

## Mapmaking and the Spatial Politics of Power in Thea Astley's *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* Jacqueline Shin

Let me draw you a little map.

So begins Thea Astley's short story sequence *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*, and so begins this exploration of Astley's text, in which I will endeavor to draw a "little map" of the "politics and ideology" (Soja 6) encoded within such an apparently straightforward proposition, and to follow its implications through the interrelated stories. In appropriating Astley's—and her narrator's—opening sentence, I intend to foreground my own position as a *mapmaker* as well as a *mapreader*, and to locate a productive point of entry from which to begin charting this literary-cartographic terrain.

An initial reading of the sentence "Let me draw you a little map" might suggest that an imminent moment of cartographic representation is to follow, one that draws an implicit parallel between the act of mapmaking and that of storytelling (and here, by extension, to the act of literary criticism). Indeed, the map does evidently serve as a metaphor for the tale that is told in the first story of this sequence, "North: Some Compass Readings: Eden," as well as in the stories that follow. When discussing Astley's text in *Territorial Disputes: Maps and Mapping Strategies in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Fiction*, Graham Huggan focuses on this very association between mapmaking and storytelling. He argues that "Astley ridicules the map as a simulacrum of truth. In a collection which, as its narrator suggests, presents life as 'an unending accretion of alternatives,' maps are not arbiters of truth at all but rather metaphors of fabrication, of the multiple variations of the storyteller" (64). He goes on to claim that, "mapmaking, the means by which one person persuades another to believe in the reality of what she/he is seeing, thus becomes the ironic metaphor for the illusionism of the

storyteller's art" (65). While both convincing and plausible, Huggan's argument rests upon a tacit assumption (made explicit elsewhere in his text) that maps function simply as systems of representation and as tools of persuasion or control that profess to offer a mimetic transcription of "reality," and that as such, they may be used as "paradigms for an investigation of the procedures—and of the ontological and epistemological problems—of mimesis" (31). Such an assumption about the nature of maps restricts a reading of Astley's sentence, "Let me draw you a little map," both within the story where it appears and within the entire story sequence to the drawing of a parallel between two systems of representation: cartographic and literary. However, I will argue that Astley's complex deployment of the map topos in *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* in fact goes far beyond the limits of what such a premise would allow. By focusing exclusively on the map as an (ironic) *metaphor*—of fabrication, illusionism, and disorientation—within Astley's text, Huggan completely bypasses the question of what Astley and her narrator, Keith Levenson, are actually mapping, and thus overlooks how the map functions as a particular *structural paradigm* that is reiterated upon multiple levels of meaning in *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*.

What, then, *is* being mapped in these stories? If, as I suggest, Astley's maps serve as more than mere metaphors of the telling of the tales, then what exactly *is* the function of the map topos within this short story sequence? And why does it matter to our reading of this text, and to our reading of the world that exists beyond the borders of these stories?

Let me draw you a little map.

### I. Laying the Groundwork: Astley and Literary Cartography

By way of entering into a consideration of what Astley and her narrator are attempting to map in *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*, I would like to address the more general question of how a map can be defined, and how it actually functions as a structural paradigm as well as a system of representation. One definition of the word "map" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* not strictly limited to the delineation of physical geography, describes the map as a "diagram representing the spatial distribution of anything or the relative positions of its components." The map then, not

only concerns the mimetic transcription of “reality,” nor merely the arts of persuasion and control (although these are unquestionably essential aspects of cartography), but also the organization of objects in space and of their *relative positions* within that space. This stress on spatiality is, I would argue, very significant for a reading of Astley’s text. As Richard Phillips succinctly notes, “Maps may be spatial, visual, graphic representations, but the information they represent *must* be spatial” (14).

