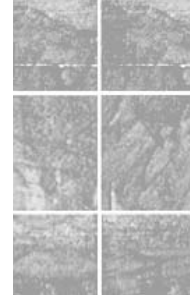


# The map as a kind of talk: Brian Harley and the confabulation of the inner and outer voice



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## ABSTRACT

The recent publication of a collection of critical essays by the late theoretician of cartography, Brian Harley, provides an occasion for reflecting on the nature of his contribution to our understanding of the map. Harley argued that the authority of the map derives from the erasure of its authorship, an authorship Harley understood to be diffused between the inner voice of the mapmaker (with his craft and knowledge) and the outer voice of the mapmaker's patron (with his capital and interests). As each attributes the map to the other, both disappear. The effect is to naturalize the map as an (unauthored and so) objective image of the world as it is. Harley's argument is relevant to anyone who makes things for others, including the author of this abstract.

## KEY WORDS

Brian Harley • cartography • discourse • mapmaking • maps • naturalization

I have been asked – I have agreed – to write something about maps for the inaugural volume of *Visual Communication*, but... *what to write?* There's actually a little more to it: I've been asked – I've agreed – to write between 7000 and 10,000 words; I am to use the Harvard system of referencing; to type on one side only; to use only A4 paper; *everything* must be double-spaced.

But... *what to write?* What would be timely would be something about Brian Harley. Brian was a seminal figure in the history and philosophy of cartography, one read by a growing number of people outside the field, people in fields seemingly quite unrelated, people in literature, for instance, people in the visual arts. What makes the moment timely is the recent

publication of a collection of his most provocative essays (Harley, 2001), a publication which, in token of his widening readership, drew the attention of no less an arbiter of cultural significance than *The New Yorker*.<sup>1</sup>

Punchy, trenchant, truly germinal, Brian had begun writing these essays sometime in the early 1980s. Each of them, in increasingly combative ways, contested the paradigm that had dominated cartography for decades. Where that paradigm had positioned maps as objective – indeed ‘scientific’ – representations of the world around us, Brian insisted on resituating maps as political documents inculcated in the creation and maintenance of social power.

As the decade waned the titles of his essays grew increasingly contentious: ‘Meaning and Ambiguity in Tudor Cartography’ had been followed by ‘Maps, Knowledge, and Power’. ‘Silences and Secrecy: The Hidden Agenda of Cartography in Early Modern Europe’ had been followed by ‘Can There Be a Cartographic Ethics?’ Shortly before his death, Brian had pulled together seven of these essays for publication. His intention was to call the whole collection *The New Nature of Maps*. Back in 1976 Arthur Robinson and Barbara Petchenik had published *The Nature of Maps*. It had come to occupy a keystone position in the dominant paradigm. By calling into question Robinson and Petchenik’s continuing relevance, Brian was issuing... a call to arms.



But wait! Already a question! *Can I call him Brian?* Harley is too stuffy, too remote, for a writer who speaks so directly to us. But... *Brian?* Would that be seemly in a journal like this? Would that be... too casual? too flip?

It’s not that I knew him. We met only once. We corresponded, but not often. We sent each other copies of our papers with ‘For Brian’, ‘For Denis’, scrawled in the upper margins. Now and then we spoke on the phone. Mostly we met in print, where often we said unkind things about each other.<sup>2</sup>

How to decide? Although unstated, my agreement with *Visual Communication* is cosseted in a nest of conventions, these established by tradition and an unspoken sense of what it means to be a scholar. There is a certain history, there are relationships with others, there are expectations. The journal will be widely read. What I say should matter. It goes without saying that I should... *stick to the point*.

Which is what exactly? That’s the question, isn’t it? What’s the point? What was *Brian’s* point? Well, I’ve been writing about it, from the top.



When I’m writing I always wonder: *will this make it through?* Above, in the first paragraph, I tried to distinguish ‘I’ve’ from ‘I have’ – maybe it

passed unnoticed – but what I hoped was to let *what to write?* resonate at this abysmal ‘technical’ level, and not just at the ostensible level of what to write... *about maps*. But as I wrote, I worried, *is it worth it? Is it worth trying to explain this to some editor who automatically will have blue penciled it because it’s inconsistent, because it’s too informal, because it breaks ‘house style’?* Though I want to disclaim him, this editor – among many in *my* mind – is mine. He labors to constrain my... *less appropriate* inclinations. I try to pass him off as an outsider, as a former high school teacher, as a government censor (I’m at the front, I’m trying to write home). Probably this is ungenerous. Maybe all he is trying to do is point out my path. Yet in a world where alternatives exclude, what *is* a path but the sum of the routes not taken?

That’s one way of thinking about it. The mental editor bars one path, I slip off down another. Another way of thinking about it is that... *I do as I’m told*. After all, I’m not writing this on a lark, there is a letter of agreement, I have a patron. That’s the first thing *Brian* would have noticed. He would have said: ‘You have a patron.’ And he would have been right: I do. But I *also* have an *inner voice* that speaks to me about the comeliness of sentences, the demands of truth, a voice that juggles the imperative of being *me* with those of being *in society*.

And in the history of cartography that Brian wrote, this also is how *maps* were made: *for a patron* by a mapmaker whose every gesture, no matter how slight, was edited by an *inner voice* that kept things... tasteful.<sup>3</sup>

A figure then: a man – mostly they seem to have been men, though slowly the women are being disinterred – draws a map listening to two voices, an inner and an outer (Figure 1). The outer voice says, ‘I’ll pay you if you draw what I want.’ The inner voice tells the man how to do this, how to execute the commission, that is, how to draw what the outer voice wants so the man will be compensated for his labor. Both voices are actually more subtle than this – and they speak to each other over the man’s head (sooner or later they’re both inside it) – but in any case the map is the result of a negotiation these voices achieve through the medium of the man’s hands. Or maybe it’s a whole print-shop of hands, or a government agency. And probably the voices are diffused too, that of the patron through ‘market forces’, that of the editor through professional associations, the schools, the... aether.

Notice that in this figure the environment makes no appearance. This stands in marked opposition to most figures of this kind in which it is the environment that is being apprehended by a mapmaker, and in which a patron makes no appearance at all. Notice here that the man less ‘responds’ to ‘social forces’ than experiences them as confabulating voices, so that the map that he ends up drawing is more a record – or a product – of a conversation than anything else. It’s a kind of graphic discourse, a sort of frozen talk... between a patron and a drudge. Certainly this map is not a representation, not a picture, of the world. As Brian insists in the first pages of the first essay in the new collection... *it is not a mirror*.



