Imagined Futures in the Past:

Empire, Place, Race and Nation in the Mapping of Oceania

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Abstract

Since 1511, recurrent couplings of fact and fantasy, the familiar and the imagined, have driven the European invention, naming, mapping and regionalization of the fifth part of the world, known as Oceania after 1815. Using comparative critique of maps as historical texts, this chapter investigates the relationships of experience, expectation and hope in cartography's varied graphic realization or anticipation of religious, imperial, scientific, racial, colonial, national and digital visions. I outline successive vignettes of the spatial framing of the fifth part of the world or Oceania as mapped and named from the sixteenth century—in early modern geopolitics, in shifting global visions from the Renaissance to the late eighteenth century, and in regional cartography from the mid-eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries. The vignettes conjoin to show how uneasy liaisons of empirical observation, imagination, desire and deductive reasoning generated Euro-American maps, culminating in the appropriated colonial palimpsest that underlies modern maps of Oceania's states. I conclude by reflecting briefly on the present and future implications of digitization, with its paradoxical blend of democratization and dehumanization, for cartography, its history and its audiences.

Keywords

Oceania, maps, cartography, experience, desire, imagination, race, colony, nation

Maps always combine elements of fact and fancy, if diversely and to varying degrees depending on era, agenda and genre.¹ In European cartography after 1500, the shifting liaison of familiar and imagined is notable with respect to the vast, largely maritime section of the globe that spans what are now Island Southeast Asia, Australia, New Guinea, Aotearoa-New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. Mostly little known in Europe until the late eighteenth century, this was the last terraqueous zone to be comprehensively mapped. The phrase fifth part of the world, complementing the Old World of Europe, Asia and Africa and the New World of the Americas, was in use by the mid-sixteenth century and remained the only common term for more than two hundred years,² amid diverse oceanic, continental and insular nomenclatures. For economy's sake, I project the name Oceania, proposed by a French cartographer in 1815,³ across the whole half millennium considered in this chapter.

Modern human beings have occupied Island Southeast Asia and Near Oceania—Australia, New Guinea and nearby islands—for 40–60,000 years and commenced their epic spread through the farflung islands of Remote Oceania about 4,000 years ago.⁴ In Indigenous experience over centuries or millennia, the great ocean comprised an overlapping series of lived-in “native seas”—Damon Salesa’s historically discriminating rendition of Epeli Hau‘ofa’s evocative “Sea of Islands”.⁵ In contradistinction to this embodied Indigenous knowing, Europeans from at least the fourth century BCE periodically conceived the Antichthon, or southern antipodes, as a counterweight to the great known northern land masses of a spherical earth.⁶ From the early sixteenth century CE, they skirted the peripheries of Oceania and gradually mapped its western and eastern littorals. In the west, the Portuguese were directed by Malay pilots to Maluku and the edge of the *Oceanus orientalis* (Eastern Ocean) soon after their capture of Malacca (Melaka, Malaysia) in 1511.⁷ In the east, in 1513, local guides led the Spaniard Vasco Núñez de Balboa across the isthmus of Panama to the great ocean he named Mar del Sur (South Sea). Ferdinand Magellan entered and crossed the ocean from the southeast in 1520–21, naming it Mar Pacifico (Pacific Sea). Following the Spanish conquests of New Spain (Mexico) in 1521 and Peru in the mid-1530s, these American settlement colonies sent intermittent expeditions to Maluku, the Philippines

(named in 1543), and the Mar del Sur. From 1565, Spain occupied the Philippines and Guam (Marianas Islands) as nodes on the trading route linking New Spain with China. Further south, the Portuguese focused their energies on the Maluku spice trade, as did the Dutch who largely supplanted them from the early seventeenth century. All three imperial régimes sought to create mercantile monopolies via military bases and pacts with local rulers rather than significant territorial control.

For 250 years after Magellan, the northern and southern margins of Oceania remained realms of European myth and speculation while the great ocean itself was a cartographic void, save for the spider tracks of the northern galleon routes and sporadic voyages which “discovered” only specks of land and the elusive, mobile Solomons. From the mid-eighteenth century, Europeans regionalized and named the fifth part of the world and slowly mapped its blank spaces in geographical, racial and ultimately colonial terms. Oceania was explored, surveyed and exploited by scientific navigators serving imperial ends, whalers and traders after profits and missionaries seeking souls for conversion. The modern colonial era began in 1788 with British convict and pastoral settlement at Port Jackson in New South Wales. Colonial rule was established patchily over the next century and climaxed during the four decades after 1880 in rampant imperial competition which left the entire zone under at least nominal Euro-American or Japanese control.

On the ground, colonialism sometimes devastated local populations but was always constrained by circumstance and local agency. All foreigners, whatever their pretensions and expectations, had to work with and depend on Indigenous partners, interlocutors, intermediaries and employees. Traces of those usually asymmetrical relationships are embedded in colonial representations, including maps. Most of Oceania was decolonized along established colonial borders between 1946 and 1980. Remnant colonial régimes endure in West New Guinea where Indonesia is entrenched; in French Polynesia and New Caledonia where France hangs on in collusion with local élites; and in American Samoa and much of Micronesia where local choice ambiguously supports ongoing United States control.

The cultural historian Paul Carter sees geography as implicitly ironic because it is “a travelling discourse, a historical discipline, which at the same time aspires to the transcendent placelessness and timelessness of the map”.⁸ Using comparative critique of maps as historical texts, this chapter investigates the relationships of fact and fantasy, past experience and future expectation, time and its absence, in cartography’s varied graphic realization or anticipation of religious, imperial, scientific, racial, colonial and national visions. By outlining successive vignettes of the spatial framing of Oceania, as mapped and named from the sixteenth century, I show how uneasy liaisons of empirical observation, imagination, desire and deductive reasoning generated Euro-American maps and literally colored them, culminating in the appropriated colonial palimpsest that underlies modern maps of Oceania’s nations.

