

# Mapping Norman Nicholsons Network

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# **Spatial Humanities:**

Texts, GIS & Places

We are a five-year, European Research Council-funded project whose main ambition is to explore how quantitative research tools developed in the fields of Geography and Corpus Linguistics can be adapted to address qualitative research questions in the Humanities. Our work primarily focuses on developing techniques for analysing textual information, including large corpora of books and manuscripts, using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other data-visualization technologies.



#### **Methods & Materials**

GIS is a software-based computer mapping and database management system that allows the user to structure, visualize and explore the geographic information contained in a given text or dataset. Broadly speaking, geographic information consists of two components: a spatial component, such as a set of place names or locations, and a thematic component, which assigns some attribute to those locations. A GIS is a digital tool for bringing these different strands of information together and for analysing correlations between them.

Like the other data-visualization technologies we employ-including network diagrams, word clouds and cartograms—GIS is a powerful tool for reducing large datasets to a few salient features and thus for detecting patterns that might otherwise remain hidden. It has thus traditionally been used for quantitative research. Recently, however, researchers have embraced GIS as a key technology for the study of literary cartography. Our project has been driving innovation in this emergent field of research by integrating GIS and other visualization tools to map out the literary history of the English Lake District.

K S Hims mes Tambimuttu Iain Crichton Smith Percy Kelly ay Godwin Jon Silkin David Gascoyne Kenneth Smith Liz Andrew Michael Holroyd erite Caetani di Bassiano F. Steel Dennis O'Driscoll Norman L. Richadson Charles Monteith Alan Hancox Melvyn Bragg Daniel Hay Evelyn M. Simpson Robin Skelton F.E.S. Finn Daniel Haberman John Ramsbotham, Bishop of Wak B.S. Johnson George Stephenson Betsy Moat<sub>F.</sub> Barnes Mavis E. Pindard Mary C. Fair Thomas Blackburn Kevin Crossley-Holland Barbara E. Turner John Denny Peter BuckwellMontagu Slater John L. Foster and Valerie A. Kibble T.S. EliotPhoebe Hesketh Ted Walker Lohn L Sid Chaplin Kathleen Coburn Mabel H. Caine Gen. Sec. of Birmingham and Midland Institute Andrew Young Barbara W. Bland William Greer, Bishop of Manchester John Hale and Carmel Elwell P.C. Orr Gen. Sec. of Birmingham and Midland Institute, And the order of Barbara W. Bland William Greet, Bishop of Maintenester S.A. Milford and Jenny Thomas Bill Rollinson J. Thompson J.S. Scott-Kilvent Jane Newcastle University, Dept. of Adult Education<sup>Roy Fuller</sup> Robert B. Kelly Rev. John R. Norman Kathleen E. Morgan Illegible John Haines Course Margowan Graham Sutherland Carole Files Robert B. Kelly Rev. John Betjeman Matt Simpson William PlomerLeslie Norris George EveryPat Miles Robert B. Kelly Rev. John Betjeman Matt Simpson William PlomerLeslie Norris George Mackay Brown Ales Jill Lewin Robert B. Kelly Rev. John Betjeman Matt Simpson William PlomerLeslie Norris George Mackay Brown Ales Jill Lewin Robert B. Kelly Spencer Jenny Stratford George EveryPat Miles Chalter Christopher Wordsworth Alan Hankinson Robert B. Kelly Spencer Jenny Stratford George EveryPat Miles Chalter Christopher Wordsworth Alan Hankinson Robert B. Kelly Spencer Jenny Stratford George EveryPat Miles Chalter Christopher Wordsworth Alan Hankinson Robert B. Kelly Spencer Jenny Stratford George EveryPat Miles Chalter Christopher Wordsworth Alan Hankinson Spencer Jenny Stratford George EveryPat Miles Chalter Christopher Wordsworth Alan Hankinson Spencer Jenny Stratford George EveryPat Miles Chalter Christopher Wordsworth Alan Hankinson Spencer Jenny Stratford George EveryPat Miles Chalter Christopher Version Spencer Crookunder Christopher Wordsworth Harold Massingham John Heath-Stubbs

Andrea Masefield A.L. Rowse Samuel L. Marten

Rev. W. Moelwyn Arthur Russ

The Lake District is an ideal focus for a study in literary cartography because it is a well-defined region whose history has been shaped by an overlapping of verbal and visual representation. One thinks of Wordsworth, of course, but one can also think of an array of writers and artists who have shaped our awareness of the Lakeland's cultural landscape. The region's ties with early 20th-century art and literature are particularly notable. These include both famous children's authors, like Arthur Ransome and Beatrix Potter, as well as major figures of the modernist period, such as Kurt Schwitters, Kathleen Raine and the region's own twentieth-century laureate, the poet, playwright and novelist Norman Nicholson.

### Mapping Nicholson's Network

G.H. Spencer Jenny Stratford George EveryPat Miles

erek Walker Nicholas Graham Melvin B. Yoken P.H. Newby

Ivor R. Brown Ted Hughes Valerie Eliot Christina Shewell

or Harold and Muriel Stephe

William Blissett

Promoted by T.S. Eliot and praised by Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney, Nicholson's works once occupied a firm place within the British canon and the national curriculum. Since his death in 1987, however, his writings have suffered neglect. In large part, this can be attributed to the commonplace and emphatically provincial subject matter with which Nicholson engaged. A lifelong resident of the small, west Cumbrian town of Millom, he stands alongside late-modernist poets like Jack Clemo and R.S. Thomas as a writer who shaped his craft through the close study of the landscape and community in which he lived.