## THE MAPMAKER

**Figure 1** The map is the result of a negotiation between an outer and an inner voice achieved through the hands of a man – or woman – called the mapmaker. It is a snapshot of a moment in a discourse these voices are having with others in the world. *Artist: Chandler Wood.*

Then what is the map? Brian talks about it as a ‘social construction’, but this phrase evades as much as it confronts. *I’ve* been trying to think about the map as a *discourse function*, that is, as one of the ways available for people to affect the behavior of others in a communication situation.<sup>4</sup> That is, I’ve been trying to construe the map as a thing with a regular function – a regular role – in discourse, in talk. The role a map plays in this discourse is descriptive. That is, it’s little narrative or interrogative, it’s not much interpellative or imperative. The descriptions maps effect affect behavior by binding people to each other through territory they mutually inhabit.

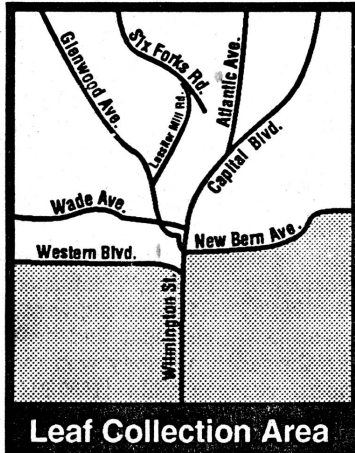
This is really straightforward when you think about the maps that are made of school districts, leaf collection areas, congressional voting districts, soil conservation districts, zoning (Figure 2). Each of these maps binds people together by describing on a common plane (the plane of the map) two kinds of behavior, *dwelling*, and *things we want to attach to dwelling* (voting, paying taxes, receiving services). That is, the mapmaker *links*, *connects*, *ties* these behaviors together by describing them on a common plane (that of the map). The binding is accomplished *through, by means of*,



**Jan. 9- Jan. 13, 1995**



**FOR THIS AREA:** Starting on the south side of New Bern Ave. moving to Western Blvd.



**Trucks will be in the shaded area indicated on the map Jan. 9-13, 1995.**

This is an estimated schedule and may be changed due to weather or the amount of leaves. Contact the Leaf Line at 831-6729 for a recorded message about leaf collection or consult Cable Channel 22 for updated information about any schedule changes.

City crews will collect with a vacuum leaf machine piled, loose leaves left at curbside. Leaves should be raked to the curb, not placed in the street.

**Bagged leaves and other yard waste also will continue to be collected curbside in CLEAR plastic bags or permanent containers as part of the City's regular Wednesday yard waste collection.**

Requests for delivery of leaves (full truckloads only) for use as mulch are now being accepted. Call 831-6446. Most deliveries will be made after Christmas.

**C I T Y   O F   R A L E I G H**

**LEAF COLLECTION**

**Figure 2** A map of a leaf collection area. This links residents of Raleigh living south of New Bern and Western Boulevard with a vacuum leaf machine that will be at their curbsides at the indicated times. It was produced by a technician in negotiation with his boss as part of a discourse the City of Raleigh carries on with its citizens.  
*Source:* City of Raleigh.

this coterminous description. As this coterminous description binds, it simultaneously reifies, stores, reflects, and promulgates the act of binding: 'These two things go together', the map says, and as a consequence, we who live *here*... send our kids to school *there*.

No map works in any other way, though the behaviors they bind may vary widely. Instead of *dwelling* and *voting*, they could be *knowing this* (for

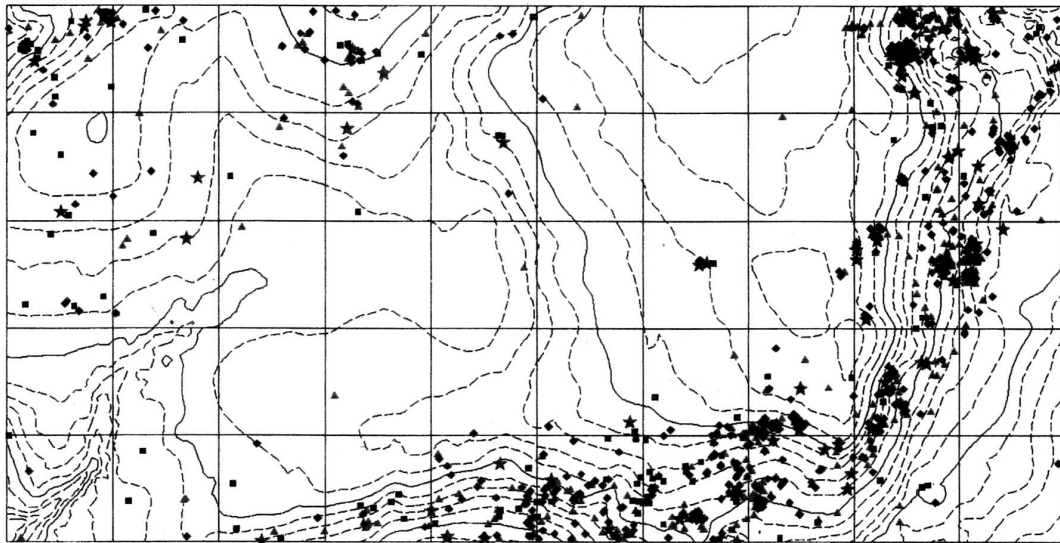
instance, about *topography*, say that of Barro Colorado Island) and *knowing that* (for instance, about *the occurrence of a tree*, say that of *Ocotea skutchii*). ‘These two things go together’, the map says (Figure 3) and, as a consequence, to know two things... is to know a third (say, that *Ocotea skutchii* is a slope specialist). The *knowledge* that is brought into being this way – that is *constructed* this way – is no different from other *behaviors* that are brought into being by a map. After all, *knowing* this or that, and *going* here or there, are equally behaviors, are equivalently caught up in the larger frame of social action.

