



Cartophilia: Maps and the Search for Identity in the French-German Borderland

By Catherine Tatiana Dunlop

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The period between the French Revolution and World War II was a time of tremendous growth in both mapmaking and map reading throughout Europe. There is no better place to witness this rise of popular cartography than in Alsace-Lorraine, a disputed borderland that the French and Germans both claimed as their national territory. Desired for its prime geographical position and abundant natural resources, Alsace-Lorraine endured devastating wars from 1870 to 1945 that altered its borders four times, transforming its physical landscape and the political allegiances of its citizens. For the border population whose lives were turned upside down by the French-German conflict, maps became essential tools for finding a new sense of place and a new sense of identity in their changing national and regional communities.

Turning to a previously undiscovered archive of popular maps, *Cartophilia* reveals Alsace-Lorraine's lively world of citizen mapmakers that included linguists, ethnographers, schoolteachers, hikers, and priests. Together, this fresh group of mapmakers invented new genres of maps that framed French and German territory in original ways through experimental surveying techniques, orientations, scales, colors, and iconography. In focusing on the power of "bottom-up" maps to transform modern European identities, *Cartophilia* argues that the history of cartography must expand beyond the study of elite maps and shift its emphasis to the democratization of cartography in the modern world.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Dunlop analyzes maps and geographic pamphlets generated from the mid-18th century to 1940 to show how cartographers, nationalists, and the Alsatians themselves used map making to define Alsatians as French, German, or Alsatian. Her regional study shows that maps do not present territory; they interpret it. Map makers create identities by circumscribing boundaries. . . . Recommended."

(CHOICE)

"Maps should rightly follow in the footsteps of national developments, chronicling changes that have occurred due to nature, wars or treaties. However, *Cartophilia* makes it clear that maps can have a much more profound cultural impact, and in some occasions actually lead the change. Over time, maps went from strategic military use, to nationalist use, to civilian-made and bought; yet in Dunlop's telling they rarely lost their greater strategic purpose throughout this period."

(Geographical Magazine)

"Elegantly written and excellently illustrated, this book is a very successful example of how maps can be used in political projects. In fact, the visual artefacts under discussion extend far beyond maps, and this sets maps in a wider visual, as well as political, culture."

(Journal of Historical Geography)

"*Cartophilia* is a thoroughly researched, elegantly written and beautifully illustrated investigation of the cartographic depiction of this contested part of Europe. Its emphasis on 'popular' or unofficial map-makers is especially new. Author and publisher alike are to be congratulated for the appearance of this handsome, challenging and path-breaking book that is adorned with 16 colour plates and 70 halftones."

(Cultural Geographies)

"*Cartophilia* represents an important and innovative contribution to this debate. Through its beautifully illustrated discussion of a range of different maps produced to chart and plot Alsace, Lorraine and the Franco-German border, it offers a clear and convincing account of the ways in which this border connected distinct national populations, and joins the growing consensus that in their dual function of dividing and connecting nations, borders connect more often than they divide."

(French History)

"Drawing on an extensive and impressive collection of published maps and archival documents. . . . Dunlop effectively demonstrates how mapping initiative passed out of the hands of state surveyors by the middle of the nineteenth century, becoming the purview of nationalist activists, geography teachers, and later even popular hiking associations. Rethinking the common characterization of the nineteenth century as a period when national borders began to harden, she asserts that cartography actually made them more malleable because it empowered ordinary people to reimagine national boundaries in any way they saw fit."

(Journal of Modern History)

"*Cartophilia* uncovers a remarkable range of "citizen cartographers" who mapped one of Europe's most iconic borderland regions. From foldable hiking charts to popular village maps, Dunlop draws upon quotidian objects that, in her analysis, become cultural symbols underpinning the modern nation. Not since

Peter Sahlins' *Boundaries* has there been such an insightful analysis of French cartographic culture at its own geographic limits."

(Neil Safier, The John Carter Brown Library at Brown University)

"Dunlop's *Cartophilia* is an impressive book. Taking the borderland of Alsace-Lorraine as her point of reference, and "popular" cartographers as her subject, Dunlop demonstrates, with a keen eye for telling details, the role of maps and cartographic practices in the formation and re-formation of national and regional identities over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Cartophilia* is cogently organized, elegantly and succinctly written, and original in its emphases and contributions."

(Raymond Craib, Cornell University)

"There is a freshness in Dunlop's writing, a desire to innovate and rethink that is remarkable. Dunlop does not paint by numbers, filling in a tableau well-established by others. Rather, *Cartophilia* is conceptually bold in combining history and geography in a way that is unique and fascinating. It is also methodologically important, as she handles historical geography with a precision and a delicacy that I have not yet seen among historians or geographers. *Cartophilia* is an impressive work that will set the model for scholars and students for years to come."

(Stephen Harp, History, University of Akron)

"With lively and polished prose, Dunlop traces the many ways that visual imagery both reflected and shaped the shifting boundary between France and Germany. Her ability to explicate all types of cartographic knowledge—from state-sponsored surveys to popular "citizen maps"—makes this a most welcome addition to the history of cartography."

(Susan Schulten, University of Denver)

About the Author

Catherine Tatiana Dunlop is assistant professor of modern European history at Montana State University, Bozeman.

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Margaret Head:

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