Putting the British Seas on the Map: John Dee's Imperial Cartography

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Abstract

This essay surveys the cartographic output of the Elizabethan scholar John Dee (1527–1609), and puts it in the context of intellectual and political developments in sixteenth-century England. While Dee's mappings are now obscured by the legacy of explorers such as Drake and Raleigh and writers such as Hakluyt and Purchas, they brought together advanced science and sophisticated rhetoric, and played an important role in the genesis of the British Empire.

DURING the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the British Empire existed only in patriotic versions of the past and optimistic visions for the future: both figuratively and literally, it was still a "paper empire."[1] Despite the growing body of comparative and revisionist work on the British Empire, this statement retains a surprising amount of shock value. This is not simply because of the magnitude of the empire that Britain built up during the reigns of Elizabeth's successors, but because it is Elizabeth herself who is most often associated with the birth of that empire. The painters and poets of the so-called "cult of Elizabeth" celebrated the Queen's power in explicitly imperial terms,[2] and even before she died there was a tradition crediting her with pioneering patronage of English maritime enterprise—a tradition that dominated British historiography until very recently.[3] But the fact is that Spain and Portugal had dominated global exploration and had long since secured the most accessible and profitable trade routes. In the face of this global pre-emption, Elizabeth and most of her ministers reacted with a combination of realism and insularity, adopting a passive stance and refraining, when possible, from engaging in foreign endeavours.

Nonetheless, there were those who believed that Elizabeth's England could become an imperial power in its own right, enriching its coffers with new trades and expanding its dominions with territorial conquests. These seamen, statesmen, and scholars attempted, with limited success, to make the English Renaissance what J. H. Parry termed the "Age of Reconnaissance"[4]—even if the result was closer to an "Age of Plunder," as W. G. Hoskins described the reign of Elizabeth's father.[5] Many significant voyages of exploration were undertaken, mostly in search of elusive and dangerous Northern passages unattempted by the Spanish or Portuguese. Alongside these path-breaking efforts, experts and ideologues carried out a temporal (or historical) reconnaissance: as cosmographers, historians, and editors they recovered and

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1. This phrase has been applied to a much later stage of the British Empire in Thomas Richards' suggestive study of Victorian literature, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso Books, 1993). Recent accounts of Elizabethan imperialism have stressed its primarily 'paper' nature: see Mary C. Fuller, *Voyages in Print: English Travel to America, 1576–1624* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America, and Literature from* Utopia *to* The Tempest (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
2. Frances Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), and *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987).
3. See Christopher Haigh, editor's introduction to *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 9.
4. *The Age of Reconnaissance: Discovery, Exploration and Settlement, 1450–1650* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1963).
5. *The Age of Plunder: The England of Henry VIII, 1500–1547* (London: Longman, 1976).

manipulated records, myths, and maps to advocate the creation of a global empire, secured by power over the seas that surrounded the British Isles and spread throughout the world.

In this essay, I want to focus on one of the most interesting and under-appreciated imperial advocates, the polymath John Dee (1527–1609).[6] Dee is best known today as Elizabethan England's great magus, a man of prodigious scientific talent who committed himself to a Neoplatonic quest for the secrets of natural philosophy.[7] Since his own day, however, there has been another Dee: a highly valued scholarly adviser, especially on matters of British history and the advancement of English sea-power.

This latter Dee has always been assured of a place in maritime history and the history of geography: Eva Taylor made him the central figure of her pioneering study, *Tudor Geography*; Antoine de Smet claimed for Dee a seminal role in the development of English cartography by calling attention to his unparalleled cartographical education, contacts, and resources; and, most recently, David Livingstone gave Dee a prominent position in his chapter on the Renaissance in *The Geographical Tradition*.[8] In the late 1540s, after graduating from Cambridge University, Dee went to Louvain where he studied under and alongside the foremost Continental cosmographers —among them Gemma Frisius, Pedro Nuñez, Abraham Ortelius, and Gerard Mercator. These men exercised a lasting influence on Dee and, by extension, the development of Tudor cartography. When he returned to England, Dee took with him rare European books and manuscripts[9] as well as some of Gemma Frisius's globes and instruments.[10] When he became seriously ill in the late 1550s, Dee appointed Nuñez as his executor. When Ortelius travelled to England in 1577, he paid a visit to Dee's house in Mortlake, and surviving letters suggest that the two men maintained a correspondence.[11] But it was Mercator with whom Dee had been, and remained, closest. In the dedicatory epistle to his *Propaedeumata aphoristica* (1558), Dee fondly described their time together in Louvain: "[I]t was the custom of our mutual friendship and intimacy that, during three whole years, neither of us willingly lacked the other's presence for as much as three whole days; and such was the eagerness of both for learning and philosophizing that, after we had come together, we scarcely left off the investigation of difficult and useful problems for three minutes of an hour."[12] And in the 1570s, when Dee was researching possible northern routes to Cathay, he was still able to compare notes with Mercator.[13]

Yet, Dee's service as one of Tudor England's leading maritime advisers has been consistently overshadowed by the more public legacy of Richard Hakluyt, Francis Drake, and Sir Walter Raleigh. If we assemble all of the available sources, it becomes evident that Dee could hardly have held a more prominent place in what Kenneth Andrews described as the conjunction of "maritime enterprise and the genesis of the British Empire" in the sixteenth century.[14] Dee is traditionally credited with coining the very term "British Empire,"[15] and he was one of its earliest, boldest, and most ingenious (as well as, it must be said, least successful) architects. In a series of