None of this is to deny the map’s deictic competence. It *is* to displace it. It is not the *role* of maps to point to the environment – I can point to the environment with my finger – though their handiness at doing so supports their ever-growing role in human discourse. Maps that are differentially able to point to the environment are, of course, differentially enabled to fulfill the map’s discourse function; but though the pointing is essential, it is not what the map *does*, it is not what the map is really *about*. The pointing is an

## OCOTEA SP.

Minimum adult size = 30cm

*Barro Colorado Island -- 50 hectare permanent forest plot*



1982 Size Classes:    ▲ 1–2cm    ♦ 2–8cm    ■ 8–Adult    ★ Adults

**OCOS**

**Figure 3** A map of a 50 hectare permanent forest plot. This links the topography with the occurrence of *Ocotea skutchii* on Barro Colorado Island in Panama. It was produced by a technician, largely embodied in a computer, printer and relevant software, in negotiation with a senior scientist on the staff of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute as part of a discourse humans are having with each other about our long-term relationship to trees. *Source:* Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute.

almost... *by-the-way*... attribute of the map (it is certainly taken for granted). What the map's *about* – what is really at stake – is whatever the discourse *facilitated* by this pointing is about. It's about the consequences of this pointing for social life. It's about taxation. It's about school attendance. It's about the differential sway of the law.



So, a second figure then: a man draws a map – that is, *shapes human behavior* – while listening to two voices, an outer voice, that of his patron, who has hired the mapmaker for his own purposes; and an inner voice, editing his hand, bending it to the patron's will, ensuring that the mapmaker earns his fee (Figure 4). Again, the two voices are probably more subtle than this: they have much in common (they have been flattering each other for centuries); the mapmaker is not being forced to draw against his will. Still, his map *is* the conclusion of a colloquy conducted by these voices, and though reached through the mapmaker's hands (perhaps these days tapping keys instead of holding a pen) it is only in the most limited sense... *his*.

Whose is the map then? That is, who is *responsible* for the map, whom shall we praise for its glories, attack for its sins? What Brian saw, what makes



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**Figure 4** The mapmaker, listening to the outer voice of an employer or patron and the inner voice of a craftsman or a drudge... *shapes human behavior*. Artist: Chandler Wood.

these essays genuinely generative, was that certainly the map is *not* the mapmaker's, but that... *neither is it the patron's*. It is important to understand what this means. It means, first of all, that the mapmaker is not autonomous, that the history of maps cannot be written as a hero saga from the mapmaker's perspective, that the interests of the patron are always a part of the story – an essential part of the story – where no doubt *interests* has some of the sense of curiosity, but far more that of *self-interest*, of *personal* advantage, of things in which *rights*, *claims* or *shares* are held, as in *commercial* interests, *military* interests, *political* interests. This instantaneously makes of the history of cartography a mercantile history, a military history, a political history; and this makes of cartography – of mapmaking – a mercantile, a military, a political, *practice*. But in the very same breath it means that the patron is not autonomous either. His dependence on the mapmaker to advance his interests is real, the binding so effectively achieved through the medium of the map can be achieved only through the hands of the mapmaker, hands attendant to a voice that whispers of elegance, that speaks about acid and copper, that natters on about the difficulties of showing both the hill and the town below it. In fact, it is only because his hands are attendant to this voice that the mapmaker is able to serve the patron. This makes of the commercial history, the military history, the political history a history of aesthetics, a history of technology, a history of signs.<sup>5</sup>

There is only *one* history. It is all one piece. We cannot choose to be in one part and not another. It is all or nothing.

Brian's achievement was to resituate the history of cartography, and therefore its practice, in this recognizable reality of wealth *and* power *and* taste *and* technique from which previous generations of practitioners and historians had, as if by a sleight of hand, abstracted it. *Look!* they've said, *it's all technique, it's all aesthetics* (it's all aesthetics which we will reduce to techniques (it will be demonstrated that the best looking map is the one that is easiest to 'read' (endless college students will be subjected to tests measuring their ability to estimate the relative sizes of graduated circles, to discriminate among shades of gray (the reproduction of the social relations of power will... *disappear*))). By showing in many different ways that there was more to mapmaking than the aesthetic and the technical (more than both art *and* science (more than the inner voice alone could speak of)), Brian was able to show why maps mattered (why they have often been censored, why so many are published in such mind-boggling numbers). They mattered because, having been made by a mapmaker who bent his art and science to the will of a patron exercising his wealth and power, maps became vehicles for the *exercise* of that wealth and power.

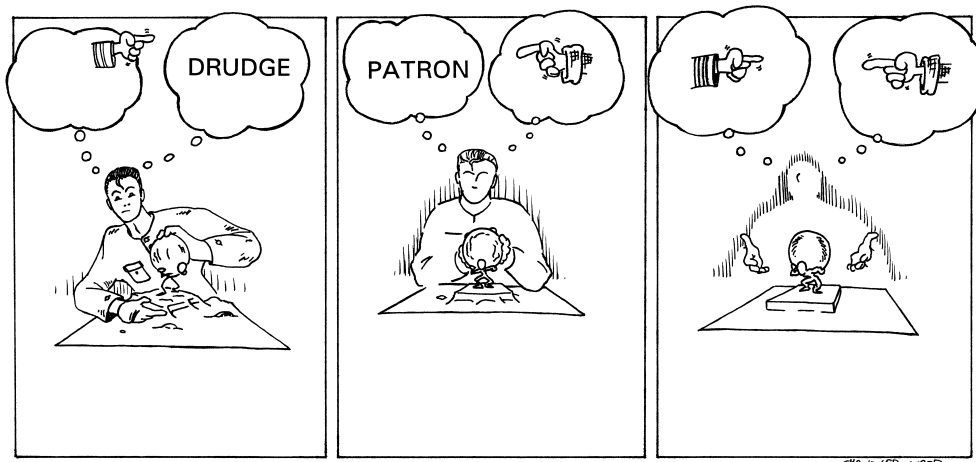
It was the *simultaneous* attention to the two voices that gave Brian's analysis its edge. Brian's attention to the voice of the patron never closed his ears to the din of the workshop. Brian's *inclusive* listening allowed him to reconstruct the workshop (with all its art and science) as the site of a labor expropriated by a patron (with all his wealth and power). Holding them in a

single gaze let Brian see the source of the naturalizing mantle maps wear (the font of their actual authority): the mutual alibis drudge and patron give each other with their reciprocal, ‘*He wanted to put that on the map! No! He said this was the only way to do it!*’ Brian showed how this diffusion of responsibility, this... *modesty*... generated the map’s authority, gave the map its rhetorical effectiveness, gave it its power, its ability to convince. Against the claims of the profession (and its apologists) that this depended on the map’s *quality* (its deictic accuracy and precision), Brian demonstrated that the map’s power *actually* arose from its apparently *immaculate conception*, that the map had authority precisely because it was... authorless. It was the invisibility of the agency of its origins that gave the map the appearance of a product of nature, and it was this naturalization that made the map appear to be a window on the world (instead of an *argument* about it). The mutual finger-pointing of patron and drudge evaporates the colloquy whose conclusion is actually... *the mapmaker in action*. And so the *mapmaker*, like the Cheshire cat, fades discreetly from the scene, leaving behind a map... *unmade*, Natural, True (Figure 5).

