

# Mapping Empires, Mapping Bodies: Reflections on the Use and Abuse of Cartography

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## Resum

L'exercici del poder es pot mostrar en un ventall infinit de cares, en aquest article se'n presenten dues: el domini territorial i la possessió personal. Amb una sèrie d'exemples cartogràfics il·lustra abastament els usos i els abusos dels mapes al llarg de la història i en especial referència als de l'Imperi Britànic. La comparació entre aquests usos cartogràfics i el domini del propi cos ens planteja fins a quin punt la mateixa cartografia no esdevé una mena de pornografia en el procés de domini imperialista.

**Paraules Clau:** Cartografia, Imperialisme, Poder, Història de la cartografia.

## Resumen

El ejercicio del poder se puede mostrar en una infinidad de formas, en este artículo se destacan dos: el dominio territorial y la posesión personal. Con una serie de ejemplos cartográficos se ilustra ampliamente los usos y abusos que los mapas han tenido en el curso de la historia con especial énfasis en el imperialismo británico. La comparación entre estos usos cartográficos y aquellos sobre el domi-

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nio del propio cuerpo, nos hace plantearnos hasta que punto la cartografía no se convierte en una especie de pornografía en el proceso del dominio imperialista.

**Palabras Clave:** Cartografía, Imperialismo, Poder, Historia de la cartografía.

## Abstract

Power relations could be unfolded in countless ways; in this article two of them are analyzed: territorial domination and personal possession. Using a series of cartographic examples this article presents some of the uses and abuses that the maps have had in the course of history with special emphasis during the British Empire. The comparison between these cartographic examples and those on the dominion of the own body; make us wonder until which point cartography does not become a sort of pornography in the process of the imperialistic domination?

**Keywords:** Cartography, Imperialism, Power, History of Cartography.

The ongoing reconfiguration of the study of the nature and history of maps – stimulated in large part by *The History of Cartography* and its founding editors, Brian Harley and David Woodward – has taken scholars down many new and interesting avenues of scholarship. There have been three principal avenues. First, comparative studies of western and non-western cartographies, and of their many interactions, have demonstrated that the modern, empiricist faith in the factual and unproblematic map is a culturally determined position (Rundstrom 1991; Jacob 2006; Turnbull 1993). The result has been the dissolution of the hard-and-fast conceptual boundary that tradition has constructed around the graphic map, such that we can now identify maps inscribed in written texts, images, and tectonic structures, and incorporated within ceremonies, performances, and gestures (Woodward and Lewis 1998, 1-10). Second, studies of the social contexts within which maps have been produced and consumed have significantly broadened our appreciation of the functions that maps have served, over and beyond any supposed navigational function. In particular, maps and mapping technologies are increasingly understood as having played crucial roles in the constitution of modern states and empires, not only as instruments of knowledge through which to regulate and control spatial activities, but also as devices to constitute the state's territorial coherency. Even the most "scientific" of maps are revealed to be utterly *interested* conceptualizations of geographical space. The certainty of cartography's post-1650 scientific turn is thus readily revealed as so much wishful thinking (Harley 2001; Wood 1992). Third, students of literature and art – especially of Renaissance literature and culture – have undertaken readings of maps as cultural texts. This work has

demonstrated that maps are complex representations whose meanings are not solely spatial but also cultural and social in nature. Moreover, cartographic meaning does not lie latent in the map, waiting to be retrieved by a passive “map per-  
cipient,” but is created by the cognitively active *reader* functioning within specific discourses. In other words, the meanings of maps are not inherent to each image – they are not fixed and stable – but are instead read into the maps by their readers according to the conventions of the particular discourses within which the readers are situated; the meaning of any given map will thus vary between readers, over time, and between discourses (Pickles 1992, 2004).

My purpose in this essay is to travel along a secondary route that connects across these three main avenues, a secondary route along which scholars have yet to venture (with the prominent exception of Reitinger 1999; Lewes 2000a; Lewes 2000b). Specifically, I am interested in the intersection of maps and bodies, in the ways in which bodies have been mapped, or maps superimposed on bodies. These are rarely maps of the sort traditionally emphasized in cartographic studies; indeed, they would until recently have been placed into the categories of “map-like objects” or even of “non-maps,” if they were noticed at all. But, as we extend and expand our definitions of “map,” we have to deal with this intriguing map genre. We can, in fact, find many intersections within modern Western culture of maps and bodies, and especially of maps and female bodies. Many of these body-maps tend towards the pornographic, especially in the context of Europe’s mapping of its overseas empires. Indeed, interesting parallels can be drawn between pornography and cartography, especially in terms of the unequal and abusive deployment of power. It therefore seems potentially fruitful to work through some of those parallels. In doing so, we can identify one mechanism by which maps actually work as expressions of power, as devices to concentrate their readers’ emotions and establish a relationship between the reader and the territory. This in turn allows us to be more careful in understanding how maps can variously be both “useful” and “abusive,” and also to be more careful in delineating the differences between “imperial” and “state” mappings.

My argument has three sections. First, I review some of the history of maps and bodies in European history, and focus in particular on the implications of such body-maps in modern Western culture, after the eighteenth century. Second, I explore some of the parallels between cartography and pornography, especially considering the way in which readers can impose meanings and desires on territories through maps. Third, I continue to refine our understanding of how maps function within “imperial” discourses.

