

MAPPING LATIN AMERICA: A CARTOGRAPHIC READER / Ed. Jordana Dym and Karl Offen. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. Pp. 360; illus. (118 col. plates, 12 halftones, 1 line drawing); 8½ × 11". ISBN-13 9780226618210 (cloth), US\$125.00. ISBN-13 9780226618227 (paper), US\$39.00. ISBN-13 9780226921815 (ebook), \$31.00 (forthcoming December 2012). Available from University of Chicago Press, <http://press.uchicago.edu/>

It's an attractive idea for a book, a bunch of short pieces unlikely to strain the attention of the most blasé undergraduate, yet at the same time capable of sketching the content of an entire domain. Martin Dodge, Rob Kitchin, and Chris Perkins' *The Map Reader* (2011), reviewed here earlier this year, is an example of how to do this. With better than 50 excerpts culled from key, classic articles and monographs, it amounts to a kind of survey, elevating the reader as, it were, to a promontory from which to appraise the state of the field. An alternative approach is the picaresque. Valerie Kivelson and Joan Neuberger's *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture* (2008) takes this road – 50 articles again, but these especially commissioned to explore Russia through its visual culture: posters, playing cards, paintings, maps, photographs, porcelain figurines. *Mapping Latin America* has the commissioned articles of the latter – 57 of them here – but, like the former, confines itself to maps. This makes it less a picaresque than a traverse through highly varied terrain: Renaissance world maps, map art from the twentieth century, town plans, maps of vegetation, cadasters, road maps, maps illustrating magazine articles, subway maps, Indigenous “mental maps” – I could go on. Each is accompanied by a fully annotated three- or four-page text from an expert in the relevant subject, region, or era (often all three), and a list of further readings.

An important strength of the book – it has many – is precisely this breadth. I don't mean its reach, from Argentina to the US–Mexican border and including the Caribbean, but rather its eagerness to embrace *the entire cloud of maps* that bellies forth from their deployment in support of the early modern state. And indeed, except for a scarcely credible attempt to claim a fourth-century Mayan mural painting as a map, it's in the early modern period that the book opens, the early modern of Spain, England, and the Holy Roman Empire; and it's the unfolding histories of these states, their colonies, and the states these colonies grew into that the book tracks. What's so refreshing, what makes this book almost *necessary*, is where it tracks them. Some places are more or less readily anticipated. Martin Waldseemüller's *Universalis cosmographia* (John Hébert), the *Relación Geográfica* (Barbara Mundy), Caribbean estate maps (David Buisseret), and Humboldt's *Géographie des plantes équinoxiales* (Karl Zimmerer) are canonical. But the same cannot be claimed of a promotional map of Argentina stuffed with Germany, France, Spain, and other European countries (Carla Lois), of

Joaquín Torres-García's *Inverted Map of South America* (Jennifer Jolly), of a deeply illuminating map of *Diesel and Fuel Oil Facilities in Tela* (John Soluri), of the map of Mexico City's subway (Alain Musset), of a tourist map of Antigua (Walter Little), or of an anonymous witness map of one of the Guatemalan military's “strategic hamlets” (Matthew Taylor and Michael Steinberg).

Mapping Latin America demonstrates that these maps are less exceptions than at least as much the heart of the matter as any other. In the miasma of maps that comes to envelop Latin America, none has precedence. And so, in tracing a history of town plans – that of Tenochtitlán in 1524 (Barbara Mundy), a 1562 *Plano fundacional de San Juan de la Frontera – Argentina* (Richard Kagan), a 1581 map of Cholula (Barbara Mundy), a 1590 map of Potosí (Peter Bakewell), 1864 and 1875 plans of Santiago de Chile (Fernando Pérez Oyarzún and José Rosas Vera), a 1929 plan of Tela, Honduras (John Soluri), a 1957 pencil drawing of what would become Brasília (Sylvia Ficher and Francisco Leitão), and the 1980s witness map of Samaritano, Guatemala, mentioned above – *Mapping Latin America* does not isolate them in a special section as partial, secondary, or lesser. By refusing to do so, it distinguishes itself from James Akerman and Robert Karrow's *Maps: Finding Our Place in the World* (2007), a book that has a comparable sweep but which, by sequestering town plans in a chapter, “Mapping Parts of the World” (Matthew Edney), that *follows* a chapter, “Mapping the World” (Denis Cosgrove), only reinforces the dominant perspective that world maps matter most. Instead, by folding its city plans in among world maps, regional maps, and national maps, among plans for canal systems, subways, and diesel and fuel facilities, *Mapping Latin America* insists that they're all important, that none matters more than another, that it's all of them *taken together* that map Latin America.