The Politics of Not Knowing Longitude: Iberian Imperial Visions

Before the late eighteenth century, the technical incapacity to determine longitude with any accuracy or consistency not only ensured major cartographic errors and distortions but facilitated manipulation and strategic misdirection to political and commercial ends.⁹ Throughout the sixteenth century and beyond, Portuguese and Spanish maps repeatedly expressed their kings’ mutually preemptive claims to exploit and convert newly “discovered” non-Christian lands around the globe. In 1494, the Treaty of Tordesillas conciliated Portugal by significantly realigning the previous year’s papal line which had heavily favored Spain. On this basis, Portugal claimed the future Brazil. In 1502, the “Carta del Cantino”—an anonymous planisphere copied illegally from the Portuguese *padrão de el-Rei* (royal master map) and smuggled to Italy—inscribed the “boundary between Castile and Portugal” as a bold line cleaving south America to Portuguese advantage.¹⁰ This map graphically announced the latest Portuguese “discoveries” in Brazil, Africa and India and symbolically actualized their spurious transformation into Portuguese territories by studding these coastlines with red-fringed blue flags indicating *feitorias* (factory, fortified trading station).

At this stage, the Tordesillas line bisected only the western hemisphere but subsequent Iberian rivalry in Maluku saw the position of the antimeridian also become of

acute interest, its placement oscillating in Portuguese or Spanish representation. A planisphere of 1529 by Diogo Ribeiro—Portuguese-born but employed as the Spanish royal cosmographer and responsible for revision of the *padrón real* (royal pattern chart)—uses ambiguously placed flags to symbolize Maluku’s location in the Spanish sphere. A legend justifies “this longitude” empirically with reference to the “opinion and judgment” of Juan Sebastián Elcano who led the few survivors of Magellan’s expedition back to Spain in 1522.¹¹

The cartographic contest endured even after Spain sold its claim to Maluku to Portugal in 1529. A planisphere drawn in 1554 by the Portuguese official cosmographer Lopo Homem allots Brazil beyond the mouth of the Amazon to Portugal and positions the antimeridian well east of Maluku. Major segments of the intervening hemisphere are stamped with flags to mark *feitorias* and with the royal coat of arms to signal extravagant Portuguese ambitions in southern Africa, India and China.¹² This is one of the earliest maps to name New Guinea, represented as a disembodied northern coastline east of Maluku. In about 1575, the Spanish official cosmographer Juan López de Velasco configured the demarcation to Spain’s benefit by making all Maluku Spanish and leaving Portugal only a narrow slice of Brazil.¹³ When the chronicler Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas published this map in 1601, the delimitation should have been irrelevant since the crowns of Spain and Portugal were now joined. Moreover, other European realms rejected both the lines and the unilateral political and religious claims underpinning them.¹⁴ Herrera nonetheless reinscribed the demarcation to advantage Spain.¹⁵ Its ongoing pertinence is evident in a royal imprimatur asserting that a hydrographic treatise published in 1606 was meant “to show how the Portuguese have perverted maps, to put the Spice Islands inside their area”.¹⁶ Thirty years later, the Portuguese cartographer João Teixeira Albernaz defiantly repositioned both lines. His triumph of hope over practice, hubris over logic, expands the Portuguese sphere to envelop part of Labrador, Newfoundland, all of South America east of the río de la Plata, and—notwithstanding their now much diminished Asian presence—Maluku, the Philippines and far western New Guinea.¹⁷

Arrogant Iberian bipartitions of the globe are obvious exemplars for Brian Harley's challenge to the objectivist orthodoxy that mapping is a "'neutral' or 'value free'" science mirroring geographic reality. Harley argued that maps were "socially constructed perspectives on the world" and deeply ideological. As instruments of power, they were "key documents in the launching of the Luso-Hispanic empires" and should be read as "*actions*" rather than "impassive descriptions".¹⁸ Harley's stress on the instrumentality of maps is pertinent to this chapter. Yet his timely zeal to unmask their anticipatory complicity in colonialism also took as given the outcomes he deplored—the teleological imperial trinity of inevitable conquest, domination and effacement of indigenous occupation. In a late paper, Harley acknowledged that early American colonial maps were also "an epitome of the encounter", regarded as "a set of reciprocal relations" between Native Americans and immigrants.¹⁹ In related vein, David Turnbull insisted that cartographic "knowledge is not simply local, it is located", and has potential for "resistance".²⁰

These qualifications speak to my own interest in empirical and Indigenous elements of maps across the representational gamut. For, if world maps are products of science in the service of geopolitics, they also depend for content on located charts and surveys. Often constructed in dialogue with local experts, charts and surveys are immediate outcomes of situated technical expertise that aims to reduce intractable place to manageable diagram. Regional maps occupy the ground between, at once pragmatic, synoptic, prescriptive and obliquely inflected by Indigenous presence.

