

In concluding, Adams seeks to finally shake off what he sees as the 'vague' and 'biased' connotations of the focus on a cultural turn in geography. To this end he encourages geographers to see the ways his argument might allow them to 'have it both ways', avoiding the tendency to 'critiqu[e] representations of the world and give up on understanding the world itself' while simultaneously preventing them from 'dismiss[ing] such critiques as tendentious and continue to represent the world as accurately as possible' (p. 217). In demonstrating the affordances achieved through a recognition of 'the duality of container and contained when dealing with communication' (p. 217) his hope is that geographical knowledges might yet account both for 'actually existing phenomena, really out there in the world, and the tropes used to describe the world' (p. 215).

This book may present a conundrum for the reader, leaving them feeling a little unclear by the end if they have been guided through the careful marking of waypoints for an embryonic sub-discipline, as they were initially encouraged to believe, or facing something altogether more ambitious. Yet in this, Adams follows the tone set by Don Mitchell's *Cultural Geography: a Critical Introduction* (2000), which famously argued there was 'no such thing as culture' in the first book from the series. Indeed, Wiley-Blackwell's Critical Introductions is somewhat deceptively pitched as a collection of 'textbooks for undergraduate courses', as each title has served equally as a platform for the radical reframing of recent geographical scholarship. As such, Adams makes a stimulating contribution to a maturing collection shaped by accomplished scholars in the field – one that is to include Tim Cresswell's much anticipated *Geographical Thought* in 2013 – but nonetheless one that must be taken as the sophisticated polemic it really is.

Yet unlike Mitchell's book, which attracted heated debate even before its publication, *Geographies of Media and Communication* remains defined by Adams own observations that 'few if any of the authors cited here would call themselves communication geographers' (p. 3), and that 'despite the dominance of communication in all elements of the "cultural turn" the concept remains rather diffuse in geography'

(p. 11). However, while this suggests that Adams' has failed to make an impact on the discipline in quite the way he hoped, this key difference is perhaps also the greatest strength of this present work. Whereas Mitchell has perhaps divided opinion – doing what a former colleague once wryly referred to as parking one's tank in the intellectual car park – Adams seems intent on reconciling divergent disciplinary positions. In presenting a 'humbler concept, a process rather than an object' (p. 9) Adams' book not only seems certain to be widely read beyond an undergraduate audience, but may be more likely to develop genuinely shared connections across such a broad spectrum of scholarship.

Reference

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Rethinking the Power of Maps.

DENIS WOOD, New York 2010: The Guilford Press. xi + 340pp. £20.00 (pbk).

There has been a welcome explosion in the number of monographs and articles that have sought to variously re-think the history and philosophy of mapping and cartography over the last decade. Denis Wood's *Rethinking the Power of Maps*, published a year after Dodge *et al.*'s *Rethinking Maps: New Frontiers in Cartographic Theory*, contributes to somewhat of a renaissance in critical geographical 'rethinking' around maps that has been on going since at least Denis Cosgrove's *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* and John Pickle's *A History of Spaces*. Wood's book is lively and passionate in its affirmation of the potentialities of mapping, cautious in its promotion of public participatory practices, and critical in its exposition of the logics of authority, self-evidence and persuasion at work within cartographic techniques deployed in the service of the state.

Explicitly drawing upon his seminal *The Power of Maps* (1992), Wood's text offers a sustained engagement with the central arguments and theoretical tools of that earlier work, while also opening the scope of critical reflection on mapping towards new and contemporary forms of 'counter-mappings'. Accordingly, the book is divided into two parts. The first part, 'Mapping', provides the empirical and theoretical basis for the argument that maps are useful, persuasive and powerful technologies that are born with, and for the most part deployed by, states. The second part of the book, 'Counter-Mapping' develops this initial argument concerning the utility of maps in making assertions about the world by revealing how they can be deployed in alternative, progressive or even transgressive ways.

The contemporary 'rethinking' of critical geographical work on maps could be said to be composed of two principal currents or directions. To begin, and necessarily, 'rethinking' involves reflecting on the heritage of critical cartographic thought from the late 1980s onwards, (the work of Brian Harley and David Woodward, John Pickles, Jeremy Crampton among others). As Wood demonstrates, this heritage provides important techniques for uncovering the subjective, ideological and powerful modes of persuasion and truth embodied in cartographic representations. For Wood, the power, authority and seductiveness of familiar spatial representations continue to require careful unpacking; their configurations with different forms of state practice needing to be precisely traced. In *Rethinking the Power of Maps*, the tools for this kind of critical work are most effectively unpacked in chapter 2 'Unleashing the Power of the Map'. There Wood provides a valuable set of pedagogical terms and techniques to be employed in the analysis of the ways maps assert and construct worlds rather than mirror them.

