

Cucco through Norton's day and beyond—my paper will make the “unknown” known in its strangely poetic reality.

KEYWORDS: Kenneth Slessor (1901–1971); *Cuckooz Contrey* (1932); *The Atlas* sequence (ca. 1930); “The King of Cuckooz”; poetry—twentieth-century; poetry—Australian; poetry and maps; cartography—seventeenth-century; Robert Norton (d. 1635); Barbarossa/Kheir-ed-din (ca. 1478–1546); Berbers; Kingdom of Koukou/Cucco

WHO'S “THE KING OF CUCKOOZ”? MAPS AND MAPPING IN KENNETH SLESSOR'S POETIC SEQUENCE *THE ATLAS*, PART ONE

Despite my title's claim to be “Part One,” this is not the first article in *Cartographic Perspectives* to focus on *The Atlas* (ca. 1930). In *CP* 70, my “Introduction to Maps and Mapping in Kenneth Slessor's Poetic Sequence *The Atlas*” presented the background for what is gradually becoming the first extended analysis, in several parts, of that five-poem sequence by the acclaimed Australian poet Kenneth Slessor (1901–1971: Haft 2011). Beginning with a brief biography of Slessor as poet, journalist, and man about Sydney, it surveyed his third solo collection, *Cuckooz Contrey* (1932), before turning to *The Atlas*, which both opened and debuted in that collection. Examining the notebook in which he drafted all five poems (NLA MS 3020/19/1¹) revealed the enormous effort that Slessor—then at the height of his artistry and productivity—lavished on *The Atlas* and on mastering the period in which it is set. Not only does the sequence encompass nearly half of the 282 pages in that “National Treasure” (Elizabeth Caplice, e-mail to author: May 28, 2010), but, as the notebook makes clear, Slessor considered naming his entire collection *The Atlas* (September 13, -s242²) before choosing the catchy title *Cuckooz Contrey*. My review of his corpus, furthermore, showed that the sequence uniquely combines interests and strategies apparent in Slessor's earlier and later poems, including his abiding fascination with cartography of exotic places and bygone eras, as well as his emphasis on the arts and the use of illustrations to heighten his poetry's allure. Next came the maps that were created to illustrate his poetry—especially *Strange Lands*, made by Slessor's famously controversial friend and mentor, Norman Lindsay (1879–1969: Smith 1986), and reproduced as “Cuckooz Contrey” for the frontispiece of *Cuckooz Contrey*. Slessor's poetic allusions to maps, in turn, led to the great Australian mariner Captain Francis Joseph Bayldon (1872–1948: Phillips 1979) and to Bayldon's magnificent nautical library, in which the poet may have found the inspiration for *The Atlas*. Finally, I managed to track down *Old Maps of the World* (Francis Edwards 1929), the rare and hitherto elusive catalogue to which Slessor refers in his notes on *The Atlas*. What that article and the remaining parts of my study attempt to prove is that the relationship between that ephemeral catalogue and *The Atlas* is far more profound and far-reaching than anyone might have anticipated.

The article now unfolding before you focuses on three related documents: “The King of Cuckooz,” the first poem of Slessor's sequence *The Atlas* and his collection *Cuckooz Contrey*; Robert Norton's 1620 *Platt of Argier*, whose title

Slessor used to begin his poem; and the 1929 Francis Edwards catalogue *Old Maps of the World*, which advertised and described Norton's manuscript map. Through a close reading of a variety of textual and cartographic documents—each of them replete with narratives of power, wealth, and desire—"Who's 'The King of Cuckooz'" will weave together some rather curious strands of literature, cartography, geography, and history, and in the process offer new discoveries about the poet's use of cartographic sources in constructing "The King of Cuckooz."

POWER, WEALTH, AND DESIRE: SLESSOR'S "THE KING OF CUCKOOZ"

We begin with the delights of "The King of Cuckooz":³

The Atlas, I: "The King of Cuckooz" (ca. 1930)

*"The Platt of Argier and the Pts. adjoining within the view thereof made by Robert Norton the Muster Mr. of his Ma't's Fleet ther Ao Di 1620 & by his owne carfull & dilligent observations then not without danger."*⁴

The King of Cuckooz Contrey
Hangs peaked above Argier
With Janzaries and Marabutts
To bid a sailor fear

With lantern-eyed astrologers
Who walk upon the walls
And ram with stars their basilisks
Instead of cannon-balls.

And in that floating castle
(I tell you it is so)
Five thousand naked Concubines
With dulcimers do go.

Each rosy nose anoints a tile,
Bang, bang! the fort salutes,
When He, the King of Cuckooz Land,
Comes forth in satin boots,

Each rosy darling flies before
When he desires his tent,
Or, like a tempest driving flowers,
Inspects a battlement.

And this I spied by moonlight
Behind a royal bamboo
That Monarch in a curricule
Which ninety virgins drew;

That Monarch drinking nectar
(Lord God, my tale attest!)
Milked from a snow-white elephant
As white as *your* white breast!