At the root of the map’s claim to objectivity lies its outrageous irresponsibility.



Brian referred to these voices of patron and drudge in many different ways. In the first article in the new collection, ‘Texts and Contexts in the Interpretation of Early Maps’, Brian called the outer voice *society*, and the inner voice the *context of the cartographer*. In the second, ‘Maps, Knowledge, and Power’, he distinguished between the *political contexts* of maps (outer),



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**Figure 5** The mapmaker, shaping human behavior through his resolution of the debate between his outer and inner voices, fades from the scene as the two voices assign responsibility for the map... *to each other*. Artist: Chandler Wood.

and *cartographic symbolism* (mostly inner). In the same paper he tried to conceptualize the relationship of the outer to the inner in a section called 'Map content in the transaction of power'. Here he distinguished *deliberate distortions of map content* (imposed from without) from '*unconscious distortions of map content* (arising from within by virtue of the cartographer's unavoidable immersion in society). In the third essay, 'Silences and Secrecy: The Hidden Agenda of Cartography in Early Modern Europe', Brian opposed *intentional silences*, similarly imposed from without (from... *above*), and *epistemological or unintentional silences*. These latter occur *within the workshop* as the form cartographic practice assumes in its conformation to patronal and social desires. In the fourth essay, 'Power and Legitimation in English Geographical Atlases', Brian set the *external power* of the patron in opposition to the mapmaker's *internal power*, as he did in 'Deconstructing the Map', where he additionally distinguished between the *cultural* and the *technical*, almost, but not quite, identical to *external* and *internal* power.

Though their application to old maps was a novelty, the distinctions themselves were rarely original with Brian. Instead they came from an eclectic and sometimes superficial reading in philosophy (Jacques Derrida), history (Michel Foucault), art history (Erwin Panofsky), the history of science (Joseph Rouse). Insight ignited inspiration, the whole caught flame, often Brian was unable to control the resulting conflagration. The fever of discovery whirled him from essay to essay in a kind of delirium, so the essays are sometimes sloppy, the distinctions are often softer than they could be, they shift uneasily with the scale of analysis, certainly the inner is *embedded* in the outer, and the closer you listen the more obvious it is that because the two are in dialogue, they are continuously stroking, cajoling, shaping each other. Evidently the outer is internalized, soon enough it turns *into* the inner. As Brian put it in the essay on English atlases, 'Diffused between a number of London map-makers, external power became internal power.' But at the same time the inner is somehow unfolding into the outer, it is only through the technique the inner speaks that the outer can be embodied in the map. It is the technique (in fact) that legitimates through the dispassion of its apparent systemization the untamed desire driving the patron. This mutual co-construction does not, however, unmake the distinctions. The ensemble of *culture, society, political contexts, deliberate distortions, intentional silences, and external power* recognizably limns a patron – yours, mine and Brian's no less than those of 18th-century mapmakers – precisely as that of *the technical, the context of the cartographer, cartographic symbolism, 'unconscious' distortions, unintentional silences, and internal power* sketches the practiced competence, the specialist knowledge, the craft, that the professional, the scholar, the editor brings to the tasks of making maps, doing history, writing this essay.<sup>6</sup>

In writing about these voices, Brian often seems to be taking sides. He seems to be arguing that the patron is more responsible for the map, or that the drudge is. In the end... he *doesn't* take sides. Whichever voice he seems to be advancing here, he will be sure to throw over in the next section. There he

will not only right the balance, but tip it too far in the other direction. In the next paper he will make the necessary... *over*-correction. So Brian stumbled forward in an unceasing dialectic, the more inspiring – the more *interesting* – for being, apparently, unselfconscious. *The history of maps is the history of patronage. The history of maps is a history of workshop practices.* First one, then the other. In this way, again and again, the real history seems just beyond his reach. But actually he's nailed it down...

The real history is one of complaisance, compliance, complicity.



Against whom? Why, against the innocent! Brian is terribly straightforward about this. Nothing in his late work is so novel as the *feelings* he expresses for the victims of the map, his sense of guilty responsibility, his anger at the unholy alliance of patron and professional to subjugate the weak, his contempt for the lie with which they obscure their dirty work. There is a sense of personal outrage – as though at the fact that he himself was duped for most of his life – and it expresses itself in what strikes many as violent hyperbole: 'As much as guns and warships, maps have been the weapons of imperialism', he writes in the second essay in this collection. Wow! To anyone steeped in the warm bath of the history of cartography as drawn by Bagrow, Brown, Crone, Robinson, Tooley, Wallis, and Wilford, this comes with the shock of an ice water douche.<sup>7</sup> It's a jarring backhand across the face from a man whose principles have been insulted, whose sense of fairness has been violated. *It's a call to arms.*

Brian actually argues that maps are *more* deadly than guns, *more* insidious than warships. 'My reading of the map is not a technical one', he writes in the third essay in the new collection, '... but a political one.' Brian argues that maps *anticipate* empire, which they then go on to help *pacify*, *exploit*, and *legitimate*. For Brian, maps are the colonial ordnance *par excellence*. Subsequently they go on to create the myths necessary for the maintenance of the new territorial *status quo*, standing as 'aggressive complement to the rhetoric of speeches, newspapers, and written texts, or to the histories and popular songs extolling the virtues of empire'.

That is, maps are like intellectual cops, creating and maintaining an order that *suppresses* an inherent *disorder*, a disorder stirred up by an iniquitous distribution of wealth and power. First maps collude in an usurpation of territory and a simultaneous (re)construction of space and property (the reconnoitering and claims of the explorers' charts, the panegyrics made from these by the engravers back home). Then they help patrol it (the cadasters, zoning maps, and topographic surveys cruising the neighborhoods like squad cars vigilant for any violation of established order). The victims of this imperialist mapping project have been numerous. The greater part of them are living now (*they are all of us who are not in control*), but, living or dead, Brian is not slow to name them: Palestinians,

Algonquians, other American Indians, tropical peoples, the Irish, the lower classes, Catholics, Muslims, the conquered, the disenfranchised, the everyday landscape of ordinary people, the subject, the unique.<sup>8</sup>

Nothing so marked Brian's writing as his willingness, indeed his *eagerness*, to get concrete about the subjects of cartographic oppression. He identifies with its victims. His prose soars in their defense. He gallops to their rescue. He ties their pennons to his lance. *That's it!* It's an embattled prose. *That's* what made the difference: *the passion!* Which in the end is why it didn't matter if he understood Derrida or Foucault,<sup>9</sup> didn't matter that he wouldn't let go his British empiricism.<sup>10</sup> What mattered was the fresh air he let into the overheated study (the tray with the sherry glasses, the antique maps tastefully framed against the paneled walls), the more so because it amounted to the *volte-face* of a long-term drudge, to a revolt led by a Spartacus...

