

Putting it on the Map: Imperial Gazing and Cartographic Meaning

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Introduction

Ideally practiced, the science of cartography as a method describing space is one that presents objective, detached, and neutral geographical knowledge. The history of cartography is typically imagined as a progression of newer and ever-progressing technologies and techniques developed for the most part by European explorers and geographers over the past few centuries. As such, maps are judged almost solely on the degree to which they successfully ‘mirror’ reality.¹ Seen in this simplistic manner, mapmaking can be anything but ideological. Such ‘cartographic positivism,’ however, is indeed an ideal, as it fails to acknowledge that many so-called ‘geographical realities’ were/are not universal. A positivist understanding of the practice of mapmaking neglects the role that maps have had in a quintessentially imperial project of inscribing power-laden knowledge and meanings onto space. This activity has historically been one very important way in which expanding empires have cast a geographic ‘gaze,’ or way of seeing, which facilitated the transformation of “seized space into a legible, ordered imperial territory.”²

Though it is explained in varying and nuanced ways, such a ‘gaze’ is ideologically and epistemologically grounded in a Cartesian approach that treats geography as a reality that exists ‘out there,’ ready to be catalogued and mapped.³ The first part of this essay will introduce and treat ‘Cartesian perspectivalism’ as the

¹ H.J. Andrews and John B. Harley. *The New Nature of Maps*. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2001. 5.

² Gearóid Tuathail. *Critical Geopolitics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 4.

³ Andrews. 3; Tuathail, 5; Daniel Clayton. *Handbook of Cultural Geography*. Anderson, Kay et al eds. California: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2003. 358; David Cosgrove. *Apollo's Eye*. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2001. 2.

epistemology that informed imperial cartography. It will problematize the assumption that cartographic knowledge is objective, arguing instead that any meanings achieved through this form of knowledge are done so through the practice of *citation*. The second part will deploy this problematization according to two examples of imperial mapping projects – the mapping of colonial India, and cartographic representations of Cuba during the Spanish-American war. The concluding part will briefly explain the significance of critical cartography for postcolonial studies, and for the study of geography itself.

Cartographic Cartesianism

According to critical geographer Gearóid Tuathail (Gerard Toal), Cartesian perspectivalism has deep roots in Western thought in the form of Ocularcentrism – the privileging of the faculty of sight. “Sight,” he says,

“is pre-eminently the sense of simultaneity. It is intrinsically less temporal than the other senses and has thus long been associated with intellectual pursuits that tend to elevate...fixed essences over ephemeral appearances. An epistemology structured by vision tends to configure knowledge in terms of the simultaneous display and full apprehension of all the elements of a given configuration.”⁴

Later augmented in Western thought as Cartesian perspectivalism, this approach takes the world as a “reality that exists ‘out there,’ separate from the consciousness of the [observer].”⁵

⁴ Tuathail. 70.

⁵ Ibid. 23.

Cartesianism separates “an inner [mind] from an outer reality,...an external world of objects.” This approach respectively positions a ‘viewing subject’ and a ‘viewed object,’ with the former “witnessing, not interpreting.”⁶

Thomas Edney confirms that “the dominant epistemology of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was strictly visual and mechanistic,” with the dominant model of vision defining the viewer as “isolated, enclosed,...autonomous...and withdrawn from the world.”⁷ As with Tuathail’s description of occidental discourses of vision, Edney writes that the faculty of sight “depended on the pre-given world of independent truth” – an understanding “that was only reinforced by the use of artificial technologies of vision.”⁸ These ‘artificial technologies of vision’ were varied, including at various times cameras,⁹ cylindrical artistic panoramas,¹⁰ and maps.

Tuathail describes how the function of maps had become increasingly central to the machinations of expanding and centralizing imperial powers that sought to “[organize]...space around an intensified principle of...absolutism.”¹¹ Providing the example of England’s early imperial ambitions, he writes that sixteenth century military expansions “provoked new forms of knowledge that sought to address the problematic of...conquest, delimitations, and mastery of space. A detailed cartography was essential in subjugating what were held to be ‘wild and untamed territories...’¹² For England’s

⁶ Ibid. 24.

⁷ Thomas Edney. *Mapping an Empire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. 47.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Tuathail. 29.

¹¹ Ibid. 1.

¹² Ibid. 4.

armies, planners, and administrators who found foreign terrain “difficult and disorienting,” conquered land proved to be an “illegible surface...[and] a disorienting space *that was not yet a territory*”¹³ (emphasis added) because it was not yet rendered visible.