6. For an earlier (and, in places, fuller) treatment, see my monograph, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995)—especially ch. 7. Robert Baldwin has also produced an indispensable study, "John Dee's Interest in the Application of Nautical Science, Mathematics, and Law to English Naval Affairs," and I am grateful to him for sharing the manuscript with me.
7. In addition to the influential works of Frances Yates—especially *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) and *Theatre of the World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969)—see Peter French, *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972). A more recent and reliable account is Nicholas Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1988).
8. E. G. R. Taylor, *Tudor Geography, 1485–1583* (London: Methuen, 1930); Antoine de Smet, "John Dee et sa place dans l'histoire de la cartographie," in Helen Wallis and Sarah Tyacke, eds., *My Head is a Map: Essays & Memoires in Honour of R. V. Tooley* (London: Francis Edwards Ltd., 1973); and David N. Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).
9. See Samuel H. Baron, "Herberstein and the English 'Discovery' of Muscovy," *Terrae Incognitae* 18 (1986): 43–54, for a discussion of the possible significance of one of these texts for English exploration.
10. See Dee's description in his "Compendious Rehearsall"—printed in James Crossley, ed., *The Autobiographical Tracts of Dr. John Dee* (Manchester: Printed for the Chetham Society, 1851).
11. What remains of their correspondence can be found in J. H. Hessels, ed., *Abrahami Ortelii ... epistulae* (Cambridge, 1887).
12. I cite Wayne Shumaker's facing-page translation in *John Dee on Astronomy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 111.
13. E. G. R. Taylor, "A Letter Dated 1577 from Mercator to John Dee," *Imago Mundi* 13 (1956): 56–68.
14. K. R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
15. See, however, Bruce Henry, "John Dee, Humphrey Llwyd, and the name 'British Empire'," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 35 (1971–72): 189–90.

conferences, treatises, and maps from the 1550s to the 1590s, he developed an expansionist program that he called "this British discovery and recovery enterprise."[16] Supporting both the discovery of new lands and the recovery of territories that once arguably belonged to the British crown, Dee gradually claimed for the Queen a vast dominion covering most of the water and much of the land in the northern hemisphere.

For Dee, this amounted to nothing less than a "Geographical Reformation,"[17] and in the foreign policy of many of his compatriots this reformation was no less important than the one initiated by Henry VIII's break with Rome. The Geographical, like the Protestant, Reformation was a matter more of interpretation than absolute truth, and new geopolitical maps had to be drawn, justified, and enforced. In assessing these maps, we should not expect them to conform to modern standards of geographical and historical verisimilitude: as W. F. Ganong vividly warned when describing some of the "crucial maps" of the period, "Most ... represent primarily not the actual geography of the country, but the results of the efforts of professional closet cartographers in Europe to reconcile the scant, incomplete, and often inconsistent geographical data ... and therefrom to produce pleasing pictures, pretentiously complete, stylistically elaborated, artistically adorned, and nationalistically acceptable."[18] In looking at Dee's imperial cartography, I will be especially concerned with this final constraint, and will focus on the ways in which he used cartography as a rhetorical tool to persuade the English government and its potential competitors of the legitimacy and feasibility of his imperialistic designs.

Dee's first, and by far his best known, textual treatment of these issues was the *General and Rare Memorials pertayning to the Perfect Arte of Navigation*, written in 1576 and printed in 1577. This work outlined a project for the establishment of a small naval coast guard, but it was part of a much more ambitious program. As Dee explained in the work's preface, he intended for it to serve as an introduction to a four-volume series that would go under the extraordinary title, "The British Monarchy," and that would offer a general scheme for securing the coasts of the English commonwealth and for enlarging (or, to use the term most commonly employed by contemporaries, augmenting) the boundaries of the British Empire. The second volume was entitled, "The Brytish Complement of the Perfect Arte of Navigation," and was to consist mainly of "Queen Elizabeth, her Tables Gubernautic." This was never printed, but from surviving notes these "tables gubernautic" seem to have been lists of longitudes and latitudes computed according to Dee's geographical invention, the "paradoxal compass": in August, 1576, he described his invention to his publisher, John Daye, and tried (unsuccessfully) to persuade him to publish a large circumpolar sea-chart based on his tables.[19] The third volume is a complete mystery, as it was destroyed for reasons unknown. The fourth and final volume was to be called, "Of Famous and Rich Discoveries." The badly damaged manuscript that survives of this text is a rambling collection of materials on geography, with an eye toward discovery and recovery in Elizabeth's name. It is mostly concerned with the areas to be explored in voyages to Cathay via the Northeast and Northwest Passages, voyages for which Dee served as one of the Muscovy and Cathay Companies' chief advisers.