Indeed, for Wood, the first critical stage in any reading of a map is precisely the recognition that it is something to be read. The map is not a neutral or transparent window that offers immediate access to the world. Rather it is a particular form of representation that mediates, constructs and presents a world according to specific configurations. This is the discursive function of the map, or what Wood calls its

'propositional' nature. The map proposes that such and such an object, identity or event is indeed located at a particular site, and that it is bound to this location with the naturalising force of self-evidence. In this vein, and recalling the work of Gunnar Olsson on cartographic reason, the cartographic logic of the map can be understood according to the abstract schema of $a = b$, where maps 'selectively link places in the world (*theres*) to other kinds of things (to *thises*)' (p. 19). The crucial step in accounting for what Wood calls the 'power of the map', however, lies in the way that the map's propositional character, as well as its mediated nature, persistently *withdraw* from the map: 'The map's propositional character becomes . . . hard to see' (p. 4). The mediations of the map – the work, knowledges, assumptions, individuals, selections, contexts that go into its composition – withdraw from the image of the map in its presence. In its immediacy and familiarity the map appears complete and without need of any supplementation. The classic contemporary example of this can be found in the photomosaiced and smooth images of Google Earth: 'Using Google Earth may feel like magic but it's not . . . it's the magic of a Fred Astaire dance, effortless only because so long rehearsed' (p. 17).

As intimated, for Wood, the analysis of maps needs to ground itself in a kind of spatial semiotics, which he explains and furnishes with concepts such as 'postings', 'linkages', 'signs', 'sign-planes', 'semantic clouds' and so on. For Wood, 'signs are the *what* out of which maps are finally made' (p. 55). This means that there is a kind of *a priori* saturation of the surface of the map with signifying functions: 'There is nothing in the map that fails to signify' (p. 104). The specific form of the map's indexicality (the way in which signs indicate or point to some state of affairs) is further unpacked in chapter 3, 'Signs in the Service of the State'. There, Wood revisits and extends his brilliant account of the North Carolina Highway Map from *The Power of Maps*, drawing usefully upon Barthes' concept of the 'rhetoric of the image' to unpack the authoritative functions and forms of naturalisations at work in maps that make them so useful for states interested in making propositions about what shows up in the world.

In this respect, one of Wood's well-known interventions in debates around the history of mapping is his positioning of the birth of the map with the birth of modern European nation states. For Wood, the map, properly speaking, should be understood as a novel mode of communication precipitated by the administrative demands and logistical complexities surrounding the construction and formation of states. In particular, one of the most important functions of the map was to serve as a way of rendering concrete a very abstract and elusive idea – that of the state (p. 31). Wood provides a powerful account of the mythic function of maps in rendering states natural, timeless, and unconstructed (pp. 33–34) and contrasts this position with other geographical accounts of maps in which mapping is said to be given a more 'universal' value, a function common to all human cultures as such. For Wood, this universalism entails 'naturalising' the map, and obscuring 'the map's origins in the rise of the state' (p. 19). In this way, naturalising mapping as a 'fundamental cognitive ability' also has the effect, for Wood, of passing over 'the map's role in the establishment and maintenance of social relations in societies where maps are common' (pp. 19; cf. 22–23). The consequence of Wood's contextualism? 'There were no maps before 1500' (p. 22).

However, while the historical analysis of the origin of mapping in relation to the needs and contexts of state-formation is very persuasive, I wonder if there are nonetheless elements of this quite categorical assertion that might be troubled. First, in arguing for the birth (in the sixteenth century) and subsequent explosion (in the seventeenth century) of maps in early modern Europe, Wood's argument necessitates making a radical disassociation of maps from inherited Greco-Roman contributions, which he claims 'have been unconscionably exaggerated' (p. 22) in reflections on the history of European mapping. With this disassociation however, one wonders, then, how to account at all for the kinds of conceptual, aesthetic, religious and epistemological continuities between Greco-Roman thought and later European practices (see Cosgrove, 2001)? Further, to make the argument that maps are essentially born along with states, and that pre-1500 maps are in fact not maps at all, but can only really be

