**Orienting the map: Toward a cartographic queer phenomenology**

Michael W. Pesses
Antelope Valley College
mpesses@avc.edu

*Presented at the 2017 American Association of Geographers' Annual Meeting, Revolutionary Methodologies I Session, Boston, MA.*

## Introduction

> "An archive may be largely about 'the past' but it is always 're-read' in the light of the present and the future: and in that reprise, as Walter Benjamin reminds us, it always flashes up before us as *a moment of danger*."
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> -Stuart Hall, "Constituting an Archive," 2001, 92, his emphasis

> "Just because I grew up seeing Greenland the equal of Africa in land mass doesn't mean I believed them to be that way, any more than I fretted over the misnomer of Greenland, a place white with ice, near Iceland, green with flora. Maps are only human, after all."
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> -Dava Sobel, "Introduction" to *On the Map: A Mind Expanding Exploration of the Way the World Looks,* 2013, 13

As a cartography student, I was taught about the 'T-O' maps, world maps produced in Medieval Europe. At the time, the 'world' was comprised of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The maps were always drawn as a circle (the 'O') and the three continents were divided by two bold lines creating a 'T' shape. Asia was always drawn at the top, which could be used as a means to 'orient' which way was up on the page, hence the name of that region. This had nothing to do with 'north' as it is used today, as magnetic compasses were not yet invented in the eighth century. To orient the map was instead to place oneself, or one's home, in relation to a different place. In Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, to orient in this context takes on a different meaning:

> The word can mean to place so as to face the east; to place in any definite position with reference to the points of the compass or other points; to adjust in relation to new circumstances or surroundings; to turn a map so that the direction on the map is parallel the direction on the ground; to turn toward the east in a specified direction (Ahmed 2006, 112).

Ahmed focuses on the place of the east more than the object of the map. To orient is to know where east is and in doing so, to know what the East is. While her use of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2003 [1978]) and the positioning of Europe on graphic representations of the Earth are relevant and a good start, I contend she is missing the connection between phenomenology and the object of the world map. My point is not to poke historic and scientific holes in Ahmed's concept of orientation. Far from it, as I think she deftly uses spatial theory and historical materialism to strengthen phenomenology. My issue is that Ahmed slips into the textual analysis of Said when she argues for phenomenological experience. She teases the reader with hints of how the Euclidian geometry of cartographic spaces are sites of power/knowledge, yet never digs to see from where the power comes.

I will explore Ahmed's queer phenomenology using the material objects of cartography and their affect upon the body (Shouse 2005). I will "attend to the background" of the modern world map and see how this object's "conditions of emergence" can strengthen her argument that "orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as 'who' or 'what' we direct our energy and attention toward" (Ahmed 2006, 3). Ahmed focuses on the Prime Meridian to show how one is disciplined to orient one's body; I argue that even with the importance of the map's grid for using the map, the lines of national borders hold more answers for cartographic orientations. I plan to enter the archive of cartography and see what it can tell us about bodily orientations around the West and toward the East.

**Ahmed's Phenomenology**

Ahmed did not begin her project with the notion of critiquing phenomenology. "I arrived at phenomenology, because, in part, the concept of orientation led me there. It matters how we arrive at the places we do" (Ahmed 2006, 2). I will explore that important second sentence in a moment, but first I want to scrutinize Ahmed's use of phenomenology. As stated, she was initially interested in the concept of 'orientation,' as in, what does it mean for one to be sexually oriented? Phenomenology, for Ahmed, was a means to get at this question, through looking at how bodies and objects are oriented towards or away from each other. To get at this notion of orientation and phenomenology, she engages with phenomenological texts by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Using Husserl's writing table from the first volume of *Ideas,* she reexamines the relationship between the philosopher and this specific object. What is important for Ahmed is the presence of the objects themselves as they relate to a body's orientation. "To queer" phenomenology is not to look at different or "deviant" objects. It is to get at the root of how phenomenological method positions, or orients, itself. "A queer phenomenology might turn to phenomenology by asking not only about the concept of orientation *in* phenomenology, but also about the orientation *of* phenomenology" (Ahmed 2006, 3, her emphasis). It is not just that Husserl is experiencing a table, but "that the writing table appears, and not another kind of table, might reveal something about the 'orientation' of phenomenology, or even of philosophy itself" (Ahmed 2006, 3).