World Maps: Theory, Praxis and the Specter of Terra Australis

From the early sixteenth century, the imagined Antichthon was materialized for many European cartographers in Tierra del Fuego, the land seen and named by Magellan on the left of his strait. The term *Terra Australis* (South Land) appears in a globe produced in rapid response to this voyage by the German polymath Johann Schöner who depicted a huge Antarctic continent labeled "Terra Australis recently discovered but not yet fully known".²¹ However, the expedition's survivors reported that Tierra del Fuego was not a mainland "but

islands, because sometimes from that side they had heard the reverberating and roaring of the sea on a farther coast”.²² Sixteenth-century Iberian cosmographers enjoyed unparalleled access to such reports and the charts of returning pilots. Pilots’ observations and information they received locally were periodically incorporated into the secret master maps—the *padrão de el-Rei* and the *padrón real*, “by which all pilots must steer”.²³ This “practical character” meant that Iberian cartography tended either to leave blank the southern portion of world maps or merely hint that Tierra del Fuego might be a northern extremity of *Terra Australis*. However, neither the template maps nor the pilots’ charts based on them have survived. Few Iberian maps were printed and most of those extant are lavish manuscript presentation copies.²⁴

Faced by Iberian official reticence, cartographers in northern Europe lacked direct experiential stimulus and instead constructed ambitious graphic syntheses by interweaving the facts they could glean with ancient theory, including ideas about the Antichthon. Furthermore, from the mid-sixteenth century, growing technical expertise centered in the Netherlands enabled readier reproduction and dissemination of maps by a thriving printing industry. Both technical advance and a characteristic melding of reported observation and presumptive logic, are patent in the remarkable global wall map engraved and printed in 1569 by the Flemish-born cartographer Gerard Mercator (Figure 1). According to title and author’s intention, it was “correctly adapted for use in navigation”. In the interests of achieving “truth” about terrestrial “positions”, “dimensions” and “distances”, Mercator adopted a double strategy. First, his revolutionary new projection “spread on a plane the surface of the sphere” so that the “positions of places” corresponded in both “true direction and distance” and “correct longitudes and latitudes”. Second, he scrupulously compared Spanish and Portuguese portolan charts and reconciled them with all available “records of voyages both printed and in manuscript”.²⁵ But this pragmatic grounding is bracketed with confident deduction of the “indisputable” reality of a vast *Pars continentis australis* (Austral continental region), circling the southern parts of the globe.²⁶

Figure 1: Gerard Mercator, *Nova et aucta orbis terrae descriptio ad usum navigantium emendate accommodata* (1569), Bibliothèque nationale de France, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7200344k>

Mercator's intermeshing of conjectural and empirical is localized with respect to New Guinea (Figure 2). On the one hand, he represented it as an immense, almost square island hovering above the *Pars continentis australis*. A legend speculates that it might be the "Land of Pygmies" of earlier rumor and stresses that "whether it is an island or a part of the southern continent is unknown". On the other hand, whereas three sides of the great island are smooth and undifferentiated, the north coast is physically well defined, with several small islands arrayed in echelon along it, their names rehearsing those on a Portuguese manuscript map of about 1560.²⁷ Though the islands are inaccurately located, the names are practical legacies of the appearance, behavior and agency of Indigenous people met during specific encounters with Spanish travelers between 1528 and 1545. The islands are called *crespos* (frizzy-haired people, probably Biak); *arimo* (Arimoa, the local name of an island insistently and persistently provided by the inhabitants); *mala gente* (wicked people, because the Spanish were attacked there, probably Manus); *hombres blancos* (white men, where the Spanish saw people of lighter skin color than most New Guineans, Aua or Wuvulu in the western

Bismarck Archipelago); and *Barbada* (bearded people). I argue elsewhere that these names infiltrated global cartography via voyagers' journals or narratives. In such firsthand contexts, they constitute traces, or countersigns, of the powerful emotional impact on visiting mariners of embodied encounters with Indigenous people.²⁸

Figure 2: Gerard Mercator, “Nova Guinea,” in *Nova et aucta orbis terrarum descriptio ad usum navigantium emendate accommodata* (1569), sheet 6, detail, Bibliothèque nationale de France <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7200344k>

Over the next two centuries, belief and disbelief in the existence of Terra Australis oscillated in European thinking in response to voyagers' reported new knowledge, assimilated within a shifting balance of interest, pragmatism, desire and fantasy.²⁹ Believers

recurrently invoked the practical authority of the Spanish navigator Pedro Fernández de Quirós who had twice voyaged across the Mar del Sur. His “eighth memorial” submitted to the King of Spain in 1609–10 was one of very few Iberian voyage texts published at the time and was quickly translated into most major European languages.³⁰ An impassioned blueprint for Spanish colonization dressed as eyewitness testimony (“judging from what I saw”), Quirós’s royal petition recounts his “discovery” of the “unknown southern part” of the globe in *Espiritu Santo* (Vanuatu) in 1606 and vaunts its “great riches and fertility”. The credibility of his ocular assertions inspired several eminent cartographers to adjust their published world maps. The Englishman Edward Wright had interpreted and developed Mercator’s projection in his map of 1599 but cautiously depicted no land mass in the far south. Yet his new world chart of 1610 outlines a great southern continent, culminating to the north in New Guinea, with a long chain of off-shore islands labeled “lately discovered” by Quirós.³¹ In a map of 1612, the Dutch cartographer Hessel Gerritsz filled much of the southern quarter of the world with *Terra Australis incognita* (unknown) and explained in a legend that its South Sea segment was “recently discovered” by Quirós. In 1630, Teixeira Albernaz did likewise.³²

