

Novel Wayfinding: LitLabs and the Activism of Place

JACQUELINE BARRIOS 

University of Arizona, United States

“D O they read the whole book?” I’ve meditated on this question after almost a decade of teaching Dickens novels to South LA teens. The countless handouts of passages to “annotate,” the blackboards and whiteboards over which groups crowd-source knowledge to piece together sprawling character maps and plot maps of *Dombey* or *Chuzzlewit*, the six-hour marathons (with pizza and snack bags) organized in lecture halls commandeered to stage our collective “reading”—these images rush to my mind, a slideshow for what wholly reading Dickens might look like in LitLabs, an immersive, site-specific, design-based approach to studying literature I developed in close to a decade of teaching Victorian novels in an LAUSD secondary-education class for high school seniors who were also aspiring to be the first in their generation to attend college. We used *Little Dorrit* (1857) to capture students’ walks home in photographic poems, we deployed *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) to create sonic installations about the LA 1992 uprising, we reinterpreted *David Copperfield* (1850) to choreograph a tribute to migration stories—and yet, by what rubric might such readings be seen as partial or incomplete?

Behind this question, I will presume, is an implicit idealization of the contemporary reader that secondary literary classrooms like my own should seek to form, one whose academic fluency and literary interpretive virtuosity, forged through consuming *whole* books, might be called up at will, and under timed conditions, to pass the AP English Literature exam (three hours, fifty-five multiple-choice questions, three free-response essays), or to form essays with arguments drawn from close-grained stylistic interpretation, capacities that perhaps, years later, might come in handy to make one at home at settings like Victorian studies

Jacqueline Barrios is an assistant professor of public and applied humanities at the University of Arizona, where she studies geographies of East Asian Pacific Rim entanglement with the British capital. She founded LitLabs, a public humanities hub fusing site-specific research with the study of literature, the subject of her upcoming book, *Dear Charles Dickens, Love South LA* (University of Iowa Press). She co-leads the inaugural global Urban Humanities Network for scholars and practitioners in the emerging field of transdisciplinary spatial studies. She holds a PhD in English from UCLA and served as a public schoolteacher for many years in South Los Angeles.

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conferences. It is, in some ways, a commitment to reproducing and rewarding the figure Leah Price has called the “self-made reader,” absorbed in hours of silent sustained reading, whose status has been forged by their representations as heroes and heroines of novels themselves.¹

Yet this essay is about my work at cultivating a different kind of reader, of mostly Dickens, whose readings of his books aimed to produce the interpretive rigor demanded by academic study but were not devoted to, or wholly rationalized by, its achievement.

I first started to teach Dickens in Foshay, a public school in South LA, through a classroom partnership I helped inaugurate between USC’s Neighborhood Academic Initiative (NAI), a six-year first-generation college preparation pathway for students in neighboring public schools, and the Dickens Project, one of the largest consortia dedicated to Victorian scholarship in the world. My commitment as a classroom teacher through this partnership was to read and study a Dickens novel every year with my high school seniors, and in return, the Dickens Project would provide scholarships to selected students and faculty to annually attend the Dickens Universe, an annual conference of Victorian studies (one of the largest in the world) that uniquely coalesced scholars, Dickens enthusiasts, students, and the general public, in a weeklong investigation of one Dickens novel.

In the course of this work (for nearly a decade), while shuttling back and forth between the unlikely juxtaposition of geographies (which also came to include UCLA’s English department when I started my doctoral program), I founded LitLabs, a hub merging literary study with site-specific urban cultural productions, where I co-created, with students and a host of collaborating artists, scholars, urbanists, and designers, a body of work that included live dance theater, print publications, art installations, film festivals, and the like that elaborated, in my view, a curious and extraordinary Dickensian South LA.