In light of the ‘*provocation*’ of this new knowledge, Tuathail points out that ‘geography’ was not only a noun, but also a verb. ‘Geography’ involves ‘geo-graphing,’ or ‘earth-writing.’ Not something “possessed by the earth,” geography is in fact “*an active writing of the earth*,” the purpose of which is to organize and discipline space according to one’s own “cultural visions and material interests.”¹⁴ Having set out this particular view of geography establishes a problematic that Tuathail terms “geo-power” – the “functioning of geographical knowledge not as an innocent body of knowledge...but as an ensemble of technologies of power...”¹⁵ deployed for the function of writing meaning onto space.

Here one can identify the source of the impulse to map newly seized/not-yet-territorialized conquests. Prior to any cartographic representation, conquered land was effectively opaque to the empire’s ‘gaze’ and therefore extremely difficult to administer. Moreover, in a culture immersed in Ocularcentrism, a lack of visual representation of territory made it difficult for that territorial object to acquire popular discursive meaning within society. It became necessary to deploy more conceptually tangible forms of

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. 2.

¹⁵ Ibid. 7.

geographic description that would limit this incertitude. New territories had to be grasped in their ‘totality’ in order to allow for a workable management of foreign spaces.

By what attitude, then, does this ‘cartographic impulse’ translate into a visible representation that allows imperial powers to visually and conceptually grasp the ‘realities’ of foreign lands? Present throughout this process is what Jean Baudrillard has noted be the original sense of the word ‘production.’ To ‘produce’ in this sense is not “to materially manufacture but to render visible and make appear...To set everything up in clear view so it can be read, can become real and visible.”¹⁶ To ‘render visible’ in this context implies that the ones doing the ‘reading’ are not implicated in the form or configuration. Rather, they ‘reveal’ the outcome, as if by excavation. ‘Production’ in this original sense is an ocularcentric and logocentric approach that becomes unsustainable, once viewed as an exercise of ‘citation.’

‘Citation’ comes in response to the notion that language refers to already existing objects or ideas. In a sense, it reduces the differentiation between ‘referential’ speech-acts, which refer to already-existing words and concepts, and ‘performative’ speech-acts, which make something new come into existence, such as a new claim to sovereignty over a particular chunk of territory. The addition of ‘citation’, on the other hand, introduces the idea that any sort of communication achieves meaning only through sustained repetition (through citing) of previous uses of the same words, phrases, or ideas.¹⁷ If expanding empires were ever able to arrive at any form of geographic meaning or reality,

¹⁶ Ibid. 29.

¹⁷ Headnotes to Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Leitch, Vincent B. New York: Norton & Company Inc., 2001. 2486.

it was only in accordance with their own discursive structures that repeated appeals to scientific privilege, to imperial destinies, or any other parochial idiosyncrasies that they sought to impose elsewhere.

Elaborating on the significance of citation to geography, Tuathail writes how Cartesian perspectivalism (erroneously) reinforces “the differentiation of the visual (sight) from the textual (cite), as Descartes assumed a divine congruence between language and the world of transparent objects (sites).”¹⁸ A traditional ocularcentric or Cartesian perspectivalism, then, assumes that through ‘sight’ a subject is able to discern transparent and inert spatial ‘sites.’ Put differently, Cartesianism is an ideological lense that assumes that there is no lense; one thinks ‘I see it, therefore it must be as I see it.’ Tuathail proposes, however that “the ocularcentric world of ‘sight’ is a world that is already infested with textual ‘cites.’”¹⁹ Though the imperial activity of geo-graphing assumed otherwise, the maps they produced were “constructed from knowledge circumscribed by the numerous contingencies of knowledge acquisition. The [cartographic texts]...did not present truth, nor [did] the maps constitute panopticons. The [imperial powers] simply believed that they did”²⁰ in accordance with their own citational repetitions. Critical geography, according to Tuathail, must “problematize the relationship between subject, object, and text, or...that between sight, sites, and cites.”²¹

¹⁸ Tuathail. 71.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Edney. 26.

²¹ Tuathail. 71.

The following historical examples of imperial cartographic practices in Asia and the Americas will show how cartographic descriptions grounded in Cartesian perspectivalism could not maintain their illusion of detachment and neutrality when examined according to the full equation of sight/sites/cites.

