'Gaskell's Spaces and Places'. This function allows the author to place and manage pins on a map, as well as to upload and assign media and links to these locations. Each feature facilitates a different relationship between place and its representation, allowing us to explore the ways in which our sense of place may change through the creation of a deep-mapping platform allowing for layers, pins, annotations, points of interest, and coordinates, which themselves contain information about a location as well as pointers to media including images, audio, video, text, web pages, and commentary.

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Step 2 – Mapping Gaskell[3]

Add two layers, for example:

- Layer 1: Industrial Milton (fictional Manchester) and Helstone (*North and South*)
- Layer 2: Working-class home, Green Heys Fields, representing the nostalgia of characters like Alice Wilson, who long for the agrarian simplicity of their past, or Davenport's cellar, illustrating the harsh realities faced by those living in poverty (*Mary Barton*)

On each layer, insert pins or shapes for significant locations (e.g. streets, factories, the Hale family's new home, the Bartons' kitchen). For every pin, write an annotation quoting or paraphrasing a line from the passage and tagging it with physical description (e.g. smoke, narrow streets), emotional tone (e.g. oppressive, secure, warm) or social meaning (e.g. middle-class respectability, working-class endurance). One could use colour-coding, such as red for industrial/public spaces, green for domestic/private places, and blue for transitions or thresholds (doors, windows, streets).

Step 3

Use the wayfinder tool[4] to add a website, a YouTube video, or any other online material.

Step 4

Use the 'authoring tool'[5] to create collections of media and establish relationships between them. For instance, students can use a map to link audio recordings to geographic locations. That material can then be bundled, downloaded, and used offline by a mobile application. The audience thus never interacts with The MapTool directly but experiences the interfaces provided by the mobile interface.

Whole-Class Conclusive Discussion

Guide students through these prompts:

- How does mapping make visible the link between material space and social hierarchy?
- What contrasts emerge between city and home and between space and place?
- How might the map change if we added our twenty-first-century perspective to these Victorian settings?

This lesson plan culminates in a comprehensive and multimodal exploration of how Gaskell constructs spatial and social meaning through narrative form. By engaging with textual analysis, visual interpretation, and digital mapping, students acquire a critical awareness of the ways in which industrial and domestic environments encode

[3] See Figure 1; see also Sempere and Sempere.
[4] See Figure 2; see also Sempere and Sempere.
[5] See Figure 3; see also Sempere and Sempere.

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hierarchies of class, gender, and labour. The integration of TEAL methodologies—ranging from audiovisual materials to collaborative digital platforms—encourages active participation and fosters interdisciplinary connections between literary studies, cultural geography, and social history. Throughout the sequences, students move progressively from reading to spatial reasoning, guided by the locate–describe–interpret model that links language, environment, and social identity. The use of tools such as The MapTool not only enhances digital literacy but also allows students to visualize the narrative dynamics of space, tracing how Gaskell's industrial and domestic geographies articulate moral tension and social critique within the broader context of Victorian modernity.

The resulting digital 'deep map' synthesizes interpretive and creative learning, offering a collective representation of how literature reflects and reshapes the lived experience of space. By connecting nineteenth-century urban and rural imaginaries with contemporary perceptions of city life, the lesson consolidates linguistic competence, critical insight, and socio-cultural awareness.