In his exploration of adventure stories and their connection to colonialism, cartography and empire, Phillips argues that like “other modern maps, realistic adventure stories naturalise the geographies they represent, and normalize the constructions of race, gender, class and empire those geographies inscribe” (15). The notion of normalization is a crucial one in Astley’s deployment of the map topos within *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*, in that both she and her narrator attempt to map not only the relative positions of objects within space (whether physical, social, linguistic, or textual space), but also how these relative positions are normalized and normatively coded in terms of relations of power. Indeed, one answer to the question of what is being mapped in this sequence of stories may be found in the seemingly straightforward sentence that begins *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* (and which I have appropriated): “Let me draw you a little map.”

Far more than indicating a parallel between mapmaking and storytelling, this sentence reflects, at the semantic and grammatical level, that which is being plotted upon multiple registers in this text. As well, it serves to reveal Astley’s conscious and careful attention to her choice of words, and her awareness of how they act as signifiers of intent and meaning. For instance, the adjective “little” that modifies the noun “map” in the sentence is a relative term that describes an object in relation to what is larger or “greater” than itself. The word can also be a spatial term in that it denotes the dimensions that an object takes within space. Yet “little” is spatial in the sense that through its normative coding, or ideological connotations of triviality, insignificance, inferiority and subordination (connotations that Astley and her narrator successfully subvert in their drawing of maps), what is “little” is often hierarchically and vertically positioned below objects deemed to be larger or greater.

Hence spatial positioning and normative coding are conjoined through the choice and ideological freight of words.

The verb “draw” and the proposition “let me draw you” in the opening sentence of this story sequence are also crucial to a close reading of this sentence in that they map a particular relation of power, or normative and spatial positioning—that which exists between the mapmaker and the mapreader. In a more general examination of the principles of literary cartography Huggan perceptively observes that, “maps constitute an often complex set of transactions between mapmaker and mapreader” (*Territorial* 3–4). The map “is both product and process: it represents both an encoded document of a specific environment and a network of perpetually recoded messages passing between the various mapmakers and mapreaders who participate in the event of cartographic communication” (4). In referring to the *drawing* of a “little map,” rather than to the map as a complete and closed document, Astley focuses attention on the *process* of mapmaking, and thus foregrounds not only the subjective nature of the map that is drawn—what Levenson refers to as the visibility rather than the seeming invisibility of the mapmaker within the representational space of the map—but also draws attention to the map as “a discourse of traveling” (Carter 71). That is, as Levenson draws his “little maps,” Astley emphasizes what Paul Carter, in *The Road to Botany Bay*, refers to as the traces of the encounter; traces that must inevitably involve the mapreader as well as the mapmaker (23). This mutually constitutive aspect of the process of mapmaking is further underscored by the proposition “*Let me draw you a little map,*” in that the word “let” implies that the reader holds the power to either allow or disallow the cartographic process, while it is the narrator, in “*draw you a little map*” who seems to be relationally placed in a position of power and who appears to possess the ultimate power of bringing this map into being.

Within this opening sentence of *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*, and elsewhere in the text, Astley maps the inherently unresolved and dynamic processes involved in the relative positioning of objects within space, and illuminates how these positions are normatively coded and normalized in terms of “inherent categorical privilege” (Soja 11). In this sense, charting the “event of cartographic communication” involves mapping

the ways in which the complex set of transactions that occur between the mapmaker and mapreader positions one hierarchically according to relative power and normatively in terms of inclusion and exclusion. More than a metaphor of the act of storytelling, the map thus functions as a spatial paradigm in this short story sequence. The map functions as a structure of organization that draws attention to the relativity of objects in space, and to the way in which the spatial positioning of objects within various demarcations of space is imbricated in the politics of power.