Ahmed highlights the spatial nature of her project, as well as the importance of her own "relational spaces" (Harvey 2006). Ahmed invokes a number of cultural geographers to show that "space is dynamic and lived" as well as connected to genealogy (2006, 12). Here we return to "it matters how we arrive at the places we do" (Ahmed 2006, 2). For Ahmed, this arrival is something missing from traditional phenomenological approaches; that history of what led up to

the very experiences and objects being studied. Ahmed's queer phenomenology stresses the need for placing the object of study into both spatial and temporal contexts. This is the site of Ahmed's critique of the classic sense and use of phenomenology. Again, Husserl's writing table as an object is useful. "Husserl considers how this table might be *in* the background, as well as the background that is *around* the table, when 'it' comes into view. I want to consider how the table itself may *have* background" (Ahmed 2006, 37, her emphasis).

"Attending to the background" as Ahmed puts it, is to acknowledge the history that brought the object to its current place. This history can be had through suturing Marxist materialism to phenomenology, which provides "a philosophy for rethinking the object as not only in history, but as an effect of history" (Ahmed 2006, 40). According to Ahmed, objects are "fetishized" in the Marxist sense in that their histories are obscured. We should ask questions about how these objects are produced in addition to how we orient towards or away from them. Ahmed (2006, 40) calls up Henri Lefebvre's critique of Heidegger's "thrownness" of objects, that is how they are launched into the present. In Lefebvre's own words:

> …even if Heidegger asks questions about [an object's] origin, even if he poses 'historical' questions in this connection, there can be no doubt about the main thrust of his thinking here: time counts more than space; Being has a history, and history is nothing but the History of Being. This leads him to a restricted and restrictive conception of production, which he envisages as a causing-to-appear, a process of emergence which brings a thing forth as a thing now present amidst other already-present things (Lefebvre 1991, 121-2).

The taken-for-granted nature of objects is obviously a problem for both Lefebvre and Ahmed. This "already-present" of which Lefebvre speaks is to say that these early phenomenological works did not take orientation, in Ahmed's sense, into account. To say that time counts more than space is to diminish the very act of orienting one's body toward an object

of desire or away from an object of fear. The mere passing of time would not be enough to account for our physical and emotional "lines." While Lefebvre critiques his focus on time, he simultaneously challenges Heidegger's distinct lack of acknowledging the interruptions in an object's archive. This is not a grand narrative, but rather should be thought of as a "heterogeneity, the multiplicity of discourses, not only of practice but of criticism, history and theory, of personal story, anecdote and biography" (Hall 2001, 92). In digging into the archive, we can get at what brought us to now. Citing Franz Fanon, Ahmed stresses the importance of the material history of the object: "Where phenomenology attends to the tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, and visual character of embodied reality, Fanon asks us to think of the 'historic-racial' scheme which is, importantly 'below it'" (Ahmed 2006, 110).

To use Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* is to acknowledge the spatial, but it should not be confused with the spatial geometry of Ptolemy that still inhabits maps today. Ahmed is clearly trying to avoid the 'scientific knowledge' of cartography through her discussion of space. Her "arrival" at phenomenology occurred because of its emphasis on "the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds" (2006, 2). The objects at hand may have positivist origins in the production of knowledge, but Ahmed positions her readers to be attentive to the ways in which objects become part of lived spaces, often becoming part of lived spaces in a way difficult to quantify. One of Ahmed's main points is that both the body and the object have different "lines" and "arrivals" which produces specific spaces and orientations.

It is worth turning to David Harvey, another advocate of Lefebvre, whom I think puts it succinctly. "In a way, relational conceptions of space-time bring us to the point where

mathematics, poetry, and music converge, if not merge. And that, from a scientific (as opposed to aesthetic) viewpoint, is anathema to those of a positivist or crudely materialist bent" (Harvey 2006, 124). Ahmed's project, like Harvey's, is interested in this space-time of both mathematics and art, where to understand an experience is to find a conjuncture of the quantitative and the qualitative, of effect and affect.

