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Humorous map of Scotland.
Robert Dighton, *Geography Bewitched!*, London 1795.
Maps 54.a.26/2, British Library, London.

Below

Gerard Kremer (Mercator),
Celestial globe, 1551.
Circumference 131 cm.
Biblioteca Comunale, Urbania.

Facing page

Cordiform map.
Oronzo Fineo, Recens et integra
orbis description, 1534-36.
Rés.Ge.DD.2987 (63), Bibliothèque
Nationale de France, Paris.

Pages 64-65

Leo Belgicus.
Claes Jansz. Visscher, De leone
belgico, Amsterdam 1650.
Maps C.9.d.1 (6), p. 94,
British Library, London.
The figure of the lion rampant was
the emblem of the seventeen Dutch
provinces; it was taken as a
zoomorphic model of the Low
Countries, in 1583, by Michael von
Eytzinger to serve as an illustration
to his history of the Low Countries.



Somatopias

by Giorgio Mangani

In London, in 1868, William Stokes, an English teacher of the art of memory – which, at the time, was regarded as something which could indeed be taught – published an umpteenth manual for the easy mastering of geography, a genre which was extremely popular in France and England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The teaching method included the use of a globe on which, apart from the continents, the features of the human face were also reproduced. The use of eyes, nose and lips as reference points facilitated the memorising and identifying of islands, countries and cities; the Greenwich meridian, for example, lay just beneath the nose of this strange face.

Stokes' globe, which could also be taken apart, and which is now in the British Library (BL Maps C.7.a.26), makes an appearance whenever the industrious world of antiquarians and collectors of geographical items turns its attention to so-called "cartographic oddities", itself a large playful continent of maps depicting regions in the form of heraldic animals, of imaginary regions and other such curiosities. In fact, however, this globe is something more than a mere oddity, since it unintentionally embodies one of the most important functions played by cartography over the last two thousand years, namely, that of an aide-memoire; and this, for many centuries, preceded and prevailed over the function of the representation of geographical places,

and of orientation.

Indeed, the writing of the history of this "odd function" of maps means going in search of the very foundations of geographical representation, and of its original narrative and fantastical character, relegated in our own times to the rank of mere oddity by the prevailing practical use of the modern map. Stokes' globe is very helpful in clarifying the function performed by anthropomorphic metaphor in the representation of geographical places: it made the locating of the individual places easier by superimposing another, more familiar, system of references upon real space. In a society based mainly upon the oral transmission of knowledge, the peculiar character of mental association was a basic feature of the art of memory, and already in the classical world the linking of the known geographical regions with parts of the human body is attested by a treatise on the number seven attributed to Hippocrates.

The use of figures for mnemonic purpose also lay at the root of the powers attributed to the signs of the Zodiac; linked to the constellations by strong emotional attributes, to which we probably owe the idea of the influence of the stars on human behaviour, such figures were an aid to their identification, reminding men of their approximative shape. The creation of such "moralised" heavens served as a model for terrestrial geography. Classical geographical description thus became a "speculative" genre, an opportunity to reflect on the human condition. In the eighth century Cosmas Indicopleustes' *Christian*

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Map of the Land of Cockaigne.
Johann Baptist Homann, *Accurata
Utopiae Tabula*, Nuremberg, 1716.
University Library, Graz.
In the eighteenth century, the
Homann family, of Nuremberg,
were the owners of the foremost
mapmaking workshop in Germany.
This map is a playful
representation of an entire
continent of fictitious nations such
as the Land of Cockaigne etc., and
it was inspired by a Utopian work
by Andreas Schnebelin (d. 1706).

Pages 68-69

Les attaques de l'Amour,
an example of the so-called
"Géographie galante" so popular
in the eighteenth century.
Map published by Matthias
Seutter, Augsburg 1730 c.
Maps C.26.f.4 (42), British Library,
London.

Facing page

Humorous map of England and
Wales.
Robert Dighton, *Geography
Bewitched!*, London 1795.
Maps 54.a.26/1, British Library,
London.