## II. Some Compass Readings: “North: Some Compass Readings: Eden”

In his study of the metaphors of form in Katherine Mansfield’s short fiction, W.H. New argues that, “the choice of verbal form—the language of literary structure—is inevitably a strategy of communication,” and the “word *strategy*, moreover, implies a deliberate intent to shape reactions and responses” (66). While critics of Astley’s fiction have often been exasperated by her “poetic style” (Milnes 255), reviewers have nevertheless acknowledged her conscious deliberation over the choice and placement of words, or what Robert L. Ross, in “Thea Astley’s Long Struggle with the Language of Fiction,” refers to as her “finely tuned prose” (505). Astley’s deliberate strategy when choosing words, cast by Ross as an epic struggle with language, can be seen in New’s terms as a “strategy of communication” that is linked to what is being mapped by Astley more generally in this sequence of short stories. In order to illustrate my argument, and to provide a point from which to further maneuver through this literary-cartographic terrain, I will consider the opening paragraphs of the first story of *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*, entitled “North: Some Compass Readings: Eden”:

Let me draw you a little map.

Take a patch of coastline and its hinterland, put it north of twenty and one hundred and forty-six east, make it hot and wet and sprinkle it with people who feel they’ve been forgotten by the rest of the country—and don’t really care. Where there aren’t hills and unswimmable water, plant cane. There’s this lar-

gish place called Reeftown on the coast and in the purple hills behind there are smaller towns that grow tobacco and maize and stories that ripen and wither and repeat themselves as cautions against being human. Human! Ah! There's the rub! It's not the dreaming that matters, as the poet man insisted. He couldn't have been more wrong. It's the reality that rubs. And rubs. And rubs.

Everything is very green here. Very blue and very green, and the depth of its coloration whacks out this response, not only from me but from the rest of us, who, having chosen, ripen and wither and repeat ourselves in stories. Which are re-lived by others. Over. Over. Maybe it's only a second-rate Eden with its rain-forest and waterfalls, its mountain-climbing burrower of a railway and sea-bitten rind of coast—a kind of limbo for those who've lost direction and have pitched a last-stand tent.

Take me.

Let me draw you a little map. (3)

One is immediately struck by the rhetorical reiteration of imperatives: the reader is told to “*Take* a patch of coastline and its hinterland,” to “*put* it north of twenty and one hundred and forty-six east,” to “*make* it hot and wet,” and to “*sprinkle* it with people.” This series of imperatives exists in tension with the framing propositions “Let me draw you a little map,” which seems to accord the reader a certain amount of power in the cartographic process. Indeed, one element that is being mapped in these sentences, and in the text beyond this passage, is the tension between imperatives, through which one claims ultimate authority, and propositions, which, in contrast, serve to destabilize that authority. In its rhetorical interplay, this passage foregrounds the relations of power between the mapmaker and the mapreader, and the mutually constitutive “event of cartographic communication.” The story begins, as I have stated, with a proposition that itself encodes a dynamics of power between the mapreader (“let me”) and the mapmaker (“draw you”). Similarly, while formulating his series of imperative demands, the narrator appears to be in control of the mapmaking process. He exerts power

and hierarchically positions himself above the reader who is then placed outside, or excluded from, this process. The nature of these commands is critical in that the reader is actually being told to position various objects within imaginative space. That is, the mapreader is being invited to participate in the cartographic process, and is thus given the power to either comply with, or deny, the mapmaker's imperatives. The map to be drawn is far from closed, but is itself structured according to a set of unresolved relations coded in terms of normative positions of power.

At a broader level, this dynamic between imperatives and propositions, with its concern over questions of authority, extends beyond the particular relations between the mapmaker and mapreader to the relative positions of objects within space. Within the linguistic and rhetorical space of the sentence and paragraph, the tension between opposing conceptions of the structure of authority, whether in terms of a vertical hierarchy or a horizontal plane, can be seen in the tension between coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. While coordinating conjunctions connect words, phrases, and clauses of equal value, subordinating conjunctions indicate a relationship of unequal elements, or a grammatical relation of dependence. In the opening passage cited above, individual sentences may contain both coordination and subordination within their structure, as for instance, in the sentence: "Very blue and very green, and the depth of its coloration whacks out this response, not only from me, but from the rest of us, who, having chosen, ripen and wither and repeat ourselves in stories" (3). Moreover, this dynamic pattern may be expressed in the juxtaposition of various sentences—thus the sentence, "There's this largish place called Reeftown on the coast and in the purple hills behind there are smaller towns that grow tobacco and maize and stories that ripen and wither and repeat themselves as cautions against being human," is offset by the later line "It's not the dreaming that matters, as the poet man insisted" (3). From the very outset of these stories then, Astley is drawing our attention to how the spatial organization of words, clauses and sentences is far from neutral or arbitrary. Rather, it encodes varying claims of authority, and betrays a politics of power that is constructed normatively in terms of equality or inequality, or subordination and domination. The rhetorical pattern that