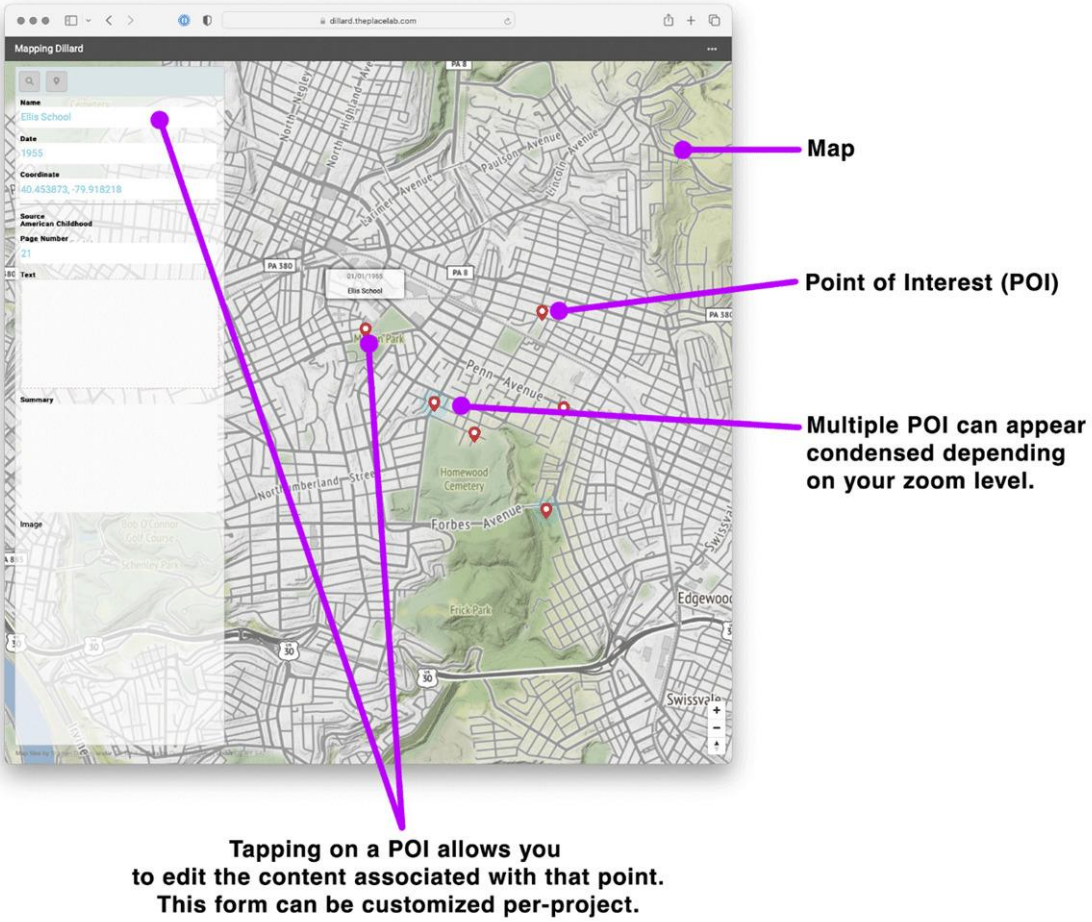

Fig. 1 The MapTool's 'mapping' function (developed for the Dillard Project by Sempere and Sempere).

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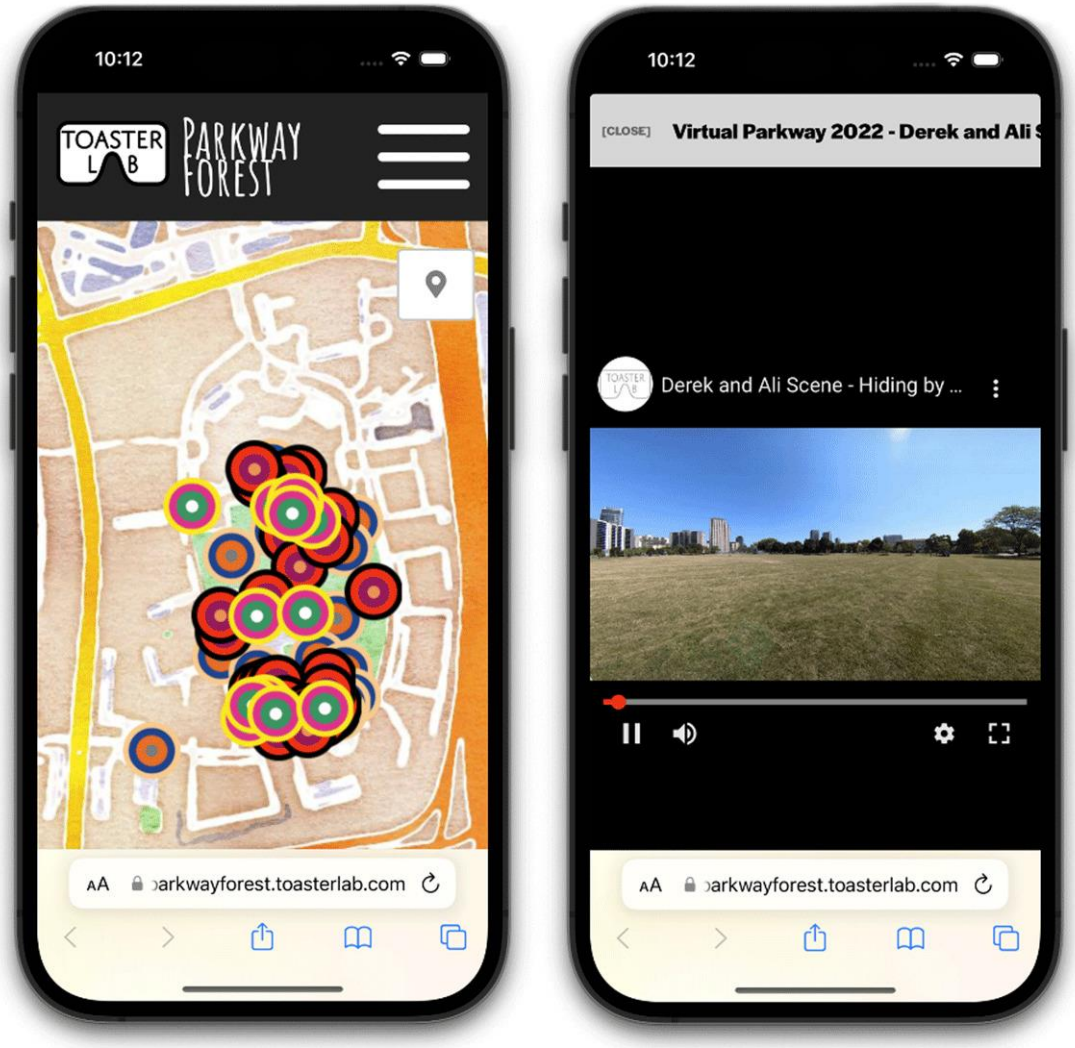