Cartographic Negotiations: Mapping Colonial India

Right at the turn of the eighteenth century, a young brigade major named William Lambton sent a proposal to the Indian colonial governor for the execution of a mathematical geographic survey of India extending from the Malabar coast in the south in order to determine “key geographical points” of the territory that had been conquered not long before.²² Having received the authorization to conduct the survey, he deployed a new method of mapping – that of triangulation or trigonometrical survey. Though other surveyors were concurrently conducting mapping projects of colonial India, the cartographic drawings that Lambton produced using this technique were of such a high standard that, by the second decade of the nineteenth century, Lambton’s maps had become the authoritative geographic documents that served as “the backbone for all subsequent maps of the subcontinent.”²³

As Andrew Tickell points out, the significance of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India was not just in manufacturing maps that were important for the military and political domination of the subcontinent. The survey was also a way of ideologically “constructing India as a domain of British cultural and political

²² Alex Tickell. “Negotiating the Landscape: Travel, Transaction, and the Mapping of Colonial India.” *JSTOR* (2004). 18.

²³ *Ibid.* 19.

sovereignty,” and to present the “position of the colonial subject as fixed and unchangeable.”²⁴ This would rely on scientific mapping techniques that depicted the geography as it *truly* was. Lambton’s colleague George Everest wrote that: “a complete topographical survey of India is perhaps...the most Herculean undertaking of any government embarked. We must be sure that it is as free from error as instrumental means and human care can make it.”²⁵ Tickell suggests that Everest’s ‘anxiety’ over the veracity of the survey betrays not merely his less-than-absolute confidence in the mapping techniques, but an (unreflective) ideological commitment to “European moral and rational integrity” and the “triumph of Euclidean reason over the threatening landscape.”²⁶

This brief introduction to the context of the Indian Trigonometrical Survey provides a glimpse of Britain’s geo-power to ‘produce’ its south Asian ‘possession.’ Despite their anxieties, Lambton and Everest’s project was “legitimized by the technical demands of the mapping process,”²⁷ which involved the overt usage of scientific instruments. British consumers of the maps could associate them with *previous* European expeditions and their attendant scientific prestige.

Lambton and Everest, however, failed doubly in their aim of inscribing allegedly ‘fixed and unchangeable’ European geographical truths, as well as even sustaining a commitment to asserting the vision of ‘mapper’ over ‘mapped.’ These maps and other

²⁴ Ibid. 20.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. 19.

texts were not merely guilty of a “systematic forgetfulness of antecedent spatial configurations”²⁸ at a conscious level, but also of unconscious enmeshment with a series of indigenous citational responses to the “‘worlding’ of [the locals’] environment.”²⁹ Alex Tickell and Matthew Edney emphasize the “flexible quality of the imperial map,” and that the knowledge that it presented was more the result of an intercultural negotiation “between the conquerors and the conquered than of some topographical reality.”³⁰ Indeed, as Tuathail suspected, the Europeans’ world of sight cannot discern inert sites outside of repetitive citations (including those of the indigenous people, in this case) that produce meaning. A closer look at challenges to British geo-power in colonial India will show the unsustainability of Cartesian perspectivalism.

Returning to Lambton’s survey expedition, one finds a sort of ‘entanglement’ of spatial meaning as “existing religio-cultural inscriptions...enmesh[ed] with, and inform[ed], the colonial cartographic text.”³¹ These ‘textual knots’ came initially from Lambton’s challenge of finding elevated trig-points in the flat regions of southern India. The search led him naturally to temple locations that had a ‘commanding’ view of the landscape. Although these sighting points were only visible as geometric angles on the survey map, Tickell explains that they “reveal a correspondence between an older, puranic³² narrative of landscape”³³ – according to which these points indicated a network

²⁸ Ibid. 21.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Edney. 25., Tickell, 22.

³¹ Tickell. 22.

³² Referring to ancient religious Hindu texts.

³³ Tickell. 23.

of pilgrimage sites – and Lambton’s own presumptions of narrating previously ‘uninscribed’ space.

The fact that Lambton’s trigonometrical measurements were taken from geographical positions that were previously associated with local religious culture meant that the surveyors’ activities as well as any cartographic images made available to locals would have been associated with the latter’s knowledge of sacred places and spaces. Though locals might have even assumed that the British surveyors were ignorant of the local geographies, the spatial representations presented by the maps would have been seen as an aggregation of visual projections from holy sites and their attendant citations of meaning – a kind of ‘cartographic pilgrimage.’ Rather than a quashing out of local geographies by foreign and power-seeking ‘others,’ the activities of the surveyors and the actual cartographic productions of the topography may very well have been seen as the foreigners’ confirmation of local geographical knowledge.

