

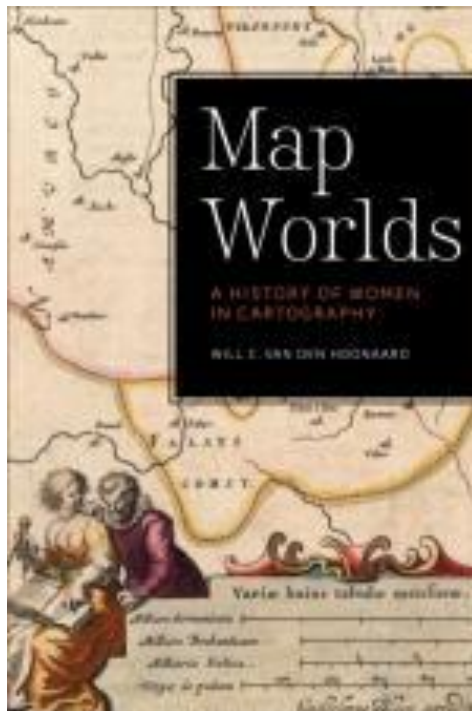
Review

Will C. van den Hoonaard:

Map worlds: A history of women in cartography

Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013. 394p.
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Reviewed by Trina Filan



Women cartographers! Most excellent. As a feminist geographer, I was quite excited to review this book. A great deal of research on gendered topics begins with a recuperative, “making women visible” segment (Morell and Bock, 2008), and this contribution by Will C. van den Hoonaard, a sociologist from the University of New Brunswick, is a great addition to that particular type of illumination. Many times as I was reading this book, I uttered a satisfied, “Oh! I

didn't know that!" Women cartographers, it seems, are responsible for standardizing lunar geographical nomenclature; for the invention and publication of the A-Z Street Map series; for the mapping of the landscape of the ocean floor, which led to the acknowledgement of continental drift; for coining the term "remote sensing" (p. 105) and establishing some of the early protocols for it; and for a variety of other cartographic innovations whose origins are taken for granted.

Using the conceit of a "map world" ("the totality of relationships, norms, practices, and technologies that shape and constitute the world of map makers"; p. 7) to shape the knowledge he has collected on this topic over the course of many years, van den Hoonaard discusses the historical, philosophical, political, economic, cultural, and social circumstances in which women, in various places and times, have participated in and contributed to cartography. He explores both the internal (personal and relational) and external (institutional and cultural) processes that shape this world. He also allows for a broad definition of what counts as cartographic work, so that the boundaries of the "map world" – which have mostly been defined by the (white, educated, Western, male) people who inhabit it – can be expanded to acknowledge all of the efforts and values that shape it. Thus, cartographic work might include the gathering and analysis of data; making and using the materials associated with mapping, from dyes to paper to various cartographic technologies; drawing, coloring and embellishing maps; storing, cataloging, and archiving maps; selling maps; participating in cartographic education; and innovating cartographic practices. Also included in this work are the processes involved in coming to be seen as a legitimate member of the professional cartographic community through individual work and organizational/institutional membership in the context of wider social forces.

Although van den Hoonaard concedes the non-linearity of the historical development of this gendered map world, he does cede to the utility of a historical progression in describing women's work in cartography. Each chapter covers a particular historical period (and different research methods come into play to illuminate gender within these periods), and these chapters become what could be considered various layers of an evolving, ever-more-complex and nuanced map. In some ways, this presentation makes the text feel discombobulated, as though the author is overwhelmed with all of the data he has collected and cannot find a way to present it in a more connected fashion. This feeling is especially prominent in the early historical chapters (3 and 4), which deal with archival data that cannot be filled out by more personal, biographical information. When he has access to more recent and personally

derived information (presented in chapters 5 to 12 in various ways), this feeling of disconnection fades.

I think this disconnection might be dealt with in a couple of ways. First, because this book feels like an interactive map with many layers to be explored, I think it would have been both appropriate and inestimably useful to have actual maps made of these various written layers to illustrate each of them more clearly. These layers might include “maps” of:

- the intricacies of intermarriage and the life histories of at least one of the mapping houses (ateliers) in the Low Countries described in Chapter 3;
- the variations in career pathways and perceptions between men and women cartographers (Chapter 8 and 9);
- the internal (personal and relational) and external (social, cultural, organizational, institutional) forces and structures at play that shape these women cartographers’ individual and collective “map worlds” (Chapters 8 to 11);
- the four pathways followed by women negotiating inequality in the present day, as well as the compromises, thought-processes, and primary adherents of each pathway (Chapter 12).

All of these maps would have assisted in the visual navigation of the “map world” in its entirety.

Furthermore, while each piece of this book is compelling in its own right, there is something missing to tie all the pieces together in a more overarching theoretical way. Therefore, as a second way to deal with the disconnectedness of the text, an analysis of gendered power at the individual, symbolic, and structural levels could have been employed throughout, rather than in the last two chapters (12 and 13). This gendered analytical framework would have stitched the rest of the contents together more cohesively, like a common attribute can be used to join tables in a GIS database, and may also have accommodated a more thorough discussion of the intersectional identities that each of these women cartographers occupy.

Excavating and making visible the contributions of an unacknowledged segment of society is an arduous task. The methods used to gather the material for this book are diverse: archival research, reading and coding existing biographies of women cartographic “pioneers,” doing interviews with present-day women cartographers, engaging in participant observation at cartographic events, conferences, and trade shows, content analysis of organizational ephemera and scores of atlases from around the world. For anyone interested in delving into the methodological aspects of this work, the

author has helpfully supplied details in extensive appendices at the end of the book. Without a doubt, Dr. van den Hoonaard has done a great deal of detailed work to reveal these women's marks on cartographic knowledge and process. His efforts allow a new vision of the "map world" as it is understood to take shape; it is a new world in which women's ideas, physical labor, values, and interests are acknowledged in shaping the contours of reality.

Dr. van den Hoonaard concludes that gender, indeed, has shaped the "map world" in ways that are not obvious until one compiles and examines a great variety of data that spans centuries and continents. He explores, though not to the extent a scholar of gender issues may wish, the interplay of gender (and, to a lesser extent, other identities such as age and culture-of-origin) and power in the cartographic world. Overall, this was an interesting and enlightening read that is a good addition to a growing body of "visibility of gender" scholarly literature. It's an especially good book for people who have not thought much about women in cartography (or in any other discipline) before. It's a gentle reminder that if we don't ask questions like "who" or "why," we might be missing a large part of the overall story about a subject (although the author, a sociologist, claims that this is not what members of his discipline actually ask).

References

Morell, Ildikó Asztalos & Bettina A. Bock. 2008. *Gender regimes, citizen participation and rural restructuring*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

About the reviewer

Trina Filan is a feminist geographer who studies nature-culture interactions, primarily as they manifest in food systems, writ both small and large. She earned her Ph.D. at the University of California, Davis, where she studied gender, agriculture, and political ecology in and of California. She recently spent an edifying and gratifying two years as a post-doctoral scholar and assistant professor at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, in the Department of Women and Gender Studies, with a connection to the Department of Geography. In Lethbridge, she dug deeply into the local food system and also into poverty alleviation work with local non-profits and government agencies.