The full account about my development of LitLabs, its methods and case studies, are the subject of my forthcoming book, *Dear Charles Dickens, Love South LA* (University of Iowa Press). What follows is an exploration of what I see as the potential micro-activisms that can transpire in literary classrooms, in my case, as incipient forms of urban placekeeping manifested via reading Victorian literature. In my use of the term “placekeeping,” I mean creative and cultural practices that cultivate attachments to place, that activate structures of feeling for belonging to them, and that expand moments for expressing them as well. In common usage among

urban practitioners, “creative placemaking” refers to the suite of site-specific cultural and creative practices aimed to promote economic revitalization of cities post Great Recession, primarily through funding units like the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and their signature placemaking grant, Our Town.² Compelling modifications of the term have emanated from BIPOC urbanists, revising placemaking to sharpen and contextualize these practices in light of minoritized communities’ histories of dispossession that work in part to diminish or erase their cultural presence. They offer the term “placekeeping” to acknowledge the already present store of cultural memory and relations that sustain minoritized communities.³ While LitLabs can be legible in some ways as creative placekeeping projects, they also do something different by specifically testing out literature as a resource and field for something I call “urban belonging,” cultivations and manifestations of place attachment, not aimed at making place legible or consumable to outsiders, but rather at uplifting communal bonds already present within minoritized communities’ occupation of space. In this essay, I account for the ways we collaboratively manifested this through my doubled investment in transmitting knowledge about (Victorian) books and in enacting political commitments to use pedagogy to build, in terms I borrow from liberatory educator Paolo Freire, more beautiful, more compassionate, more humane environments, built, natural, and cultural, for the communities of those who read them.

This essay proceeds in three sections. It begins with a narrative about how and why location, and urban space, became increasingly important to my pedagogy and scholarship of Victorian literature. It then turns to an analysis of a counterexample in *David Copperfield*, where reading, it might be said, repudiates the local. I conclude with an example of how LitLabs offers a model for emplaced reading in its adaptations of a core urban humanities “fused practice” of thick-mapping.⁴ This essay argues that in expanding the geographies literary works reference to include our own embodiment in place, LitLabs strengthen and nurture a sense of place for readers often *displaced* by engagements with the Western literary canon and, in so doing, reveal one response to the ways objects of Victorian study can, and do, make political demands of its scholars and teachers today.

1. NOT HOW, BUT WHERE WE READ

The larger work of building a first-generation college access pipeline, upon reflection, is a spatial project as much as a sociocultural one.

Part of the success of the USC NAI program as I saw it was its insistence in literally taking space in the university itself, that is, LAUSD students and teachers would have their morning English and math classes in the lecture halls of USC. We would make our way to school among the red brick and iconic buildings, landscaping and wide paths, fountains, libraries, cafés. Through the years of teaching, in those early hours when our periods would start before most college classes began, or in driving the few blocks (beating the yellow school buses filled with students) back to our home campus, I began to feel myself, and my students, somewhat like unread books on the shelf of college campus life. As a program situated within the outreach and civic engagement units of the university, the program did not often intersect with the academic side of campus life, that is, the business of producing and disseminating knowledge. And so in collaboration with partners, faculty and their students, college mentoring and outreach programs,⁵ students and I began commandeering those same lecture halls for things like performances and poetry, classroom exchanges and reading marathons, fall rehearsals for *Great Gatsby* receptions and summer intensives for Shakespeare. Later on, as the LitLabs partnership took shape, annual treks up to Santa Cruz for the Dickens Universe meant finding ourselves envired by Victorian scholars and the redwoods and tea and the postlectures buzz, a situation that called up moves on my part to do things like packing a second suitcase full of miniature chair-sculptures we had made after reading *Dombey and Son* (1848), or setting up slideshows of urban photography inspired by *Dorrit*, or reinstalling the listening panels we constructed for our *Barnaby* sound project. In essence, I worked to extend the placemaking powers of the classroom itself. Not just our bodies or our products, but the ways we occupied space, the architecture we created to belong, to signal and recognize why our presence mattered. Traffic became mutual, with USC and Dickens Project partners learning to navigate Foshay's hallways to arrive at the Miami room or the Theater or Ms. Barrios's room by the bungalows. Part of LitLabs' fundamental strength drew from its ability to unite disparate communities in the seemingly simple matter of visiting each other for these books.⁶ In these exchanges, we were forming a new public, a crew that would travel for each other (and with Dickens).

My work with Victorian novels became increasingly intertwined with political questions about space and belonging through my training with UCLA's Urban Humanities Initiative (UHI), a graduate program dedicated to spatial transdisciplinary research and teaching. To Fredric

Jameson's injunction to always historicize came a rejoinder, always spatialize! And while this did not preclude things like, say, a semiotic analysis of street signs in Chinatown or close reading representations of the city in Virginia Woolf, urban humanities as an emerging transdisciplinary field tasks its practitioners and scholars to speculate, to materialize knowledge production in interventions through design, to aspire to co-produce space with communities to understand the geographies of power we are maintaining or transforming.