And this is no vain fable
As other knaves may lie
Have I not got that Fowl aboard
Which no man may deny?

The King's own hunting-falcon
I limed across the side
When by the Bayes of Africa
King James's Fleet did ride.

What crest is there emblazoned,
Whose mark is this, I beg,
Stamped on the silver manacle
Around that dainty leg?

Let this be news to you, my dear,
How Man should be revered;
Though I'm no King of Cuckooz Land,
Behold as fierce a beard!

I have as huge an appetite,
As deep a kiss, my girl,
And *somewhere*, for the hand that seeks,
Perhaps a Sultan's pearl!

Like a nursery rhyme, "The King of Cuckooz" sparkles with curious words, arresting images, and bouncy rhythms. In each stanza, longer first and third lines alternate with shorter, end-rhymed lines. Adding to the poem's exuberance is Slessor's tongue-in-cheek narrator, who claims to have sailed "by the Bayes of Africa/ [with] King James's Fleet." He barrages his beloved with an arsenal of expressions ranging from affectionate ("my dear," "my girl") and intimate ("*your* white breast," "as deep a kiss") to titillating ("five thousand naked Concubines") and unfamiliar ("Cuckooz," "Janzaries," "Marabutts," "lantern-eyed," "basilisks"). More delicious is his self-mocking tone. Slessor's seducer attempts to impress his beloved not with his valor or wealth, not even with his "first-hand" account of an exotic country, but rather with amusing travesties of these. His wealth is "*somewhere*...perhaps." It's his beard that is "fierce," and he performs his only deeds—acting the voyeur and ensnaring with birdlime the "King's own hunting-falcon"—while safely on deck. He repeatedly undermines his account by emphasizing its implausibility and lack of corroboration ("I tell you it is so." "Lord God, my tale attest!" "And this is no vain fable.../ Which no man may deny?"). In fact, the entire poem undermines the gravity of its epigraph. The 1620 *Platt of Argier* is a *military* "plan" or "map" of Algiers (*OED*, 2nd ed., 1989, 11:992, s.v. "plat" sb³ II.2), one that Robert Norton (d. 1635; Tooley et al. 1999–2004, 3:337) claims to have made "by his owne carfull & dilligent

observations then *not without danger*” (emphasis mine). If Slessor meant for his narrator to be that map-maker, he used Norton’s double negative “not without danger” to develop a wry poetic voice that casts doubt not only on the narrator’s participation against Algiers, but also on his description of that foreign place and time.

Slessor’s “response” to Norton’s map (or, at least, to its title) also raises the specter of cartographic doubt that permeates this study and the entire project of textual re-presentation of mapped knowledge (Wood and Fels 1992, 4–27; Harley and Laxton 2001, 36, 110–112, 159). As we shall see, biographers don’t always agree that *Norton* witnessed what he mapped, and Norton’s uncertain role in King James’s expedition appears to have inspired Slessor’s creation of the unreliable narrator in “The King of Cuckooz.” Yet perhaps our most surprising encounter with the voyeur who remains safely on board will be when we discover the poet eagerly leafing through a *catalogue* of old maps.

“The King of Cuckooz” may have its roots in the naval songs and ballads collected by Captain Francis Bayldon, maternal uncle of Slessor’s first wife, Noela, and frequent host to the young couple. The poem’s rhythm, rhyme, and address to the beloved echo the seventh stanza of “The Sailor’s Farewell,” for instance, which Slessor could have found in Bayldon’s copy of *Naval Songs, and Other Songs and Ballads of Sea Life*—a charming pocket-size book with gilt edges and ornaments: “So all you pretty English girls,/ Now see what we go through,/ And see what hardship we endure,/ For the sake of loving you” (Rinder 1899, 265). Because “The Sailor’s Farewell” also opens with a sailor recounting his journey to a dangerous North African locale (Egypt), it acts—like Slessor’s poem—as another mode of mapping, but one in which the knowledge of maritime space is enshrined in song. “The King of Cuckooz” certainly harkens back to Slessor’s earlier poetry (Green [1961] 1985, 944–946). Most apparent are his exotic settings in bygone eras. Early China dominated many of his uncollected poems (“Civilization,” “Songs from the Chinese,” “Youth”) as well as *Thief of the Moon* (Slessor and Lindsay 1924: “Amazement,” “Marco Polo,” “Old Chinese Poem,” “Taoist,” “An Old Harp”). Later, Tartar kings invaded his second collection, *Earth-Visitors* (Slessor and Lindsay 1926: “Music” [VI], “Earth-Visitors”). The “rosy darling[s]” and “ninety virgins” with whom the king disports in “The King of Cuckooz” recall a comment made by Slessor’s writer/friend Hal Porter: “no women-sized women appear in his poetry, but ‘girls’ abound. Like mice the size of pussy-willow buds they appear and disappear in the same twink” (1975, 98; see Caesar 1995, 13). In its eroticism, “The King of Cuckooz” is reminiscent of Slessor’s “Adventure Bay,” which Norman Lindsay illustrated with three lusty mermaids in *Vision: A Literary Quarterly* (Johnson, Lindsay, and Slessor, November 1923, 6; Slessor, Haskell, and Dutton 1994, 10). And “A Surrender” conceives of sex as a military skirmish enlivened by cannons and artillery (Judith Wright, in Thomson 1968, 12). In it, Slessor portrayed a lover storming his beloved’s “Venusbergs, thy breasts,/ By wars of love and moonlight batteries” in the hope that she, “sweet enemy of love,/ Shalt find a conquest in capitulation!” (1923: Slessor and Lindsay 1924; Slessor, Haskell, and Dutton 1994, 4–5, 333).