A similar example highlights a more active re-interpretation of the activities of the European cartographers “which slyly compromises the authority of the colonial presence.”³⁴ Tickell’s look at Everest’s journal accounts of encounters with locals reveals “a form of indigenous translation of the colonial, and...a non-mimicking, transforming acceptance of the authority of an alien presence.”³⁵ A certain ‘cultural curiosity’ engaged with Everest’s surveying equipment, as locals developed the habit of “attributing miraculous powers to [the] instruments and the sites which had been occupied by

³⁴ Ibid. 27.

³⁵ Ibid.

them.”³⁶ Everest explained in his notes that people came to “entreat permission to bow down before the...telescope.” In fact, rather than viewing this act of genuflection as a sign of indigenous subservience to the colonial master and his activities, Tickell interprets this action as a form of appropriation of cartographic meaning that nevertheless “fall[s] outside the conceptual range of English terms such as ‘resistance’ or ‘rebellion.’”³⁷ Here one sees an indigenous resistance to English geo-power, as Everest’s “cartographic overlay...is revised and absorbed back into the syncretic geographies of rural South Indian culture.”³⁸ As stories of the surveyors’ activities would proliferate and be repeated, local geographic discourses would take on different formations than those of the British. The indigenous ‘reading-in’ of cartographic text might have even been amplified in cases where European surveyors relied on local guides and their knowledge of the topography, and this may very well have affected the actual maps produced.

A third example comes in the form of a more concerted indigenous recalcitrance to revealing local geographical knowledge to the European surveyors. This particular example highlights “the impossibility of a cultural cartographic translation of the geographies of the rivers in Bengal”³⁹ in terms of signification. While the courses of the rivers in Bengal change, carving out new channels over time, the problem for the British cartographers relying on local knowledge of the river geographies was that the “local

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid. 24.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid. 25.

inhabitants continued to call old channels by their original names.”⁴⁰ The surveyor Francis Buchanan described that:

“The geographers of Europe are apt to be enraged, when in tracing a river they find that an inconsiderable stream falling into their grand channel changes [the channel’s] name, and that the sources of this smaller stream is obstinately considered by the natives as the source of the river, either having been the first to which they had access, or having at one time been the largest.”⁴¹

The unwillingness on the part of locals to dispense knowledge of the complex past of the streams and tributaries to ‘alien’ others created a “cross-cultural impasse”⁴² that, in the eyes of locals, emerged in British maps as a crude representation of European geographical meaning that was citationally inconsistent with local knowledge and cultural significance.

Seen here is another indication of the resilience of indigenous ability to re-inscribe British knowledge and geo-power. In this case, British imperial powers stumbled in their project of imposing universal geographical meaning. Via a process involving the entanglement of European and indigenous citations of sites, the cartographic ‘production’ of Bengal’s river geographies would have had a wholly different meaning to locals.

Cartographic Manifestation: Peripheral Vision and the Spanish-American War

The second instance of imperial geo-power presented in this essay is that of cartographic productions of Cuba during the 1898 Spanish-American war. Though diminished to a great extent in America’s popular memory, the relatively brief war was a

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid. 26.

pivotal shift of U.S. national/imperial identity at the end of the nineteenth century. The 113-day conflict resulted in the territorial acquisition by the U.S. of Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam, and in the relinquishment by Spain of sovereign claims over Cuba. The outcome of the war affirmed to the U.S. a vision of itself as a new imperial power in the western hemisphere. Raymond Craib and Graham Brunett's photo essay examines the wax of U.S. imperial ambitions prior to and during the war. Old discourses of hemispherical geo-power were inserted into the maps of insular territories made at the time of the war, and these maps served to entrench the geographies already aligned with the nineteenth century notion of Manifest Destiny – the belief that the United States would inevitably come to dominate key Caribbean, Central- and South American locations. In order to permit more depth in terms of my own examination, I will focus only on Cuba.

The analysis of pre- and post-war maps of the island has a different focus as compared to the example of the British geographic production of India. Rather than looking at the survey process as a kind of 'cartographic negotiation,' I will instead focus on these maps' function as "visual instruments to *domesticate and incorporate the foreign*."⁴³ (Emphasis added). Through reviewing Craib and Brunett's essay *Insular Visions*, which argues that American cartographic representations of the islands were informed by, and served to reinforce the U.S.' already-established imperial aspirations over its 'backyard,' I will attempt to add that the maps (of Cuba) can be viewed as citational repetitions of U.S. geo-power in the western hemisphere.