At the same time, Dee was busy preparing his manuscript, *Brytanici Imperij Limites*, which is almost unknown today but which was perhaps the most influential of his imperial texts.[20] This collection was written alongside the "British Monarchy" tetralogy, but it represents a different project: it documents Dee's verbal presentations in a series of conferences with the queen and her ministers at court. After a number of brief and informal discussions, Dee was finally given the opportunity to present his entire case for the Queen's rights to foreign lands in person. At 11:00 a.m. on 3 October 1580, as he recorded in his diary, Dee delivered his "two rolls of the Quene's Majesties Title unto herself in the garden at Richemond."[21]

The imperial claims that Dee made in these "two rolls" were pretty remarkable in themselves; but my focus here must be on the ways in which he presented and justified them. He cited classical historians, medieval chroniclers, Renaissance cosmographers, Papal Bulls, genealogical charters, and (last but not least) manuscript and printed maps to support his conclusion that for "a great parte of the sea Coastes of Atlantis (otherwise called *America*) ...

16. It is worth quoting the full passage in which this phrase appears: "Nowe (at length) ame I come to my chiefe purpose, of some Records settinge downe: which wilbe found sufficient, for to stire upp yo[u]r Ma[jes]tis most noble hart, and to directe yo[u]r Godlie conscience, to undertake this Brytish discovery, and recovery Enterprise, in yo[u]r owne Royall Interest: for the great good service of God, for yo[u]r highnes immortal fame, and the marvailous Wealth Publick of yo[u]r Brytish Impire" (*Brytannici Imperii Limites*, British Library, MS Additional 59681).
17. Ibid.
18. W. F. Ganong, *Crucial Maps in the Early Cartography and Place-Nomenclature of the Atlantic Coast of Canada*, ed. Theodore E. Layng (Toronto: University of Toronto Press with the Royal Society of Canada, 1964), 439.
19. Bodleian Library, Ashmole 242, art. 83 (I owe this reference to Robert Baldwin). Cf. E. G. R. Taylor's Hakluyt Society edition of William Bourne's writings (London, 1963), Appendix 1.
20. British Library, MS Additional 59681.
21. J. O. Halliwell, ed., *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee* (London: Camden Society, 1842), 9.

and of all the Iles nere unto the same ... and Cheiflie all the *Ilands Septentrionall* [e.g., Greenland and Friseland], the Title Royall and supreme government is due and appropriate unto [her] most gratious Majestie ... ." These claims rested, then, on textual precedents—based in the strongest cases on documents relating to recent voyages of discovery and colonization, but in cases like his claim to the entire North Sea and most of the Atlantic Ocean, they rested on historical and quasi-historical passages gathered from his reading, wrenched out of context, and rewritten into a new narrative. The cornerstones for Dee's imperial project turn out to be the legendary exploits of King Arthur and Prince Madoc, as well as the more verifiable legacy of Elizabeth's navally minded predecessor King Edgar.

The imperial cartography of Dee's *Brytanici Imperii Limites* emerges most dramatically in the rhetorical tour-de-force that concludes the first section of the text. After "reforming" Ortelius's and Mercator's charts of the Arctic region around Cathay, Dee outdoes the famous Ditchley portrait (in which the Queen is shown standing on a map of England) by actually mapping the Asian and American regions he wishes England to explore onto the Queen's body itself: "the single little black circle on the left hand side of your Majesty's throne," he suggests, "represents Cambalu the capital of Cathay. But by a wonderful fortune ... the City of Heaven (that is, of course, Quinsay) happens to be located at the middle joint of the index finger which encloses the hilt of your sword." "And there are other things," he continues,

> extremely noteworthy, which, as if by Divine will, adorn the surroundings of your imperial seat. For under your Crown ... is concealed an island; once known as Chryse, but now commonly called Japan ... . Thirdly, at the right side of your Majesty, the coast of Atlantis is pleased to have its place—almost opposite Quinsay. But about the feet of your supreme highness lies the Strait of Anian ... . And if those things are true which we have hitherto heard reported, those 4 places which I have named have thus their own geographical symmetry.

After some detective work, it becomes clear that one of the "two rolls" that Dee presented in the garden at Richmond Palace was a map of the northern regions claimed for the Queen, while the other was a collection of the textual sources that supported those claims. This package would have looked very similar to—and was, indeed, closely related to—a map that Dee prepared in 1580, which is now preserved in the British Library as Cotton MS Augustus I.i.1. In that text, the territorial claims were not only accompanied by a map: they were inscribed on the back of one. On one side, Dee sketched a map of the Western part of the Northern Hemisphere (Figure 1). Stretching from Western Europe to the eastern extremity of Asia, Dee's map puts the contested American continent squarely in the centre, its detailed eastern coastline contrasting with the blank interior and absent western and northern boundaries.[22] Its geographical details closely follow Mercator's influential chart of 1569, but it is laid down on a different projection and makes some important emendations.[23] On the reverse, he inscribed a list—"sweeping" is the only way to describe it—of those foreign lands depicted on the map that he claimed for the English crown. The outline is headed, "A briefe Remembrance of Sondrye foreyne Regions, discovered, inhabited, and partlie Conquered by the Subjects of this *Brytish Monarchie*. And so [the] lawfull Tytle ... for the dewe Clayme, and just recovery of the same disclosed ... ." Reading down the edge, we find a compressed list of Dee's precedents, which moves from remote myth to recent history: Madoc, Arthur, St. Brendan, the Cabots, the Boroughs, and, most recently, Martin Frobisher.

