

## Review

Norman Etherington (ed) (2007) *Mapping Colonial Conquest: Australia and Southern Africa*. Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Press.

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*Mapping Colonial Conquest* is a visually stunning book. Given the subject matter, this is not only desirable, but necessary. As Norman Etherington points out in his 'Introduction', this project has been made possible by the new digital technologies of knowledge production, which have made the maps, illustrations and works of art that are the central concern of this book available online for research, dissemination, reproduction and publication. *Mapping Colonial Conquest* overcomes one of the most common flaws of an edited collection: it is much more than a series of discrete chapters on a common theme tied together by the editor's introduction. Instead, the book represents a successful interdisciplinary collaboration of scholars resulting in an intellectually coherent and engaging comparison that expounds 'the new history of cartography' analysing the discourse, meaning and context of knowledge production represented visually in maps and artistic landscapes. The case studies, South Africa and Australia, have parallel histories of exploration, colonial conquest, settlement and nation building that make comparisons of hydrography, cartography, land surveying, fantasy and historical mapping, and urban planning not mere juxtapositions but analytically novel arguments that raise thought-provoking questions about both their respective histories. The introduction and two of the eight chapters are written by Etherington, who also co-authors another chapter with Lindy Stiebel. The book therefore breaks with another usual convention for an edited collection. Etherington's extensive scholarship on mapping is in dialogue with the other six authors throughout the book rather than being

confined to the editor's 'Introduction'.

Mapping is a cultural act, creating a form of power-knowledge that explains the world in a visual representation of the environment. Part of the dynamic of European exploration and colonisation was the appropriation of indigenous knowledge in the creation of maps that were then both used and erased in order to undermine indigenous claims to their land and resources and to foster colonial settlement. The cartographic art of Aboriginal people was conceptually entirely different from European conventions of mapping, yet both were concerned with identifying water sources in the land. As Vivian Louis Forbes and Marion Hercocock explain, European exploration was at first more concerned with mapping water and shorelines rather than interior landscapes. European imperialism would have been impossible without the development of the maritime sciences and charting the seas was a crucial prior step to territorial occupation. Nevertheless, as Forbes and Hercocock show, the circulation of the latest hydrographic charts even within the British Navy was not systematised until the mid-nineteenth century, resulting in the continued loss of ships wrecked or sunk due to inaccurate maps. Connections between the Admiralty Hydrographic Office and learned scientific societies like the Royal Geographical Society generated knowledge through personal connections and shared membership that eventually enabled the scope of marine surveys to expand beyond the surface of the water and coastlines into oceanography.

Stiebel and Etherington point out that not all modern mapping projects were scientific in nature. Fantasy maps, as part of literature, played an important role in fueling the imagination of reading publics about foreign lands that were being penetrated by European explorers and colonisers. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) has been a long time favourite of scholars in this genre for its overt feminisation and eroticisation of Africa as a 'bodyscape' written to titillate (pun intended) Victorian readers and fill in their imagination of the 'Dark Continent'. But not all fantasy maps were designed as accompaniments for adventure stories written to stimulate the imagination of school boys. Mapping the 'lost continent' of Lemuria by the members of the Theosophist movement was intended to expound their theories of racial degeneration in which the Australian Aborigines were considered one of the last of a dying breed of inferior races. Fantasy maps show that 'Social Darwinism was only one source of late-Victorian racism, and that racism need not be scientific to be intellectually influential' (62). George Stow's historical map of African migrations was concocted to prove

that only the San or 'Bushman' were ancient dwellers on the land, and that subsequent migrations by other Africans, particularly Bantu speakers, were far more recent and in some cases contemporary with European arrivals on the continent. Stow's intention was to valorise the San in the face of their domination by 'stronger races' and his powerful use of color in creating his map graphically illustrated this over-running, providing the visual basis for the now debunked theory of Zulu conquests and migration waves that came to be known as the *mfecane* which in turn was used under apartheid to justify white land claims.

Janda Gooding's chapter on the 2.5 metre full color acquatint of a *Panoramic View of King George's Sound* by surveyor and explorer Robert Dale, published in 1834, shows how art and mapping was used in the service of advertising to attract settlers to the new colony that became Western Australia. Dale stressed in his panorama the harmonious relations between indigenous people and settlers, while simultaneously depicting a violent encounter resulting in the murder and beheading of the Nyungar leader Yagan which was ordered by the British in retaliation for indigenous resistance against settlers.

In a chapter entitled 'Putting tribes on maps' Etherington poses the question of 'How for nearly three centuries tribal names proliferate on maps of South Africa while the Aboriginal people of Australia were ignored by cartographers who continued to render the interior of the continent as empty of indigenous groups' (79). The complex answer involves how 'mapping tribes' served to fix ethnic identities in South Africa that eventually supported white land claims and underpinned the logic of separate development and the creation of 'Bantustans' during the apartheid era. In Australia earlier depictions of an 'empty land' were replaced by mapping Aboriginal linguistic groups which have in turn led to the unintended consequence of these maps being used to support indigenous land claims that reject the notion of Australia as *terra nullius*. Jane Carruthers shows through the career of a single bureaucrat in the South African Transvaal how land surveying and the creation of maps were crucial in the simultaneous processes of class formation based on land ownership and the dispossession of indigenous Africans.

Urban planning created symbolic landscapes that embodied nation building in both South Africa and Australia through the construction of 'capital cities' in the early twentieth century. Christopher Vernon's examination of Pretoria and Canberra shows how architects designed

buildings that complemented indigenous landscapes in a way that symbolised the representation of nationhood. Pretoria as the administrative capital of the Union of South Africa was partly redesigned by the British architect Herbert Baker, whose 'Union Buildings', constructed on a hill overlooking the city, were designed in a classicist style that highlighted imperial control over both people and the natural environment. Political wrangling over what city should be the capital of the newly federated Commonwealth of Australia resulted in the construction of an entirely new city, Canberra, one of the first modern planned cities in the world, designed by American architects Walter Burley and Marion Mahony Griffin. But cities are not static designs and this chapter shows how the symbolism of these capital cities has been altered along with the political landscape in both South Africa and Australia. This is a theme taken up by Stiebel in the final chapter of the book, entitled 'Unmapping Conquest'. She traces exhibitions that symbolically remap Africa in the post-apartheid era, both in terms of an African renaissance and in global historical perspectives of Africa that displace European cartography from the centre of concepts of mapping the continent. She concludes by posing 'whether a similar project to decolonise and remake the map of Australia might be feasible' (188).

*Mapping Colonial Conquest* succeeds in its endeavour to 'unmake the colonial map' by revealing the power dynamics behind its production, and comparing how these versions of reality were constructed in South Africa and Australia. The book raises questions and issues that are applicable to other contexts and deserves a readership outside the fields of South African and Australian studies.