I have outlined as a tension between coordinate and subordinate conjunctions, and more generally as a contention between imperatives and propositions, is, as I will now attempt to demonstrate, further mapped by Astley and her narrator within the terrains of social, linguistic, and textual space in *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*.

### III. Mapmaking and the Normative Coding of Spatial Relations

My argument is progressing outwards from narrower to broader levels of signification within various demarcations of space: from an exploration of the organization of objects within the space of the sentence to that of the paragraph, and now to a consideration of various stories within this story sequence. However, at the same time that I spatially extend my line of inquiry, I would also like to simultaneously reverse this development, focusing first on the more general mapping of the normative coding of spatial relations within Astley's text, and then concluding with a consideration of the more particular instance of spatial patterning that is mapped in the relations between the mapmaker and mapreader.

Insofar as maps are diagrams that represent the organization of objects within space, they are also tools for orientation, and serve to provide a sense of where objects are located in order to allow for a successful maneuvering within that space. While *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* begins with a depiction of physical geography, describing an area of northern Australia, the end of the short story does not leave the reader with a very clear picture of where various towns are physically situated in relation to each other. However, we are left with a definite sense of where and how various characters are positioned spatially in relation to others, specifically in terms of power.

One story that particularly foregrounds the relative positions of characters within social space is "Ladies Need Only Apply." Here, the tale that is told is framed by Levenson's voice: his friend Tripp tells him of Leo, who is "holed up about fifty miles from here" (111). Tripp draws Levenson a map, and Levenson in turn draws it for us. Introduced to the characters Leo and Sadie, or Miss Klein, we are told that, "there were the two of them, no denying it, hanging perilously together on an escarpment in the range of his dinge of a shack whose walls he had



pansied with arrogant arrangements of dried fan-palm frond” (114). While the story begins with these two characters seemingly located on the same horizontal plane, both hanging together on this escarpment in an isolated area of northern Queensland, the story centers on a series of intentional spatial maneuverings, a succession of attempts to gain the “upper hand” or position of social dominance, whether through language or physical positioning. For instance, when Leo leaves Sadie to open her side of the car door, he walks away from her indifferently and stands by his shack waiting, (“Tapping his bloody foot!’ she would tell them later), a meaty bulk of a man, cross-hatched by stratagems of light and shadow that made the him of the fellow even more elusive” (122). When Leo later offers a mocking response to her question of what he does to protect his material possessions, we are told that “The more he out-maneuvered her, the more the dislike settled in, became familiar” (123). Their dialogue is also set up as a kind of chess game, where he opens with “king’s pawn,” discussing “his private theories, his dogmatisms, unapologetic and absorbed” (124). The battle waged between these two characters continues throughout the story, and it is interesting that Sadie’s understanding of her own wish for sexual dominance is described in cartographic terminology. Readers are told that, “The tropic blaze, of course, did not diminish, and the week or so of trial she had secretly allowed herself for laughs extended as she discovered he was tolerable simply as a present chunk of male whose remoter coastline she found herself wanting to chart” (127). As the story progresses, however, it becomes more and more apparent that Sadie is on the losing side of their battle, and is ultimately out-maneuvered by Leo’s “geographic cunning” (132). Leo stations Sadie in positions where she will be made aware of his relationship with Flute, his music student; in fact, she is positioned to work in the garden below the window of a larger shack from which she hears them “working at pleasure of another kind” (132).