In the same year, Dee produced a similar, and related, map of part of the Northern Hemisphere: this was not prepared directly for the Queen but for her chief minister, William Cecil, Lord Burghley. While geographical imagery was regularly displayed to Queen Elizabeth—and used to display the queen to others—if we want to understand the political power of maps in the Elizabethan period, we need to look less at Elizabeth and more at Lord Burghley: it is Burghley who reveals the ways in which the government's management and colonization of space, ranging from estate surveying to military surveillance, depended upon the use of geographical representations and cartographic intelligence.

Thanks to the efforts of R. A. Skelton, we know that Burghley had an exhaustive collection of maps, which he organized in volumes and annotated thoroughly with practical and administrative details. These volumes survive at Hatfield and Burghley Houses, and in cataloguing them, Skelton suggestively called them Burghley's "cartographical commonplace books."[24]

Richard Helgerson has discussed one of these volumes, a set of proofs for Christopher Saxton's atlas, to which

22. The area that Dee chose to highlight was closely related to the ongoing exploration of the North Atlantic: as several scholars have discussed (including E. G. R. Taylor, *Tudor Geography*; Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); and Ganong, *Crucial Maps*—the last of which provides a photograph of the section in question as Figure 116) he reproduces a deeply misguided Canadian and Polar geography, including the islands of Estotilant, Grocland, and Groenland, and he shows the beginnings of a straight and wide-open Northwest Passage.
23. Ganong, 450.
24. R. A. Skelton and J. Summerson, *A Description of the Maps and Architectural Drawings in the Collection ... at Hatfield House* (Oxford: Printed for presentation to the members of the Roxburghe Club, 1971).

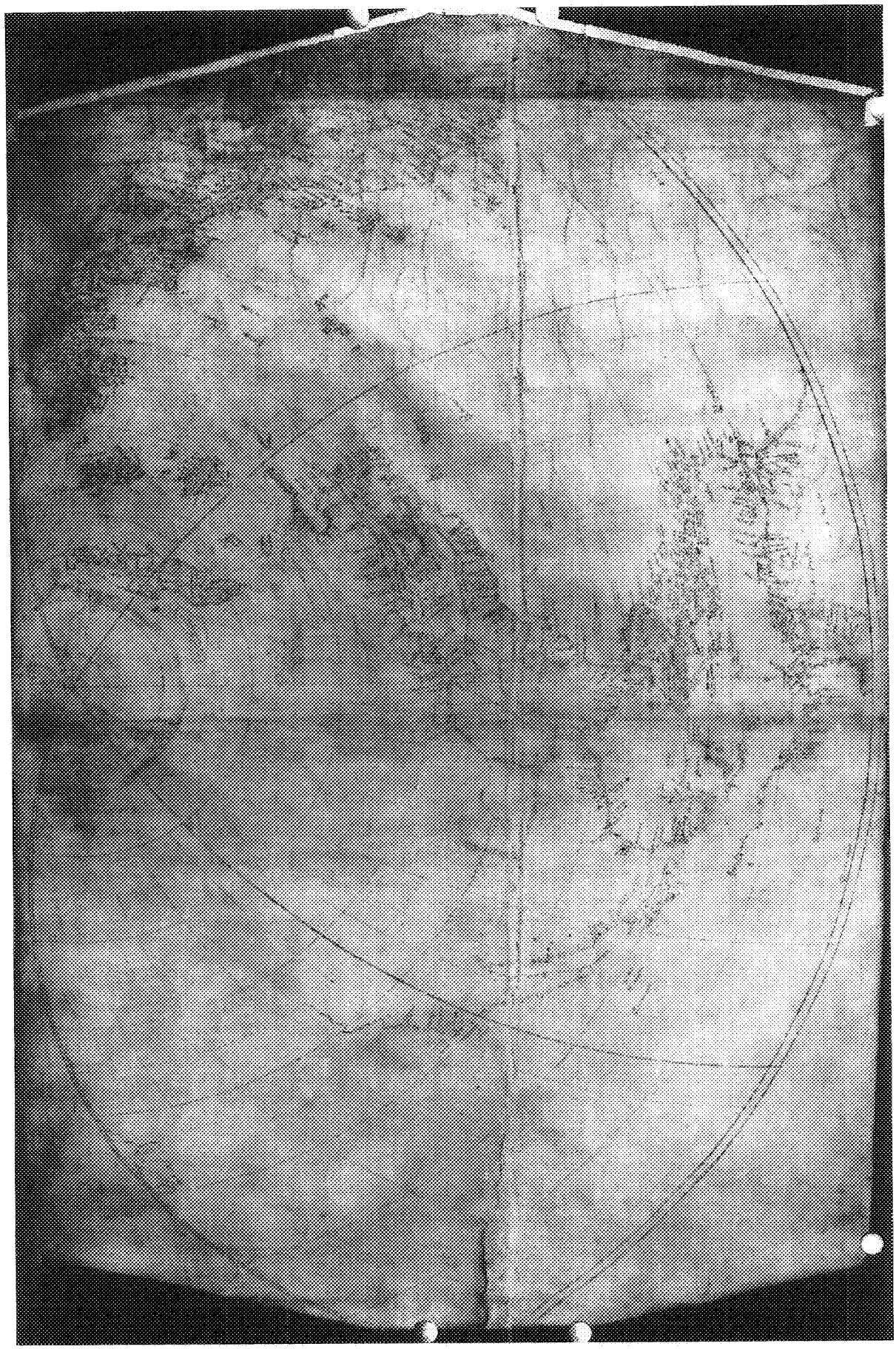

Figure 1. Dee's map of the northern hemisphere with imperial plans for the American continent. Reproduced by permission of the British Library. MS Cotton Augustus I.i.1.