The year 2014 will mark the hundredth anniversary of Nicholson's birth, and plans (including local festivities and critical biographies) are already in the works. In anticipation of these celebrations, and in order to share in the task of bringing Nicholson's works to a larger audience, our team has undertaken a GIS-based study of his sphere of influence. This study is being conducted in tandem with our research into the history of tourism in the Lake District—a topic about which Nicholson wrote both perceptively and extensively.

The visualizations we created include GIS-based radial and kernel density maps as well as word clouds, bubble charts and circular visualizations. This combination of cartographic and schematic approaches is significant, because it helps to bring the different dimensions of the dataset into focus. For example, whereas the radial map charts the distribution of Nicholson's correspondents around the globe, the kernel density map documents both the locations of his UK-based correspondents and the volume of letters he received from each of those locations. Similarly, the use of abstract models, such as word clouds and circular visualizations, allows us to represent the dataset in terms of kind and

Alan Hankinson Goeran Standell Bonamy Dobree Philip Larkin C.V. Pearson John Heath-Stubb

Christopher Barker Rev. R.H. Harvey Kathleen Abbott Derek Sta

John Woolverton Matthew Maisey John Lehmann Hugh SargentRobin J. Gra

liot Christina Snewell John Cassidy Millom Parish Council Joseph Carinelli Colin Speakman Margaret Cropper Patrick Campbell Alan Bold

ret Wilkes S. Singer Hamish M. Brown Anthony Thwaite Benjamin Britten Eddie S. Linden Norman Birkett John R. Elliott

Sheena RingerDavid Douglas

Samuel L. McAslan Dorothea Jackson Anne Cluysenaar

Adam Drimare



Using the catalogue of the Norman Nicholson Archive at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, we have completed a preliminary analysis of Nicholson's readership by creating a series of visualizations to display the geographic distribution of the people who corresponded with him about his works between 1940 and 1987. In total, this dataset comprises 565 letters from more than 275 different correspondents including Anne Ridler, Kathleen Raine and Philip Larkin.

proportion by ranking the place-names and personal names it contains according to the number of times they appear. Finally, other schematics, such as bubble charts, help isolate and display specific thematic elements in the dataset, such as the nationalities of Nicholson's non-British correspondents.

 

 Newbury
 Newbury
 Swindon
 Glenelg

 Bushey Saint Ives
 Colchester
 Portsmouth Staveley Kendal Vancouver
 Halifax
 Birkerød
 Rome
 Enfield

 Dublin
 Chichester
 Cambridge
 Milton Keynes
 Glasgow
 Southampton Windermere Haddington

 West
 Malling
 Troy
 Middlesbrough
 Cambridge
 Exmouth York Grasmere

 HitchinNorth Dartmouth Chessington
 Bristol
 Saint David's Cheltenham
 Keswick Gothenburg

 Athens
 North Tawton
 Granville
 Codolming St
 John's

GillinghamHolmrookChichester GodalmingSt. John's Newark-on-Trent Millom City of Westminster Hurstpierpoint Leeds Piccadilly Plaza NorthamptonDerby Lancaster Southend-on-Sea Launceston Newcastle upon Tyne Leeds Ringshall Newcastle upon Tyne Hull Reading<sup>obar</sup> Barrow-in-FurnessKendal Cardiff Hucclecote Billingshurst Liverpool<sup>Walton-on-Thames</sup> Whitehaven Morecambe Oxford Broughton-in-Furness Workington Toronto Town Centre Wellington New York Walsham le Willows Saint Albans Grassington PenrithRipon BoltonCarlisle Minehead Llanrhaeadr-ym-MochnantChalfont Saint Giles Beckenham Guide Post Cockermouth Cirencester Charlottenlund Orkney IslandsBirminghamHeckmondwike Winchester Moresby Parks City Centre Merseyside Kinghorn Ormskirk Lexington Olney Ulverston San Francisco Berkeley Peterborough Kenilworth Centre Merseyside Kinghorn Ormskirk Lexington Oney Orversion Morecambe Rainham La Si GlenrothesWelcombe Edinburgh Hythe Isle of Man Hartlepool Columbia Bangor Snape Crewkerne Detroit NorwichConiston Wakefield Oakville

Newick



## **Findings & Conclusions**

Creating these visualizations drew our attention to a number of indicative spatial patterns, including the surprisingly global distribution of the correspondents and the fact that London (the metropolitan centre against which Nicholson, the poet of Millom, defined his literary ethos) is the place-name that appears most frequently in the corpus. Noticing these patterns has sharpened our awareness of the complexity underlying Nicholson's status as a writer who, though emphatically provincial, nonetheless lived and worked in an era of increasing globalization. We were especially intrigued to discover that many of the non-British correspondents in the dataset wrote to Nicholson about translations and critical studies of his works. This latter finding has led us to explore the possibility of creating an international, GIS-based bibliography of Nicholson's works.

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