Shirley Ardener argues that societies

have generated their own rules, culturally determined, for making boundaries on the ground, and have divided the social into spheres, levels an territories with invisible fences and plat-

forms to be scaled by abstract ladders and crossed by intangible bridges with as much trepidation or exultation as on a plank over a raging torrent. (*Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps* 11–12)

In “Ladies Need Only Apply,” Sadie literally does cross a raging torrent, in the very last and incredibly physical and spatially choreographed scene:

One step and she was in to her waist, and then the current grabbed her and flung her towards the bridge. In a minute she had crashed against it and felt the skin above her ribs rip as she hung there just keeping her head gruntingly above water. Inch after inch, using the logs as lever she shoved her way through a force that delighted her perversely until pummeled, gulping, under the slamming drench of rain, she was snatching at slimy weeds on the far slope, grasping, slipping, losing, dragging, and at last hauling herself through mud and banana ooze onto higher ground. (143)

Sadie, however, is not advancing past a restrictive social boundary in order to contest that line of demarcation, but rather crawls up the steps of Leo’s house until she is at his feet on all fours, completely accepting a subordinate and dominated position within this vertical relation of power. In this story, as elsewhere in the text, Astley draws our attention to how human interactions are normatively coded according to relations of power—that is, how the spatial terms “above” and “below” are not neutral signs, but become markers of dominance and subordination within social space, with the person above. In this case that person is Leo, who holds the power of either performing or refusing to perform the act of inclusion or exclusion. It is Leo who is able to open the door and permit Sadie, positioned below him on all fours, “in” through the door, by uttering the phrase “Come on in” (115).

As well as the spatial relations between people, this story also underscores the importance of the spatial organization of words in a sentence, within textual or linguistic space. While I have examined the manner in

which Astley's choice of words in the sentence "Let me draw you a little map" serves as a system of communication, Astley herself emphasizes how the organization of words is of enormous importance in signifying intent and meaning. The difference between "Genuine ladies need only apply," which suggests inclusion, and "Only genuine ladies need apply," which is restrictive and establishes rules of exclusion, is not a superficial one, as Sadie first believes. Upon encountering this supposedly "misplaced adverb," Sadie nuzzles "her face into her arm in a self-mocking attempt to stifle her mirth" (116). However, the choice of the adverb betrays a structure of power within linguistic space that carries implications within social space as well. This story is ultimately concerned with the question of subordination, and with the failure of coordination, as well as with how the manipulation of the sequence and order of words in a sentence is, like the organization of people in space, not neutral, but laden with significance.

Another aspect of Astley's (and her narrator's) mapping of social space in this short story sequence is the mapping of what Levenson refers to as "human geography" in the title story "Hunting the Wild Pineapple." Levenson notes that "Mrs. Crystal Bellamy, a calmly widowed South Georgian," who has set up a base at his bed-and-breakfast, is "impossibly researching the human geography of the north for a nonsense thesis" (64). A distinct and prominent area of study within the discipline of geography, human geography investigates location, environment, and the arrangement of human activities within space, or the significance of human settlement and activities. This field encompasses subjects such as demographics, migration, diaspora, the distribution of resources, ethnicity, land settlement and agriculture, political geography, and regionalism. Hence, when Levenson drives Mrs. Bellamy about in "a kind of tour-captain fever," they visit "lakes, craters, dams, limestone caves, ghost towns, abandoned mining camps, mission settlements, crocodile farms, hippie communes, sugar mills, prawn fleets, rich American marlin fishers, tin fossickers" (65). Levenson claims, "We ranged north, south, west, and as far as weather would allow us, east" (65). While Levenson describes the mapping of the human geography of the north as an impossibility, he himself is engaged to some extent in the same

process as he draws his “little maps,” charts patterns of migration to the coast, of “the mercurial, spontaneous and apparently directionless surges to north and east; a lively fusion, a parting,” and describes the hippie communes and the land settlement patterns of the “middle-class struggling back towards the slums and serfdoms out of which they struggled over the last two hundred years” (64):