## Maps on Bodies / Bodies as Maps

The front page of the “style” section of the *New York Times* for 16 February 2006 featured a story about the black market in southern Florida for plastic surgery. The report was accompanied by a large image in which a dashed out-

line of the state of Florida, complete with a scalpel to emphasize the act of cutting along the dashed line, was superimposed on the bared stomach of a woman. Why should the designer, the artistic director, and section editor all have accepted that it is meaningful and appropriate to superimpose a map on a female body, such that the body can be treated and manipulated like a map? After all, they could have used any number of other images to elicit thoughts of Miami and South Beach in the newspaper's readers. The answer, of course, is the long-standing habit within modern, Western culture of conflating maps with female bodies. Another recent example of the latter occurs in Elton John and Tim Rice's 2001 revision of *Aïda*: the warrior Radames is uninterested in Princess Amneris, to whom he is betrothed, because he is in love with Aïda; frustrated and piqued, Amneris yells angrily at Radames:

There's a buck-naked princess lounging in her bed, calling your name. What exactly didn't you realize? Before our wedding night, ... have the royal cartographer draw you a map of the female body, Captain. Maybe then you'll be more inclined to explore. (John et al. 2001)

Such comments make explicit the equivalency drawn between land and bodies, such that they can be represented – and explored and perhaps controlled – in the same manner.

There is, of course, a long history in the European geographical tradition of representing territories as women (Lewes 2000b, 128-64). In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, Europe was repeatedly mapped as a woman, with various political and religious meanings (Harley and Zandvliet 1992). An eighteenth-century variant of the same idea entails a map of the Spanish empire (Vicente de Memije's *Aspecto Simbólico de Mundo Hispánico* [Manila, 1761]) over which the Virgin Mary is superimposed, with Iberia as her head and her feet resting on the Philippines (Padrón 2004, 232-34). In the nineteenth century, William Harvey made a series of cartographic caricatures of the states of Europe, depicting most as women (Harvey 1990). Parallels of the land to the female body abound in Western culture. They are rooted in the practice, which has been prevalent from ancient times, of representing Nature as feminine and to be made fertile by Man. The persistent and pervasive concept of feminine Nature has provided a fundamental framework by which Europeans have conceptualized and sold the environment since the early Renaissance.

Renaissance Europeans also appropriated, from Greek religious practices of dressing and adorning statuary, the idea of using female figures as allegories for a variety of ideas, concepts, and other abstractions such as regions. In doing so, Europeans overtly manipulated allegorical imagery to reify the masculine control of Nature. This was made explicit in the famous titlepage of Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum orbis terrarum* of 1570 (Figure 1), with its allegorical depiction of the five continents: Europe at top, Asia and Africa to either side,

**Figure 1**

Allegorical title page to Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Antwerp, 1570). By permission of the Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education, University of Southern Maine.

and in the stage itself – the scene of geographical action – America and Magellanica. Ortelius labeled the great southern continent of Magellanica as *terra australis nondum cognita*: southern land *not yet known*. Ortelius also thought that Tierra del Fuego was the northernmost promontory of this vast southern continent; he therefore had Magellanica depicted as a female bust, as the upper parts of a land whose contours were still to be sculpted by European geographers (Waterschoot 1979; Corbeiller 1961; Montrose 1991). The same sense of male agency and female passivity is evident in the equally famous image by Johannes van der Straet from 1575, of Amerigo Vespucci's putative landing in America in 1497. As Vespucci steps ashore, America gets off her hammock, where she has been sleeping. America's slumbers had been unaffected by the indigenous peoples, whose cannibalism (shown in the background) indicated an inability to use America effectively and appropriately. It is only cultured European Man who can awaken and properly cultivate otherwise fallow and latent America (e.g., Ambrosini 1980; Sawyer and Agrawal 2000). Both Ortelius's titlepage and Van der Straet's allegory speak to the ideologies that underpinned Europe's imperialistic expansion into the Americas and the rest of the world.

The connections drawn between land and the female body further extend into an early modern movement to map a form of pornographic writing.

The most famous example is probably Madame de Scudéry's *carte de tendre*, from her 1654 romance, *Clélie* (Peters 2004). Such allegories reconfigured regional maps into guides to access the hearts, or the bodies, of women. It is a small reach from such imagery to the formation late in the seventeenth century of what Franz Reitinger (1999) has called "geo-pornography" and Darby Lewes (2000a) "gynocartography." This genre of libertine writing featured gallant male explorers traveling allegorical lands, such as "Merryland," and also the feminized lands of the real world, into which they entered, in language that is readily understandable as sexual in its connotations (Lewes 200b, 102-27).