What an urban humanities trajectory did at this point in my career was to bring explorations of place and concerns of literary scholarship into tension and relation. I became interested in what models of readership geography can inculcate. Not only how we read, but where. Geography can cue us toward new ways of reading, and in Price's terms, the handling and (contemporary) circulation of Victorian novels (5).⁷ Because advanced high school English classrooms remain some of the few spaces where young people, especially young people of color, might read a Victorian novel, it is an exceptional locale, I argue, for opportunities to expect, innovate, and demand political work from these encounters. One case study I can offer for how we did this is *LA Copperfield*, the LitLabs I designed to teach *David Copperfield*.⁸ Students' engagements with the bildungsroman exemplified the conflicted, but rewarding, processes for reading literature with an agenda for urban placekeeping. The design of the reading and the resulting body of work show how LitLabs became my avenue for cultivating a resistant and self-affirming communal consciousness among users, especially marginalized ones, of space, reflective of the point Black radical theorists Stefano Harney and Fred Moten put forward in *Undercommons* when they said that "study is what we do with others."⁹

2. DAVID COPPERFIELD'S READERLY DISLOCATIONS

I had a greedy relish for a few volumes of Voyages and Travels—I forget what, now—that were on those shelves; and for days and days I can remember to have gone about my region of our house, armed with the centre-piece out of an old set of boot-trees—the perfect realization of Captain Somebody, of the Royal British Navy, in danger of being beset by savages, and resolved to sell his life at a great price. The Captain never lost dignity, from having his ears boxed with the Latin Grammar. I did; but the Captain was a Captain and a hero, in despite of all the grammars of all the languages in the world, dead or alive.¹⁰

In *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain*, Leah Price has written of the above, the "most memorable and memorized passage" of Dickens,

as the classic example of the kind of absorptive reading valorized by Victorians (and on to our own time) as index of the self-made interiority prized by the bildungsroman form. What she stresses in her account is the way the presentation of reading itself vanishes into the virtual, the heavy materiality of Latin grammar tomes wielded by villainous adults epitomized by Mr. Murdstone, in contradistinction to the etherealized textuality of story that frees David from his entanglement in literal place (82).

This passage was never the focus of *LA Copperfield* or ensuing *Copperfield* LitLab projects. This, in retrospect, is not surprising, given my investment in Dickensian treatments of city space in the novels, from detail- and minor-character rich urban scenes (little David's post-work flâneuring) to crucial plot or characterization moments that draw metonymically from environmental material for figural elaboration (the road to Dover scene, for example), or what I have increasingly started to call "spatial tropes," where a type of setting recurs enough times in the novel to become a thematic armature for the work as a whole (places of rest, nontraditional home spaces, memorials, bodies of water).

Yet the spatial aspects of this particular passage do dramatize a particular relation to place that can be seen as a foil, in some ways, to what we strove to do through LitLabs. In the "absorptive" reading David does here, the fictional realm transfigures the local scene: "every stone in the church, and every foot of the churchyard, had some association of its own, in my mind, connected with these books, and stood for some locality made famous in them" (54). This erasure of the local through the powers of the capacious, precocious imagination gets enacted by a classic case of readerly identification, with colonial overtones. David's verve and dash in his virtual inhabitation of "Captain Somebody, of the Royal British Navy in danger of being beset by savages," are reenacted in his remembrances of literal space itself:

When I think of it, the picture always rises in my mind, of a summer evening, the boys at play in the churchyard, and I sitting on my bed, reading as if for life. Every barn in the neighborhood, every stone in the church, and every foot of the churchyard, had some association of its own, in my mind, connected with these books, and stood for some locality made famous in them. I have seen Tom Pipes go climbing up the church-steeple; I have watched Strap, with the knapsack on his back, stopping to rest himself upon the wicket-gate; and I know that Commodore Trunnion held that club with Mr. Pickle, in the parlour of our little village alehouse. (54)