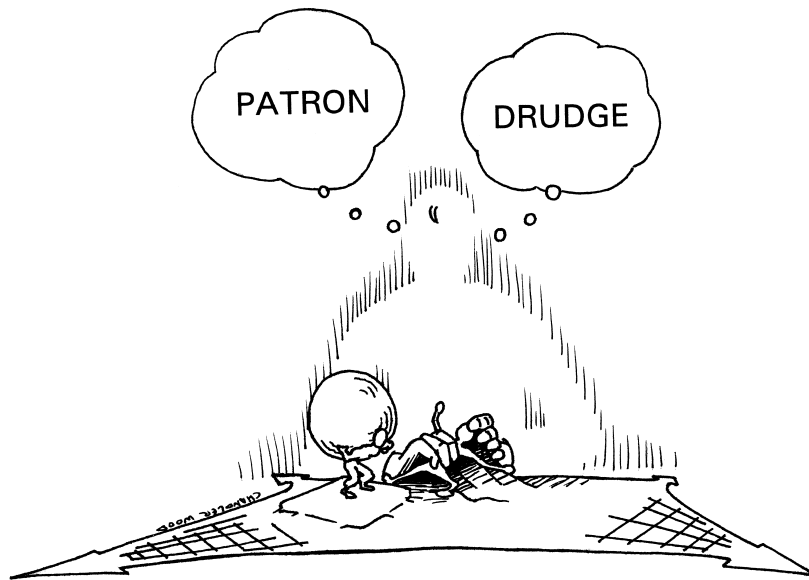
*Man the barricades! Liberté! Égalité! Fraternité!* In the fourth essay in this collection the class consciousness Harley never quite manages to obscure swarms to the surface in a kind of straightforward denunciation of the role of the map, explicitly as embodied in 18th-century English atlases, but every map is implied:

The making and reading of maps, by constantly recycling a normalcy in power relations, is akin to a ritual, a ritual performed with knowledge and linked to attitudes and emotions widely held and expressed in English society. These included an attachment by the patrons to their own class and nation, a love of ownership and property, a bellicose chauvinism, and a tendency to despise savages.

At home these maps worked 'to maintain the long-standing hegemony of a broad ruling class', while in the North American colonies the maps 'operated decisively in favor of the new society of Euro-Americans and at the expense of the Indians'. This is what maps did: they screwed the powerless on the behalf of the powerful.

So a fourth figure then: an *invisible* man draws a map – that is, *maintains and extends the hegemony of the ruling class* – while listening to two voices, an outer voice, and an inner (Figure 6). The outer voice is that of his patron. This is a member of the ruling classes, some species of landowner, mercantile buccaneer, colonial apparatchik; or more often an agent operating for the patron or with the patron's interest in mind, a printer, a bookseller, a tamed savant.<sup>11</sup> The inner voice is that of the conscientious professional, the craftsman, the drudge (another tamed savant (the professional's teacher)), grappling with the daunting complexities of compilation, generalization, hierarchization, and standardization.<sup>12</sup>

The mapmaker – attendant to both voices, obligated to reconcile them – is incapacitated from drawing *either* the world desired by the patron, *or* that dictated by the systematic technicalism of the professional: he has to



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**Figure 6** An invisible man maintains and extends the hegemony of the ruling classes by attending to the outer voice of his patron and the inner voice of his technical training: this is the mapmaker. Artist: Chandler Wood.

attend to *both*. In the first place, *both voices have to be heeded for either to be heard at all*, but in the second place *neither exists without the other*. The technicalism of the professional has long since been infected by patronal will on earlier excursions through the cycles of social production (it's a festering sore of compromised intentions); exactly as the patronal will has been (somewhat) bridled – *frustrated* – by the mapmaker's systematic technicalism (... yes, *I'm sure you do, but...*).

Because workshops accumulate precedents as a form of capital, each turn of this productive wheel embeds patronal desires more and more deeply into the professional codes, and technicalism more and more deeply into the very dreams of the patron (*just think what we can do!*). All this charms the voices into an increasing harmony (though never equals, patron and drudge work to their mutual benefit (the status quo is not merely supported, it is reproduced and extended)). As Brian concludes, 'the social power in question [becomes] internal to cartography and [is] manufactured in its own workshop practices.' Maps of North America that – for purely technical reasons (*to better show the topography!*) – marginalized, trivialized, or eliminated traces of aboriginal occupation, worked to support legal doctrines of *terra nullis* and *vacuum domicilium*. These in turn legitimated an English occupation encouraged by precisely the same maps (through their 'portrayal of a landscape that was familiar and not hostile to English eyes' (i.e. not already occupied by a terrifying Otherness (excluded... to better show the topography))).

By making himself invisible the mapmaker thus not only lent his

professional skills to the full exercise of his patron's will, but excused himself from paying attention to what he was doing (the better to enjoy the fruits of his subservience (which fact he repressed beneath the 'imperious' demands of... *method, system, rigor*)). In the essay that concludes this volume, Brian eludes the commitment to the past that marginalized his own discourse as *history*; and, directly addressing contemporary practitioners, explicitly identifies technicalism, method... *positive scientism* as the essential means through which cartographers screen, deny, *repress* their complicity in the contemporary world order. *Every map is a moral tract*, Brian avers, 'a manifesto for a set of beliefs about the world,' and unless the professional in the mapmaker admits to this, the mapmaker will be 'relegated to becoming a robotic arm of an institutional or commercial patron.'



This straightforward assertion of the iniquitous power of maps, and the bad faith of their makers, offended many – perhaps most – practitioners and historians. Inevitably there were efforts to dismiss Brian's critique as... *old hat*. 'Cartographers are perforce aware of the masters they serve and their interests', Anne Godlewska (1989) wrote in her commentary on 'Deconstructing the Map':

They have always had the power of loyal and skilled servants and no more. Prospective USA Central Intelligence Agency cartographers are still sworn to secrecy and submitted to extensive security checks. And for hundreds, if not thousands, of years cartographers have been the servants of kings and rulers and not, by any stretch of the imagination, free to publish or liberally interpret their findings.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, were it true, this could at best have been wormwood to Brian's gall, but the unceasing construction of cartography *as a science* across the modern period gives the lie to Godlewska's (1989) claims. As she herself acknowledges, 'these relationships have been more complex than they seem as both the government cartographers and the commercial cartographers have also shaped, and sometimes manipulatively so, the perceptions of the rich and powerful.'