It is here at Harvey's blending of geometry and art where I think Ahmed does not fully engage the archive of cartography in her discussion of the map. There is not enough "attending to the background." For her claims of the West orienting around the Prime Meridian and toward the East, she does not fully develop that conjuncture of quantitative cartography and its qualitative uses. Ahmed only hints at the social constructions that have shaped how we represent the Earth, those very things that allow us to orient around and toward certain places. To orient the map using queer phenomenology requires archival work from the "multiplicity of discourses" (Hall 2001, 92) that have led to the spaces produced by the map as an object.

**Orienting the Map**

"It matters how we arrive at the places we do" (Ahmed 2006, 2). I have arrived here through years of producing and using maps and other forms of geospatial visualization. I have learned how to map the world. "[Cartography's] assumptions are that the objects in the world to be mapped are real and objective, and that they enjoy an existence independent of the cartographer; that their reality can be expressed in mathematical terms; that systematic observation and measurement offer the only route to cartographic truth; and that this truth can be independently verified" (Harley 1989, 4). Cartographers map reality with a confident objectiveness, a confidence that seems rarely questioned before Harley's essay. As Ahmed is interested in the writing table, I am interested in the world map. To experience a world map

using Husserl's phenomenology, much as he experienced his writing table, one would need to approach the map with a sense of unfamiliarity in order for the object to not disappear "under the blanket of the familiar" (Ahmed 2006, 33). To orient the map using queer phenomenology though, I must bracket my familiarity, yet also "face" the background of the object itself. In other words, I must not overlook features of the object because I am so used to them, but at the same time I must give an "account of the conditions of emergence" of that very object (Ahmed 2006, 38).

In the geography lab of my college, there is a large world map tacked to a wall. It measures roughly two meters by three meters. It arrived, in part, because I put it there. I met a map dealer at a conference a year ago and got a good price on this map, I think, because he did not want to have to haul it home with him. I brought it back and put it upon the wall so that my students had a reference, but also because it helps create the 'look' of a geography lab. Just as Ahmed critiques Husserl's "facing" the writing table as failing to be attentive to the work done by other bodies in Husserl's home, it is important to remind myself that I am the one who faces the map as an object of instruction while other bodies in the room face away from the map and towards my teaching desk (Ahmed 2006, 30). Students seem to only look at the map when I acknowledge it in a lecture.

The map's size makes it visible from across the room. Labels like "China" and "Brazil" are bold and prominent. Land is colored with different hues and a legend explains that this corresponds to elevation. Though I need to bracket my knowledge, I find it difficult to ignore the term that pops into my head – hypsometric tinting. This term sounded so foreign when I first learned it and now I cannot not help up use it when looking a green valleys and purple-brown peaks. I also notice the myriad lines running vertically and horizontally across the map. These

intersecting lines evoke a sense of order and control over something as massive as the world. What is notable, is that this cartographer did not feel the need to highlight the Equator or the Prime Meridian. They look identical to the other parallels and meridians.

In experiencing this map in this unfamiliar way, I realize that I face it when I teach a class in this room; it is directly across from the instructor's desk. Other objects appear near it in the room: globes and more maps, computers with software used for cartography, chairs, and laboratory tables. This arrangement orients certain objects. Students "face" the world in a specific way. By putting the large map on the wall, I have helped to orient them toward and around specific places. To understand this, I must "attend to the background." I need to look into the archive.

I am still oriented around Ahmed's writing on cartographic objects, specifically the lines drawn on a world map. As with the writing table, one must "attend to the background" and get at the genealogical lines that have led to the drawn lines. Ahmed's use of the word background requires some explanation. So far, I have used it in its historic sense, that is, the background refers to the events leading up to the materiality of the object. Ahmed also uses the word background to describe the spatial nature of objects and places: "We can think… of the background not simply in terms of what is around what we face, as the 'dimly perceived,' but as produced by acts of relegation: some things are relegated to the background in order *to sustain* a certain direction; in other words, in order to keep attention on what is faced" (2006, 31, her emphasis). In orienting the map, we must attend to both uses; how did this map come to be and what lines are relegated and for what purpose?