understood as maps in a 'metaphoric' sense, requires taking maps to be essentially bound up with particular discourse-functions – namely those functions concerning the demands for systematic surveys, administrations and identity-formation required by 'newly self-conscious states' in the sixteenth century. In Wood's words, people did not create maps prior to 1500 'because the discourse function served by maps [...] was not called for' (p. 24). This may well be the case. However, the fact that this argument rests on equating 'the map' with a discursive-function (as against other 'metaphoric' uses of "cosmological maps") means that this equation is inherently unstable and open to slippage. Indeed, this slippage is something that is itself demonstrated by Wood in the context of addressing the semiotic uncouplings at work in any discursive regime, and as demonstrated in 'map art' which, he claims, 'makes a mockery of any idea that the state and its interests so monopolize the map that it cannot, and has not been released to other functions' (p. 38).

'Rethinking' also gestures towards another direction, one that involves considering how, and in what ways, inherited frameworks for thinking about mapping can adequately respond to, and illuminate, contemporary empirical practices of mapping and cartography, particularly in the context of an expansion of broadly 'participatory' digital technologies such as Google Earth, the explosion of mapping practices outside the state, and the mobilisation of map-art at the borders of aesthetics, politics and commerce. In Part 2 'Counter-Mapping', Wood explores these concerns in chapters dedicated to examining 'The Death of Cartography' (by which Wood refers to the end of cartography as a specialist, 'scientific' discipline), and 'Talking Back to the Map' where Wood offers a genealogy of 'counter-mappings' grounded in useful historical accounts of Bill Bunge's Detroit Geographical Expedition and Institute (pp. 166–171), and the psychogeography of the Situationists (pp. 171–177). In this chapter Wood also provides biting critiques of the fervour surrounding 'public participation', particularly in the context of GIS, which he diagnoses as a tool for cultivating 'consensus'. The final, concluding chapter is dedicated to the paradigmatic

example of the mapping of Palestine through which the differing trajectories and possibilities of mapping encountered across the book are brought together (maps in the service of the state, as the object of counter-mapping, and as map art).

A final concern of any 'rethinking' of maps involves tracing the limits and assumptions found in some of the orthodox cartographic theoretical frameworks. In Wood's text we might legitimately question the extent to which we should in fact consider the map as a complex semiotic of signs, writing or 'literature'? (p. 121). Drawing upon both Saussure's and Barthes' linguistic analyses, Wood stresses that the relationships between signifieds and signifiers upon the semiotic plane of the map's surface 'are wholly conventional – essentially arbitrary' (p. 36), and to recognise this is to understand the constructivist and performative basis to maps. As Wood makes explicit in a footnote: 'Maps do not establish facts: they perform namings, claimings, and so on. Maps are performative *tout court*' (p. 270). However, given this assertion, the book would have benefited from a detailed exposition and engagement with the logic of the performative and the metaphoric, for instance after the work of John L. Austin and Jacques Derrida. To what extent, for example, might we consider how maps function according to a logic of performance, evidencing and enactment in which traditional relations between signifier and signified are displaced? If, for Wood, the map should never be thought in terms of a logic of representation, mirroring or copying of the world (pp. 39, 45), to what extent is a representational-discursive analysis of signs adequate to addressing the specificity of maps? Wood gestures to this tension when claiming that the 'map image is simultaneously . . . language *and* image' (p. 92). These are just some of the creative tensions and questions that Wood's book encourages and provokes us to rethink.

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Measure of America 2010–2011: Mapping Risks and Resilience.

KRISTEN LEWIS and SARAH BURD-SHARPS New York 2010: New York University Press, 320 pp. \$25 (pbk).

The *Measure of America 2010–2011* offers an important and often ignored perspective on the state of the Union. The authors examine and compare inequality across health, education and financial status by various geographies, offering the means to see the vast inequalities that often cohabit within the same city or state. Drawing on the approach engendered within the Human Development Index and developed by the United Nations Development Project, the book examines inequality from more than the traditional measures of income and poverty rates that tend to dominate the US discourse on inequality. The authors present data on health inequalities across the country, providing for some familiar but still shocking statistics such as the difference in life expectancy at birth for Native Americans in South Dakota (66 years) and for Asian-Americans in Connecticut (92.4 years). They provide data on the inequality existing within New York's greater Metropolitan area – the upper east side of New York has the highest median earnings of all congressional districts while the South Bronx has the lowest median earnings of all congressional districts at \$18,000.

Mapping different measures of human development, the authors present data showing several states consistently performing at the lowest end of the human development index within the US. These states include Louisiana, Mississippi, West Virginia and Alabama. The book points to the importance of geography in