The self-made reader's absorption produces the ideal of pure and total identification (David is a reader of whole books) enabled by a seamless mapping of his subjectivity unto the generic heroism of Captain Somebody, a figure called up at will, at the expense of "savages" and "all languages in the world, dead or alive." The geographies of this self-made reader, like the captain's, are projections of autonomy and power, and thus are in some ways rendered immaterial, borderless, colonizable. Price, citing Michael Fried, writes of such scenes as "[co-relating] the reader's attention to the text with his oblivion to the world around him" (73), with this dematerialization especially highlighted as a key effect of absorptive reading:

By making the text that fills minds coincide with the thing that thumps heads, these opening scenes dramatize two competing media theories. In one, the book's power comes from its material attributes (weight, heft, the volume of every volume); in the other, a sequence of words (no matter whether in the memory or on the page) crowds out any awareness of the physical world. (76)

Price's larger project—recuperation of other uses of the book beyond interpretation—is useful for me in my ongoing desire to stake out wayward itineraries with literary study.¹¹ In particular, the Victorian investment in locating imagination inside minds and out of place is especially suggestive in sketching out the systems of valuation already at play when students pick up the book and read texts, hundreds of years later.

LitLabs proceeds by a different logic and value system, where *dis*identification is both a starting point and a generative one.¹² Eschewing "schema" building (a teacherly word for that part of the reading lesson geared at priming comprehension, i.e., the little blurb of historical context or a free-write journal that starts with "Have you ever . . .") by calling for cathexis with David, I turn to geographies of the emplaced reader, where a reverse operation transpires with regard to the local. For this reader, the wires of a chain-link fence, the shrine at the heart of a swapmeet, the gardens and the steeples of an urban world, rush in to rematerialize the virtualized text. Instead of escaping one's environment through the geographies of the novel, emplaced reading cultivates the nascent politics in placekeeping, calling attention to the nonfungible materialities of environments where home, work, and family are revealed.

Before further elaboration of this idea in my last section, I conclude this discussion with an example of the ways the novel offers something

like an alternative to the self-fashioning, absorptive reading conducted by David in the attic:

I had been reading to Peggotty about crocodiles. I must have read very perspicuously, or the poor soul must have been deeply interested. . . . I was tired of reading, and dead sleepy; but having leave, as a high treat, to sit up until my mother came home from spending the evening at a neighbor's, I would rather have died upon my post (of course) than have gone to bed. . . . I propped my eyelids open with my two forefingers, and looked perseveringly at her as she sat at work; at the little bit of wax-candle she kept for her thread—how old it looked, being so wrinkled in all directions!—at the little house with a thatched roof, where the yard-measure lived; at her work-box with a sliding lid, with a view of St Paul's Cathedral (with a pink dome) painted on the top. (22)

In ruminating about David's reading away for life, I found myself drawn to this earlier scene of reading, one conducted in that fugue state between sleep and wakefulness, where David's Crocodile Book reading accompanies, even lightens, Peggotty's labor. This reading is marked on his body by the fatigue he describes, this dreamy consciousness paradoxically attuned to the material world, its figures and objects becoming especially clear, interestingly enough, in this one, through a description of a miniaturized place: "the little house with a thatched roof where the yard-measure lived . . . with a view of St Paul's Cathedral" (22).

This scene of reading depicts David's relationality to the maintenance of a community of care in which he too must contribute his share. It is not surprising that the reading of the Crocodile Book becomes a trope for authentic relationship, its growing feature to be a kind of fixed relic in David's various pilgrimages home:

When we had had our tea, and the ashes were thrown up, and the candles snuffed, I read Peggotty a chapter out of the Crocodile Book, in remembrance of old times—she took it out of her pocket: I don't know whether she had kept it there ever since—and then we talked about Salem House, which brought me round again to Steerforth, who was my great subject. (105)

So it was, though in a softened degree, when I went to my neat room at night; and, turning over the leaves of the crocodile-book (which was always there, upon a little table). (273)

But, Peggotty told me, when she lighted me to a little chamber where the Crocodile book was lying ready for me on the table. (619)

There is something bulky in Peggotty's pocket. It is nothing smaller than the Crocodile Book, which is in rather a dilapidated condition by this time, with divers of the leaves torn and stitched across, but which Peggotty exhibits to the children as a precious relic. (735)

The Crocodile book is a landmark that enables homeward wayfinding for David into *intersubjectivity*. The passage suggests other practices we can cultivate with books and reading, for example, how can books become the ways in which we share in the labor and care of communities? How can we lose some of our faith in the power of self-made readership, the hegemony of interpretation,¹³ and make trials of ways we can, and should, read for each other?