But such acknowledgments were rare. More common was the pretense of a bewilderment, a kind of disingenuous innocence (*what could Brian be talking about?*), though some had been stumbling around for so long in the dark they'd grown accustomed to their blinders. As if to underscore the salience of Brian's observation that 'the social power in question had become internal to cartography', Duane Marble acknowledged apropos the choice of map projections that, 'It escapes me how politics, etc., can enter into it.'<sup>14</sup> Doubtless it equally escapes him how maps could have had anything to do with the English subjugation of aboriginal Americans, but it is hard to

distinguish his position from that of the National Rifle Association which cannot understand how murder etc., etc., can enter into the question whether to control the manufacture and distribution of handguns. Of course it's *not* that they can't see it, but that both are so *invested* in what it is they manufacture (knowledge, handguns) that they find themselves *literally* incapacitated from acting on the evidence of their eyes and brains (they have lost *all* objectivity).

Some were furious, though, those from whose eyes Brian *had* ripped the scales, but who understood – even as they suddenly realized what maps were really up to – that for them it was... *too late* (either they acknowledged they'd invested too much in their own co-optation, or accepted their infamy and relished it). These spent themselves in combinations of willful ignorance and self-righteous outrage. *No*, really! Here, just read this *Cartographica* referee's response to Brian's 'Deconstructing the Map':

I have read the paper by Brian Harley. In fact I spent two hours on this horseshit and that is more than it deserves. You should know better than to send me a paper on such a topic. What a pretentious bunch of mumbo-jumbo. Can't he write plain English? He uses obscure terms that he does not define and that are not even in the *Oxford Universal*. He would be far more effective if he made his points more directly, but then what are his points? In most cases I think I know what he means, but his points are obvious; at least to me. So what's the problem? Does he have a hidden agenda?

Honestly now, what is – 'postmodern philosophical thought' – 'deconstruct' – 'rhetorical dimension' – 'preexistence' – 'mimetic bondage' (sounds interesting; with chains and whips?) – 'pregnancy of the opaque' (obviously a result of mimetic bondage) – 'archeology of knowledge' – 'subliminal geometry' – 'powers are reified and legitimated' – 'anthropology of the image' etc. etc. ad nauseam. He vastly overplays the points he is trying to make and obscures them with a verbal smoke screen. In the process he loses sight of what maps are all about. You print this crap and I'll cancel my subscription.

Wow. I got it all off my chest. Do you want me to return the paper or can I use it for toilet paper? <sup>15</sup>

Was it really Brian's diction that roused this unforeseen desire to use horseshit for toilet paper? The issue of *Cartographica* in which 'Deconstructing the Map' appeared had articles in it by jargonmeisters Mark Monmonier, Patricia Gilmartin and Elizabeth Shelton, Frank Canters, and Samuel Baron.<sup>16</sup> Pick sentences at random. Honestly now, what does: 'This means that for  $\lambda = 0$   $f_2(\Phi, \lambda)$  has to become a linear function of the latitude' mean? Or, 'A modified two-scale, two-stage version of the Douglas line-simplification algorithm can first regionalize the small-scale database and then produce a matched regionalization of the large-scale database'? Or 'Post

hoc comparisons showed that the means for all three hues were significantly different from each other ( $p > .05$ ), but the interaction between hue and number of classes was not significant ( $F(8,3591) = 1.62, p > (F = .1142)$ )?

No, it wasn't the jargon. The vocabulary issue's not even a good smoke screen. Brian's writing is, if anything, freer from jargon than most. Take this sentence from 'Deconstructing the Map': 'Our task is to search for the social forces that have structured cartography and to locate the presence of power – and its effects – in all map knowledge' (Figure 7). It doesn't get much more straightforward than this. But it doesn't get much more threatening either. It's not that Brian 'loses sight of what maps are all about', it's that Brian shows and tells what maps are *really* about all too clearly. What's got this guy's shorts in a knot is that, from within the citadel, Brian cracked the door on a taboo discourse... *and now it's all over*. That's the fear, anyway. So, *shhhh! Don't tell. If they find out all these maps are just arguments and opinions, why, what's to prevent them from making maps on their own and then... where would we be?* (It's the Fall of the West, the End of Civilization.)

But you can't come right out and say this (it's too scary, it's too straightforward) so... *attack the guy's vocabulary, pretend you can't understand him, make fun of his figures of speech*. What's at issue is academic freedom, is freedom of speech. Brian could get away with saying these things because he'd labored for so long in the positivist vineyard himself,<sup>17</sup> producing a history that bought into, and therefore tacitly supported, the scientific essentialism underlying the self-anesthetization cartographers practice,<sup>18</sup> but if anyone else had tried, they'd have never gotten past the reviewers:

This is stupid! What *power*?! What's this guy talking about?

Bad maps are made by people who haven't been properly trained!

The Russians!