Ahmed's background of the map begins with dividing the world into hemispheres. She discusses the social nature of space as argued by Lefebvre, but states that this does not mean all

spaces are relative to a subject's position. The subject is within space and thus "the social depends in part on agreement about how we measure space and time, which is why social conflict can often be experienced as being 'out of time' as well as 'out of place' with others" (2006, 13). This agreement means that within a society, members must produce references (like latitude and longitude) for the designations of space and place. Ahmed continues:

> But the social dependence upon agreed measures tells us more about the social than it does about space. Or if it tells us about space, then it reminds us that 'absolute space' is invented, as an invention that has real and material effects in the arrangement of bodies and worlds. We might not be able to imagine the world without dividing the world into hemispheres, which are themselves created by the intersection of lines (the equator and the prime meridian), even when we know that there are other ways of inhabiting the world (Ahmed 2006, 13).

Ahmed wants "to queer" this notion of absolute space, this taken-for-granted coordinate system one uses anytime he or she refers to the "South" or the "East." To begin this project, she calls up Dava Sobel's fascinating work on longitude, highlighting the political nature of something as seemingly fixed as the Prime Meridian. "The zero-degree parallel of latitude is fixed by the laws of nature, while the zero-degree meridian of longitude shifts like the sands of time" (Sobel 1995, 4). Sobel is speaking of the fact that 0° longitude could exist anywhere on the planet, but currently cuts through Greenwich, England.[i] This causes Ahmed to claim that "the East as well as the left is thus oriented; *it acquires its direction only by taking a certain point of view as given*" (Ahmed 2006, 14, her emphasis). This "given" orientation then allows for the practice of orientalism, which Ahmed examines in her third chapter:

> The cartographic imperative to make maps as technologies for navigation shows how normalization involves the normalization not only of certain kinds of bodies, but also specific directions: 'What is east (of me/us)' becomes 'the East' by taking some points of view as given. In other words, it is drawing the line (the prime meridian) in one location, through Greenwich, that 'east' becomes 'the East,'

> as if the East were a property of certain places and people (Ahmed 2006, 113).

While this is an interesting argument by itself, her use of Greenwich is nominal. It is a word seemingly full of meaning and even power, yet Ahmed lets it sit there, unexamined. She continues to explore the object of the map:

> Cartographic space is, of course, 'flat space' that conventionally describes locations as determined by axes of coordination that are independent of one's bodily location. Cartographic space, as the space we have inherited from Euclidean geometry, would not from this point of view be directed or orientated. But it would not be a radical—or new—claim to say that such 'flatness' is itself 'orientated,' in the sense that it still depends upon a point of view, as a point that is lost on the horizon, or that is concealed in the very mode of its operation (see Lefebvre 1991). To orientate oneself by facing a direction is to participate in a longer history in which certain 'directions' are 'given to' certain places: they become *the* East, *the* West, and so on (Ahmed 2006, 113, her emphasis).

Here Ahmed challenges the notion that Euclidian spaces are "pure" or devoid of politics. She hints at this longer history of orientation *vis-à-vis* the world map, but this is as deep as she takes the reader into the archive of cartography. The chapter shifts to Edward Said, whom she rightly invokes in her phenomenology of the Orient. I will argue however, that Ahmed's move from cartography to language presents a problem; namely, this "given" line around which the West orients is never actually accounted for. We are left without an effective history of how the Prime Meridian allowed for orientalist accounts of the East.

Accounts of the history of cartography traditionally begin with a late Babylonian representation of Mesopotamia that dates to the sixth century B.C. (Garfield 2013 and Imhof 2007 for example). This map is never really shown to be the beginning of cartographic representation, but rather is given a sentence or two as a nod to non-European civilizations being spatially aware. Some texts will acknowledge cultural difference in representing the Earth, as Krygier and Wood do with an Ojibwe map of the Great Lakes region drawn on birch bark (2005,