3. *LA COPPERFIELD'S* CARTOGRAPHIES OF PLACEKEEPING

In the last decade of my tenure in a high school literary classroom, I've engaged these questions, exploring ways to produce various instruments of homeward wayfinding by means of the book. In this last section, I discuss one tool from the urban humanist repertoire, "thick-mapping," that enabled us to do that.

Thick-mapping as a core practice within the urban humanities draws from the larger project of critical cartography, where mapmaking itself makes visible and resists its own genealogy as a practice aiding territorial control and domination.¹⁴ Harkening to the avant-garde artistic practices of the situationists or informed by contemporary digital visualizations of the landscapes of mass incarceration like Kelly Lytle Hernandez's *Million Dollar Hoods*, thick-mapping in the urban humanities is the process of composing a multilayered, multitemporal, and propositional spatial representation that foregrounds multiple voices, perspectives, and narratives.¹⁵ Conceived as "countermaps" to normative cartographic practices that enable top-down, panoptic, empirical, and imperial projects of territorial expansion and colonial management, thick-maps allude to Clifford Geertz's coinage for layered ethnographic observation, or "thick description," and also to a theorization beyond this toward media-making about cities itself:

Thickness moves beyond a singular or definitive reading, which is a "thin" approach to knowing and being. Rather, thick media incorporate—and perform—multiple readings and histories; they combine polyvocality and contestation in ways that create a greater whole without erasing what might be construed as conflictual or incongruent realities.¹⁶

Urbanist and design theorist Annette Miae Kim, in her review of the explosion of mapping projects in the last twenty years in various fields, adds to this conceptualization of thickness a nuanced attention to what constitutes criticality in maps, how they might go about making their

own authorship visible, for example, or how they “[interrogate their] own systems of representation.”¹⁷ Thus, a thick-mapper confronts spatial phenomena and representations of them with questions about what data to include and how, with what aesthetic philosophies, to what ends, and for which audiences.¹⁸

I find myself drawn to studying maps and novels for similar reasons, for the ways their systems of representation promise and disrupt an epistemological “wholeness” for vast amounts of content. In LitLabs, I tested out the production of cartographic media by asking students to make maps to both magnify the material referent of our neighborhoods and bring them into relation, to visualize the dimensions of their readings that could both project a sense of the “whole” while also bearing witness to the fragmented, piecemeal, collaborative traces of emplacing the book in the city together.

In *LA Copperfield, the Fotonovela Edition*, students produced augmented fotonovelas or photo-based comics that embed digital visualization technologies like mapping or AR, a method developed by Latinx digital humanist (and longtime classroom collaborator) Leigh-Anna Hidalgo in her scholarship and activism on urban labor in LA and beyond.¹⁹ Each *LA Copperfield* fotonovela riffed on a passage I asked students to select, which they close-read and workshopped during the course of our study. In each volume of the series, students “relocated” Mudstone and Grimby, the road to Dover, London storefronts, even senior David’s gravestone, onto South LA spaces. The production of the fotonovelas began with student teams investigating the passage, then they coalesced observations, speculations, memories, tributes, invention about locales that the passage called to their minds and beings—parents’ workplaces, street corners, urban memorials, neighborhood gardens—into a photo-based narrative. Students lifted aspects of the structure of the language—a syntactical quirk, a tonal register, a way of ballooning imagery—to produce visual narratives of place: sketches, photographs, films. Reading the fotonovelas brings echoes of the operation described in David’s refashioning of churchyard and ale house, with an important distinction. In *David Copperfield*, the world is dissolved in fiction; in *LA Copperfield*, the world materializes it.²⁰

Students’ thick-maps were the centerfolds for each fotonovela, and in them, students manipulated and challenged cartographic language to locate themselves as South LA readers of the novel. To make them—the charge was to create a map to locate all their “versions” of the passage onto one surface—students appropriated and annotated the

empirical, top-down visual language of maps (i.e., screenshots of Google maps, simple grids of their neighborhoods) with DIY strategies (hand-drawn illustrations, collage, assemblage of found objects). In one case, one of my favorites, the team created handmade models, in cardboard, marker, and pen, of their childhood homes, inspired by the novel's passages about the Rookery. Students' maps revealed various forms of what Kim calls "testimonial" (an accounting of lived experience) or "visionary" (speculations of what could be or could have been) data upon the hegemonic visuality of Google or the urban grid.²¹ In hand-drawn icons representing the office buildings a mother cleaned or the clothing factory a father ran,²² a desire to pay tribute to labor and an LA enwrapped and overlaid by their presence is offered up. In cut-up photographs of close-up details of street corners, a morning glory and a storefront sign touch each other in jagged harmony,²³ witnessing and announcing the possibility of alternate street views of South LA.