⁴³ Graham Burnett and Raymond B. Craib. "Insular Visions: Cartographic Imagery and the Spanish-American Civil War." *The Historian*, Vol. 61: Fall, 1998. 101.

The U.S. has had a long history of geo-graphing itself as the sole hegemon in the western hemisphere. Alan Henrikson explains that for 200 years of America's own colonial past, "settlers in North America were regulated by the mercantilist policies of distant London."⁴⁴ Not surprisingly, the earliest maps of the continent, drafted "before the full expanse of the globe was finally appreciated..."⁴⁵ represented North America as an eastern extension of Asia, and as a periphery of the imperial core. Only later on were the American continents "placed on the left side of joined-hemisphere maps" – such as the one in figure 1 – allowing Eurasia to retain its position as a geographical 'core,' but simultaneously "[making] America central as well."⁴⁶ After the American Revolution, when the U.S. was newly equipped with the authority to make *its own* official maps, further expressions of nascent America-centrism were made through acts such as "placing the prime meridian of longitude within the American orbit"⁴⁷ – an act which John Harley agrees, expresses a sustained ethno-centrism.⁴⁸ Thus, through a slow process of citational cartographic repetition and re-vision, the United States attained the geo-power to locate itself geographically without the need to "[ask] of England [North America's] relative position."⁴⁹ Only under these conditions was the United States able to site/cite itself fully as a geographical core. In turn, this allowed the U.S. to *see* Cuba and

⁴⁴ Allen K. Henrikson. *Political Geography: A Reader*. Agnew, John, ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997. 100.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 101.

⁴⁸ Andrews. 13.

⁴⁹ Henrikson. 101.

other insular and South American territories as peripheral to the continent and as components “to which the Laws of Nature...entitled [the United States].”⁵⁰

Even as early as one century before the Spanish-American war, this geographic discourse informed the U.S.’ expansionist policy that had been “nibbl[ing] away”⁵¹ at Spanish acquisitions in the New World in a bid to consolidate the nation’s relatively newfound national and geopolitical domain. The 1823 Monroe Doctrine declared America’s intolerance of any intrusion into the Western hemisphere by other imperial powers, thus expressing a geographic vision of itself as a local power that should seek to repel others within what it deemed to be ‘its space.’⁵² John Quincy Adams, one of the Doctrine’s principle authors, added that Cuba and Puerto Rico were “natural appendages to the north American continent,” which assumed that the islands would “naturally fall into the orbit of the United States once the right conditions prevailed.”⁵³ Adams’ positivist geography and the vision expressed in the Monroe Doctrine “equated proximity with destiny.”⁵⁴

Through the following examples of cartographic depictions of Spanish territories during the war, I will attempt to show how previous U.S. imperial visions of itself manifested citationally in how cartographers ‘saw’ these territories.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 100.

⁵¹ Burnett. 101.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid. 102.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

The map of Cuba presented in Figure 2 was published in 1897, and is thus antecedent to the war. Craib and Burnett explain the text's "[emphasis on] the multiple links between the 'Gem of the Antilles'"⁵⁵ and the continent of North America. Enhancing the written text is the visual presence of Florida's extremity, which can be seen at the top of the document, extending from beyond the map's limits, crossing its frame, 'reaching out' to the island neighbour. Considering that this map otherwise appears to be constructed according to systematic cartographic techniques, there seems to be undue insistence on Florida's presence, as if the map is incomplete without it.

Though the U.S. supported independence movements throughout Latin America that would chip away at foreign imperial presences within the western hemisphere, there was opposition to independence for Spain's Caribbean possessions for numerous geopolitical, social, and economic reasons (such as anxiety over the abolition of slavery in an independent Cuba, which would compromise commercial interactions with the island, a large part of which involved trade in sugar). Regardless of the specific reasons for resisting an independent Cuba, the U.S.' ambitions of incorporating the island into its own domain can be inferred from the (same) map's overt identification of Spanish outposts. Represented as discrete points by the small circles – like bubbles ready to pop – the outposts sit in contrast to the rest of the island, which is shown to be already liberated by Cuban revolutionary forces engaged in an insurgency at the time. By showing that Spain was barely clinging to the island, the map suggests that Cuba was a "ripe[ening] apple" that was ready to fall into America's possession.⁵⁶ All of this suggests that what

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 103-104.

one could ‘see’ on the map was not a neutral depiction of innocent facts. Rather, the representations reflect a series of citational meanings that placed Cuba’s destiny imminently within the U.S.’ geographic gaze.

