

# Mapping the Victorian Social Body (SUNY series, Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century)

Pamela K. Gilbert



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Explores how medical and social maps helped shape modern perceptions of space.

The cholera epidemics that plagued London in the nineteenth century were a turning point in the science of epidemiology and public health, and the use of maps to pinpoint the source of the disease initiated an explosion of medical and social mapping not only in London but throughout the British Empire as well. *Mapping the Victorian Social Body* explores the impact of such maps on Victorian and, ultimately, present-day perceptions of space. Tracing the development of cholera mapping from the early sanitary period to the later "medical" period of which John Snow's work was a key example, the book explores how maps of cholera outbreaks, residents' responses to those maps, and the novels of Charles Dickens, who drew heavily on this material, contributed to an emerging vision of London as a metropolis. The book then turns to India, the metropole's colonial other and the perceived source of the disease. In India, the book argues, imperial politics took cholera mapping in a wholly different direction and contributed to Britons' perceptions of Indian space as quite different from that of home. The book concludes by tracing the persistence of Victorian themes in current discourse, particularly in terms of the identification of large cities with cancerous growth and of Africa with AIDS.

"...highly original ... Gilbert's analysis seems an important addition to the panoply of Victorian epistemological innovations ... and just as important in helping articulate modern social, political, and national identity." — *Victorian Studies* 

"[Gilbert] brings the skills of literary and textual analysis to nineteenth-century British and colonial cartography, and the result is an intriguing and relatively unusual study." — *Journal of British Studies* 

"There is no other study that brings the evolving tradition of health-related mapping to literature. This book will be a crucial portal through which literary scholars can see how epidemiology, mapmaking, and cultural theories of space can produce new readings of literature." — Laura Otis, editor of *Literature and Science in the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology* 

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