Correspondingly, the book reserves no place of pride for “official” map-makers, for self-described cartographers, for famous ones. To be sure, Waldseemüller is here, and so are Diego Ribeiro, Herman Moll, von Humboldt, and John Arrowsmith, but most of the map-makers are uncelebrated government functionaries, clerks, uncredited illustrators, staff artists, painters, architects, unknown designers, periodical graphic designers, citizens, and the intentionally anonymous. These are those, of course, who have always made the overwhelming majority of the world's maps, and it's about time for them to get *equal* billing with the anointed, not just as a matter of justice – though that's essential – but as a corrective to the unbalanced understanding of map-making, maps, and their roles that the usual account continues to promote.

Matthew Edney is explicit about this in a succinct but brilliant foreword in which he takes pains to articulate the critical component of this enterprise, to stress the contestation the book mounts against received views of

the mapping of Latin America, and to underscore the achievement of an understanding, however partial and tentative, of “how people have used maps to create meaning in the world in conjunction with other forms of writing, art, and science” (p. xvii).

Ultimately, however, this depends on understanding how people have used *maps*, and it does not forward this project to confuse a scarcely intelligible mural, a painting, an elevation, an air photo, an *arpillera*, or a hydrologic model with a map. Yes, by all means establish the necessary, vital, enriching *connections* among the wealth of graphics within which maps find their wholly continuous place. That’s critical. The map is always embedded in a context, often in a text, and is invariably surrounded by varieties of contributory stuff. This *paramap* – integral aspect of my “cloud of maps” – is ignored only at the cost of enormous loss of meaning, and it’s another strength of this book to attend closely to these contexts.

But maps have a singular logic not shared by other graphics, and so the answer to Jessica Budds’s question, “Since figure 52.2 is based on a physical map, could the schematic diagram be considered a type of map?” (p. 275) has to be a resounding *No!* It’s a *diagram* of a hydrologic model which has an unmaplike logic recently illuminated by John Bender and Michael Marrinan in their *Culture of Diagram* (2010). The understanding gained by considering the diagram in the *context* of an actual map of the river (Figure 52.1) is that vouchsafed by the *interaction* of their very different logics; and it is this enhanced power that helps explain why maps are so often ganged with other forms of writing, art, and science. This is borne out in Peter Bakewell’s juxtaposition of a landscape drawing and a map of Potosí – again, though, when he notes that the drawing of the silver refinery “is obviously not a conventional map (although, maplike, it shows cardinal directions)” (p. 63), it needs to be underscored that it is not a map of any kind, conventional or otherwise (it’s a landscape drawing foregrounding a silver refinery). Michael Schroeder’s statement that “the second illustration is not a map in a conventional sense but a black-and-white photograph of recently built nuclear facilities at Guanajay, Cuba” (p. 247), is another case in point: the U-2 spy-plane photo is a map in no sense whatsoever (as Schroeder himself argues in his ensuing discussion). I pass over the canonical Humboldt, which even Karl Zimmerer acknowledges is a “cross-sectional diagram” (p. 125), and Francisco Estrada-Belli and Heather Hurst’s wildly anachronistic and inappropriate ascription of the term “map” (to say nothing of “cartography”!) to the fourth-century Mural 6N in palace Room 1 at La Sufricaya (which is no more likely to survive critical scrutiny than the famous “map” at Çatalhöyük has).

Ericka Kim Verba suggests a likely source for these confusions when, speaking about a pair of *arpilleras*, she writes, “Though not technically ‘maps’ in a conventional sense, they are ‘graphic texts . . . that can be analyzed and inter-

preted to reveal something about the spaces and times they portray” (p. 259). First of all, the *arpilleras* in question are not maps at all, technically or otherwise; but far more importantly, maps are not *any* graphic text that can be analyzed and interpreted to reveal something about the spaces and times they portray. In making this claim, Verba is following the lead of the editors in their introduction, who in turn have embraced the expansive definition given by Brian Harley and David Woodward (1987) in the first volume of their *History of Cartography*. An attempt to overcome an existing parochialism that acknowledged only the narrowest range of professionally produced topographic and thematic maps, Harley and Woodward’s reactionary definition was ridiculously capacious, failing to distinguish a map – with its singular logic – from almost any other graphic – with their individual logics – drawings, paintings, photos, diagrams, graphs; failing to distinguish a map from, say, one of William Playfair’s statistical graphs, from a watercolour by J.M.W. Turner (say, his *Upper Falls of the Reichenbach*), from one of those oil sketches by Willem de Kooning (*Rosy Fingered Dawn at Louse Point*), from one of Richard Misrach’s luminous ocean photographs, from a satellite photograph, or from one of Richard Diebenkorn’s paintings of Ocean Park.