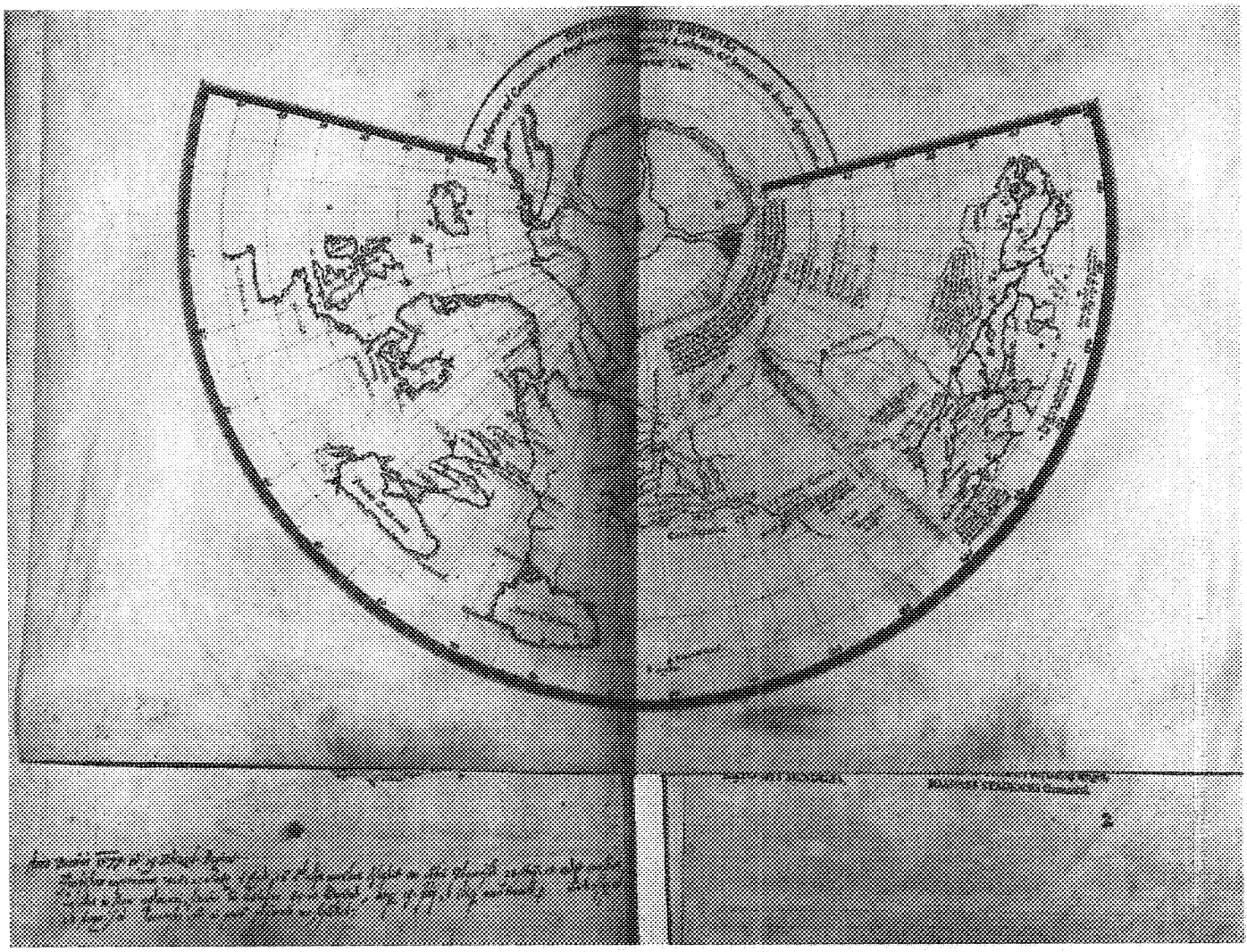

Figure 2. Manuscript map of part of the northern hemisphere, bound in Lord Burghley's copy of Ortelius' Theatrum Orbis Terrarum. *The Burghley House Collection.*

Burghley added corrections and further information.[25] A lesser-known volume is Burghley's copy of the first edition of Abraham Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, now in the library at Burghley House, which he not only annotated but supplemented with manuscript maps. One of these was a map, in Dee's hand, of the Northeast Passage between Eurasia and the North Pole (Figure 2). Its fan-shaped projection covers 200 degrees of longitude, between 40 and 90 degrees latitude, depicting the stretch from Britain and Iceland on the left to Cathay on the right. In both technical and artistic terms, it can be considered Dee's finest map.