Once the war began, American newspapers started to play a more dynamic role in U.S. citizens’ contact with the events of the conflict. American newspapers printed maps as inserts, such as the ones in figure 3, which emphasizes the spatial proximity of the conflict to North America in contrast to its distance from Spain by means of positioning the site of conflict with drawn lines. Included along with this particular map is a ‘scorecard’ of the U.S.’ and Spain’s respective military strengths, allowing the curious American populous “to become armchair strategist[s], plotting troop movements and naval battles on their parlor wall.”⁵⁷ Such maps were used to follow the events of the war as they unfolded, “serving as visual accompaniments to lead articles, and as up-to-date teaching tools in the country’s classrooms.”⁵⁸ U.S. citizens continued to consume information about the war and about the military’s territorial acquisitions. These newspapers provided the public not only with stories of heroic exploits of U.S. soldiers, but also with reliable geographical, historical, and economic information that became increasingly diffused as popular knowledge.⁵⁹

The jingoism that, for decades, (re)produced geographic visions of the U.S. as the ultimate hegemon of its own hemisphere has already been identified. In light of this, one should appreciate that the information provided in these news reports, though factual, was

⁵⁷ Ibid. 112.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

not inert and innocent knowledge meant merely to satisfy people's curiosity. The foreign imperial powers that had previously checked the fulfillment of America's hemispherical supremacy were finally in the process of being overcome, and the past envisioning of Manifest Destiny could be expressed with even more confidence and vigour. Americans thus had to come to *know* their new possessions. The geographical *site* of the Monroe Doctrine had long been established. As Americans came to *see* their achievements cartographically, these visual instruments, whose purpose it was to 'domesticate the foreign,' attained meaning through repetitive, decades-old geographical citations.

Arguably, the practice of augmenting this geo-power became even more aggressive after the war. For example, whereas Figure 2 – a map published just before the war – shows just the tip of Florida 'reaching down' to touch Cuba, Figure 4 – a pedagogical document for use in the classroom – juxtaposes Cuba with a map of the United States in the upper right corner, at two wildly different scales. Though in actual geographic terms the island and the continent remained at the same distance, one can observe how, in terms of American spatial imagination, the continent had 'slid' further down the map to the point that it 'loomed' over its long-awaited conquest.

Not for the first time, one sees imperial geo-power working to locate the (potentially) "new territorial [acquisition] within the broader trajectory of U.S. history and geography"⁶⁰ through the citation of cultural understandings of America's hemispherical destiny, expressed visually in maps. As such, the site/cite of Cuba (as well

⁶⁰ Ibid.

as other island territories not examined in this essay) was placed more firmly within American geographical and imperial discourses.

Conclusion

Only two examples of imperial cartography have been examined in this essay, and only one critical perspective has been used in the attempt to problematize imperial cartographic practices. Nevertheless, there is no shortage of specific examples that could be studied, as everywhere that imperial powers have gone and mapped is a potential site for critical examination. Nor is Tuathail's problematization of the relationship between sight, sites, and cites the only fashion through which to deconstruct western cartography. No matter where attention is focused, the overlapping fields of critical geography and - cartography provide the potential for fruitful insight in at least two avenues: the first being postcolonial studies, and the second being the field of geography itself.

"It now seems obvious," writes Daniel Clayton, "that cartography played a crucial role in the imperialists' self-legitimizing construction of space as universal, measurable, and divisible" that provided "a stage for dramatic imperial gestures."⁶¹ Though not an exhaustive list, these 'imperial gestures' may have been anything from territorializing populations and their identities, incorporating those territories into an administrative framework and into popular knowledge, (in)stating these territories into a European system of spatial organization based on nation-states, and so on. Clayton suggests that students of postcolonialism may "probe the local knowledges that western travellers used and erased, and delve into the fraught physical and cross-cultural circumstances in which

⁶¹ Clayton. 360.

cartographic knowledges were made.”⁶² Additionally, he points out that there is currently an effort to produce “aboriginal and postcolonial mappings...that are based on different cultural and epistemological premises” than those “abstract projective, co-ordinate geometries of western cartography.”⁶³

