

Mapping Postcolonial Literature

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Research Method

Our research project seeks to explore and analyze the geographical locations mentioned in 50 postcolonial novels. Building a digital library using Hathi Trust, and piping that collection into the Hathi Trust's Data Analytics dashboard, we create this list by applying an algorithmic process called "named entity recognition" which scans a text and generates a list the computer guesses might be locations. We then assign coordinates to each location and map the results. Our hope is to generate a multi-layered list by which a user could explore the various locations referenced in postcolonial literature as a whole or by individual novel.

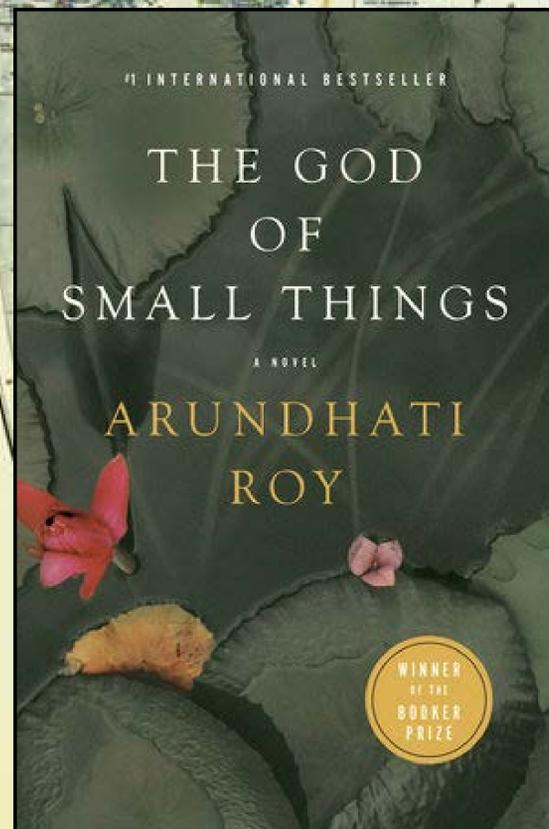
What is "postcolonialism"?

"The colonial world is a world cut in two" –Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

"Change is one thing. Acceptance is another." –Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

In the wake of the colonial system's final collapse, from 1953 to 1968, many writers and intellectuals from former colonies began to grapple with what it meant to be "postcolonial." For theorists, this transition from colonial subaltern to autonomous postcolonial provided a framework to critique the colonizer and the Empire, which had provided the resources and political justification for colonialism. Central to such theoretical engagements is the question of geography: the arbitrary borders that were established by colonial administrations; the relationship between land, identity, and ideology; and the legacies of barbarism and cruelty inscribed on the land itself.

For postcolonial novelists and poets, such questions infuse the literature written in the shadow of the Empire.



Research Abstract

Postcolonialism is a significant area of representation in literary texts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. An important central theme to postcolonial literature is nationhood and national identity, yet there are no substantial efforts to map geolocation data. This project curates a corpus of canonical postcolonial novels and generates a list of geospatial coordinates. The purpose of the study is to analyze this locational data and map it on to a GIS digital map to assist scholars and students interested in the locales, cities, and nations represented in this important area of literature.



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Next Steps

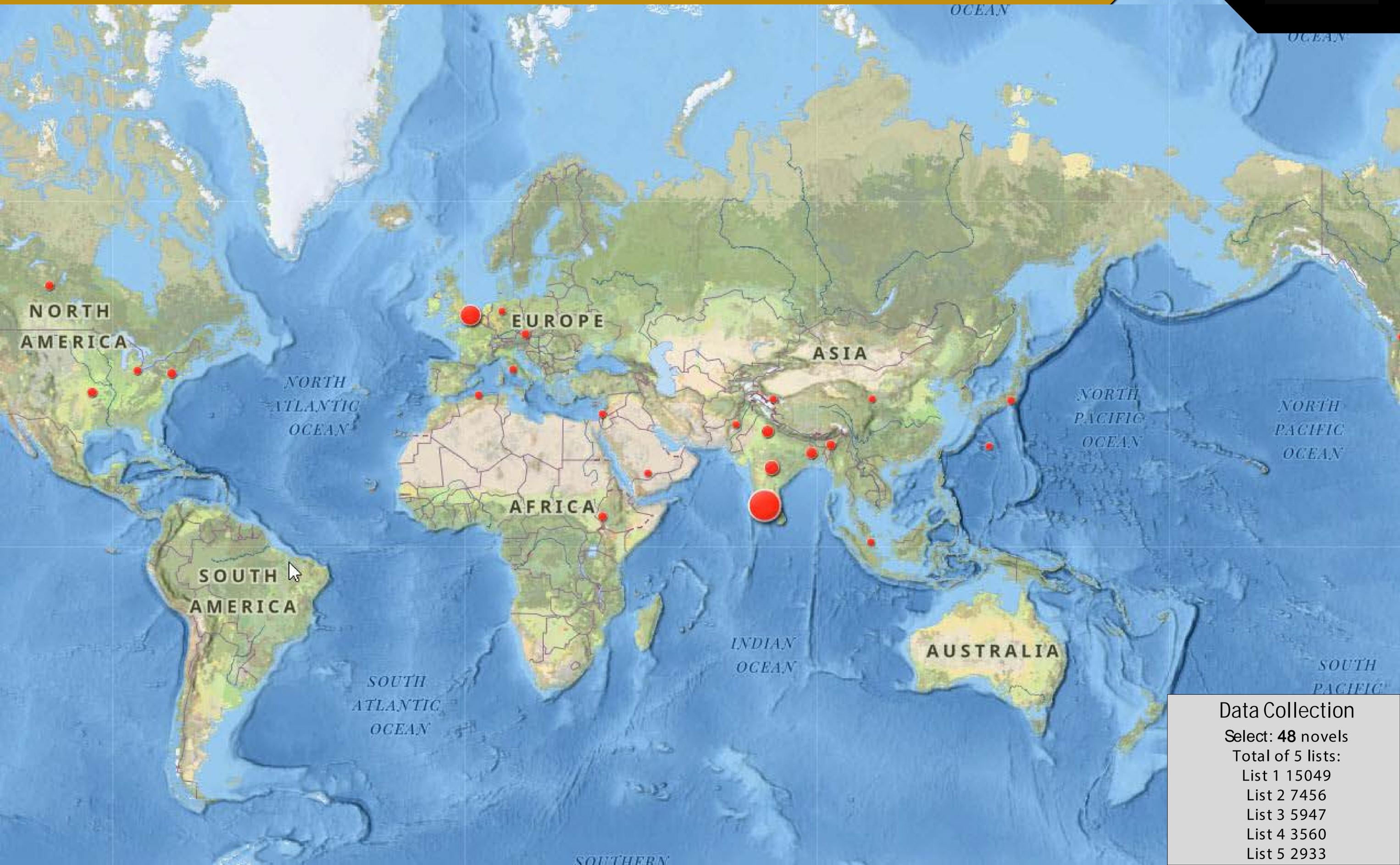
Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* is the prototype for this project. We have scraped named entities from over 50 postcolonial novels. Future efforts include cleaning that data (over 35,000 rows!), generating coordinates, and mapping the results in layers so users can look at all the locations at once or locations by novel.

Reference

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove P, 1963, 38.

Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* London: Harpers, 2004.

Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*



Data Collection

Select: 48 novels

Total of 5 lists:

List 1 15049

List 2 7456

List 3 5947

List 4 3560

List 5 2933