Bibliographical references

One of the first scholars to concern
themselves with the genre of
"cartographic oddities", during a
period of historical-cartographic
research dominated by collecting,
was R.V. Tooley (*Geographical
Oddities, or Curious, Ingenuous
and Imaginary Maps and
Miscellaneous Plates published in
Atlases*, London 1963). An
illustrated collection has been
published by the British Library,
edited by Gillian Hill

Topography based the form of the
world on the mystic form of the
tabernacle of the temple in
Jerusalem; circular medieval
mappamundi, with the three great
continents (Europe, Asia and Africa)
represented schematically (and hence
more easily memorisable), roughly in
the form of a T, were put up in
convent refectories and bishops'
palaces, and used as a *memento
mori*; the thirteenth-century Ebstorf
mappamundo showed the world as
superimposed upon the body of
Christ, with his head and feet
protruding beyond the earth's
circumference, as though it were not
large enough completely to cover his
divine condition.

Rather than crediting medieval
culture with a general naiveté, as has
long been the case, a proper
understanding of these cosmological
and geographical reconstructions
requires us to bear in mind that they
were in fact mnemonic figures,
complex images which strove to
document information bringing
ethnographical, theological, moral
and scientific matters together with
historical memories and millenarist
premonitions in a powerfully emotive
and dynamic manner.

This was the purpose served by the
anthropomorphic maps of the monk
Opicino de Canistris, from Pavia,
which until a few years ago were
regarded as the outpourings of a
disturbed fourteenth-century mind.
In his meditative exercises, the
outlines of the continents were
overlaid with figures of monks,
and women, which gave the
cartographic representation an
interpretative slant whose
functioning has been compared with

that of the Tibetan mandala.
What is surprising in such
geographical representations is the
fact that, in them, sound "scientific"
information is shown,
unproblematically, side by side with
a narrative and symbolic system.
Their versatility may in fact be
explained by the maps' mnemonic
nature, by their function as
instruments to be used above all to
encourage the chain of reflections set
in motion by memory itself, in
accordance with a method used in
both science and mystical
meditation. For real-life travel, it was
simpler to use written itineraries or
portulans, not necessarily illustrated;
for travel within mnemonic figures, it
was necessary to make use of the
above-mentioned maps. The great
theorist of figurative thinking in
twelfth-century meditation, Hugh of
Saint Victor, had written that a
knowledge of geography could be
based on such *descriptions*, but to
understand the meaning of the world
it was necessary to make use of his
complex meditative figures known as
machinae universitatis.

This combination of moral symbols
and straight information was not
confined to the Middle Ages; it
continued to flourish down to the
eighteenth century, with the making
of maps to convey both geographical
information and moralising
instruction, as guides to both
geographical orientation and to
ethical behaviour, in a sense
anticipating the more subtle codes of
contemporary media communication.
The deep-seated relationship between
maps and the mnemonic use of
images was immediately grasped by
the great mapmakers of the sixteenth

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Humorous map of Ireland.
Robert Dighton, *Geography Bewitched!*, London 1795.
Maps 54.a.26/2, British Library,
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(*Cartographical Curiosities*, G. Hill ed., The British Library, London 1978). Systematic research into the genre was spearheaded by Franz Reitingier ("Mapping Relationships: Allegory, Gender and the Cartographical Image in Eighteenth-Century France and England", in *Imago Mundi*, 51, 1999, pp. 106-130). On the deep-seated relationship between the art of memory, cartography and anthropomorphic metaphors, see G. Mangani, *Il "mondo" di Abramo Ortelio. Misticismo, geografia e collezionismo nel Rinascimento dei Paesi Bassi*, Modena 1998; Idem, "Abraham Ortelius and the Hermetic Meaning of the Cordiform Projection", in *Imago Mundi*, 50, 1998, pp. 59-83; L. Nuti, "The World Map as an Emblem: Abraham Ortelius and the Stoic Contemplation", in *Imago Mundi*, 55, 2002, pp. 38-55. An ongoing analysis of the geographical and cartographical sources, common in English literature from the sixteenth century onwards, may be consulted in the online periodical *Early Modern Literary Studies* (<http://purl.oclc.org/emls>), and an Internet newsgroup interested in anthropomorphic maps has recently been set up (*BPMaps*, on <http://groups.Yahoo.com>).