This is throwing away the map to save it, ignoring its peculiar power to demonstrate its pervasiveness. It begs the very question, If it’s just a graphic text that can be analysed to reveal something about space, why then, in this book, so narrow a focus on so particular a subset as . . . *the map*? Why not a Latin American equivalent of Kivelson and Neuberger’s *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture*? But then, having paid their obeisance to Harley and Woodward, Jordana Dym and Karl Offen take us patronizingly through space and place, the language of maps, cartouches, scale (“*Scale matters*,” they write; p. 11), graticule, projection, and map-reproduction technologies (“Maps are not just graphics about space,” they might have written). I don’t mean to mock Offen and Dym, whose labours here have been genuinely heroic (and whose individual essays are among the high points of the book), but to gesture toward a problem with this inheritance from two of our presiding deities. It’s especially problematic in a book like this, whose historical self-consciousness is so high. Am I to imagine that those who made the map of La Ligua would confuse it for a second with the schematic diagram of the hydrologic model? Or that the anonymous artist of the Cerro Rico in Potosí imagined that he was drawing a map (a *planta general*)? No, of course not.

Nor should we. Context does matter – especially in this volume directed in perhaps most cases to readers apparently conceived of as historians contemplating the use of maps as historic documents for the first time. There’s a recurrent effort to get them to see what they otherwise might miss: “Examine the built and natural features surrounding the tanks. Where would high-level United Fruit

managers live?” reads an all-too-typical sentence (p. 219). Too often these come across like the questions for students at the chapter ends of introductory textbooks. “Look closely,” reads another, “and you will see the word ‘English’ inscribed on the blood-red fringed island” (p. 79). Tone aside, the request is an impossible one, for the map sits too small on the page and the colour has been so badly handled by the printer – throughout, at least in my copy – that it might be hard to make out even in a detail. Going to the book’s Web site “for links to high-quality, zoomable digital versions of some of the book’s maps” takes me to a high-resolution, but uncoloured, image of the map in question. Blood-red fringed? Perhaps . . . to some eyes, on some copies of the map.

The patronizing tone of the introduction and these recurring questions to the reader, in the context of the book’s cost (US\$125 in hardcover, \$39 in paperback), its size (338 double-columned pages), its reach, and its breadth (it has 98 “maps”), raises the question of what it’s for. A *Cartographic Reader*, it’s subtitled, which implies either the forced march of a school reader or an anthology to be dipped into here and there, as assignment or inclination dictates. The former might make an interesting semester for advanced students in Latin American history – but who else? – while the latter is hard to imagine, given the price of admission. The real audience should be historians of map-making but too many of the authors know too little about maps. Though the history of map-making undoubtedly needs new eyes, I’m not convinced they’re the ones here. An ebook version is promised for later this year, and this could well be a case in which that might be the preferable form. There’s a lot of good stuff here, and I’m glad to have it. But I doubt I would have bought the book, and I’m sure I never would have read it straight through if I weren’t reviewing it. The best of intentions and the highest scholarship aren’t all it takes to make a good book.

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MAPPING NEW YORK / Ed. Duncan McCorquodale. London: Black Dog Books, 2009. Pp. 272; illus. (216 b/w & col.); 29.5 × 24.6 × 2.5 cm. ISBN-13 978-1-906155-82-7 (cloth), £29.95, US\$49.95. Available from <http://blackdogonline.com>

Neither *Mapping America* nor *Mapping New York* wastes any time in establishing the same absorbing conceit: The Great Maps theory of history sounds better, does it not? In the introductory essay for *Mapping America*, Strange Maps blogger Frank Jacobs emphasizes the centrality of mapping practices to the post-Columbian encounter New World. “It is fittingly ironic,” he writes, “that the discovery of America itself was such a huge cartographic blunder” (p. 11). In their introduction to *Mapping New York*, authors Seth Robbins and Robert Neuwirth provocatively write, “Uptown, Downtown, East Side, West Side; avenue and street: New York City was invented by a map” (p. 8). Maps, these authors argue, not only depict the world but discipline it. To examine maps – of certain places, at certain times – is thus to uncover something of the cultural, economic, and spatial landscapes in which they emerged.

From their back covers, we learn that Black Dog Publishing intends these books for an audience of professional and armchair cartographers interested in using maps to better understand the histories of the United States of America or New York City. But these books are more than merely histories in maps. In the second introductory essay for *Mapping America*, Fritz Kessler suggests that we try to see the collection not merely as a history of the United States but as a history of mapping itself – of the cartographic approaches and symbolization methods that have, like the landscape itself, served as both “mold and mirror” to American cultural, economic, and social development since the Columbian encounter (Meinig 1979). These books, then, are not merely histories *in* maps but histories *of* maps. Or, more precisely, histories of mapping practices. To examine these mapping practices – at certain places, at certain times – is also to uncover something of the cultural, economic, and spatial landscapes in which they emerged.

The books share a streamlined structure oriented around a set of four thematic chapters. The set of themes differs between the two, mostly on account of the scales depicted. The chapter themes in *Mapping America*, for instance, each describe a role performed through and within maps and the mapping of North America – particularly the area of the United States – since the Columbian encounter (Harley 1989). The chapters here are titled “Discovering . . .,” “Describing . . .,” “Navigating . . .,” and