Ironically, Quirós’s claims for his past actions and future plans were less respected in Spain than elsewhere. Pointers to reasons for this disbelief are scattered through another printed memorial of 1610 in which Quirós stated baldly that “New Guinea is the end of the South land”. He thereby seemingly authenticated the speculative consensus of sixteenth-century cartographers. However, an earlier passage in the same text summarizes a report he received in 1609 from his deputy Luis Váez de Torres, abandoned three years before when Quirós left *Espiritu Santo* in bad weather and headed for New Spain, certain he had discovered the South land. Here, Quirós acknowledged only that Torres later “found a great land in eleven and a half degrees [south latitude]” which formed a “continuous land” running “more than 800 leagues” to “near the Moluccas”.³³ Comparison with another report sent by Torres to the king reveals the disingenuousness of Quirós’s joint assertions. Torres told how he first went far enough around *Espiritu Santo* to prove it was an island, not a continent. Then, in obedience to royal orders, he made “every effort to get to 20⁰ of south latitude and

see if there is any land in that region”. Having found none, he sailed to the Philippines along the south coast of the “land of New Guinea”, proving its insular status in the process.³⁴ This report, with five attached maps, reached Madrid in mid-1608. It helped convince the Council of State that Quirós’s “proposal” for further “conquests of heathens who do not bother or offend us” should be neither encouraged nor publicized, given Spain’s “lack of men”, “diminished” state treasury, and concern to keep such news from the “enemies of this Crown”.³⁵ The embargo on publication was broken by the eighth memorial but Torres’s vital report to the king and its accompanying maps remained buried in archives for two centuries and more.

If faith in Terra Australis was widely sustained by Quirós’s claim to firsthand knowledge, firmer empirical grounds saw it gradually disappear from Dutch maps after 1620. Some materialize vague rumors about Torres’s voyage.³⁶ Others register more concrete information stemming from the expeditions of Willem Corneliszoon Schouten and Jacob Le Maire in 1615–16 and Abel Janszoon Tasman in 1642–43. Schouten and Le Maire had been inspired by Quirós’s eighth memorial “to sail to *Terra Australis*”. Having proven Tierra del Fuego to be an island by passing through the strait named for Le Maire and round the promontory they named Cape Horn, they traversed broad stretches of the South Sea without finding a continent.³⁷ Gerritsz, as cartographer for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) from 1617, had privileged access to the charts and reports of Dutch voyagers. Accordingly, in 1622 he renounced his earlier endorsement of *Terra Australis incognita* by eliminating it from his manuscript map “Mar del Sur, Mar Pacifico”.³⁸ Most Dutch mapmakers eventually followed suit, especially after Tasman’s distant circumnavigation of the future Australia found only scraps of new land in Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania), New Zealand (both of which he named), and a few western Pacific Islands, before traversing the known north coast of New Guinea.³⁹ If the positive results of this voyage were meagre—and so regarded by Tasman’s demanding VOC masters—its negative implications were also profound, since the space available for a continent was now sharply circumscribed. As this awareness infiltrated wider European cartography over the next century, Terra Australis was either omitted from

world maps or the solid coastline of earlier imagined geography was replaced by words—*Terres australes* or “parts unknown”—traversing a blank space near the Antarctic Circle.⁴⁰

Notwithstanding Dutch-inspired skepticism, the eighth memorial continued to authorize the reality of a southern continent for many geographers and travelers until after 1750 when much of the fifth part of the world still remained *terra incognita*.⁴¹ The eighteenth-century savants John Campbell, Charles de Brosses and Alexander Dalrymple were fervent believers who promoted future European exploration, commerce and settlement in Terra Australis by paraphrasing or translating the eighth memorial in influential collations of voyage texts.⁴² The southern continent remained a major goal for maritime expeditions to the South Sea until the empirical cornucopia from James Cook’s voyages between 1768 and 1775 finally dispelled the mirage and reduced the actuality to approximately the modern contours of Australia and Antarctica.

Naming Places, Classifying Races

From the expansive visions of world maps, I turn to a different nexus of experience and expectation expressed in the bounded but more detailed realm of regional mapping. The earliest printed map of Oceania was “*Maris Pacifici*”, published by the Flemish cartographer Abraham Ortelius in the 1590 addenda to his first world atlas. Based mainly on Mercator’s world map of 1569, it reinscribes the sixteenth-century trope of a vast Terra Australis “not yet revealed” with New Guinea perched above it.⁴³ Numerous maps of all or some of the fifth part of the world were produced over the next two centuries. They include one engraved from Dutch and French precedents by the Englishman Emanuel Bowen who robustly projected the ambiguous post-Tasman potential for a contracted southern continent into “what has been Actually discovered”. Published in 1744 in Campbell’s re-edition of John Harris’s voyage collection, this map ardently advocates future British colonization of “Terra Australis; no longer incognita”. A legend proclaims that “there is a Country where Ferdinand de Quiros says he found one” and asserts that his claims were “very rashly as well as very unjustly treated by some Critical Writers as a Fiction”. Bowen’s southern continent links Hollandia

Nova in the west—its known northern, western and southern coasts surveyed by the Dutch—to a large amorphous space labelled Terra Australis, fringed by fragments of charted coastline in Van Diemen's Land, New Zealand, Carpentaria (Cape York Peninsula) and New Guinea.⁴⁴

The little-known fifth part of the world was regionally undifferentiated in European maps and nomenclatures before 1750. Its subsequent subdivision and naming were largely French initiatives, facilitated after 1766 by expanding geographic knowledge produced by scientific expeditions. A decade earlier, Brosset built a grand prospective imperial edifice on a sketchy empirical foundation drawn from voyagers' accounts, including those of Schouten and Le Maire and Tasman. Seemingly oblivious to the physical consequences of these voyages, he rehearsed the classical "counterweight" theory of a necessary "immense continent of solid land south of Asia".⁴⁵ He materialized this ancient convention by dividing the "unknown austral world" into three geographical regions, *Magellanie*, *Australasie* and *Polynésie*. Gilles Robert de Vaugondy's supporting map merely hints at the possibility of a southern continent and names Brosset's regions without delimiting them (Figure 3).⁴⁶ Apart from mislocating the Solomons in mid-Pacific and attaching Espiritu Santo to the east coast of New Holland, this map's geography is more empirical and less fanciful than the treatise in which it appears. In 1766, Brosset's work was plagiarized in English translation, his colonial prospectus appropriated "to the Advantage of Great Britain" and Robert de Vaugondy's maps re-engraved to serve British imperial interests.⁴⁷