century, such as Abraham Ortelius and Gerard Mercator. Ortelius even referred to it in the introduction to the great printed atlas published in Antwerp (the earliest ever) in 1570, the *Theatrum orbis terrarum*. In so far as they are figures, wrote Ortelius, maps are easily impressed upon the memory, fostering a knowledge of the world for the armchair traveller. Similar observations had inspired the medieval mystics such as Hugh of Saint Victor (Ortelius himself, apart from being a skilled mapmaker, was also a respected spiritual leader). From this point of view there was not much difference between a scientific representation of the world and one which tended to superimpose an anthropomorphic or symbolic "figure" upon it. The two models co-existed as late as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the same cartographic workshops often produced both types. One up-to-date and reliable map of the world, the one printed in the sixteenth century by Mercator, Finus and Ortelius – all respected scholars and amongst the foremost modern cartographers – had adopted the "cordiform", or "heart-shaped", projection to represent the world as the place of ethical choice, upon which the soul's salvation was dependent, by analogy with what was believed to occur in the human heart. But the map also functioned on the basis of a reliable projective technique which was capable of representing the curved surface of the globe in two dimensions, maintaining the proportions of the distances to a maximum. Ortelius' cordiform map was regarded as an

effective synthesis of geodesic reliability and moral instruction, borne out by the fact that the Jesuit Matteo Ricci used it, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, specifically as a vehicle for Christian propaganda, translating it into Chinese for the purpose. For his part, the French Orientalist Guillaume Postel had had it translated and engraved in Arabic, in Venice, a few years earlier, to be used in the Islamic world as a crusading vehicle for his idea that all religions were basically similar (the famous theory of *concordantia omnium rerum*, whose acronym was none other than the word *cor*, heart); a coincidence which Postel regarded as the reverse of accidental, and much more than a mere "curiosity". Rather than heralding the decline of the symbolic and meditative aspect of cartography, it might be said that printing actually helped to generalise its use, boosted by the rise of a dawning sensitivity to the individual and private faith typical of the so-called *devotio moderna*, particularly in Protestant circles. Where devices prompting reflection on the Holy Scriptures were required, images of this kind came into their own. One such example is the map of the *Itinerarium sacrae scripturae* (Helmstedt 1581, printed until 1757) by Heinrich Bunting, a German humanist and Biblical scholar who represented the world in the form of a clover leaf, with Europe as a queen and Asia with the features of Pegasus, the mythical horse; the work was intended as an accompaniment to the Bible and suggesting a "geographical" reading of it, transforming the *loci* of the text

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Humorous map of Scotland.
William Harvey, *Geographical Fun: being Humorous Outlines of Various Countries*, London 1868 (?).
National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Notes

1. *Œuvres complètes d'Hippocrate*, M.P. Littré ed., Paris 1861, vol. 9, chapter 11.
2. See M. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought. Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, Cambridge 1998.
3. See P. Findlen, "Humanism, Politics and Pornography in Renaissance Italy", in *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*, Lynn Hunt ed., New York 1996, pp. 49-108.
4. D. Lewes, "Utopian Sexual Landscapes: An Annotated Checklist of British Somatopias", in *Utopian Studies*, 7, 2, 1996, pp. 167-195.

into places on an itinerary. Bunting's maps also had a meditative character, and were intended to accompany and enrich a reading of the Scriptures. They functioned like the figures of the Zodiac in astrology (which influenced the *skopos* of life on the basis of the hour of one's birth, i.e. the horoscope), and gave an emotional slant, a textual *skopos*, to the interpretation of the texts. This was a device which was far more complex, rich and dynamic than mere allegory, because it worked itself deeply and powerfully into the necessarily different personality and imaginary universe of every single reader. Indeed, for many years Bunting's figures continued to be appended to Protestant editions of the Bible, until, in 1618, in an outburst of iconoclasm, the Synod of Dordrecht decided that it was better to banish such images from the Scriptures once and for all.²

Indeed, in the age of printing the use of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic metaphors actually became more popular than ever. The newly available printed images also favoured the combining of inward moral meditation, achieved through figures, with the genre of pornography, which encouraged a widespread use of the female body as a geographical metaphor and as a territory ripe for conquest.