These examples are from the early modern period and relate to a broadly geographical, chorographical, or regional approach to allegory that continue into the present. The modern intersections of maps and bodies are, however, based on another foundation, specifically the more distinctively modern concern with the extensive mapping of territories. The equivalency of land and body developed in the eighteenth century as an integral element of the new ideal of territorial, topographical mapping. In his remarkable *New Philosophico-Chorographical Chart of East-Kent* of 1743 (discussed and reproduced in Campbell 1949; Charlesworth 1999), Christopher Packe delineated very precisely the geomorphology of the eastern half of Kent, tracing all the valleys, watersheds, and slopes. Packe was very concerned to demonstrate how his map was emphatically not like regular, geographical maps of the time, but was rather the product of perspective vision carried on over the all region (Packe 1737, 15; 1743, 3). At the same time, as a medical doctor, Packe sought to explain the principles of fluvial geomorphology by drawing on a bodily metaphor: the flow of water within a watershed, from the smallest rivulets all the way to the great reservoir of the sea, replicated the flow of blood from the smallest capillaries to the heart, before being returned to the body by the arteries. He made explicit the equivalency of landscape and body in a manuscript map of the valley of the River Stour, in which he depicted the watershed as a male body (Tuan 1968, 29-31). While a few commentators have sporadically related landscape to the male body – as in a recent passage in a mystery novel: "The young man on reception at the sports complex as a walking piece of physical geography, his biceps and triceps swelling like the Cotswolds and his tight-fitting gold singlet displaying a finely detailed relief map of his pectorals" (Hill 2004, 412) – the relationship is normally construed through the lens of the feminine nature and the bodies presumed to be female bodies.

I must stress that this is a particularly *modern* aspect of cartography. The understanding that the techniques of topographical mapping might be used to represent both landscapes and bodies develops in the eighteenth century and becomes entrenched after 1800. In this respect, the position that Packe advocated for his topographical mapping of Kent, as being from a view from everywhere, has since 1800 been inappropriately applied to all maps generally, regardless of scale and content.



## Maps / Bodies; Cartography / Pornography

Christopher Packe's reference to the perspective point of view as the source of his depiction of East Kent's topography – as the reason why his depiction was truthful and accurate and valid – takes us to the second theme of this essay. The conceptualization of nature as feminine, to be seen and represented by men, to be dominated and made fertile by male action, can entail constructions of inequality and impositions of desire that are pornographic in character. This is evident from any number of mappings. While there is one well-known image that uses the representational strategies of the modern topographic map to represent the sex act itself (Holmes 1991, 186), body-mappings are generally not explicit and tend instead to the suggestive.

Consider, for example, two maps in the special 2003 “swimsuit issue” of the popular U.S. monthly magazine *Sports Illustrated*, which displayed a variety of models dressed in skimpy swim suits located in exotic locations and staged in poses that are designed to entice and titillate the male of the species. The first of the two maps in the 2003 issue supposedly located the sites in which the photo shoots took place. However, none of the sites of the seven photo shoots it highlights are located with any attempt at geographical veracity: Turkey and Colorado are not in the Arctic; Vietnam is not in the Persian Gulf; and so on. The map is more of a declaration that the models were photographed in locations “all around the world.” Indeed, this first map's fundamental purpose would seem only to have been to set up the map on the following page, a fold-out of the famous model Rachel Hunter wearing a map swimsuit. It is clear from a caption on the swimsuit map that the two maps are intended to be compared:

The map on the previous page was for latitude and longitude. This one's for the soul. The map painted on Rachel Hunter may not be as accurate as the [geographical positioning system] in your new [sports utility vehicle]; in fact, it will definitely lead you astray. (Anonymous Winter 2003, 57)

It does not take much to see that the magazine's editors expected this vision of geography to elicit a sense of entrancement and distraction in the presumably male viewer. When this image “leads you astray,” it does not lead you astray from the curved meridians and parallels of the geographical map but from the straight-and-true of appropriate moral behavior. The image's community of designers – photographers, artists, writers, and editors – consciously worked within an established discourse of male delight at the female body.

Central to such imagery is the expectation that its readers will be male. The same expectation has pervaded cartography in modern times, that the people who make maps – who assert authority over the land – and those who read maps are all male. A case in point is provided by a small pamphlet by the U.S. National Geographic Society that highlighted the contributions made by the

society's maps to the Allied victory in the Second World War (Chamberlin 1947). It includes many staged photographs of people engaged in map making and map reading, in which men and boys actively engage with maps while women and girls look on. Only two of the photographs featured women in active roles (Chamberlin 1947, 24 and 40). The first depicted the intellectually insignificant activity of "girls" slipping separately printed map supplements into thousands of copies of the magazine. The other is more revealing: an American woman interprets an Inuit map, reconciling it with a modern topographic map, effectively mediating between the modern, masculine world of science and the natural, feminized world of the indigene; in this the woman is granted an intermediate position, part of the modern world and so able to engage with the products of science, yet inherently attuned to nature and to the "natural mind." This point is important: many women have indeed used, and even made, maps for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but the discourses of modern cartography remain resolutely masculine.

It was in this respect that Naftali Kadmon could propose, and the editors of *Cartographica* could agree in 1977 to publish, an argument that to make cartography more appealing to students – i.e., to *male* students – instructors should use the female body rather than the actual land as the object of their exercises (Kadmon 1977). Indeed, there have also been some instructional videos on contouring, for use in U.S. colleges and universities, that map women rather than land.<sup>2</sup>

Modern authors can thus readily imagine and depict the easy transference of desires for bodies into desires for land, and vice versa. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, J. M. Coetzee told the story of a magistrate on the frontier of "the Empire" in what is effectively an extended reflection upon knowledge, truth, vision, sexuality, bodily power, and territorial power. At one point, the magistrate reflects on growing older and the shift in his desire for power over women to a more intellectual power: "I found that I needed women less frequently; I spent more time on my work, my hobbies, my antiquarianism, my cartography" (Coetzee 1982, 45). Conversely, the Belgians François Schuiten and Benoît Peeters have created a two-part graphic fantasy – *Cities of the Fantastic* – about a young cartographer who becomes disillusioned with the failings of the digital mapping technologies employed by corrupt politicians; he becomes increasingly obsessed with birthmarks on the body of his mistress, taking them for the *real* and *true* map of the territory. His desire to map the world becomes a desire to control his mistress's body, and he takes her out into the field in a futile attempt to demonstrate the failings of the computers (Schuiten and Peeters 2002; refer Fall 2006).