The old *nostalgie de la boue*. In cities they're buying up depressed terrace areas faster than you can blink. A true craving to get back to their economic womb. They're the new urban trendies, so sadly conformist that they are turning their new elysiums into a bedraggled transcription of the suburbia they have been trying to escape. And these ones. They're crawling back to the good earth in their hunt for feudal share-cropping, buying up their starveling five-, ten-, twenty-acre blocks, living with a roof, a tamped earth floor and hessian sides. (19)

The concepts referred to in this passage—those of the suburban and urban, of the region as opposed to the city—are also significant to a consideration of social space in that such designations are often normatively coded in terms of power and serve to delineate who or what is to be included or excluded, considered central or marginal. While this group of stories is set in a geographically peripheral location in relation to the “rest of the country” (3), Levenson's insistence that this “is the place where anything screwball is normal and often where what is normal is horrible” (161) performs a process of reversing the terms of normative spatial coding, insisting upon a new center that is situated in this geographical margin.

Another intriguing spatial relation mapped in these stories is the one that exists between human beings and the environment. While colonial history is often constructed in terms of settlers and communities taming the land and civilizing it, within Astley's stories the landscape seems to become a separate and tyrannical character who certainly dominates the others in the text through torrential rain and extreme heat, swallowing all traces of human settlement so that “Nothing's changed,” and that the land Captain Cook—the “flying Dutchman of an *Endeavour*

caracol[ing] across the scrolls of reef water”—saw is no different from the land seen by Leverson (14–15). However, because of limitations of space, I will merely point out these elements of “human geography” and turn now to an examination of Astley’s mapping of ‘languages’ and stories within *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*.

Mikhail Bakhtin explores the concept of voice and authority within artistic prose and argues that a “unitary language is not something given [*dan*] but is always in essence posited [*zadan*]—and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia” (270). Far from being isolated and closed, Bakhtin’s conception of language is a dynamic one that involves a requisite connection to an ever-shifting sociopolitical reality. As such, every utterance serves as a “point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear” (272). Heteroglossia, or the “diversity of social speech types” (262) and its stratification into “social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour” (263), are organized by an author within a prose work, and specifically, for Bakhtin, within the novel.

In other words, the “social and historical voices populating language, all its words and all its forms, which provide language with its particular concrete conceptualizations, are organized in the novel into a structured stylistic system that expresses the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of his epoch” (300). In *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* Astley spatially organizes these various Bakhtinian ‘languages’ (of which Leverson’s ironic and colloquial voice is merely one among many) into a system that foregrounds the unresolved tension between unity and disunity, and between the coordination and subordination of languages that purport to possess an equal claim to truth or falsity within the “relativizing of linguistic consciousness in the perception of language borders” (323). Such languages, in their relativity and organization, are given a sense of “materiality . . . that defines such a relativized consciousness” (323–24). Hence, in “North: Some Compass

Readings: Eden,” Astley juxtaposes slang, the voice of the narrator, the language of the religious fanatic, that of hippies and Christian American tycoons, the language of musical history, doggerel, cartoons, and so on. Levenson refers to the “newness of the language” of these hippies, who “groove” and say “don’t heavy-scene me, man’ and they despise bread. Not give us this daily variety. They’re all for that” (18). In reference to Lilian’s clichéd language of the religious fanatic, Levenson notes, “There genuinely was a *lingua franca*” (11). And in the story “Hunting the Wild Pineapple,” Levenson refers to the “new inflexion!”