Its context is suggested not only by its date but by the section of the globe its perspective highlights and by the legend that Dee inscribed at the top: "DEO OPTIMO MAXIMO FAVENTE, Anglorum ad CATHAYUM per Scythicum Oceanum Fecundi Labores, & Immortali laude dignissimi ... . Authore Joanne Dee." This positions the map alongside his collection *Of Famous and Rare Discoveries* and at the centre of the key maritime enterprise of 1580, Charles Jackman and Arthur Pet's search for the Northeast Passage. Hakluyt tells us that Dee prepared a map for this voyage, but it has not been identified. The Burghley map may well be a copy of Dee's map for Pet and Jackman, if not the map itself: it clearly illustrates Dee's argument—backed up by extensive quotations in *Famous and Rare Discoveries* and compressed legends copied onto the map itself—that the whole course from "Vaygach" to "Tabin" lay south of 70 degrees.[26]

Dee has been associated with one more, slightly later, map, and both its content and context are very similar to the 1580 Cotton map accompanying the "briefe Remembraunce." It is the "Humphrey Gilbert" map of ca. 1583 —so called because of the inscription, "Humfray Gylbert

25. Helgerson, "The Land Speaks," in his *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

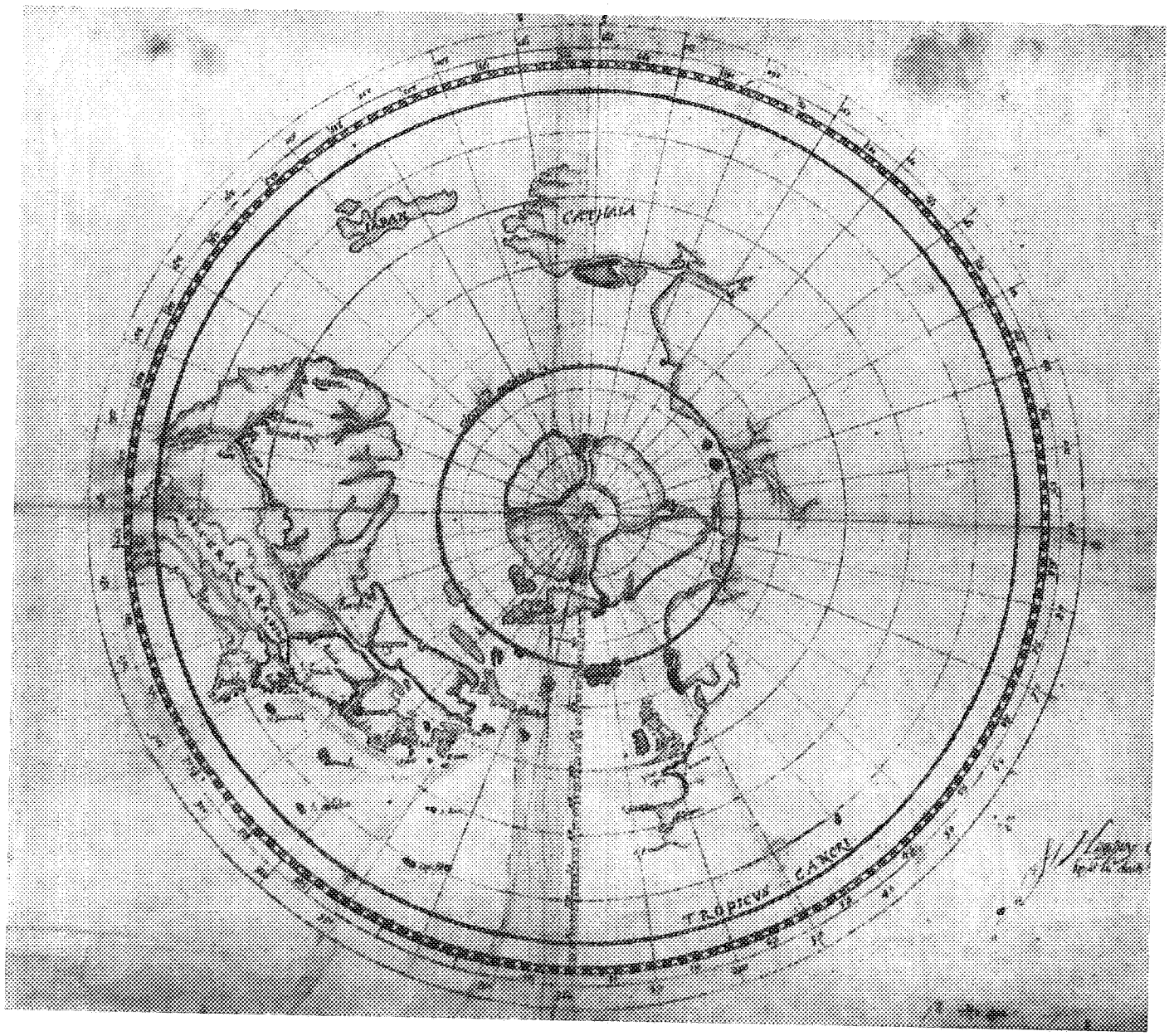

Figure 3. Humfray Gylbert Knight his charte. *Rare Book Department, The Free Library of Philadelphia.*

Knight his charte" (Figure 3).[27] As E. G. R. Taylor suggested, this may well be the "Hemisphaeri Borealis geographica, atque Hydrographica descriptio: longe a vulgatis chartis diversa: Anglis quibusdam versus Atlantidis Septentrionalis litora, navigationem instituentibus dono data, An. 1583," which Dee entered in a list of his manuscript writings in the 1590s.[28] Its details clearly derive from the 1569 Mercator chart and Michael Lok's 1582 map of North America, which was published as an accompaniment to Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages*.[29] But the uniqueness of this map lies not so much in its arguments as its motives: we know that in 1580, the westward-bound Gilbert granted Dee the rights to all discoveries north of 50 degrees latitude.[30] Since this would give him financial control over not only most of Canada but the hoped-for northern route from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, Dee's map probably documents a desire that was personal as well as political.