On mobile, the wrapped website can be used as a web-app, provided that native functionality isn't required. This is the Parkway project as shown in Fig 2.0, but displayed on a mobile device.

Fig. 2 The MapTool's 'wayfinder' function (developed for the Dillard Project by Sempere and Sempere).

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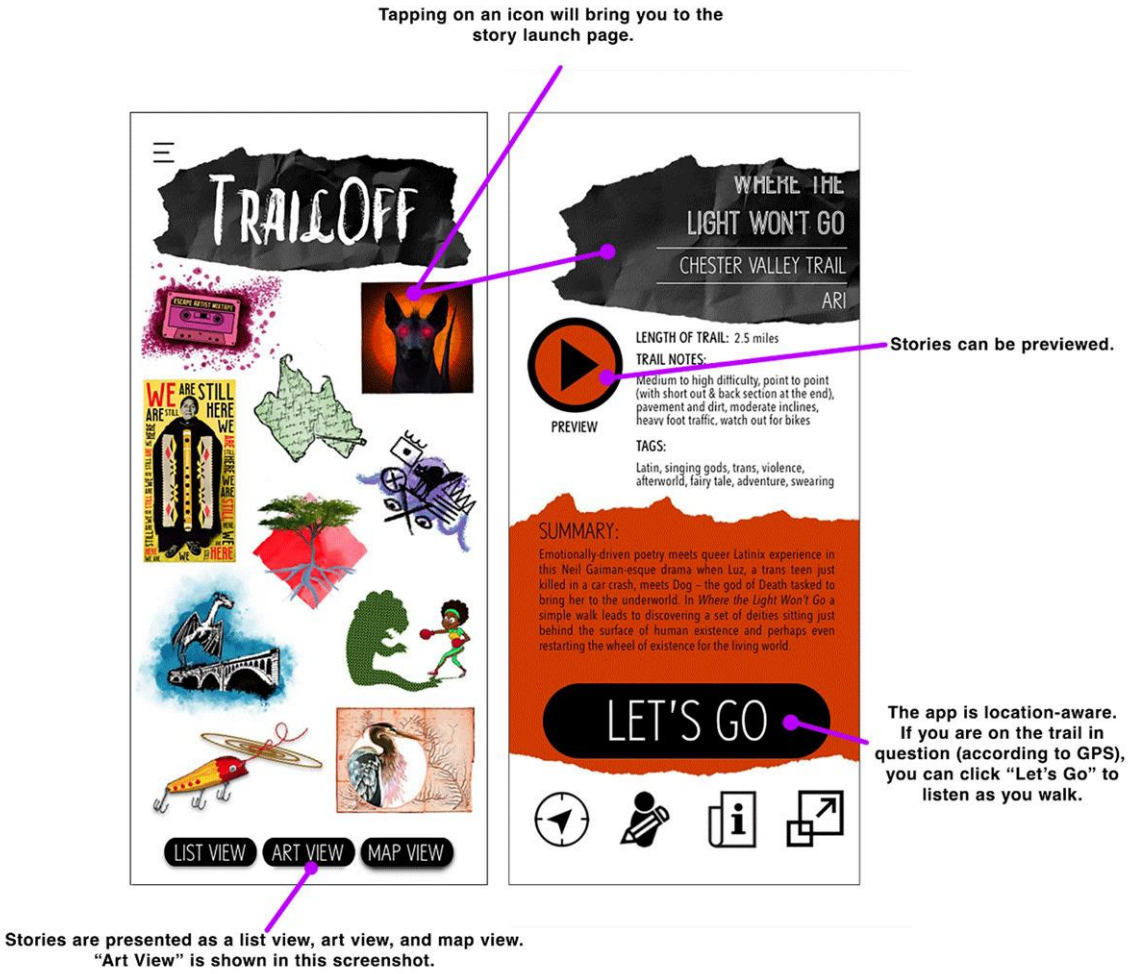

Fig. 3 The MapTool's 'authoring' function (developed for the Dillard Project by Sempere and Sempere).

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Fig. 4 Example 1: An Instagram post created with Canva, in which each student is required to comment as another character from *North and South*.

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Fig. 5 Example 2: An Instagram post created with Canva, in which each student is required to comment as another character from *Mary Barton*.

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