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Mary Sponberg Pedley, *The Commerce of Cartography: Making and Marketing Maps in Eighteenth-Century France and England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ix-345 pp. Illustrations, appendices, notes, and bibliography. \$40.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-226-65341-2.

Review by Michael Wolfe, Pennsylvania State University, Altoona.

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The quest to translate three-dimensional space to a flat surface required both a mastery of Euclidean geometry and linear perspective as well as new modes of abstract thinking that accepted the resulting illusion as "real." When it came to maps, this critical shift in consciousness began in the West in the fifteenth-century with the publication of world maps using the projective techniques found in Ptolemy's *Geographia*.<sup>[1]</sup> As geographical knowledge and cartographic abilities expanded in the centuries ahead, so maps proliferated in manuscript and print as objects of both utilitarian and aesthetic value. Mary Sponberg Pedley's new book offers a comparative study of the commercial factors affecting the production and consumption of printed maps in eighteenth-century France and England, as the popularity and variety of maps underwent significant growth. It builds upon her earlier studies of French and England map makers and map sellers<sup>[2]</sup>, as well as the important work of François de Dainville, Mireille Pastoureau, and the late David Woodward.<sup>[3]</sup> Based on careful analysis and meticulous research, Pedley's study demonstrates the myriad ways in which maps became the eighteenth century's most widely accessible form of geographical knowledge and a much sought-after commodity in the burgeoning consumer print culture of the age.

Pedley readily acknowledges that Paris and London were not the sole cartographic centers of eighteenth-century Europe. Place such as Amsterdam, Nuremberg and Venice all continued to publish maps in sizeable quantities and of outstanding quality. What set Paris and London apart were their roles as centers of Enlightenment culture and science, as well as the capitals of two leading rival states that vied for hegemony in Europe and overseas. Maps thus embodied commercial, scientific, and strategic values, aspects that shaped both why and how they became produced and the manners in which people used them. Pedley largely restricts the ambit of her inquiry to individual map makers and specific enterprises rather than to the trade networks and economic resources that went into printed map production. A lively exchange in maps and geographical knowledge existed between France and England in the areas of making and consuming maps in both original and pirated editions. Differences certainly mattered. The greater preponderance of state-sponsored institutions in France in the field of map making, such as the *École des Ponts et Chaussées* (1747), the *École Royale du Génie de Mézières* (1748) and *École Royale Militaire* (1751) led to greater regularity in training and more ambitious cartographic projects, whereas in England the private interests of mercantile firms and landowners frequently accounted for the increase in large-scale mapping endeavors (chapters one and two). In the main, though loath to admit it, English aficionados of maps envied French map makers, who by contrast often considered English maps quite crude. *La plus ça change...*

The consumption of printed maps rose considerably during the eighteenth century as literacy rates and disposable income increased, particularly among middling urban groups. Maps and globes became much more ubiquitous, judging from evidence about private libraries, sales catalogues, and descriptions of home decor and the decorative arts. Meeting this market demand involved a host of public and private concerns, from the requisite collection of geographical information through surveying and textual study to the workshops of engravers and printers and then finally to the map sellers themselves (chapter three).

Pedley's book follows this process of map making from the inception of a map to its final arrival in the hands of the consumer. She begins with a look at how the data necessary for producing a map were collected and used in production. The economics of each stage in map production, from initial capital outlays to calculations of risk and profit, carried the primary weight in a decision about whether or not to print a map. Attempts to ensure some measure of authorial control over the content of maps through privilege and copyright waged at best an uphill battle in a cut-throat world where cartographic piracy could pay handsomely (chapter four). Pedley offers a fascinating case study that illustrates many of these aspects of map production, focusing on a series of British and French maps—manuscript and printed—of Narragansett Bay and Newport, Rhode Island from the 1770s. This example reveals the individuality and idiosyncrasy of map production at the time, as a small number of individuals, motivated by concerns that ranged from the pecuniary to the political and the military, collaborated to produce maps (chapter five).

Pedley's most surprising findings, at least in this reviewer's opinion, come in the final part of the book (chapter six), where she takes up the complex, yet deeply intriguing question of what defined a "good" map (p. 166). Map makers and sellers touted accuracy as a map's most compelling feature, even going so far as to concede a particular map's limitations in a bid to win the public's trust. Yet the purchasing public appeared to prize aesthetic appeal and cost above all else, readily buying maps whose inferiority in terms of accuracy was widely known, if not openly conceded by even the map makers. That a map looked good and was cheap were enough to satisfy most consumers, the vast majority of whom never intended to use it to find their way to the places it depicted (pp. 174-176). Criticism of cartographic errors, shoddy workmanship, and outright plagiarism was largely confined to the catalogues intended to guide the buying public to the best maps as well as often highly charged public denunciations by map makers themselves. Their calls to improve cartography eventually led to demands for more formal training, better pay and government support, and a regulatory body to ensure quality

*The Commerce of Cartography* forms an important complement to recent work on the birth in the eighteenth century of a consumer culture that has tended to focus more on the consumption than on the production of luxury goods.<sup>[4]</sup> It also adds further depth to our understanding of luxury as a catalyst and signpost of cultural and intellectual change, a subject recently explored in an interdisciplinary collection of essays edited by Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger. Pedley's is, indeed, a case study of the forces—economic, intellectual, political, and military—that recast modes of perceiving and representing geographical space by converting them into consumer objects.<sup>[5]</sup> Finally, there are the underlying roles that mathematics and surveying played, both from a mercantile and a military point of view, in directing the course of cartographic change. The long quest to find a way to accurately measure longitude, for example, or the quixotic quest by Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Delambre and Pierre-François-André Méchain at the height of the French Revolution to determine a new terrestrially-based unit of measure—the meter—took place in the prosaic world of field engineers, draftsmen, engravers, and printers analyzed by Pedley.

Beautifully illustrated and written, Pedley's study of the consumer and economic-driven forces affecting the printed map trade in eighteenth-century France and England takes readers on a very interesting itinerary, too, that leads to a deeper understanding of the increasing commercialization of geographical knowledge during the Enlightenment. Left over for another journey are the implications that this growing avidity to render physical space into a readily contained form—the map—held for the colonial and imperial ambitions of these two preeminent European powers, never mind for the people whose lands became subject to the cartographic gaze.

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## NOTES

[1] Monique Pelletier, *Géographie du monde au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance* (Paris: Éditions du C.T.H.S., 1989). On the technical challenges and subsequent solutions to the problems raised by the Ptolemaic system of projection, see John P. Snyder, *Flattening the Earth: Two Thousand Years of Map Projections* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

[2] Mary Sponberg Pedley, *Bel et utile: The Work of the Robert de Vaugondy Family of Mapmakers* (Tring: Map Collector Publications, 1992) and ed., *The Map Trade in the Late Eighteenth Century: Letters to the London Map Sellers Jefferys and Faden* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000).

[3] François de Dainville, S. J., *Le langage des géographes: termes, signes, couleurs des cartes anciennes 1500-1800* (Paris: Éditions A. et J. Picard, 1964; Mireille Pastoureau, *Les atlas français XVIe-XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1984), and David Woodward, *Maps as Prints in the Italian Renaissance: Makers, Distributors, and Consumers* (London: British Library, 1996).

[4] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997); and Daniel Roche, *Histoire des choses banales. Naissance de la consommation XVIIe-XIXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1997). See also the essays by Frank Donoghue and Richard Sorrenson in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[5] Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

[6] The search for the meter is the subject of Ken Alder's recent prize-winning book, *The Measure of All Things: The Seven-Year Odyssey and Hidden Error That Transformed the World* (New York: The Free Press, 2002).

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