Ah, *mamma mia!* A new meaning. This body, this face, these fingers, talk *diffunt!* But they don’t of course: and reason asserts itself and the same dull old drone of the expected vision intrudes in those boardroom, bar-room, bedroom clichés I’ve heard, oh, I’ve heard, before. (64)

By juxtaposing this variety of languages within the linguistic and textual space of these stories, Astley maps what is being charted upon multiple levels in her text—that is, she maps the ways in which relative spatial positioning normatively codes relations of power. Levenson’s attempts to exert narrative control, and to appropriate the maps and stories of others, creates a situation in which the proliferating heteroglot languages in this text are made to occupy a subordinate position. Astley’s spatial organization of these languages, however, as well as Levenson’s own admission that his stories could be told differently, and by different people, destabilizes the unifying and centripetal forces of narrative within *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*. As with her mapping of characters within social space, and of words and phrases within rhetorical space, Astley here reveals a perpetual maneuvering for dominance that is opposed to the centrifugal and disunifying forces that seek to create a condition of equivalence in which objects are joined through coordination. Languages, and the specific and subjective worldviews that they represent, are not arbitrarily transcribed, but are rather deliberately placed within the space of these stories in order to underscore the various relations of power held by the characters in this text, by the narrator, as well as by Astley herself as the author of this sequence of stories.

Astley's decision to write *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* as a short story sequence rather than as a novel further reveals the extent to which the positioning of objects within space is normatively coded. Her organization of these eight stories within the textual space of the sequence parallels that of the various socio-ideological languages within the text, in that both the arrangement of stories and languages serve to destabilize a vertical, hierarchical structuring of narrative authority. In refusing to write a traditional novel with a privileged order of beginning, middle and ending, that is, in a vertical structure, Astley organizes these stories in a horizontal succession, as variations on a theme, or the reiterations of the same story with different reference points. As Levenson insists in "A Man Who Is Tired of Swiper's Creek Is Tired of Life,"

Birth, marriage, death, re-birth. They're the only neat endings, traditional culminations for living—for books even—and what bogus back-watering punctuation they are! Living is serial, an unending accretion of alternatives. (175)

While Levenson conceives of these stories as serial and thus as equal nodal points that are joined through coordinate rather than subordinate conjunction, Astley undermines this straightforward resolution, which would posit this group of stories as possessing equal claims to importance and significance. And, while these stories are organized horizontally rather than according to a vertical hierarchy, Astley subverts a normative coding of horizontal positions within space as indicating the conjunction of equal components. Indeed, her insistence on the *unresolved* tensions between the normative coding of spatial relations in the realms of social and linguistic space provides a means of interpreting the organization of these stories within textual space. Rather than structured as an "accretion of alternatives" that functions as a rhizomatic assemblage, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari conceive of the term, *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* is constructed as a sequence of stories, and relies upon being read as such—if not in the precise order in which they are set out in the (numbered) table of contents—then at least with the first story read first, and the last story read last. The text acts as a sequence in which, as in the organization of a sentence in English, the

order and placement of its component parts are meaningful and normatively coded in terms of power.

In his study of the short story sequence, *The United Stories of America*, Rolf Lundén discusses what he calls the “compulsion to create coherence” on the part of critics of this genre (31). Rather than “marginalize the discontinuity and . . . ignore the multiplicity that are so central to the structure of this mode of narrative” (31), Lundén advocates an acknowledgement of the “*tension* between separateness and unity” (24). While Astley is very much aware of this tension in her construction of *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*, and while she emphasizes the gaps between individual stories in refusing to construct the text according to a linear temporal progression, it is the relatedness rather than the separateness of the stories that she underscores, as is attested to by her choice of title: *Hunting the Wild Pineapple and other related stories*. The gaps and silences that separate the individual stories are certainly significant, but they serve as spatial conjunctions rather than modes of disruption, foregrounding the relations of power within the organization of textual space. The silences are significant elements in the organization of these stories, and whether they are seen as sites of coordinate or subordinate conjunction, the silences emphasize the relative positioning of these stories as markers of normative relations of power. Astley extends the tension between coordination and subordination, and more generally, between imperatives and propositions, that are mapped elsewhere in these stories, to the very structuring of the text as a whole, and ultimately leaves these tensions open and unresolved.