Figure 3: Gilles Robert de Vaugondy, “Carte générale qui représente les mers des Indes, Pacifique, et Atlantique, et principalement le monde austral, divisé en Australasie, Polynésie et Magellanie ...” (1756), in [Charles de Brosses], *Histoire des navigations aux terres australes ...* (Paris: Durand, 1756), vol. 2, plate 1, detail, National Library of Australia, NK 6956 Map plate 1 (v. 2)

Brosses’s regional classification revives Magellanica, an existing synonym for Terra Australis, to label a purely conjectural land mass in the South Atlantic but the term did not survive. His other two names are neologisms that have endured to the present, though with varied content. Australasia is a partly conjectural land mass in the Indian Ocean “south of Asia”, purportedly substantiated in scattered sightings of actual places in New Guinea, New Holland, New Zealand and New Britain. Its scope was eventually contracted to the large islands of western Oceania and these days is usually limited to Australia and New Zealand. Polynesia, denoting “multiplicity of islands”, clearly differentiates space rather than people since it encompasses “everything contained in the vast Pacific Ocean”, a zone Brosses knew was “populated by inhabitants of different colors”.⁴⁸ Over the next 85 years, Polynesia was expanded in Swedish and German usage to embrace the entire fifth part of the world, whereas in French it was gradually contracted to the “small islands of the South Sea”, divided at the equator into “north” and “south” sectors.⁴⁹ In maps of both genres, the toponym was a spatial descriptor with no racial implications.

I have previously identified a marked disjunction between the emergent racialization of French writings on the human geography of Oceania after 1800 and the absence of racial inflection in accompanying maps before 1832.⁵⁰ Globally, any such lack of fit between written texts and maps was less marked. Systematic concern to distinguish human “varieties” emerged with Buffon in 1749 while by far the earliest world ethnographic maps I have found are in a 1762 school atlas by Didier Robert de Vaugondy, son of Gilles.⁵¹ Buffon did not question the orthodox doctrine of essential human similitude, attributing collective physical differences to the effects of climate, geography or lifestyle on a single, migrating human species. Unlike Linnaeus, who from 1835 classed four geographical varieties of *Homo* (Man) within the “Animal realm”, Buffon avoided classification of the myriad groupings of people he identified across the globe on the empirical basis of voyagers’ accounts.⁵² In 1766, Didier Robert de Vaugondy published a wide-ranging geographical text book. In double contrast to Buffon, he doubted that African blackness could be explained in conventional climatic terms and he divided “men” into “five distinct species” by color and “six different species” by “the external figure of the body & the face”.⁵³ In both argument and classificatory intent, Robert de Vaugondy recapitulated a radical treatise published anonymously in 1684 by François Bernier. Virtually ignored at the time, Bernier’s schema was later accorded foundational status as the first taxonomy of human races.⁵⁴ In the mid-eighteenth century, such heterodox ideas remained anathema to the conventional conviction that humanity comprised a single species of common origin, differentiated by climate, religion and relative civility or savagery rather than innate somatic features. It was thus prudent for Robert de Vaugondy to conclude that the “causes of such considerable differences” constituted “an enigma of nature difficult or perhaps impossible to resolve” except in terms of the inscrutable “supreme will” of the creator.⁵⁵

Robert de Vaugondy had already realized his classification graphically in his 1762 atlas, in three ethnographic maps that outline the world’s land masses in color according to separate legends: “Division by religion” (Judaism, Christianity, Mahometanism, Paganism); “Division by the colors of the inhabitants” (Whites, Browns, Yellowish, Olive-skinned); and

“Division by men’s face” (Europeans, flat faces and oval eyes, bears’ faces, Africans).⁵⁶ This atlas with its ethnographic plates was regularly republished into the early nineteenth century. From the late 1820s, ethnographic or racial maps of the world’s populations proliferated and race became a primary ground for cartography.⁵⁷

With respect to Oceania, the gap between racialized French written texts and spatialized maps was dramatically closed in 1832 when the navigator-naturalist Jules Dumont d’Urville, who had twice voyaged there, published linked geographical and racial taxonomies, illustrated by Ambroise Tardieu’s groundbreaking map (Figure 4).⁵⁸ In the process, Dumont d’Urville synthesized elements from earlier toponymic and racial classifications with his own empirical innovations. He formalized the earlier French division of Brosse’s spatial toponym Polynesia by applying the Italian term *Micronesia* (small islands) to the northern segment and limiting Polynesia to the southern.⁵⁹ Both are incorporated within his racialized regional triumvirate Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia—the latter a neologism derived from Greek *melas* (black) to label “the homeland of the black Oceanian race”, otherwise “the Melanesians”. I have elsewhere discussed the experiential dimension in Dumont d’Urville’s profoundly derogatory representation of them as the “true natives” of Oceania, lacking government, laws, or religion, the women “still more hideous than the men”, and all “very inferior” to supposedly conquering Polynesian and Micronesian immigrants. As in most such racial systems, *all* Pacific Islanders “naturally” ranked below the “white” race. It was, he reasoned, a “law of nature” resulting from “organic differences” in the “intellectual faculties” of the diverse races that “the black must obey” the “yellow”, “or disappear”, while the white “must dominate” both the others, even when numerically inferior.⁶⁰ This familiar formula was at once a reflex of ongoing global colonization by Europe and a teleological blueprint for its imminent extension across still uncolonized areas.