These artifacts, as evidence of students' production of spatial knowledge, may give us insight to their thoughts and feelings about the assignment and its materials. But I read and interpret them here more specifically as acts of placemaking, the work these maps do as forms of political urban media. In that sense, we see that these products are less vested in focalizing the world through one privileged first-person retrospective narratorial position; instead, the thick maps of *LA Copperfield* continually ask users to locate themselves within the field and scale of the cartographers' own choosing. The maps foreground the ways LitLabs sought to repurpose Victorian texts as materials for elaborating ways of knowing from minoritized communities and, in so doing, subvert the banishment of place that reading literature like *David Copperfield* often enacts.

In thick maps, and the fotonovelas that enfold them, students transformed privatized, and often difficult, experiences of reading unfamiliar texts into processes of collective meaning-making, with communities of friends and family members. This is the immediate public for whom they remember the streets and look-out points, the freeways and the laundromats, and for whom, for the most part, they subject themselves to an academic regime that Victorian studies helps maintain and reproduce. Their work matters as testimonies to the ways they gained confidence navigating the literature of the past and the alienation of their presence such literatures often announce, by signposting locales of belonging onto its pages, rather than the other way around.

4. CODA

“My address,” said Mr. Micawber, “is Windsor Terrace, City Road. I—in short,” said Mr. Micawber, with the same genteel air, and in another burst of confidence—“I live there.”

I made him a bow.

“Under the impression,” said Mr. Micawber, “that your peregrinations in this metropolis have not as yet been extensive, and that you might have some difficulty in penetrating the arcana of the Modern Babylon in the direction of the City Road,—in short,” said Mr. Micawber, in another burst of confidence, “that you might lose yourself—I shall be happy to call this evening, and install you in the knowledge of the nearest way.” (138–39)

David Copperfield too, one can say, is also invested in celebrating a kind of cartographic flair. Could Mr. Micawber be *David Copperfield*'s, and David Copperfield's, emplaced (city) reader and teacher? In the above, and in Micawber's scattershot appearances throughout the whole novel, city way-finding is a figure for enacting the novel's communal form. From this first encounter to letters from multiple addresses, Micawber continually locates and reentangles David in the inextinguishable debt of relationship,²⁴ experienced and sustained within material homes that we share, and build, and keep.

I washed my hands and face, to do the greater honour to his gentility, and we walked to our house, as I suppose I must now call it, together; Mr. Micawber impressing the name of streets, and the shapes of corner houses upon me, as we went along, that I might find my way back, easily, in the morning. (139)

In the face of the fragmented social and cultural landscape brought about by late capitalism's derangements of space in the postmodern era, whereby any sense of the local and “real” is already intersected and untethered by the global and the simulated, Fredric Jameson has called for an aesthetics of cognitive mapping whose intentions are ideological, here citing Althusser, “[in] effecting ‘Imaginary representation [s] of the subject's relationship to his or her Real conditions of existence.’”²⁵ In fact, Jameson premises his ideas here with an allusion to urban planner Kevin Lynch, who theorized the “imageability” of the city through things like mental maps as remedy to the alienation and disconnection of navigating the urban:

I have always been struck by the way in which Lynch's conception of city experience—the dialectic between the here and now of immediate perception and the imaginative . . . sense of the city as an absent totality—presents something like a spatial analogue of Althusser's great formulation of

ideology itself. . . . Ideology as a necessary function in any form of social life has the great merit of stressing the gap between phenomenological perception and a reality that transcends all individual thinking or experience. . . . [which it] attempts to span or coordinate, to map, by means of conscious and unconscious representations.²⁶

Emplaced reading is cognitive mapping, recuperating the experience of reading rather unmanageable books as young persons within a city in the throes itself of unmanageable change. Giving students the tools to locate themselves and their communities matters in both arenas. The chance to wield them makes clear that even in estranging conditions, like reading a Victorian novel, that beset them and bewilder, they can make their way home.