2. This last comment is based on anecdotal evidence and on the observation of indirect results. For example, when I was interviewing for an academic position, the chair's teaching assistant burst into the office and threw the offending tape on the chair's desk, having brought the class to an abrupt close; neither the chair nor the assistant had previewed the tape.



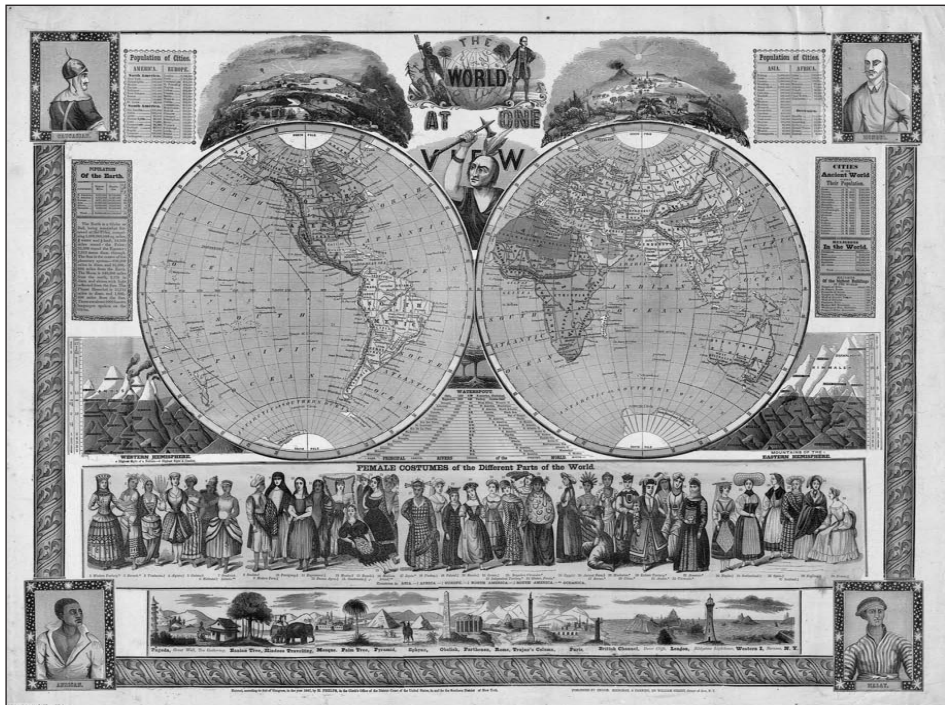
The components of modern cartography that lend themselves to a domineering relationship towards women derive from the basic elements of the modern cartographic ideal that scholars have both celebrated and derided. Consider two graphic montages. The first is the current cover design of *Cartographica*, the official journal of the Canadian Cartographic Society. This design features: an antique near-profile view of a town, a modern computer-generated shaded relief map, the graticule of the globe on an orthographic projection being cupped by a large and prominent hand, all cut through with a slice of a satellite image over which is placed a single disembodied eye. The design highlights the role of empowered vision to see and map – and even to touch and caress – the world. It also emphasizes the reduction of the world to specific objects. (In passing, we should also note the other aspects of the cartographic ideal: specifically, its claim to timelessness and its foundation in a mathematical framework.) Compare this with the Joanne Sharp's artwork, commissioned for the introduction to Jim Duncan and Samuel Ley's *Place / Culture / Representation* (1993). Here, a perspectival grid is surrounded by a trees and buildings (old and new) and overseen by the pupil-less eye from a statue. Sharpe designed this montage specifically to expose the modern cartographic ideal. As the quotation from the introduction notes: "The drawing by Joanne Sharp ... parodies and calls into question a traditional form of geographical representation, the map. ... [T]he drawing expose[s] the concealed values behind the map ..." (Duncan and Ley 1993, 1). Significantly, Sharpe's image highlights exactly the same attributes as the *Cartographica* cover design: empowered and disembodied vision (now made explicitly godlike as a portion of a statue) and the reduction of the world to objects – together with timelessness and mathematical frameworks.

There therefore seems to be, embedded within modern cartography's system of "scientific objectivity," aspects that connect directly with the accepted characteristics of pornography. For reasons I will discuss soon, there are no clear definitions of "pornography." But there is a general agreement that in addition to the explicit or suggested depiction of the sex act, pornography entails the construction of an unequal relationship between the viewer and the viewed through three mechanisms: the subjection of bodies to a domineering vision, both in creating and viewing pornographic materials; the objectification of the individual by reducing them to certain physical parts that are then taken to define the entire individual; and, the imposition of the viewer's desire onto the viewed body. All three aspects are integral parts of the modern cartographic ideal.<sup>3</sup>

We can indeed draw parallels between pornography and cartography – and especially imperial cartography – in terms of the objectification of "other" landscapes and cultures and their subjugation to an empowered imperial vision.