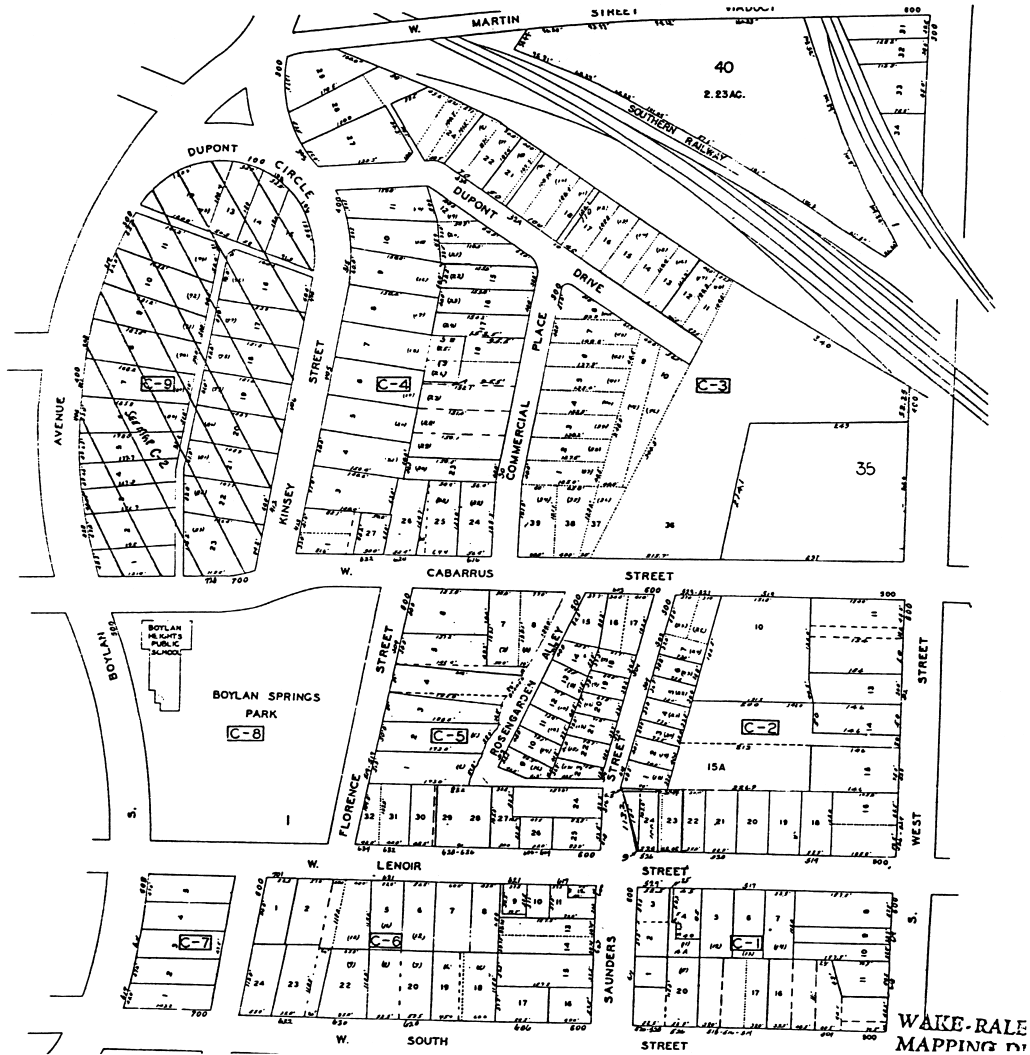
We just need to get cartography into the schools at an earlier age!

The same issue of *Cartographica* that published 'Deconstructing the Map' ran Cole Harris' review of the collection of essays that Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels had edited into *The Iconography of Landscape*. Harris' review was all but exclusively devoted to the essay of Brian's they'd included, 'Maps, Knowledge, and Power'. Harris observed that, 'Harley's essay could not have appeared twenty years ago.' *Twenty years ago*? Evidently it was only against greatest resistance that it even appeared in 1989!<sup>19</sup>



So... what to write?

The voices are so insistent! It's so hard to wrench yourself free, to kick the patron and editor out, to... just write. I was telling two acquaintances



**Figure 7** This is a map of Boylan Heights, my neighborhood, in Raleigh, North Carolina. Previously a plantation, the land was subdivided for the Greater Raleigh Land Company by the landscape architects Kelsey and Guild in 1908. The classical situation: the social forces that structured this map are all tucked away behind the neat penmanship. In this product of an invisible man there is *no hint* of the Indians originally displaced, of the slaves that labored here. And the rigor and dispassion of the map promises that there never will be...

about the difficulties I was having writing this piece – it was after dinner in a little restaurant in Maine – when one of them (hardly unique) said, ‘Oh, I hope you won’t use those ellipses! I just hate them!’ And this is how social power is exerted, here a nudge, there a rejection, here a snub, there an unexpected word of praise... and pretty soon you’re off down a path you knew you never wanted to travel. It’s hard shoving the editor out of the way, giving the patron the middle finger, especially when they’re in conference in the boardroom of your brain.

Brian never seemed to quite realize (yes, I know I split the infinitive!(and okay – maybe in this case it would have sounded better the other way around (but see how acknowledging these voices makes us question... everything))) – wait, stop!

Let me start that sentence again. Brian never quite seemed to realize the way his own situation was identical to that of the mapmakers he wrote about, the way he too had patrons and an inner voice. ‘Can there be a cartographic ethics?’, he asked. Can there be an ethics of *writing* about cartographic ethics? Brian made a serious effort to reconcile the shrill demands of his outer and inner voices, the most serious ever made in writing about maps. That Brian struggled – with the writing no less than the history of the map – is evident in everything he wrote, in its strangled syntax, in his obsessive division of every subject into threes, in his conflicted – deeply conflicted – feelings about maps, his love for them, his hesitations and doubts, his fears.

But he got his struggle down on paper. Sometimes it’s a mess. But if I can write the way I do, it is substantially because Brian wrote the way he did. By throwing his massive authority behind it, Brian legitimated a new discourse about maps, one with which he was often uncomfortable and about which he was in the end not sure. He enlarged our freedom of speech, he hacked out a way for us to say more clearly what was on our minds, he ran with his shoulder against the door of the citadel and knocked it open.

And that’s enough...

## NOTES

1. Nicholas Lehmann (2001) opens with a review of a map exhibition then playing at the New York Public Library but soon turns to Harley (2001), which had *just* come out. Lemann relies on the introductory essay by J. H. Andrews – there is no evidence that Lemann read any of Harley’s essays – and a snap judgement from Black (1977) which the University of Chicago Press had (somewhat recently) republished.
2. Harley’s first reference to my work was his dismissive assessment of my use of ‘the Darwinian paradigm’ in Blakemore and Harley (1980). I turned around and attacked their ‘opaque *nouvelle vague* terminology’ in Blakemore and Harley (1982) and abused them for having botched their treatment of evolutionary, developmental and historical models. In their riposte, Blakemore and Harley accused me of having, ‘fallen into [my] own carelessly sprung terminological trap,’ of ‘intellectual snobbism,’ of throwing out ‘the empirical baby’ with ‘the dirty theoretical water’ (p. 79), and of being ‘prone to clutching at universal straws before drowning in generalizations’ (p. 83). And that was just for starters. On the other hand, I dedicated my *The Power of Maps* (Wood, 1992) to his memory.
3. Matthew Edney has traced Harley’s involvement with this figure back

to an evidentiary distinction originally made in Harley's doctoral work of the 1950s, between the external and internal criticisms required to use maps as documents in the study of history. Edney has also traced the transformations this figure undergoes in 30 years of Harley's work. Edney prepared his indispensable (but unpublished), 'Harley's Unhidden Agenda', for the special session of the Cartography Specialty Group Edney chaired on 'J.B. Harley and Cartographic Theory,' Association of American Geographers, Atlanta, April 1993.