Figure 4: Ambroise Tardieu, “Carte pour l’intelligence du mémoire de M. le capitaine d’Urville sur les îles du grand océan (Océanie)” (1832), in Jules Dumont d’Urville, *Voyage de la corvette l’Astrolabe exécuté par ordre du roi pendant les années 1826-1827-1828-1829 ... Atlas [historique]* (Paris: J. Tastu, 1833), map [1], National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-nk2456-73>

Dumont d’Urville’s seminal map, archetype for the arrogant racialization of Oceania in French and ultimately global cartography, also gives ironic graphic expression to a paradoxical reality—that in the mid-nineteenth century much of Oceania remained Indigenous space where local rulers, élites and communities held sway, exercising significant control over itinerant explorers, whalers, traders and beachcombers, as well as resident Christian missionaries. Unevenly inscribed with dates and place names denoting European maritime “discoveries”, the map bears few traces of European colonialism, apart from Batavia, Manila and Port Jackson. Dumont d’Urville’s racial regions, delimited by thick hatched lines and embodied in bold slabs of color, subtly signify the enduring ubiquity of Indigenous presence. Indeed, he must in practice have known this to be the case, from reiterated personal experience as hydrographer, naturalist and commander on naval expeditions in Oceania. At times he received indispensable aid from local guides and, like all navigators under sail, was

vulnerable to vagaries of weather, shoals and Indigenous action.⁶¹ There is further irony that Dumont d'Urville's lasting reputation as cartographer should be condensed into a single, atypical map that belies his major professional contribution to charting a part of the world still little surveyed in the 1820s.⁶²

Normalized in France from the early 1830s, Dumont d'Urville's regional toponyms became the international standard in the 20th century. However, the route from French invention to global geopolitics was not straightforward. Minimalist nineteenth-century British mapmakers often omitted regional names or favored Brosse's geographical terms Australasia and Polynesia, as did those in the United States. Dumont d'Urville's toponyms hardly feature in British and US maps until late in the century whereas German cartographers used them regularly after 1850. Russian atlases relied on Brosse's terminology, qualified after 1840 by Dumont d'Urville's alternative. With minor modifications, his tripartite raciology of Pacific Islanders as Polynesians, Micronesians and Melanesians was quickly adopted in France and permeated global racial or ethnic terminology from the late nineteenth century, though national trajectories were again diverse.⁶³ More recently, these categories have been naturalized in modern Indigenous usages and sparked robust academic debate on their geographic, racial or disciplinary appropriateness.⁶⁴

Colonizing Cartography

Until the mid-nineteenth century, colonialism figures minimally in the cartography of Oceania, though imperial, religious and commercial ambition or competition between nations were key stimuli for the Euro-American voyages and scattered settlements which supplied much of its raw material. The earliest map I have found bearing a colonial legend is by the Prussian Friedrich Wilhelm Streit, who in 1827 used colored coastal outlines to differentiate scanty English and Spanish "possessions and colonies" from the "free lands and islands" spanning most of the Pacific Islands and New Holland and all New Guinea and New Zealand.⁶⁵ Streit's work is one of several German maps that from 1816 overtly discriminate Oceanian people in racial terms. They do so along different lines from Dumont d'Urville's

somewhat later racial schema but the implication of ongoing Indigenous sovereignty is the same.⁶⁶

Streit's map anticipates another way of demarcating the world which infiltrated European cartography from the mid-1850s and signifies the gradual subsumption of contests over geographical or racial nomenclatures within the expanding, profoundly teleological global politics of colonial rivalry.⁶⁷ The purported colonial encompassment of much of the globe by 1914 is vividly proclaimed in solid blocks of imperial color that emblazon world maps of all national persuasions, belying the often shaky foundations and limited reach of actual colonial rule. Richard Andree's *Allgemeiner Handatlas* of 1906 features a map of "World traffic, colonies and merchant fleets". It is fringed by 44 flags of nations, empires and shipping lines, all but six Euro-American. The legend explains confidently that "the colors of the colonial possessions correspond to those of the mother countries" while a graph designates just over half the land area of the Earth as "colonial possessions", nearly half of them British. Conversely, this atlas relegates the globe's *Völker* (peoples) to one of four small maps along with "Religions", "Population density" and "Economic systems". A map of "The Islands of the Great Ocean", including Australia, is now an unbroken imperial kaleidoscope with a key to German, British, French, Netherlands, Portuguese and United States "colonial possessions" (Figure 5).⁶⁸ A revised version of the map published in 1921 announces the pending redistribution of "the former German dependencies in the South Sea" (as League of Nations mandates) while the key has additional items: "Former German colonial possessions", "China", and "Japan"—the latter two in tacit acknowledgement that colonial ambition was not a Euro-American racial prerogative.⁶⁹

Figure 5: Richard Andree, “Die Inseln des Groszen Ozeans,” in *Andrees Allgemeiner Handatlas*, ed. Albert Scobel (Bielefeld and Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 5th edn., 1906), 206–7, David Rumsey Map Collection, <http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~239471~5511807>

National Reinscriptions and Digital Futures

In a now largely postcolonial era, there are striking elements of colonial palimpsest in the modern national mapping of Oceania. National borders and the states which inherited them are historical constructs, at least partly shaped by the modern colonial era with its anomalous geographical, ethnic or intellectual legacies. A shrunken Oceania is severed from Island Southeast Asia along the border cutting the island of New Guinea in half. Bougainville is split politically from Solomon Islands, as is Guam from the Northern Marianas. The international boundary between Papua New Guinea and Australia, reaching to within a few kilometers of the PNG coast, internally divides the Torres Strait Islands. Timor Leste endured decades of colonial oppression by Indonesia before achieving a precarious independence defined by earlier colonial affiliations that had separated it from the rest of Timor. Asian

Studies, Pacific Studies and Australian Studies are discrete academic universes whose well-patrolled boundaries are broached with difficulty. Two years ago, Samoa opted to be on the opposite side of the International Date Line from American Samoa. This deliberate decision acknowledged that Samoa's human, political and economic ties are far more with New Zealand and Australia than with their kinspeople in American Samoa whose orientation is towards Hawai'i and the United States mainland. Modern states and their borders are experienced by their citizens as real and significant but it is important to recognize their recentness and, like all political arrangements, their artificiality.