3. I have been especially helped by the studies by Allen (2001), Cottle *et al* (1989), Hunt (1993), and especially Sigel (2002).

Figure 2



*The World at One View* (New York: Ensign, Bridgman, & Fanning, 1852). This map was originally published by H. Phelps in 1847. Courtesy of David Rumsey and Cartographic Associates.

The Napoleonic expedition to Egypt, for example, tended to reduce Egypt to its historical antiquities, for consumption by Orientalists in Paris and the other capitals of Europe. The frontispiece to the 22-volume *Description de l'Égypte* featured a composite of the major antiquity sites of the Nile Valley, an image that was devoid of modern life and economy. This practice extended to the maps within the *Description*, such as this of Thebes, in which the modern town was reduced to amorphous lumps while its antiquities were picked out in precise detail. The practice even extended to the general, topographical mapping of the Nile Valley. In compiling the sheets of the topographic map series, the cartographers in Paris developed a series of sheetlines whose origin was the Great Pyramid at Giza. The pyramid defined the junction of four sheets. Even as the French converted the complexity and organic nature of the Egyptian landscape to rigid square sheetlines defined by European paper sizes, those sheetlines were themselves oriented to the greatest monuments of Egyptian antiquity (Godlewska 1988, 1995; Prochaska 1994).

We can see a similar antiquarian impulse at work in a world map published in New York in 1852 (Figure 2). In this particular example, a row of spatially

reconfigured architectural vignettes, reading from left to right (actually against the map's geography), presents a particularly U.S. view of the "Westward Course of Empire" and "manifest destiny," from China through India, Egypt, and Rome to the Atlantic World to New York. This vision of the United States of America as the next great world empire was further bolstered by the long-standing habit of Western culture of objectifying and categorizing the peoples of the world. In this case, the four main races of the world are depicted – together with a skulking Indian, a long-standing trope in U.S. culture – each reduced to a *type*, to a set of physical features; at the same time the map presents an array of women from around the world, defining and objectifying them not so much by their physical features but by their dress. The inequality of women is inherent in this image: men are represented by the racial types, but women are subjected to further analysis, examination, and categorization. Through such maps, it has been argued, people in the West have developed the self-conscious sense of superiority over other peoples that has underpinned western imperialism and expansion.

## Maps, Desire, and the Workings of Power

Since the study of cartography was opened up to critical approaches in the 1980s, several scholars have suggested that *all* maps are in some way pornographic, in that they entail domination, objectification, subjugation, difference, and so – ultimately – constructions of inequality. Thus, Brian Harley concluded his pioneering essay, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power," with comments that:

The way in which maps have become part of a wider political sign-system has been largely directed by their associations with elite or powerful groups and individuals and this has promoted an uneven dialogue through maps. The ideological arrows have tended to fly largely in one direction, from the powerful to the weaker in society... The social history of maps, unlike that of literature, art, or music, appears to have few genuinely popular, alternative, or subversive modes of expression. Maps are preeminently a language of power, not of protest. (Harley 1988, 300-3)

While Harley's argument owed a great deal to his own intellectual trajectory, it accorded well with a wider mistrust common in the 1980s of the political and cultural effects of print and imagery. Marshall McLuhan's (1962) arguments about the effect of "print culture" had been expanded by the 1980s – by Walter Ong (1982), Elisabeth Eisenstein (1979), and others – into a general argument that print technology has determined modern European culture and belief. At the same time, feminist scholars such as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon were presenting persuasive arguments that pornog-

raphy *causes* violence by men against women (e.g., Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988; MacKinnon 1987). From such points of view, it does not take much to suggest that maps are necessarily iniquitous. Some scholars, such as Mark Neocleous (2003) in his recent discussion of the inherent “violence of cartography” or Duncan and Ley (1993), made their opinion quite explicit. More often, the principle that dominant powers, especially political institutions, shape maps and so their readers is implicit in common statements that “all maps are propaganda maps,” or that “all maps are mental maps” representing the personal agendas of their makers.

I have many problems with this viewpoint, not least because it is historically inadequate. In terms of the history of the book, several historians have demonstrated that printing is subject to and not independent of cultural concerns; the new histories of the book are focused more on the study of written materials as material culture, seek to delineate how printed materials have circulated geographically and socially, with the goal of understanding how they were read (esp. Chartier 1994; Darnton 1982; Hall 1996; Johns 1998; McKenzie 1999). Recent historians of pornography – and I think especially of Lynn Hunt (1993) and Lisa Sigel (2002) – have adopted the lessons of this new book history to demonstrate that there is nothing intrinsic to images or texts that is “pornographic”; rather, “pornography” lies in the eye of the beholder and is subject to all sorts of social, circumstantial qualifications. For feminist historians, the task is to avoid the “flattened” and “monolithic history” created by feminist lawyers and activists by examining the patterns of circulation and reading of pornographic *materials* (Sigel 2002, 61). After all, if one goal of cultural historians is to understand how pornography has affected human behavior in the past, the first thing that has to be done is to determine *who* had access to pornographic materials and how those people consumed them.

