Lesley B. Cormack. *Charting an Empire: Geography at the English Universities, 1580–1620*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997. Pp. xvi, 281.

Geography has become over the last two decades a vital component in that broad church, cultural studies. Feminism, Marxist geography, post-colonial studies, and a general interest in the location of subjectivity in the era of globalization have made geography and the politics of space crucial to our understanding of literature, history, and politics. For the most part, however, geography has fallen foul of metaphorization, been converted into the positionality of hybrid identities, or become part of a discourse thereby effectively emptying it of its very real political significance and everyday materiality. Not surprisingly geography has been at its most grounded when the history of nations and imperialism has been the object of study. It is then that geography's role as an ideological program and strategic model for clear political, socio-economic, and territorial aims is most clearly delineated.

Lesley Cormack's important book puts the politics and utility back in geography as it evolved as a science in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Carefully elucidating the shift in scientific ideology to a more practical, public, and empirical endeavour, Cormack demonstrates that geography lay at the heart of imperialism, and, more controversially and significantly, imperialism, via geography, fired the heart of England's universities and culture. That geography aided empire is not surprising; but to add universities, leading humanist scholars, and the contention that, under the rubric of science, they were busily creating "imperialist ideology," *and* in the early modern period, is another matter altogether.

Interested in England's transformation into an imperial power and the *mentalité* which accompanied and enabled this change, Cormack surveys the leading lights and loci of geography production. Here she finds a tightly-knit network that played an "essential role" (p. 12) in developing a worldview which placed England at the center of a globe ready for the taking. These scholars united localities and subjectivities into a nation geared toward greatness through global expansion. Geography and its practitioners provided a structure for legitimizing and imagining the colonization of territory. Issuing from Oxford and Cambridge, Gresham College, and the court of Prince Henry (son of James I), from both Puritan and Royalist, from aristocrat, and the sons of the newly risen gentry and mercantile elites came a system of knowledge, a common ideology, and a design for empowerment that raised the standards (martial as well as cultural) of England above a governable world. Or as Cormack puts it, "Geography encouraged a mathematical control of the world and a mentality that sanctioned its exploitation. Geography provided a key to an imperialism that stressed the superiority of English people and customs and the knowability, controllability, and inferiority of the wider world" (p. 11).

In the main the book is divided into an examination of the three branches of geography — mathematical, descriptive, and chorography — and their evolution as

regards the formation of England as a self-conscious entity and a player in an imperialized world. This relationship is evidenced with reference to who and how many studied geography, how geography developed as a science and part of the curriculum at the universities, and how influential this scholarly world was. The roll call of those who studied and promoted geography — John Dee, Philip Sidney, Kakluyt, Purchas, Thomas Harriot — underscores that this was the subject of the future and catered to those who went on to found, fund and/or fight for the First British Empire.

Cormack deftly leads us through the curricular developments as airy cosmography is replaced by hard-nosed geography, the subject's mathematical branch gives way to its descriptive sibling, and geography's popularity and necessary focus on the real world brought about a "disciplinary evolution that changed the relationship between theory and practice in a new and extremely fertile manner" (p. 23). The lectures given by the mathematician Thomas Hood to the East India Company neatly exemplify this relationship. The shift to a more liberal education reflected the rise of the state and mercantile capitalism, the entrance of the sons of merchants and gentry into the universities, as well as an inexorable economic pressure and social dynamism that sought to distinguish England from the Continent and aggressively compete for trade routes, markets, and colonies. Geography, Cormack meticulously shows, was *useful* for these developments; its practical engagement with the natural world offered knowledge, as well as a certain panache, vital to enterprising men in a social order accelerating into capital and territorial accumulation.

However, instead of more surely connecting the Baconian or collecting methodology of this new science to capital accumulation, Cormack presents us with lengthy inventories of scholars, college affiliations, and book ownership, an accumulation of proof that is at once a wonderful resource and after a while mind-numbing. Strangely enough, a book that is about how the university is hand-in-glove with nascent imperialism ends up leaving the socio-political world that produces and is reproduced by geography largely invisible. The chapter entitled "The Social Context of Geography" is confined to a who's who and where of the geography community. The conditions out of which geography issued to meet new needs are all but left off the map. This omission has the unfortunate effect of making geography and the university appear overly important in developing an imperial imaginary and impetus. Cormack states that the English "needed an imperialist ideology before they could begin to construct an empire in deed" (p. 225). This is of course true but what of, for instance, the colonization of Ireland, the example of the much envied Spanish empire, the commercial-imperialist ventures East, militant Protestantism, literary culture, and a coherent imperialist ideology held by what Steven Saunders Webb calls the governors-general? Cormack does not argue that geography was the fount of all imperialism, but neither does she make clear what other forces were in play.

The upshot of marginalizing revolutionary social changes, with their religious and class co-ordinates that led finally to the English Revolution, is that the sons of gentry and merchants seem to appear from nowhere, geography seems to create imperialism, and the vast changes wrought by agrarian and mercantile capitalism remain nebulous. Imperialism only really found a sure footing when the state was finally in the control of parliament and mercantile interests; and this was a result of the Revolution. What needs to be made clearer is that geography's evolution and its popularity were a response to the consolidation of productive forces and control over resources at home and expansion abroad in order to capture new markets.

Nonetheless, Cormack has produced a lucid and powerful historical account of the link between culture and imperialism, identity and territorialization. She shows that geography, whether in its most esoteric form (mathematical) or its most consumable (chorography, travel narratives), is about fixing property rights over land; that fourteen M.P.'s were also chorographers — recording local history and geography, classifying hierarchies and chronologies — exemplifies that knowledge is power. Or, as Cormack succinctly puts it, geography enabled the "world [to] be measured, mapped, and thus owned and manipulated" (p. 92). Her project will niggle those who still cling to the separation of culture from imperialism, the university from foreign policy, but her evidence is overwhelming. As Cormack shows, empire begins at home; in doing so she also points to the need for academics to further clean house.

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