26. See K. R. Andrews, note 14 above, 72–73; and E. G. R. Taylor, "John Dee and the map of North-East Asia," *Imago Mundi* 12 (1955): 103–106. A potentially confusing annotation by Burghley records the details of Frobisher's second (1577) voyage to the Northwest; but the note is actually on a previous page and may not refer to the Dee map at all.

These cases will be sufficient to suggest what I mean by the phrase "cartographic rhetoric," and to indicate how closely map and text work together in Dee's persuasive program. Most modern readers see map and text as separate forms now, but virtually all maps are accompanied by some sort of text, and many of the period's most important texts—particularly historical texts—were meant to be accompanied by maps. This suggests not only that maps and words worked more closely together in the early modern period than we tend to realize—but, I would venture, a more interesting point. We tend to put the argument in the text, and to see the map or the picture as an illustration or reflection, but maps or pictures were often the point of entry, or the embodiment of an argument—with the text providing illustration or justification.

Returning to Dee's imperial program, there is one final text to consider. Although it does not contain any actual map, the last text produced as part of Dee's British discovery and recovery enterprise contains his most potent display of imperial cartography. Late in 1597, at the request of the Privy Council, he wrote a short treatise entitled, *THALATTOKRATIA BRETTANIKI*, or "The British Sea Sovereignty," and subtitled, "An Extemporaneous Miscellany on the Sea-Jurisdiction of the British Empire."[31] As the title suggests, this is Dee's clearest statement of his vision for a British "thalassocracy"—a maritime empire based on the exercise of sea-sovereignty, on the order of those established by the Athenians and Trojans.[32]

As with Dee's other writings on the subject—and, indeed, with most early modern geopolitical texts—the focus is not on the centres of state power but on the boundaries or limits. Accordingly, it is often on these fuzzy edges and disputed margins where we can find the most interesting scholarly and political negotiations.[33] Dee's own claims for English sea-sovereignty explicitly rested on the sophisticated legal distinction between 'Limits Absolute' and 'Limits Respective.' The former term applied whenever a body of water was flanked by lands belonging to a single country. In this case, the ocean simply became the jurisdiction of that country's monarch. The latter term applied whenever a body of water separated the territories of two or more monarchs. In this case, the sea jurisdiction would be determined either by the conventional one-hundred mile limit, or by a line drawn midway between the coasts in question. These rules guided not only Dee's argument but the whole discussion of the "open" or "closed" seas—the *mare liberum* and *mare clausum*—that figured so prominently in seventeenth-century writings on foreign policy.

This discussion generated one of the most famous scholarly and political episodes of the early modern period. In the 1630s, John Selden devised his classic argument for a *Mare Clausum*: this countered the Dutch assertion (voiced by Hugo Grotius) of a *Mare Liberum*, and justified the thalassocratic policies of King Charles I. As T. W. Fulton explained in his account of *The Sovereignty of the Sea*, Selden conceived of a four-quartered British Sea to which Charles could lay claim: this he represented in a map, which served as the frontispiece to the second book (Figure 4).[34] What has gone unnoticed by almost

27. This map was purchased in 1928 for the Rosenbach collection and is now held at the Free Library of Philadelphia. It was first reproduced and described by R. P. Bishop in the *Geographical Journal* 72 (1928): 235–43. It has since been reproduced and assessed in both Ganong, *Crucial Maps*, 453–54, and Morison, *The European Discovery of America*, 580–81. All of the above ascribe the information if not the execution of the map to Dee, citing its consistency with Dee's previous pictures of the region as well as the presence of a symbol strongly resembling his *"Monas Hieroglyphica"* and his close involvement in Gilbert's schemes of exploration in 1582–83. I have nothing new to add in the way of evidence, and—despite the troubling presence of the phrase *"T. S. fecit"*—am more or less persuaded of Dee's role in the production of the map.
28. See Bishop, "The Map of c. 1582–3," 236.
29. Ganong, 452. In fact, Dee and Lok were in close contact during the mid-1570s, in the run-up to the Frobisher voyages for which Lok acted as financial director and Dee as technical adviser. In an autobiographical defence prepared during his imprisonment for bankruptcy in 1581, Lok described how, in 1576, he had arranged a meeting at his own house with Frobisher, Borough, Hall, and others, where Lok laid before Dee "my Bokes & authors, my Cardes & Instruments, & my Notes thereof made in writing ... ." Dee was reportedly moved in sympathy to instruct "the Masters & Marriners in the use of [in]struments for Navigation in their voyage ... ." (BL, MS Cotton Otho E.Viii, fol. 44r-v: this account is, except for fol. 45, in Dee's hand).
30. See, in addition to the previously noted sources, Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy*, 188.
31. There are three known copies of this manuscript. Two are in Dee's hand: a draft, in BL MS Harley 249, and a cleaner copy, bound with Dee's *General and Rare Memorials* in BL C.21.e.12. The third, roughly contemporary, copy is BL MS Royal 7 C.XVI, fols. 158–65.
32. The best guide to the meaning and history of the term is Clark G. Reynolds, "'Thalassocracy' as a Historical Force," in *History and the Sea: Essays on Maritime Strategies* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).
33. On this point, see Matthew Edney's review article, "Mapping and the Early Modern State: The Intellectual Nexus of Late Tudor and Early Stuart Cartography," *Cartographica* 29, 3–4 (Autumn/Winter, 1992): 89–93.