Clayton also suggests that: “geographers have become interested in the imperial genealogy of their discipline.”⁶⁴ Combined with a fresh sensitivity “to the Eurocentric assumptions embedded in [geographers’] disciplinary visions,”⁶⁵ critical cartography may play a part in showing how, within the discipline of geography, archaic epistemological frameworks have historically become manifested visually and discursively. A historical awareness of cartographic Cartesianism may invigorate an anti-essentialist preference among contemporary geographers who seek insights into “the machinations of [geographic] knowledge and power.”⁶⁶ Hopefully, such an approach will help to promote the interrelated disciplines of geography and cartography as modes of knowledge production that take fewer things for granted, are more willing to readjust their concepts, and remain constantly on their toes.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

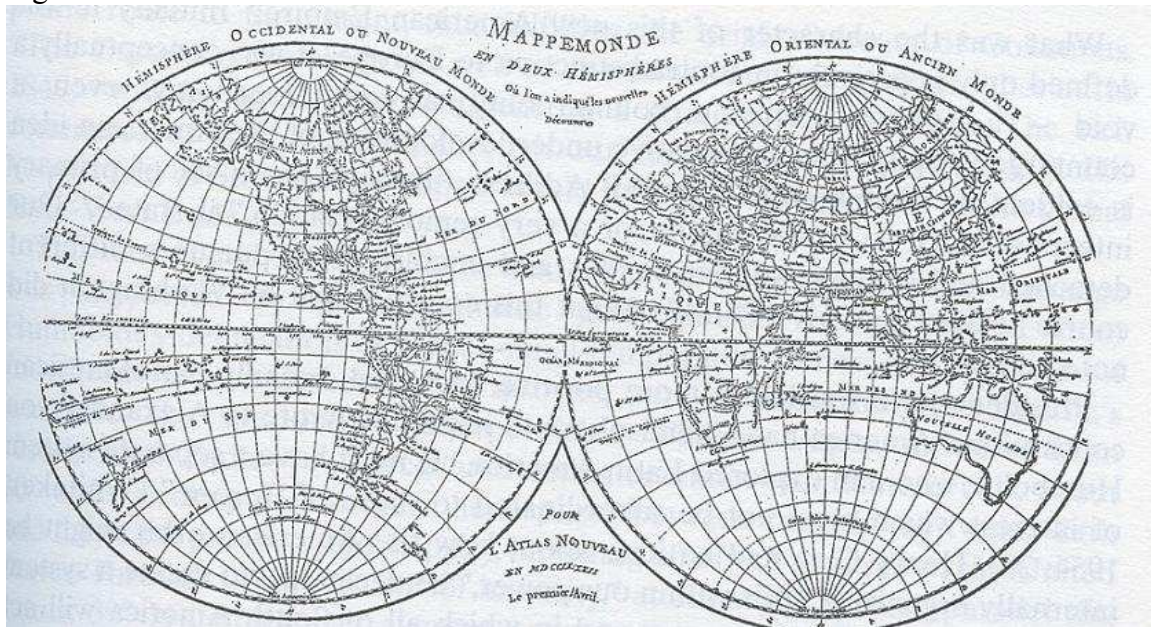
⁶⁴ Ibid. 355.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