In the same way, we need to be clear that the view of cartography as being ineluctably violent and pornographic rests upon a persistent misunderstanding of Michel Foucault’s delineation of juridical power and power/knowledge, and more generally of the phenomenon of discourse (handy introductions are Mills 2003, 2004). First there is not one enterprise called “cartography” but many cartographic modes. Each mode is a component of more general discourses that seek to understand the world’s spatial complexity in specific ways. Maps of real property, for example, are quite different from maps of territory even when produced in the same political contexts. Prepared with different surveying technologies, constructed on different mathematical models for the earth’s surface, and used by markedly different components of society in quite different ways, property and territorial maps construct quite different spatial conceptions (Edney 1993, 2007b). Within each mode, maps interact with a complex of other representational strategies. Sea charts, for example, mix with harbor plans, headland profiles, and written sailing directions within a large corpus of materials used by the mariner. In such situations, the boundary between “proper” maps and other representations breaks down, and we are

forced to appreciate that written, verbal, gestural, and performative representations can all be meaningfully treated as “maps.”

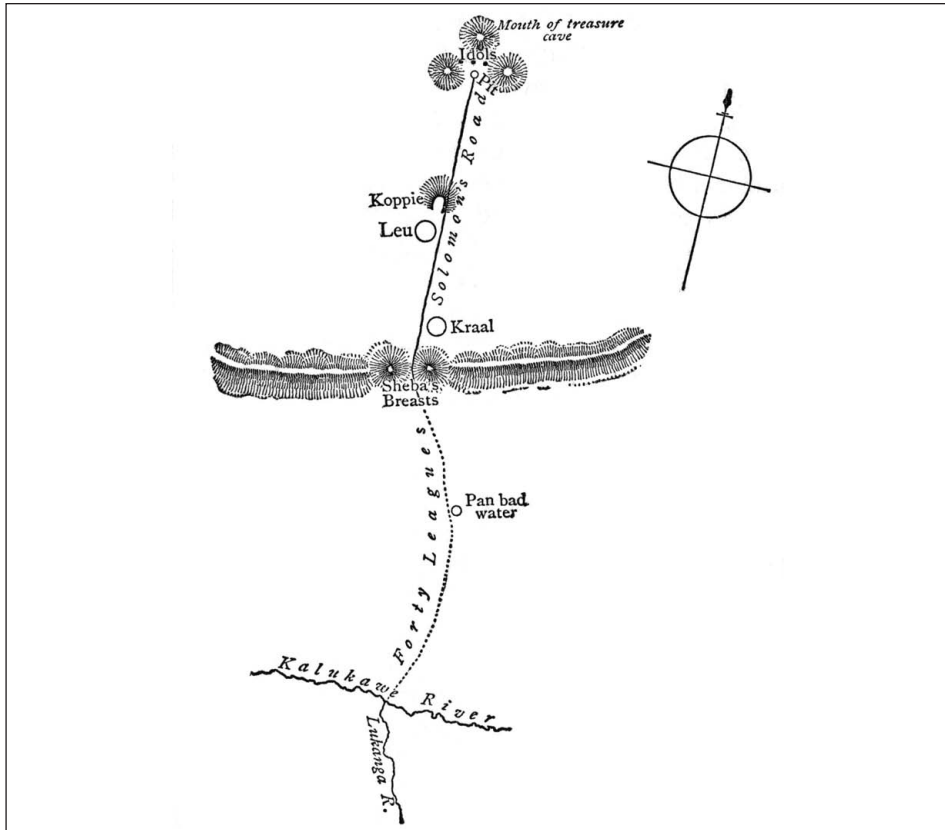
Expanding our understanding of maps requires us to recognize – in line with the arguments by historians of pornography and literature – that what is a map is not defined by the maker but by the user, and by the context of use. “Mapness” is not inherent to an image, but is determined by the reader. More generally, the meaning of a map is established by the reader. As with reading and pornography, in thinking about how maps “work” and how they have affected human actions and thought, we need to consider the ways in which they have been read, in which people have approached them. In this respect, we need to return to the third aspect of pornography, the aspect which is not readily apparent in the ideological definition – or derision – of modern cartography. Underpinning the objectification and violence of pornography is the imposition of desire by the male reader onto the female body through the image, regardless of the wishes and intentions of the women depicted. This gives us a clue as to *one* mechanism for the working of cartography and for understanding where there remains the possibility for abuse within specific cartographic discourses. Moreover, it gives us another handle for understanding the character and nature of “imperial maps.”

Anne McClintock (1995, 1-4) has identified the paradigm for the imposition of imperial desire, for the intimate cartographic connection of land and female bodies, in the map included in H. Rider Haggard’s wildly successful 1886 grand fantasy of imperial adventure, *King Solomon’s Mines*. The story’s tropes are familiar. A Portuguese country trader has gone native and has accordingly been able to access the secrets of the route to the fabled gold and diamond mines; in dying, he bequeaths the map to the English man who gave him succor (Haggard 1886, 30-31). Able to use the map in place of native knowledge, the Englishman then leads a party through the cruelest hardships offered by Nature in order to lay claim to and exploit the mines. A surrogate for Europe’s late-nineteenth century desire to control Africa and its wealth, the novel includes a reproduction of the Portuguese trader’s map (Figure 3) with the route taking a mountain pass between “Sheba’s Breasts,” past an oasis, to the “Mouth of the Treasure Cave.” If those references were not obviously sexualized, one can – as McClintock and others have noted (e.g. Bialas 1997, 126-38) – turn the map upside down, to be faced with an objectified image of the sexual parts of a woman. The overtly sexualized equivalency drawn between the land and the female body permits the male reader to infuse the territory with desire, desire for control of the land, desire for its “treasures.” The acts of crossing the terrain, of penetrating the interior, as the common phrase has it, and of claiming the treasure becomes, in the novel, a sexual act.