#### IV. “The Flying Dutchman of an *Endeavor*”: Open Maps and Relative Space

As I have noted earlier, Carter argues in *The Road to Botany Bay* that the essence of Captain James Cook’s maps lie in the fact that “they did not mirror the appearance of natural objects, but preserved the trace of encountering them.” In *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*, Levenson’s and Astley’s maps likewise fail to serve as mirrors of reality, as Huggan convincingly demonstrates. Rather, they preserve the trace of the encounter between the mapmaker and the mapreader. It is in the encounter be-



tween the person who draws and the person who reads the map, and in the rhetorical as well as spatial tension between imperatives and propositions, coordination and subordination, that the maps of *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* come into textual being. As the opening passage of this story sequence underscores, the cartographic process is one that, while asserting the complete authority and control of the mapmaker, actually depends upon the mapreader's complicity in accepting the conditions of that map.

Through charting the normative coding of spatial relations, Astley reveals how maps, in organizing objects within space, are subjective projections that encode relations of authority and dominance, and perform acts of inclusion and exclusion. While she does "ridicule the map as a simulacrum of truth" (Huggan *Territorial* 64), Astley perhaps more importantly reveals the relations of power that are involved in cartographic communication, and the role of the mapreader in passively accepting, or actively questioning, these maps. As "discourses of traveling" (Carter 71) that cannot be divorced from the conditions in which they are drawn or read, rather than fixed and closed documents, the designations of authority that maps denote are rendered subjective rather than absolute. While the reference points remain the same, they can be cast as dominant or subordinate, marginal or central, according to the subjective perspective of the mapmaker as well as that of the mapreader. Astley's maps thus posit space as relative rather than absolute, and it is the readers of the map who participate in its very construction and who may accept or reject these designations of power. Similarly, it is the readers who can refuse the maps presented to them, or write their own, which will then in turn become sites of contestation.

As this paper began with the first sentence of the first story of this sequence, I will conclude with a consideration of the last sentence of the last story, which is in fact an unanswered question. Leverson, dissatisfied with his journey to Swiper's Creek, is invited on a journey with his friend Tripp, and concludes the text musing, "As the afternoon sun gutters, I promise I'll join him. But will I?" (175). Leverson and Astley leave their map open and incomplete, with the question of who holds the authority to answer this final query left unresolved between the mapmakers and

the mapreaders, who in speculating on the answer, become mapmakers themselves. Huggan argues that this indeterminacy is a marker of the “provisionality of cartographic representation,” which renders maps, “and the areas or territories they claim to represent, incomplete, indeterminate, and insecure” (xvi). However, rather than seeing these characteristics as a debilitating aspect of literary cartography, Huggan suggests it is in the very insecurity of these open maps that “the post-colonial societies/cultures of Canada and Australia may both reconceptualize their past and map out their different visions of the future” (xvi). Maps serve as sites of contestation within *Hunting the Wild Pineapple*—as a structural paradigm that both foregrounds the spatiality of power relations, and the ways in which the relative positioning of objects within space are coded as normative relations. By leaving her map open and indeterminate, Astley refuses to provide a comfortable solution to the reader of her text, who, in choosing to interpret these stories, must inevitably be made aware of her or his own subjectivity and assertion of authority, of his or her own acts of exclusion and inclusion. We are not offered a space in which relative positions are able to escape the impositions of categorical privilege, as horizontal positioning implies spatial privileging through order and sequence, just as a vertical hierarchy encodes positions of dominance and subordination. Rather, we are left to repeat the cartographic process, more aware of the ideological implications of words, and the sociopolitical imbrications of verbal discourse.

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## Mapmaking and the Spatial Politics of Power

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