In the twenty-first century, cartography, its history, and its audiences are fundamentally transformed by ongoing and future possibilities of digitization, with its paradoxical blend of democratization and dehumanization. Before 1980, the making of nautical charts or terrestrial surveys and their translation into drawn, illuminated, engraved or lithographed maps were highly skilled, specialized human procedures. The relatively few surviving historical maps were difficult to access and unwieldy to consult. In keeping with its recondite subject matter, the history of cartography, epitomized in the journal *Imago Mundi*, was technical, antiquarian, positivist and focussed mostly on European maps, mapmaking, or mapmakers, with only occasional excursions to more exotic locales.

This blinkered empiricist orthodoxy was effectively contested from the late 1980s by a stream of critical studies provoked by Harley's argument that cartography is a "social practice" and that maps are texts, to be read "as rhetoric".⁷⁰ At the same time, a decisive reorientation of academic priorities, embracing places other than Europe and North America, was materialized in the course of the monumental project on "The History of Cartography", instigated from the mid-1980s under Harley's co-direction with David Woodward. Whereas the series began conventionally with a volume devoted to prehistoric, ancient and medieval cartography in Europe and the Mediterranean, the three books comprising the second volume deviated momentarily to address "traditional" cartography elsewhere in the globe, including Australia and the Pacific.⁷¹

Moreover, the free online availability of volumes 1–3 of *The History of Cartography* is a synecdoche for the spiralling democratization of access to maps of all descriptions, and associated cartographic materials, enabled by the Internet since the mid-1990s. A spectacular manifestation of this process is the digital cornucopia of rare historical maps offered publicly, in high resolution, to anyone with a computer by certain global institutions, such as the US Library of Congress, the David Rumsey Map Collection, the Dutch Nationaal Archief, and—particularly salient to Oceania—the National Library of Australia.⁷² The parallel movement to the Internet of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) facilitates sophisticated manipulation of cartographic images, while the capacity for precise geo-spatial position-finding via satellite navigation is rendering obsolete both specialized and mundane usages of paper maps.

At the same time, however, the exponential expansion and far-reaching tentacles of novel mapping systems—in the often antithetic but entangled contexts of global big government, multinational business, and anarchic hacking—have disturbing implications for future blanket infringement of personal privacy and human control.

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This paper has ranged in highly selective fashion over five centuries and varied European cartographies, focusing on the fifth part of the world or Oceania. I aim to shed light on relationships between the empirical and the imagined in mapmaking and its productions across differences of scale and period, through attention to several exemplary themes: early modern geopolitics (the Treaty of Tordesillas and its contested cartographic inscription); shifting global visions from the Renaissance to the late eighteenth century (world maps, voyagers' experience, and the mutable specter of *Terra Australis incognita*); and regional cartography from the mid-eighteenth century (the interplay of space, race, colony, nation and the Internet in the mapping of Oceania).

Carter's epigram cited in the introduction positions "transcendent placelessness and timelessness" as a mapmaking quality or ideal. Whether or not this is the case, it is

unattainable because place, time and the world impinge on all forms of representation, including maps. The intrusion of the real can be discursive (prevailing values or conventions), political (the demands of employers, publishers or audiences), personal (the interests and aptitudes of authors), and empirical (the presence of place and people). While always ambiguous, plural and shifting, realities affect representations, their consumption and their relevance. With respect to maps, cumulative experience of place and the passage of time undermines their authority, diminishes their utility and eventually renders them invalid and of only aesthetic or historical interest.

More pertinent is to reverse the equation and ask whether, how and to what extent maps can impinge on the world. In anti-celebration of the Columbian quincentenary, Harley characterized the European mapping of colonial boundaries in North America as providing “perhaps the most spectacular illustrations of how an anticipatory geography served to frame colonial territories” for metropolitan statesmen and land speculators. Such cartographic “visualizations from a distance” constituted the “first step in the appropriation of territory”.⁷³ As ideal or prospect, this was no doubt the case throughout the history of European colonial expansion. Most of the maps discussed here are imbued with the wishful thinking of desired or presumed outcomes, a chronologically specific, prospective teleology. However, to a considerable extent that teleology represented ambit claims in competitive conversations with other aspiring global polities. Even when outcomes paralleled cartographic anticipation, the nexus between them is hardly clear. Moreover, while the map-as-blueprint-for-colonization thesis has its points, it does not allow for the often huge gap between colonial claims and actuality or for the vagaries of colonial praxis, where relationships between survey and occupation were often slippery and uncertain.

What, then, is the value of maps as historical texts? As an historian who uses maps as historical resources, mainly in high-resolution digital formats (rather than a cartographic historian), I am attracted to their cumulative, time-bound but qualified visibility. Being non-verbal representations, maps are inherently synchronic and packed with information but their written legends, captions, cartouches and keys add a temporal dimension lacking from purely

visual materials. Maps can thus serve as a flexible complement to the sequential linearity of written texts. Moreover, because their prospective teleology anticipates a desired future without explaining the past, maps may provide a useful antidote to the retrospective teleology of causal history that reconfigures pasts as causes of later presents and often projects outcomes backwards in time as inevitable effects of pre-designated causes. Historians are always anchored in their own present but the effort to eschew outcomes and allow past presents something of their latent contemporary possibilities is undoubtedly worthwhile.