The covers of two U.S. pulp fiction magazines from the 1930s and 1940s make an interesting juxtaposition. Note that the stories in these magazines do not refer to maps, and certainly not to an episode in which the dress is ripped off the back of a woman. The maps on these covers are thus stereotypical images,



Figure 3



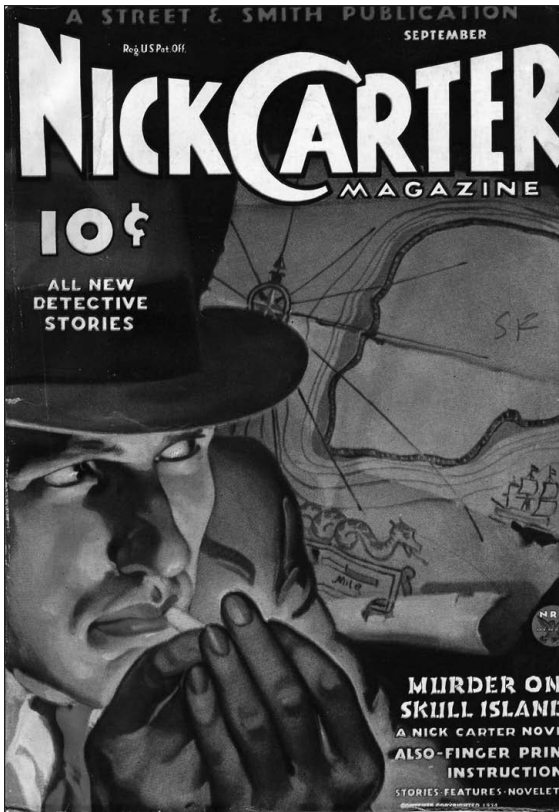
“Sketch Map of the Route to King Solomon’s Mines,” in H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon’s Mines* (London: Cassell, 1886), 30.

the products of fevered imaginations that reveal aspects of modern cartographic ideology. The September 1934 issue of *Nick Carter Magazine* features a map that bears all the hallmarks of a “treasure map” of the sort supposedly left by pirates: it looks antiquated and bears icons of the age of sail (Figure 4). Such maps stem from Robert Louis Stevenson’s imagination of such a map in *Treasure Island* (1883) and bear the same cultural baggage as Haggard’s map of the route to King Solomon’s mines. The empty space becomes a vessel which the viewer – in this case Nick Carter, Private Detective – can fill with desire for gold, wealth, and knowledge.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the island depicted in the map has the outline of a skull, and suggests how the viewer can imbue the map with a fear of danger and death, especially given how blank and unknown the island

4. See EDNEY (2008) for more on white-space, drawing on the concept of “negative space” developed by Bleach (2000).



Figure 4



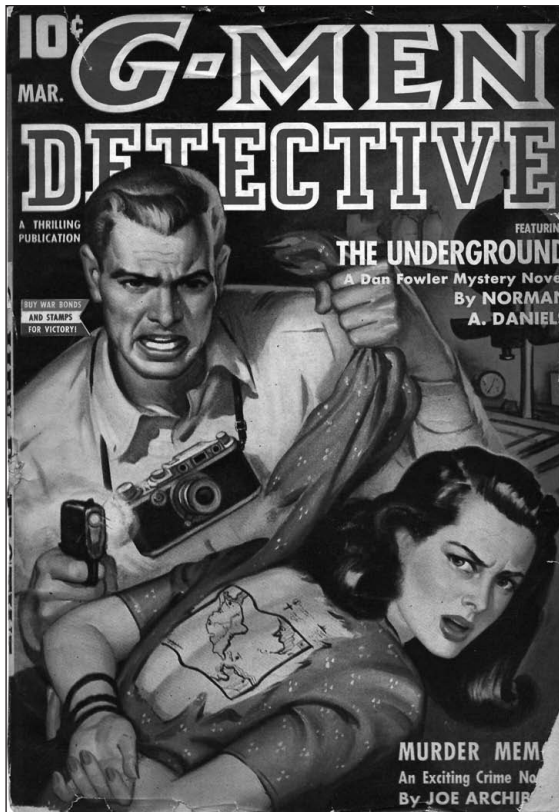
Cover of *Nick Carter Magazine* (September 1934). Courtesy of John Taylor Galleries, Madison, Wis.

is. This image accordingly suggests that maps can function as a medium by which to invest land with certain characteristics – in this case, as the repository of wealth and danger, to be desired and feared – that have no necessary relationship with the nature of the land itself.