1-3), but generally these maps rendered "Other" in such accounts are a novelty rather than a moment in the production of knowledge. Scientific cartography, and thus objective, real cartography is produced at another site and moment in time. For example, Simon Garfield writes that the difference between this Mesopotamian map and the word of the Greeks was that "they were unique and random objects. By contrast, the maps by Eratosthenes, Strabo and Ptolemy spawned at the Great Library [Alexandria] were logical and disciplined" (2013, 38). The analysis of scientific cartographic method begins with Medieval and Renaissance era editions of Ptolemy's *Geographicae Hyphegesis* (which interestingly translates to "Geographical Guidance"). Ptolemy was not the first Greek to map the world, but his gazetteer and map projections offered stunning details regarding the places of the world. Of equal importance was his confidence in his abilities. "Indeed, the map historian R.V. Tooley suggests that Ptolemy stood apart from his predecessors not just in his brilliance but in his disregard for science. Where earlier cartographers were willing to leave blanks on the map where their knowledge failed, Ptolemy could not resist filling such empty spaces with theoretical conceptions" (Garfield 2013, 37). Those using Ptolemy's work later in the cartography of the Renaissance do not critique this speculation; rather his works were carried by explorers like Christopher Columbus who intended to go east by heading west (Garfield 2013).

This privileging of Greek cartography over Babylonian stresses a need for discipline in the production of maps. Despite Ptolemy's creative license in the second century, his work endured because of a mathematical order to his work. To take the round shape of the Earth and lay it flat required a grid. Ptolemy is credited with developing the concept of latitude and longitude that we still use today (Garfield 2013, Sobel 1995). While this grid has been useful in navigation, it plays a larger role in the discipline of cartography. Even when a map is not to be

used for navigation and graticule lines are left off the page, the visual elements must follow the rules: "Map layout is enhanced by an underlying grid which proportions layout space horizontally and vertically. A grid establishes horizontal and vertical sight-lines which further enhance the stability of the layout. Without a grid, a balanced layout may seem disjointed" Krygier and Wood 2005, 136). It should be noted that John Krygier and Denis Wood's textbook on cartographic design is a radical departure from classics (see for example Robinson et al., 1995) in that it uses little text, relies heavily on visuals to make claims, and acknowledges "Other" cartographers, yet it still returns to the grid to avoid disorientation.

Ptolemy's grid, lines of latitude and longitude, run across the large map in my classroom. The two origin lines, the Equator running east to west at the middle of the map, and the Prime Meridian bisecting the map into an eastern and western hemisphere, are not drawn any differently than the others. While she pays little attention to the Equator, Ahmed continues to return to this meridian throughout *Queer Phenomenology*. My map does not give much visual importance to it, but this object—the vertical origin line—is there because of Britain's empire and global dominance in the eighteenth century. Determining one's longitude at sea had long baffled the empires of history. Empires needed a way to prevent their ships from getting lost or crashing into a rocky shore while sailing in dense fog. While Sobel (1995) goes into magnificent detail of the history, I will succinctly claim that Britain had enough capital, technological discoveries, and raw material for a humble clockmaker, John Harrison, to develop a chronometer capable of maintaining accurate time at sea. The fact that the Prime Meridian is in England and not France, Saudi Arabia, nor China is not the result of chance. According to Ahmed, we orient *around* Greenwich and *toward* the East for specific historic reasons. This "background" of the Prime Meridian is important in where the map is centered.

While Ahmed does not explore its origins, she suggests that this placement of the Prime Meridian is a condition of emergence for orientalism. Does my looking at Greenwich in the center of the map orient me toward the Eastern Hemisphere differently? Does this line make the Other countries proximate and disappear into the background? To answer this, I need to step back into the archive, this time looking in another place, China.

In the second century A.D., synchronous with Ptolemy's cartographic work, Zhang Heng was also working to put the world on a flat surface. Like Ptolemy, his actual maps did not survive to the present day, but records do show that he used grid lines and right angles to capture reality (Garfield 2013). Chinese cartography would advance in following centuries, with it seen as becoming truly scientific in the Western sense in the fourteenth century. Chu Ssu-Pen has been called the "focal figure" (Needham and Ling 2005, 551) of this history, who would produce the influential "Earth-Vehicle [Terrestrial] Map" sometime between 1311-1320. The map brought together what was known of the world from both previous maps and records and travel accounts from Persian and Arab travelers. This map was almost as large as the one in my lab; it was drawn on a scroll measuring just over two meters long. Later, in the sixteenth century, it would be turned into an atlas using a grid to ensure different sections could be reproduced on smaller pages (Needham and Ling 2005, 552). The map was a depiction of the known world, even including Southern Africa, though its cartographer did not feel much need to go beyond national boundaries:

