

## CARTOGRAPHIES

*Etudes françaises*, 21/2. Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, \$7.00.

IN THE SHORT SPACE OF 119 pages, Bernard Beugnot, the editor of this well-conceived and handsome issue of *Etudes françaises* devoted to maps, has included six important studies by contributors from North America and Europe, not to mention his own introduction and a short bibliography, as well as nine illustrations. The volume is a very model of the best in editing a special issue of an on-going periodical; intellectual historians, geographers, and that mythic but also very real creature, the general reader, have here before them a sumptuous feast for the eye and the mind.

Beugnot situates the vast subject in his excellent introduction, "De rives en rêves." Maps are not just representations of the earth on which we live; first and foremost, they invite us to (day)dream and to remember, as much as to travel. A map is a "discours sur le réel," un "foyer privilégié de représentations visuelles, intellectuelles, spirituelles multiples." Early maps had no scale and hence they did not allow the viewer to calculate distances. (One wonders if the gas station road map is not a kind of aberration, and if the fantastical cartography to be found on the backs of cereal boxes is not, in fact, the "truest" map we have today.) The original maps of the Ancients were at best only partly authentic in their symbolization of the world, for their appeal was to the viewer's imagination, his sense of the marvellous. According to Christian Jacob, maps have never been "just" maps; rather they are stories whose power is directly related to their capacity to *seduce* the viewer.

In the sixteenth century, the skills of theoreticians and sailors began to converge as explorers' discoveries gave the

lie to the improbably symmetrical constructions of earlier cartographers, maps whose artificiality Herodius had mocked. Not that the imaginary impact disappeared. Christian Morissonneau and Normand Dorion both treat the effects of cartography in seventeenth-century North America. For the French, the New World was in essence a promised land which after 1763 was transformed into an uncanny "lost continent." The result was that the North acquired the status of a kind of French-Canadian "West," that immense, virgin land, "pure, promise." "Le Nord est le lieu de la réaction optimiste, milieu de vie, de régénération, là où le Destin se révèle, l'anti-Sud" (Morissonneau). Thus the North became a mythic space, a limited and smaller version of North America when the latter was but a province and parish of Québec City in the "good old days."

The space so linearly represented by the maps of the seventeenth century was not new or uninhabited, of course. But the Indians' worldview which it replaced could not have been more different. For their world was in continuous movement and whether alive or dead the Indian soul was ever roaming. One cannot even speak of a decentering here since their world was without a centre: the notion of a fixed, legal domicile — the X we mark on the city map that inscribes our place, our spot, in the urban grid — was totally foreign to unconverted Amerindians. "Le monde sauvage bouge, ne possède pas de limites que pourrait copier la carte. Ni de centre ni de fin" (Doiron). The map, whose purpose it was to contain, to enclose and eventually to imprison, just like the (de)limiting gesture of the dictionary, was in the end the death sentence of the Indian worldview. Place names and directions, words and syntax.

In this story of opposing camps, the moderns were destined to triumph over

the ancients, the travellers over the theoretical mapmakers who never left Europe, and the white men over the Indians. The writing was on the wall — in the form of a map — and the emphasis was less and less on ornamentation and fantasy and more and more on the rational, “realistic” representations of space that could be traversed from point A to point B. The journey was conceived of only as a return to the point of departure. For the Cartesian mind was (is) incapable of thinking of the origin as always already in movement. No doubt Michel Butor’s *Mobile* would have had more to say to the Hurons than the catechism of fixed names and places which was served up to them by the Jesuits.

At the same time, just as map-making was becoming scientific, the fanciful side of the process took refuge in the domain of the psychological. Related to the theory of characters and humours, the moral mapmaker sought to describe the various types whom the life-traveller would sooner or later meet in his journey. Like the printer’s fonts, the characters allowed the traveller (*viator*) to read a human countryside populated by common places. Especially thought provoking is Louis Van Delft’s analysis of John Bunyan’s “Mapp shewing the Order & Causes of Salvation & Damnation” (c. 1664). Cartography became purely textual, i.e., metaphorical, with Lafayette and Lafontaine. The *terra incognita* of the “Carte de Tendre” was the inner one of the human psyche. Hidden waters whose depths remained to be plumbed until Freud came. . . . In fact, one is left dreaming — to come back to Beugnot’s evocative title — of a series of “cartographer” couples over the centuries who have extended various and different maps beyond the limits of earlier geographical and mental confines: Cartier and Rabelais, Champlain and La Rochefoucauld,

Bougainville and Diderot, de Tocqueville and Flaubert, not to mention Cousteau and Proust. Cartographers all, they have provided us with the “maps” which allow one to dream of new shores and new worlds. “Cartographies” has explored an area rich for research, hardly yet known or touched upon.

RALPH SARKONAK

## THE SPACE OF IMAGES

BRUCE HUNTER, *The Beekeeper’s Daughter*.  
Thistledown, \$20.00; pa. \$8.95.

JOHN SMITH, *Midnight Found You Dancing*.  
Ragweed, \$9.95.

LESLEY CHOYCE, *The Top of the Heart*.  
Thistledown, \$20.00; pa. \$8.95.

BRUCE HUNTER EXPLORES nearly undefinable spaces. The graveyard poems making up the first half of his *The Beekeeper’s Daughter* examine the dividing space between life and death as it is felt by the men who work in the cemetery:

And the gravediggers dream of being  
gardeners  
having filled too many holes with the dead.  
The reminder always too much,  
their eyes like plumb bobs  
on the surface of this life,  
plummet with every shovelful  
into the stinking water of the swimmers  
in the lake under our feet.

They are “on the surface of this life,” but are yanked horribly and abruptly through a threshold to glimpse the other side. The undefinable space of that threshold is expressed in a number of these poems in terms of water imagery. Hunter does not contain his imagery spatially. We see in the above example the distance as one travelled vertically, while in some of the other poems the movement across the threshold is horizontal, as across a canal.

Elsewhere in this book, the space is as thin and as difficult to pass through as