The March 1943 issue of *G-Men Detective* is concerned almost exclusively with the work of federal agents against German spies and collaborators within the U.S. during World War II. Here, a general social anxiety about control over strategic knowledge – as also expressed in many other images – is expressed on the cover image in terms of control over the woman (Figure 5). The map imprinted on the woman's back is clearly supposed to convey military information, as indicated by its legend. At the same time, the federal agent is firing his revolver, presumably at an enemy agent: once again, the image encodes a fear of death and defeat.

Both images suggest that *one* mechanism whereby maps function is that they serve as focal points for their reader's desires and fears, permitting their readers to give meaning to the territories that have no necessary basis in fact. Should the map's readers have the power to act – whether economic, social,

Figure 5



Cover of *G-Men Detective* (March 1943). Courtesy of John Taylor Galleries, Madison, Wis.

military, or institutional – then they might be in a position to physically impose that meaning onto the territory itself, to prospect for gold, to survey the emptiness, and so on. This is exactly the point of these two caricatures: the danger of maps – and globes – is that they can be read to support a vision that, in the wrong hands, can be readily implemented to the detriment of many. But this is not to say that the reading of emotion and desire into a map is always negative. Brian Harley, for example, had lived in Newton Abbot, in Devon, for seventeen years when he moved to Milwaukee in 1986. In his new house on the far side of the Atlantic, he hung a framed copy of the early twentieth-century Ordnance Survey map of the town, done at a scale of about 1:10,000, and he subsequently very movingly about the map as a trigger for his personal memories, for his wife and son who had died, and for the daughters he had left behind in Great Britain (Harley 1987). In this particular context, the map was not read to impose desire upon a landscape but rather to fashion a sense of Self; the emotion of the reading was not outward, through the map to the territory, but inward, through the map to the self.

Similarly, David Woodward wrote about his examination of Bradford Washburn's "Reconnaissance Topographic Map" of the Mount McKinley area in Alaska, in the context of the death of his student, Josh Hane, while ice-climbing:

It is now not the photographs of Josh that give me comfort when thinking of his death, but the map. It allows me to revisit the exact site and to think about what happened and why. By its very detachment, it triggers memories in a far more poignant way than many other forms of representation. (Woodward 2001, 65)

We can also find instances in literature – and in private letters too (e.g., Richards 2004) – in which people have sought to connect to a loved-one through the medium of the map. Early in the eighteenth-century, for example, one poet imagined a lady writing to a gentleman exiled in France with James Stuart the "Old Pretender." Having started to pay attention to Europe's religious politics, the lady had begun to use maps to understand the reports in the newspapers:

Then o'er the Map my Finger, taught to stray,  
Cross many a Region marks the winding Way;  
From Sea to Sea, from Realm to Realm I rove,  
And grow a mere Geographer by Love.  
But still *Avignon*, and the pleasing Coast  
That holds Thee banish'd, claims my Care the most;  
Oft on the well-known Spot I fix my Eyes,  
And Span the Distance that between us lies. (Tickell 1717, 2-3)

We can therefore conclude that map readers can construct meanings in one of two ways: inwards and personal, outwards and territorial. This does not have to be an either/or phenomenon: there is nothing to stop a reader, given the context, from doing both at once. And here we can see the power of "imperial maps" in the construction of both an imperial Other and an imperial Self. As deployed within imperial discourses, topographical maps are read as construing alien lands and their peoples to be effeminate; the persistent equation of landscape and the female body supports and perpetuates such constructions. At the same time, participants in imperial discourses understand that they and they alone are able to read the maps, and that they and they alone have the ability to act with respect to those lands. The result is the reinforcement of the imperial Self as powerful, masculine, and properly dominant.

This understanding is rooted in the realization that what characterizes imperial maps is their deployment within exclusionary discourses: imperial maps are maps of distant places that are *not* read by people from those places. They

might very easily feature information drawn from those people, but they are not read by them. In the case of the *Carte topographique de l'Égypte*, for example, the entire atlas was produced as part of the 22-volume *Description de l'Égypte*; this work, published in the 1820s and 1830s in Paris, served as a device for Parisians and other Frenchmen to impose their antiquarian wishes and desires on Egypt regardless of the wishes and desires of the Egyptians themselves. It is also appropriate to remember in this respect that the maps of British India circulated strictly amongst the British, in Britain as well as in India itself (Edney 2008).

## Conclusion

What therefore underpins the modern imperial map, and the modern idea of empire itself, is the concept that landscape and bodies, especially female bodies, are equivalent and can be represented and treated in similar ways. I stress that this is a modern ideology, one which develops only with the development in the eighteenth century of the detailed topographical mapping of extensive regions, and which becomes well-established only in the nineteenth century when the topographical map supplants the regional, geographical map as the prototypical form of cartographic representation.

I must also stress that this is not a universal phenomenon. Just as historians have demonstrated that we should not reduce all vision to a monolithic gaze, and all representations of female bodies to a monolithic pornography, so too should we not presume that all maps foster power and cause violence against people and territories. At least in terms of what readers bring to bear on maps, and of their instrumental and intellectual uses for maps, there is a wide possibility of emotional responses to looking at maps and, through those maps, conceptualizing territories. We have experience of a wide range of occasions in which maps are simply useful, but when the conditions of discourse are just so, then these emotional responses develop into desires and fears that are imposed on territories in an abusive manner. Herein lies the modern power of maps, and their capacity for use and abuse.

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