NOTES

1. Price, *How to Do Things*, 86. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
2. Hughes, “Annotated History,” 27–28.
3. Bedoya, “Spatial Justice”; Jojola and Shirley, “Seven Generations,” 358. Additionally, Jojola and Shirley use the term “PlaceKnowing” to characterize the work of the Indigenous Design and Planning Institute (iD+Pi) at the University of New Mexico, where “traditional knowledge . . . gives meaning to the cultural landscape [Indigenous communities] use and inhabit.”
4. Cuff et al., *Urban Humanities*, 14.
5. I especially would like to acknowledge here collaborations conducted with USC’s Joint Educational Partnership, the USC NAI Theater Workshop, and CONTRA-TIEMPO Activist Dance Theater.
6. I would say that a visit entails the often-hidden labor in establishing relationships, then managing the sheer logistics of encounter.
7. Price frames her book around the “often contentious relation among three operations: reading (doing something with the words), handling (doing something with the object), and circulating (doing something to, or with, other persons by means of the book” (5).
8. In my forthcoming book, I elaborate on the full repertoire of LitLabs methodology and exemplars of which *LA Copperfield* is a part.
9. Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 110.
10. Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 54. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.

11. Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong, "Introduction," 369–91. Here I would add that this desire is resonant with the ongoing call in our field to "undiscipline," to, as Chatterjee and her co-authors assert, "illuminate how race and racial difference subtend our most cherished objects of study" (370). The authors' work has encouraged me to underscore our uniqueness, even atypicality, in our collaborations as POC readers, as a way to push back against the ways that "in our interpellation in Victorian Studies . . . we may be rendered interchangeable or invisible, (or) made to feel like specimens or that we don't quite belong" (380).
12. Guillory, *Professing Criticism*, chap. 8. In his recent collection of essays on the history and direction of literary criticism, Guillory has problematized prioritizing students' readerly identification in structuring syllabi: "The language of pastoral care implicit in the notion that students should 'see themselves' in the curriculum echoes our students' own idiom of judgment, especially the notion that works of literature should be 'relatable'" (229). He argues for the value of defamiliarization of works from the past, saying: "We want our students to become engaged by what is other, including persons who are different from themselves, but more than that, we want them to become engaged by whole worlds of otherness and irreducible difference" (230). LitLabs deprioritizes identification in a different sense, to recognize and make visible the difference minoritized students bear in encountering canonical works.
13. See Price, *How to Do Things*, 20. "An investment in textual interpretation that runs as deep among intellectual historians as among literary critics," Price writes, "has distracted both from the wide range of non-textual and sometimes even noninterpretive (which doesn't mean noninterpretable) uses to which the book is put."
14. Cuff et. al., *Urban Humanities*, 21–24, 96–115.
15. Cuff et. al., *Urban Humanities*, 96–115; Kim, "Critical Cartography 2.0," 215.
16. Cuff et al., *Urban Humanities*, 22.
17. Kim, "Critical Cartography 2.0," 216.
18. Cuff et al., *Urban Humanities*, 96–115; Kim, "Critical Cartography 2.0," 215–25.
19. Hidalgo, "Augmented Fotonovelas," 300–314.
20. "LA COPPERFIELD." The completed fotonovelas were exhibited at the culminating production event at the students' campus and

were made available online as part of UCLA's Urban Humanities Initiative website.

21. Kim, "Critical Cartography 2.0," 215.
22. "The Workplace"; "Grind and Process." Both fotonovelas narrativized spaces of labor in Los Angeles called to mind by the Murdstone and Grimby episode in the novel.
23. "Cutting Corners." Inspired by the David's walk to Dover, this fotonovela reimaged the roadside encounter in vignettes based on corners adjacent to their residences.
24. Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 152. Harney and Moten write of "debt" as generative of alternate socialities: "There's a whole history of debt that is not that history of debt, which doesn't need to be forgiven, but needs to become activated as a principle of social life. It can become, and already is in many instances activated as something which, precisely as something that doesn't resolve itself into creditor and debtor, allows us to say, 'I don't really know where I start and where I end'" (154).
25. Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," 347–57.
26. Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," 353.

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