



# Cartographic Fictions: Maps, Race, and Identity

*Karen Piper*

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## **Cartographic Fictions: Maps, Race, and Identity** Karen Piper

Maps are stories as much about us as about the landscape. They reveal changing perceptions of the natural world, as well as conflicts over the acquisition of territories. *Cartographic Fictions* looks at maps in relation to journals, correspondence, advertisements, and novels by authors such as Joseph Conrad and Michael Ondaatje. In her innovative study, Karen Piper follows the history of cartography through three stages: the establishment of the prime meridian, the development of aerial photography, and the emergence of satellite and computer mapping.

Piper follows the cartographer's impulse to "leave the ground" as the desire to escape the racialized or gendered subject. With the distance that the aerial view provided, maps could then be produced "objectively," that is, devoid of "problematic" native interference. Piper attempts to bring back the dialogue of the "native informant," demonstrating how maps have historically constructed or betrayed anxieties about race. The book also attempts to bring back key areas of contact to the map between explorer/native and masculine/feminine definitions of space.

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