4. I don't mean to imply that Harley was unaware of this function. In the first essay in this volume he observes that maps share a 'textual function' with books; in the second, that they 'have long been central to the discourse of geography', and so on. Furthermore, as early as 1982, he had acknowledged that the meaning of maps 'resides in the *total* act of communication' (p. 267). What he never does is make the *communication situation* in which the map is a discourse function *central* to his discourse. Instead he foregrounds, and therefore *relatively* decontextualizes, the map. It's a shortcoming that arises naturally from studying maps instead of studying society (an irony in his case, since Harley first turned to maps in an effort to understand demographic and economic change in medieval England).
5. Were we talking about movies, I would have said, the film is not the director's (or the writer's or the actor's or the cinematographer's)... but neither is it the producer's. The history of film cannot be written as a hero saga from the perspective of the director (*et alia*), but neither can it be written as a story of capital. In the construction of capital-intensive artifacts (*Waterworld* cost over \$135 million, *The Atlas of the Classical World* more than \$3 million), capital swarms to the fore as a problem of production, but this does not turn it into the author. Yet with so much capital at stake, no one else can be allowed to be author either. There may be reason to ascribe authorship to the director, but there is just as compelling reason to see films from the perspective of the stars, the studios, the writers, the cinematographers (the audience). This diffusion of authorship is characteristic of the mass production of things... in general.
6. Similar ensembles of patronal and professional attributes are the hilarious subject of Woody Allen's *Bullets Over Broadway*. Here the patron is a gangster, the professional a playwright. To get his play on Broadway, the writer has to cast the gangster's inept girlfriend in a central role, rewrite her part, and... you know the story. Thinking about the cartographic problem through this film clarifies the extent to which the problem is not one for cartography alone, *but for production in general*.
7. These are the architects of the received history of cartography that Brian's work, among others, was endeavoring to... *sweep away* (Bagrow, 1964; Lloyd Brown, 1949; Crone, 1953; Tooley, 1978; Wallis

and Robinson, 1987; John Noble Wilford, 1981). The list is not exclusive, and certainly the brief but widely read histories that open the classic texts by Erwin Raisz and Arthur Robinson (1984; Robinson et al., 1984) need to be included.

8. The status of any of these as victims is open to debate, as is their pleasure in having Harley defend them. J.H. Andrews, for one, has denied that the Irish were victims of a tyrannical Ordnance Survey, and in a note submitted to *Cartographica*, called into question Harley's good faith in doing so, especially in Harley's approbation of Brian Friel (1981)'s *Translations* as a credible historical reconstruction. In Andrews' conclusion he guesses at a number of reasons that might induce scholars to prefer the fictions of Friel to the history of Andrews, but neither Andrews nor Harley address the very different discourse functions history and fiction serve. Fiction is different from history, but no less (maybe more) important for grappling with the human condition. For more detail, see Andrews (1992).
9. See first of all Barbara Belyea (1992), but also Edney (cited in Note 3). I too am convinced that Harley didn't really understand these thinkers (see later).
10. I've written about this at length (Wood, 1993). Ultimately, Harley proved incapable of giving up a theory of representation that inescapably makes a mirror of a map, though the evidence that he was aware this was a problem is stamped all over his later papers.
11. Although these things vary with the age, insofar as I embody the interests of my patrons, I myself am such a tamed savant, a member, that is, of what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) has called 'the dominated fraction of the dominant class'.
12. Insofar as I embody the interests of my profession, however, I am the conscientious professional, the craftsman, the... drudge. Only when I pay attention to both inner and outer voices do I become... *a writer*.
13. See Anne Godlewska (1989), whose surprisingly defensive remarks were among the 11 commentaries solicited by Ed Dahl (then the irreplaceable associate editor of *Cartographica*) in response to 'Deconstructing the Map'. Claiming to take issue only with what she describes as Harley's caricature of contemporary cartographers as 'barely conscious of the distinction between the map and reality' (p. 96), Godlewska actually dismisses his entire project as a species of opportunism: 'No, thank you. I think I'll wait for the next wave, or maybe for the one after that. That way I'll be the most post' (p. 98). Perhaps there was a strain of opportunism in Harley's work (I don't feel it, but I can see that his adventurism could be taken that way), but it in no way reduces the salience of his critique. It's adequate to take an introductory level college cartography class to understand the depth of the self-deception the profession practices, or to spend a few hours in the company of entry-level cartographic technicians. Few

- cartographers know their masters (which is not to say they don't know their supervisor or boss). Fewer still acknowledge them.
14. See Duane Marble (1991) as cited in Harley's 'Can There Be a Cartographic Ethics?' (Harley, 2001).
  15. These comments were solicited by Ed Dahl while considering the publication of 'Deconstructing the Map'. Edney (see note 3) comments in a footnote, apropos his, 'a few practicing cartographers seem to have rejected [Brian's] more polemical and politically charged statements out of hand'; that 'I should note that these are only impressions derived from my own discussions with both faculty and graduate students, which discussions form at best anecdotal and at worst apocryphal evidence. They do nonetheless express the extremes of feeling which Harley's work has generated'. Getting these extremes of feeling into print is essential if we are to ever understand the cartographic production process, much less do something about it.
  16. Mark Monmonier (1989); Patricia Gilmartin and Elizabeth Shelton (1989); Frank Canters (1989); Samuel Baron (1989). My characterization of these articles as uniformly jargon-ridden is in no way aspersive.
  17. Well, to the extent that he *could*. A couple of years after publishing 'Deconstructing the Map', Harley had an *invited* paper rejected by the *ACSM Bulletin* because he refused to toe the party line on the Peters projection. He alludes to this experience in 'Can There Be a Cartographic Ethics?'
  18. It's important not to underestimate the magnitude of this contribution. In Matthew Edney's bibliography of Harley's works appended to *The New Nature of Maps*, he lists two doctoral dissertations and 180 other publications, excluding book reviews (of which there are over 90). Included in these publications is the first volume of the *Chicago History of Cartography*. References to Harley's 'postmodern phase' ignore the more complicated reality that in the same year he's publishing 'Deconstructing the Map', he's also publishing, with Richard Oliver, the 'Introductory Essay' to *The Old Series Ordnance Survey Maps of England and Wales*. If, as many claim, he wore his postmodernity awkwardly this was because he was only incompletely postmodern. What we see in the essays in *The New Nature of Maps* is a snapshot of an intellect... *in transition*.
  19. Cole Harris, review of Cosgrove and Daniels (1989).

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### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

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