Endnotes

¹ I gratefully acknowledge research support from the Australian Research Council (project number DP1094562) and the National Library of Australia which awarded me a Harold White Fellowship in 2010. I thank the National Library of Australia, the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the David Rumsey Map Collection for permissions to reproduce maps. Since so few images could be printed here, I include online links to maps cited, when available. All translations are my own.

² For example, [Charles de Brosses], *Histoire des navigations aux terres australes* ... (Paris: Durand, 1756), vol. 1, 77; Cornelis de Jode, “Novæ Guineæ tabula,” in Gerard de Jode, *Speculum orbis terræ* (Antwerp: Cornelis de Jode, 1593), National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-rm389>; Grégoire Louis Domeny de Rienzi, *Océanie ou cinquième partie du monde* ... (Paris: Firmin Didot frères, 1836–38); Gerard Mercator, ‘Polus antarcticus’, in [Terrestrial globe] (Louanij: Gerardus Mercator, 1541), Harvard Map Collection, <http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/maps/exhibits/mercator/main.html>; Corneille Wytfliet, *Descriptionis Ptolemaicae augmentum sive occidentis notitia brevi commentario illustrata* (Duaci: Franciscum Fabri, 1603), 101.

³ Adrian-Hubert Brué, “Océanie ou cinquième partie du monde, comprenant l’Archipel d’Asie, l’Australasie, la Polynésie, &.^a,” in *Grand atlas universel* ... (Paris: Desray, 1815), plate 36.

⁴ Georgi Hudjashov, et al., “Revealing the Prehistoric Settlement of Australia by Y Chromosome and mtDNA Analysis,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 104, no. 21 (2007), 8726–30; Patrick V. Kirch, “Peopling of the Pacific: A Holistic Anthropological Perspective,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010): 131-48.

⁵ Epeli Hau‘ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, ed. Eric Waddell, Vijay Naidu and Epeli Hau‘ofa (Suva: School of Social and Economic Development, University of the South Pacific, 1993), 2-16; Damon Salesa, “The Pacific in

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⁶ Alfred Hiatt, *Terra Incognita: Mapping the Antipodes Before 1600* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Lawrence C. Wroth, “The Early Cartography of the Pacific,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 38, no. 2 (1944): 91–125.

⁷ The *Oceanus orientalis* was a staple of post-Marco Polo European geography. See, for example, Anon., “Carta del Cantino” ([c. 1502]), manuscript, Biblioteca estense universitaria, Modena, <http://bibliotecaestense.beniculturali.it/info/img/geo/i-mo-beu-c.g.a.2.pdf>.

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⁹ John M. Headley, “Spain’s Asian Presence, 1565-1590: Structures and Aspirations,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (1995): 627.

¹⁰ Anon., “Carta del Cantino”; Avelino Teixeira da Mota, “Some Notes on the Organization of Hydrographical Services in Portugal before the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century,” *Imago Mundi* 28 (1976): 51, 53.

¹¹ Diogo Ribeiro, “Carta univeral en que se contiene todo lo que del mundo se ha descubierto fasta agora ... la qual se divide en dos partes conforme a la capitulacion que hizieron los catholicos Reyes de españa y el Rey don Juan de portugal en Tordesillas, Año de 1494” (1529), manuscript, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, National Library of Australia, <http://www.nla.gov.au/media/mapping-our-world/>. See Armando Cortesão, “Notes on the Castiglioni Planisphere,” *Imago Mundi* 11 (1954): 53–55; Alison Sandman, “Spanish Nautical Cartography in the Renaissance,” in *The History of Cartography*, vol. 3, part 1, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1104–16.

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<http://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/JCBMAPS~1~1~1100~102700001:17000>

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¹⁵ Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, "Descripcion de las Yndias Occidentales," in *Descripción de las Indias Occidentales* (Madrid: Emplen^{ta}. Real, 1601), map 1, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, <http://www.loc.gov/resource/g3290m.gct00084/?sp=4>

¹⁶ Juan de Amezqueta, "El Rey [16 June 1603]," in Andrés García de Céspedes, *Regimiento de navegacion* (Madrid: Juan de la Cuesta, 1606).

¹⁷ João Teixeira Albernaz, [Mapa del todo el mundo], in "Taboas geraes de toda a navegação ..." (1630), folio 1, manuscript, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, <http://www.loc.gov/resource/g3200m.gct00052/?sp=4>

¹⁸ Original emphasis. J. B. Harley, "Silences and Secrecy: the Hidden Agenda of Cartography in Early Modern Europe," *Imago Mundi* 40 (1988): 57–76.

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⁵⁴ [François Bernier], “Nouvelle division de la terre, par les différentes espèces ou races d’hommes qui l’habitent ...,” *Journal des Sçavans* 24 April 1684, 133–40; Johann Friedrich

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⁵⁵ Robert de Vaugondy, *Institutions*, 244.

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⁶⁰ Dumont d’Urville, “Sur les îles,” 3–6, 11–15, 19–20. See Douglas, *Science*, 222–51.

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⁶⁶ Douglas, “Geography,” 10; *Science*, 15–16.

⁶⁷ Douglas, “Geography,” 18–21.

⁶⁸ Richard Andree, “Weltverkehr, Kolonien und Handelsflotten”; “Die Inseln des Groszen Ozeans,” in *Andrees Allgemeiner Handatlas*, ed. Albert Scobel, 5th edition (Bielefeld and Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1906), 21–22, 206–7, David Rumsey Map Collection,

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⁷⁰ Harley, “Silences and Secrecy,” 71; “Historical Geography and the Cartographic Illusion,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 15, no. 1 (1989): 80–91.

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⁷² <https://www.loc.gov/maps/collections/>; www.davidrumsey.com;

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