> Regarding the foreign countries of the barbarians south-east of the South Sea, and north-west of Mongolia, there is no means of investigating them because of their great distance, although they are continually sending tribute to the court. Those who speak of them are unable to say anything definite, while those who say something definite cannot be trusted; hence I am compelled to omit them here (Chu Ssu-Pen, quoted in Needham and Ling 2005, 551-2).

Chu's distrust of the barbarians is useful for our discussion of orientations. First, I think this shows that "othering" may be a fundamental part of cartography and perhaps speaks to the production of cartographic knowledge. Second, his orientations were around a different line, that of the national borders. This is something Ahmed never questions in her phenomenology of the map. In her focus on the Prime Meridian, she overlooks the lines I would argue most bodies first look toward when studying the map. Both of these issues brought forth by Chu Ssu-Pen's statement, the production of cartographic knowledge and the orientations of border lines, are important.

We know that cartography is a site of power/knowledge because cartographers have admitted as much. To represent the complexities of the Earth requires a disciplined simplification. "Not only is it easy to lie with maps, it's essential" (Monmonier 1996, 1). Mark Monmonier (1996) speaks of the "white lies" necessary to take a complex coastline or myriad islands in an archipelago and simplify these to represent them on a sheet of paper. Such lying was part of a contract of sorts, between the cartographer and the map user. While the cartographer needed to maintain consistency and transparency in the map making process, the onus was also on the map reader to learn the very basics of map making (Robinson et al. 1995). The idea was through such a contract the map maker could produce, and the map user could obtain, the best map for the task at hand (Robinson et al. 1977, see also Crampton 2001). This is not to say that cartographers and cultural geographers have failed to explore the political and social effects of representing the "best map." J.B. Harley (1989) was the first to study the map critically, blending the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida to get at the rules of cartography as well as to deconstruct them:

> For historians of cartography, I believe a major roadblock to understanding is that we still accept uncritically the broad

> consensus, with relatively few dissenting voices, of what *cartographers* tell us maps are supposed to be. In particular, we often tend to work from the premise that mappers engage in an unquestionably 'scientific' or 'objective' form of knowledge creation… It is better for us to begin from the premise that cartography is seldom what cartographers say it is (Harley 1989, 1, his emphasis).

Harley goes on to challenge the "assumed link between reality and representation" (1989, 2) through first exposing the origins of the positivist approach used by cartographers. Harley begins with the seventeenth century, but I have argued it goes further back to Ancient Greece. What Harley does rightly stress is the discipline imposed by the institution of cartography. Yes, there is a juridical power that commissions the production of maps, but Harley also argues for an internal power, that is "what cartographers do when they make maps" (Harley 1989, 13).

Kitchin and Dodge (2007) have argued to go further, to challenge the ontological nature bestowed upon maps even in these critical essays, and have instead described them as practice rather than representation. While their work is useful in exploring the cartographer's craft, I argue these approaches fail to step outside of cartography. The institution is studied, but not all of the subjects connected to it. What of the map user? This is where queer phenomenology can prove useful. I am interested in Ahmed's project because through phenomenology the map user is included in a way different from cartographers' efforts to make the "best map."

As I gaze at the large world map in my classroom, I see the lines of the cartographic grid, but my focus is drawn to the red national borders. Some are incredibly familiar, like the United States, and others I have not really looked at until now. Mali looks like it was forced into position, or leftover land that by default became a country, but I don't know if that is the case. My own phenomenological experience is connected to my confusion over Mali's borders; Mali's not being a part of North America likely produces my thoughts. I realize that the Prime Meridian

runs through Mali, but that doesn't keep my attention. I am drawn to the shapes of the countries and land masses. Greenland looks a little different from its shape on a Mercator projection (at which I grew up looking), but I still recognize it. I have never been to Greenland, but the map lets me apprehend it. These borders are the lines upon which I focus. I do not use the Prime Meridian to orient myself. I use the shape of my territory to define home and familiar and then scan the foreign nations.