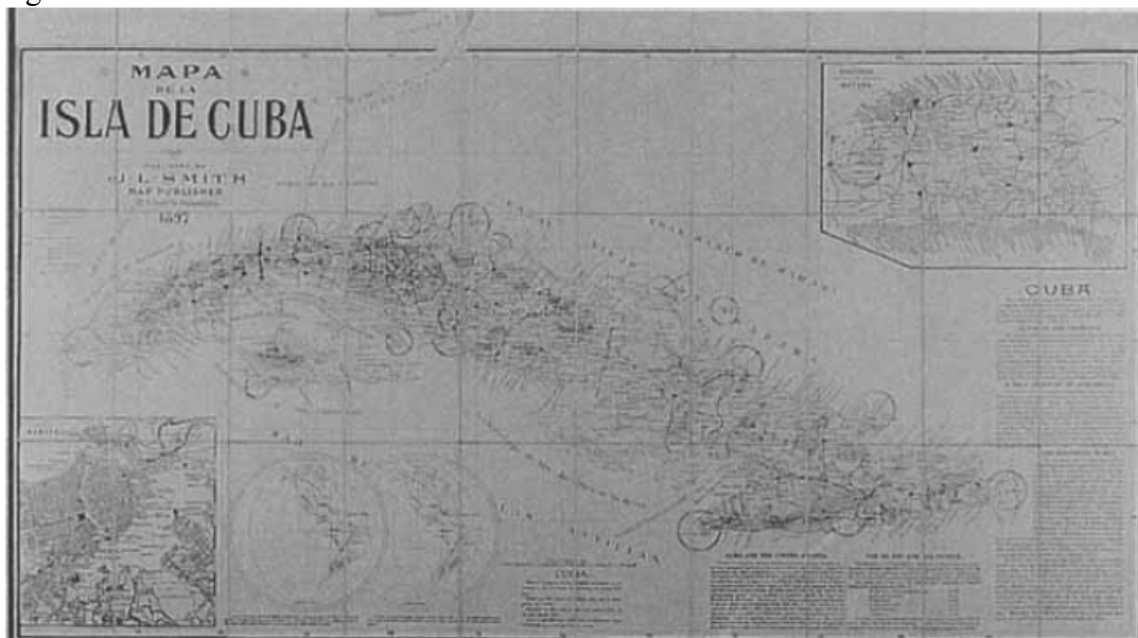
Appendix

Figure 1.



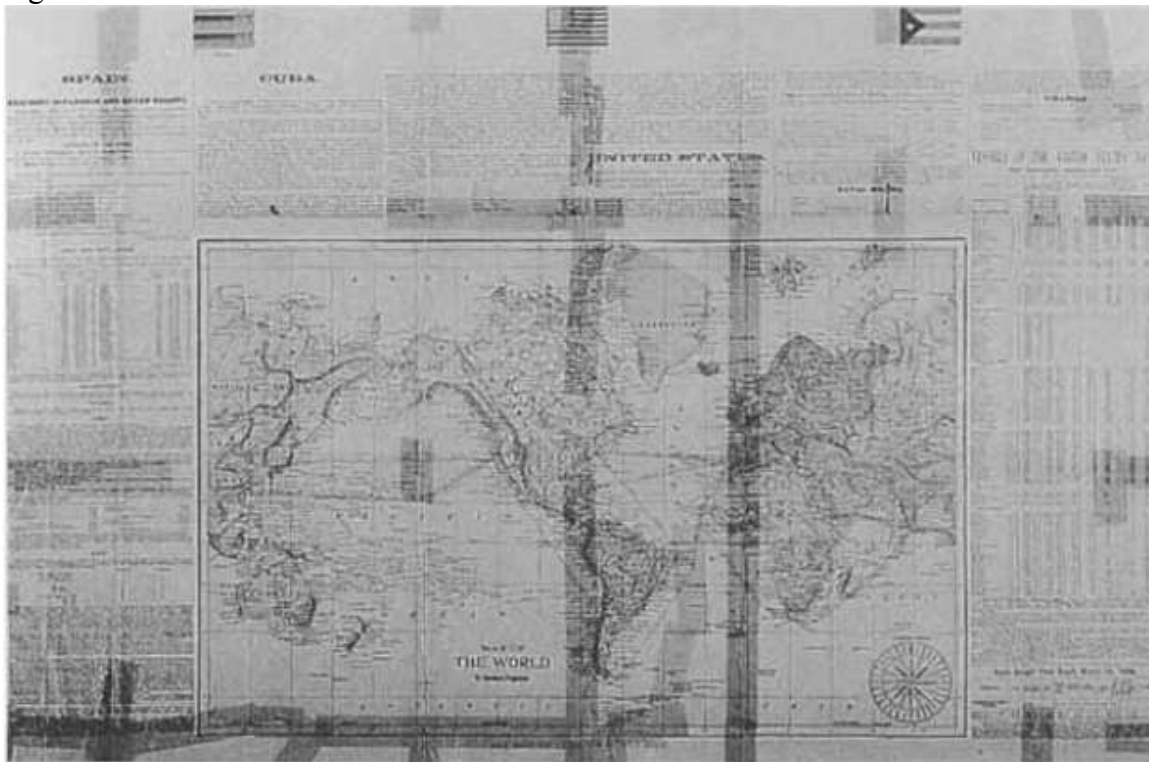
Source: Henrikson, Allen K. *Political Geography: A Reader*. Agnew, John, ed.. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997.

Figure 2.



Source: Burnett, Graham and Craib, Raymond B. "Insular Visions: Cartographic Imagery and the Spanish-American War." <<http://www.princeton.edu/history>>. 1998. 103.

Figure 3.



Source: Ibid. 111.

Figure 4.



Source: Ibid. 114.

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