Figure 4. Frontispiece for Book II, Ch. I of John Selden's Mare Clausum *(1635), The Newberry Library.*

everyone except Fulton is that, during the preceding century, Dee had drawn a comparable, though even bolder, map of the British Seas.

In *THALATTOKRATIA BRETTANIKI,* Dee took his governmental readers on a periplus of the British Isles, delineating in all four directions what he claimed to be the "British Seas." Like Selden, he had little trouble appropriating the seas off the south coast of England (the "Narrow Seas"). This was, after all, known after Ptolemy as "Mare Britannicum"; and Dee could claim that Elizabeth's supremacy over France (on the basis of "Direct inheritance, by conquest, and by free gift and composition Royall") left it a simple Limit Absolute. Nor was he stretching too far in claiming for the Queen the waters between England and Ireland. Moving northward, Dee came to the Scottish Isles. Scotland took on special importance for Dee, much more than for Selden. Before the Scottish Stuarts came to the English throne, a claim to Scotland had the potential to unite the kingdom of Great Britain. Furthermore, Dee drew attention to Scotland's position opposite the east coast of America. Dee had, in his earlier writings, claimed the Queen's title to the northern parts of America; his claim to Scotland and its water would ground the British Empire in English sovereignty over the Atlantic.

Dee's most controversial claim, and the one that really stretched the limits of the British Empire—as well as the limits of his credibility and of Elizabethan foreign policy—was the call for English sovereignty over the waters lying between the east coast of England and the western coastlines of Norway, Denmark, and Holland. Dee argued that no one could object to a Limit Respective, "half the seas over." But he felt that it was time to advance a larger claim—one that Elizabeth and her ministers would find unacceptably provocative—that the entire North Sea fell under British sea sovereignty.

In the period before Selden, when the claim was resuscitated, this argument was apparently unique and undeniably contentious. It ran counter not only to current political realities but to received historical and cartographical wisdom. From Ptolemy onward, *Mare Britannicum* referred to the English Channel, while the North Sea was universally known as *Mare Germanicum.* But Dee wanted to conflate the two under the larger name of the British Seas: "never here after," he wrote, "(so far as I may perswade, or performe) shall that Sea be any longer misnamed *Germanicus Oceanus* but be restored to his true & auncient name of *Mare Britannicum.*" To support what he called this "revived veritie," Dee cited a typical range of records and texts that mentioned such an expanded *Mare Britannicum,* including those of several chroniclers from Northern Europe and Germany itself.

This was enterprising scholarship, but it was unlikely to have convinced other geographers or antiquaries. The reasons why Dee reformed these geographical terms are, however, to be found outside the objective standards of disinterested scholarship. In the summer

34. Thomas Wemyss Fulton, *The Sovereignty of the Sea* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1911).

of 1597, the Privy Council was engaged in the escalating conflict between the English Merchant Adventurers and the merchants of the Hanseatic League.[35] The conflict had been waged on a petty level for over twenty years, but in August, 1597, Emperor Rudolf II was forced to issue a decree that effectively banned English trade in North and Central Europe. During the next months, the interested parties exchanged diplomats at a furious pace. To support the English negotiators, the Elizabethan government enlisted the help of outside experts; Dee was clearly among them. In claiming sovereignty over the North Sea, Dee was only doing his part in a campaign to counteract Rudolf's decree. That his patriotic and ingenious scholarship was put to the service of an argument doomed to failure was typical of his intellectual and social position throughout his career. But this should not obscure the fact that he remained, as late as 1597, the English court's leading imperial geographer.

In 1652, Marchamont Nedham published his translation of Selden's *Mare Clausum*, calling it *Of the Dominion, Or, Ownership of the Sea.* As the frontispiece to the volume he offered a poetic address from "Neptune to the Common-Wealth of *England.*" The last few verses seem to look back and describe not Selden's, but Dee's, Elizabethan project for a maritime empire:

> What wealth or glorie may arise
> By the North-West discoveries
> is due unto thy care.
> Th'adopting them with English names,
> The greatness of thy minde proclaims,
> and what thy actions are.
> New Seas thou gains't; & to the antient FOUR
> By *Edgar* left, thou addest many more.
>
> ... For Sea-Dominion may as well bee gain'd
> By new acquests, as by descent maintain'd.
>
> Go on (great STATE!) and make it known
> Thou never wilt forsake thine own,
> nor from thy purpose start:
> But that thou wilt thy power dilate,
> Since Narrow Seas are found too straight
> For thy capricious heart.

35. Terrence Henry Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse, 1157–1611: A Study of Their Trade and Commercial Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Ch. 6; and E. P. Cheney, "International Law under Queen Elizabeth," *EHR* 20 (1905): 659–72. The relevant primary sources are scattered throughout the State Papers Domestic and Foreign at the Public Record Office: see especially the Uncalendared State Papers Foreign Hamburg and Hanse Towns (SP 82).