Ignatius Loyola had trained his fellow members of the Society of Jesus (which included some of the finest geographers of the time) to make use of inward images (that is, those stored in the heart) for their own spiritual exercises. With its close association between emotion and the

human figure, the glorification of the female body proved to be the most effective form of inner exercise, given wider currency by printing in the sixteenth century, as Paula Finlen has recently explained.³

In this way, oddly enough, the genres of pornography and nationalist and colonial treatises adopted the same metaphors as love poetry and meditative mysticism. The English poet John Donne, writing a love poem to his mistress (*Elegy 13, Love's Progress*), imagined himself as a seafarer sailing over the body of his beloved in search of Eldorado; in the frontispiece of his *Theatrum*, Ortelius represented the continents using figures of women; a few years later, in his *Iconologia* (Rome 1603) Cesare Ripa extended the same symbolic system to the regions of Italy, listed with their characteristics in the form of female bodies. In the age of discovery and empire-building, the woman's body became a metaphor for territories to be explored and conquered. Political speeches, colonial epics and pornographic literature – of which Darby Lewes⁴ has written a checklist – made free use of the metaphor of the body, building up a sort of Utopian sexual landscape around it which Lewes termed the *somatopia*, an expression which aptly conveys the nature of such places, perceived as feminised bodies, and conceived for the purposes of pleasure. Indeed, like female bodies, the colonial regions did not exist until they were discovered and claimed by their male conquerors, who reached them on board ships which were themselves compared to female bodies, and usually with women's names:

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Above
Comic map of Scotland, published in 1882 as part of the publicity for the Scottish chain Philp's Hotels. It is now in the archives of the publishers Bartholomew, who specialise in maps. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Virginia, Maryland etc.

From the seventeenth century, the adventure-packed genre of journeys and conquest actually lent its own titles to an increasingly fashionable series of pornographic treatises such as *Erotopolis* by Charles Cotton (1648), *A new description of Merryland* by Thomas Stretser (1741), and *A voyage to Lethe* by Samuel Cock (1741).

Not even royal bodies were safe from this device. In the portrait of Elizabeth I known as *The Ditchley Portrait*, in the National Portrait Gallery, the queen is standing on an island, an allusion to her own royal power, of course – as already seen in the frontispiece of *Britannia*, by William Saxton (1585), the first English atlas – but also to her single status, with subtle polemical implications also found in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

If, in such maps, geographical territories took the form of female bodies, sentimental relationships might be expressed in terms of warlike deeds and sieges. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this gave rise to a popular genre of what might be called “gallant cartography”, centred on the cartographic representation of amorous entanglements, wooings and love affairs represented as assaults, sieges of fortified cities or journeys bristling with dangers and obstacles. Even Protestant cartographers such as Matthias Seutter and Franz Joseph von Reilly were not above producing maps and atlases of this type, which were printed for an aristocratic clientele such as that of the lovers of the epistolary novel by Madame de Scudery, which spawned the famous

Carte du Tendre, giving visual form to amorous pursuit in the shape of an extended and simplified landscape strewn with lakes of indifference, seas of hostility and rivers of elective affinities. But there was also another public, less frivolous and more concerned with self-improvement, clamouring for “curious” maps, namely the one “targeted” by the satirical-allegorical atlas by the Viennese publisher Franz Joseph von Reilly (*Atlas von der moralische welt in dem satyrisch-allegorischen landkarten*), which opens with a frontispiece decorated with the image of *Hercules at the Crossroads*, the traditional emblem of moral choice, followed by various imaginary maps. The year was now 1802, at the height of the Napoleonic upheaval, but the substance had not changed since the time of Opicino. In the meantime, “scientific” cartography had developed an effective rhetorical tone of its own, with geodesic accuracy concealing its own ethical purport and moralistic leanings, abandoning moral cartography to the realms of an outdated “oddity”; this marked the final stage of a journey which has not, it would seem, had any further developments.

Giorgio Mangani

(Translated from Italian by Judith Landry)