This framing of familiar and different brings cartography inside my head. I argue that this grid is "relegated" to the background while the lines of national borders are the objects of orientation and orientalism. Using these border lines, I am mentally engaging with global places and my own relational spaces. My background then is orienting me around some and toward others/Others. The relegated grid, in its blending into the background of the map, reassures the map reader that the map must be true. It has a grid. It reveals science, order, discipline. These taken-for-granted grid lines make the map look professional, and I argue that keeps the map reader from questioning the lines of national borders. A question might be then, is a scientific map truly representing reality or is the user mentally re-presenting place?

In his own effort to bring phenomenology to cartography, Denis Wood argued for the repudiation of "the untenable distinction currently drawn in the behavioral geographies between the world within the head and the world without" (1978, 207). His argument was that cartographic convention could not accurately represent the real world:

> Consider a young couple who have frugally saved their pennies to purchase a rug for their living room floor. Due to inflation they can just manage a "huge" six by eight foot [1.8 by 2.4 meter] shag. Elated with their purchase, they elect to carry it home themselves, but no sooner do they get the rug on the floor than they regret the entire business. The huge rug they bought has shrunk to a tiny rag, and the tears shed over this by the young lady cause her contact lenses—floating on an invisible film of tears—to come unstuck and

> fall into the forest of the shag. Falling to their knees the two are shocked: their tiny rug has miraculously assumed Saharan proportions! You may say it only "seemed" so, but I shall credit your estimation only after you too have searched a shag for a pair of contacts. Asked to draw the rug prior to purchase, the young lady might have shown it filling the room, give or take a foot or so to reflect the size of her purse; after getting it on the floor she might have shown it as a postage stamp on the proverbial infinitely extensible plane; during the search, she would have shown the rug as this extensible plane, overlapping the very confines of the room itself. While each of these images would have reflected the size of the rug, there is another reality that would not have been reflected in any of these individual images; namely, the fact of the change itself. The rug really changes size: how can this fact of reality be graphically portrayed? (Wood 1978, 209).

Wood's solution is a map of the rug with multiple, conditional scales – one to be used with the "bill of sale," another with the units doubling in size for the "point of purchase" and so on (1978, 210-1). Such a map brings us back to the notion of qualitative and quantitative spaces mentioned above, but also quickly becomes an unwieldy tool. After all, the young couple would have two, slightly different versions of each scale. Perhaps the young lady who loses her contact feels more helpless than her partner, and thus her "Saharan proportions" differ from her partner's. I do think that Wood's concept of map scale provides an untapped resource for mobilities studies, though it strikes me as impractical for understanding orientalism and othering as I am interested in them here.

Perhaps then the "disorientation" Ahmed calls for is the way forward. Despite my critique of her unexamined use of the Prime Meridian as an object of orientalism, I cannot abandon Ahmed's queer phenomenology. I want "to queer" the map and make these lines "wonky" like Ahmed's queer table (174). The magazine *Himal*, based in Kathmandu, Nepal, published a "downside-up" map of South Asia, with the following explanation: "We believe that the aloof geographical term 'South Asia' needs to be injected with some feeling. 'Southasia'

does the trick for us" (quoted in Jacobs 2009, 128). The resulting map is clearly disorienting to those used to north as North; rather than hanging off of the "bottom" of Asia, the Indian subcontinent rises up to the top of the page. Its shape might suggest a tall mountain peak, or perhaps something phallic. Since this a cartographic product, and not just an upturned image, east is on the left of the page and west on the right. "To orientate oneself by facing a direction is to participate in a longer history in which certain 'directions' are 'given to' certain places: they become the East, the West, and so on" (Ahmed 2006, 113, her emphasis). In changing the orientation, the cartographer has resisted this longer history. This also begs the question, why is north on top anyway? The answer it seems, can be traced back to Ptolemy, but other than tradition we have no rational need for it to be placed there (Jacobs 2009, 128).

