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978-0-521-12139-2 - The Geography of Empire in English Literature 1580-1745

Bruce McLeod

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Between 1580 and 1745 – Edmund Spenser’s journey to an unconquered Ireland and the last Jacobite Rebellion – the first British Empire was established. The intervening years saw the cultural and material forces of colonialism pursue a fitful, often fanciful endeavor to secure space for this expansion. With the defeat of the Highland clans, what England in 1580 could only dream about had materialized: a coherent socio-spacial system known as an empire.

Taking the Atlantic world as its context, this ambitious book argues that England’s culture during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was saturated with a geographic imagination fed by the experiences and experiments of colonialism. Using theories of space and its production to ground his readings, Bruce McLeod skilfully explores how works by Edmund Spenser, John Milton, Aphra Behn, Mary Rowlandson, Daniel Defoe, and Jonathan Swift imagine, interrogate, and narrate the adventure and geography of empire.

Bruce McLeod gained his Ph.D. at the University of Iowa, where he has also been a visiting assistant professor. This is his first book.

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THE GEOGRAPHY OF  
EMPIRE IN ENGLISH  
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*For Naomi*

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## *Acknowledgments*

This project had its genesis in a class on the *avant garde* at the University of Iowa. It was there that I was taken aback by Edward Said's essay "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community." Said critiques the specialization of "fields" and "disciplines" within academia and exhorts us to generalize, to make connections. If we fail to think big we accept and further a situation, in the words of Henri Lefebvre, in which "intellectual labour, like material labour, is subject to endless division" (*Production of Space* 8); a situation where our work is in danger of irrelevance. Thus I set out not only to write a thesis that (originally) studied transatlantic culture and imperialism of the First British Empire (from 1580 to 1815), but to foreground mechanisms of segregation which I felt to be intrinsic to colonialism (even as it forces different cultures into proximity with one another) as well as the brutal spatial "restructuring" throughout the world today.

In this sometimes over-reaching ambition I was fortunate to receive unequivocal support and encouragement from my dissertation committee at Iowa: Rudolf Kuenzli, Wayne Franklin, Alvin Snider, Florence Boos, and Thomas Lewis. Their example as astute and committed critics and as generous and politicized intellectuals has left an indelible mark both on this book and myself. I especially want to thank Rudolf Kuenzli, Wayne Franklin, and Alvin Snider who from the very start offered (non-imperial) super-vision. Their care, hospitality, and humor sustained this project over many years.

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intelligence, and desire to make the world a better place, if not overnight then in the foreseeable future, they have proven that intellectual honesty and creativity is alive and well.

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