The idea of placing south at the top of the page has sounded like a gimmick to me before, and frankly, the act of reversing the positioning of the poles on a world map is too simple a fix. I do not plan to simply flip the map in my lab. To upturn the map does not engage with the scientific knowledge of the grid. To simply upturn is to not do the work. The grid is upside down, and therefore the map appears "wrong." To queer the grid would require a more thoughtful deviation from the cardinal directions. South should be placed at the top of a new map. East should be placed on the left.

Queering the map would also take a thoughtful deviation from the accepted borders of the world. That is not to say that national boundaries should be erased or drawn "wrong," but rather, we should question just how useful they truly are in representing "the world." Do the existing lines of the political map represent or re-present other nations? Again, I argue that it doesn't matter where one is in relation to the Prime Meridian when he or she orients himself or herself

using a map. As long as the grid sits in the background, we orient around our familiar borders toward strange ones, regardless of which one is the familiar.

**Conclusion**

I do understand the absurdity of a claim that my phenomenological experience is better than Ahmed's, even though Ahmed does find fault with Husserl's experience. To push for a right way for bodies to experience tables, maps, objects is to miss what I see as Ahmed's most important point in *Queer Phenomenology*, that is, all bodies arrive at objects differently and that arrival is historically grounded.

I also understand that there are other experiences I have left out. After all, it is not just that Husserl is experiencing a table, but "that the writing table appears, and not another kind of table, might reveal something about the 'orientation' of phenomenology, or even of philosophy itself" (Ahmed 2006, 3). I have been looking at a static world map upon a wall, but what about when I orient around an app on my smart phone?  That object orients around me, no matter where I am. Are national borders useful for orientation, as I have argued, when we get into the realm of geographic information systems and geovisualization? The answers lie in more phenomenological experience.

My critique is really about using the approach for which she called in a complete way. I contend that Ahmed did not stick to the object of the map. I see great possibility and value in queering our orientations toward and around the places of the world. Ahmed uses cultural geographers, cartographers, and spatial theory to develop her project, but the project itself did not return much to geographers and cartographers. By my own orientation of the map, I have tried to demonstrate how *Queer Phenomenology* can be a useful tool for the geographer's toolkit. Ahmed's work opens up new possibilities for blending cartographic knowledge and the

humanities. By queering the map, that is, treating it as an object that "arrived" and then trying to disorient what we know, we can finally grab the grid lines of Ptolemy. In Ahmed's phenomenology of the table, she states, "A queer furnishing might be about making what is in the background, what is behind us, more available as 'things' to 'do' things with… As soon as we notice the background, then objects come to life, which already makes things rather queer" (2006, 168). We have taken these graticule lines for granted (as well as those national borders) and they have stayed in the background unexamined. Now that they have been noticed, what is still left undone is to physically queer the map.

At the end of her *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed calls for commitment, a commitment to allowing for the deviation of lines for certain lives:

> For me, the question is not so much finding a queer line but rather asking what our orientation toward queer moments of deviation will be. If the object slips away, if its face becomes inverted, if it looks odd, strange, or out of place, what will we do? If we feel oblique, where will we find support? A queer phenomenology would involve an orientation toward queer, a way of inhabiting the world by giving 'support' to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place (179).

She is clearly referencing sexual orientation, but why stop there? If to be queer is to deviate from accepted lines, and see if we should stay deviant, then why not deviate from cartography's lines? I suspect Ahmed would agree. I suggest that cartographers and geographers wishing to take up this commitment need to question the use of their maps and go beyond what Robinson et al. see as making the 'best' map for the user (1977). We need to deviate from the accepted lines of cartography and find new practices to engage with the world beyond Ptolemy. How are we using the map and how should we be using it? There is an ethics to all of this. The odd and strange national borders of other(ed) countries need a similar commitment of support. As the upturned

"Southasia" suggests, through deviating from normalized lines, we can choose to orient on our own terms and redefine the East and the South.

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[i] Philosopher Darrell Moore finds this conjunction "but" fascinating and is interested in replacing it with "and." For Moore, the use of "but" could be read as a political move that keeps our orientation away from exactly what Ahmed's argument is working towards fixing. Could one argue that using "and" is an acknowledgment of the background of the Prime Meridian?