If the narrator of “The King of Cuckooz” only hopes for the sexual favors alluded to in the last two poems, Adrian Caesar’s observation that both “Adventure Bay” and “A Surrender” “rework Renaissance tropes of conquest and

exploration to figure sexual ‘possession’” nevertheless holds true for “The King of Cuckooz” as well: “Women, like towns or countries, are there to be explored, conquered, possessed by the brave and adventurous male” (1995, 29). Our poem, which begins with a man’s fascination for the “contrey” of his enemy, quickly transforms—however drolly—into a model for “how Man should be revered.” The ambiguity of “the silver manacle/ Around that dainty leg” only strengthens Caesar’s point. For although “that dainty leg” could refer to the King’s falcon (Slessor, Haskell, and Dutton 1994, 359), it alludes as well to the narrator’s girlfriend—“bird” being British slang for “young woman” or “sweetheart” since at least the nineteenth century (Patridge, Dalzell, and Victor 2006, 1:160, s.v. “bird”). Both the “crest” and “mark” “stamped” upon the manacle denote the sexual possession of the beloved’s body. The fact that the epigraph of “The King of Cuckooz” comes from a 1620 map reminds us of Robert Norton’s contemporary, John Donne (1572–1631), the great metaphysical poet whom Slessor imitated elsewhere (Green [1961] 1985, 2:947–948). Donne repeatedly referenced maps of his era. In “To His Mistress Going to Bed,” for instance, Donne imagined his hand upon his mistress as a “seal” (Donne and Smith 1971, 125, lines 25–32), a metaphor for “claiming an unknown territory upon a map by stamping it with the seal of the claimant” (Zanger 1982, 779).

“The King of Cuckooz” was the perfect opening for Slessor’s new collection. Its title and first line, “The King of Cuckooz Contrey,” ties the poem to *Cuckooz Contrey* and to the collection’s epigraph: “The unknown hilly country to the south of the Bay is coloured green, and marked ‘Part of the King of Cuckooz Contrey.’” Accompanied by Norman Lindsay’s map-like frontispiece “Cuckooz Contrey,” the poem alludes to Slessor’s previous fantasies and promises more. Lindsay himself regarded “The King of Cuckooz” as one of his friend’s “delectable fantasies” (Lindsay, quoted in Stewart 1977, 174). Other readers drawn to his earlier work, or to the more topical verses he was publishing in *Smith’s Weekly*, enjoy the poem’s “pleasure-giving” raciness and lightness (Burns 1975, 24; see Green [1961] 1985, 946), or its “unfaltering *élan*” (Stewart 1969, 158–158; rpt. 1977, 73–74). In that sense, “The King of Cuckooz” contrasts starkly with the final poem of the sequence, “The Seafight,” which ends with the haunting lines: “But we can always find a minute/ For the festivities of Death/ Who sail upon this dangerous planet” (Slessor, Haskell, and Dutton 1994, 76). The contrast not only demonstrates Slessor’s range as Australia’s first modernist poet and pioneer of its modern national poetic identity, but also presents *The Atlas* as a bridge between the often forced gaiety of his “early” period (1919–1926: Slessor and Lindsay 1924; Slessor and Lindsay 1926; see Slessor 1944, Part I) and the more mature time and sea obsessed reflections of his “middle” period (1927–1932: Slessor 1932; see Slessor 1944, Part II). But when *The Atlas* lost its role to “Captain Dobbin” as the opening poem of his middle period in both *One Hundred Poems* (Slessor 1944, 49–61) and *Poems* (Slessor 1957, 42–53), the displaced “King of Cuckooz” became—at least for one influential critic—“the rather flimsy, Norman Lindsayish first poem in the series called ‘The Atlas’” (Dutton 1991, 135).

Douglas Stewart, on the other hand, remembered and valued “The King of Cuckooz” as the opening poem of *Cuckooz Contrey*. For his upcoming *Modern Australian Verse* (1964, 3–9), he requested permission to reprint at least “the first two [poems] in the sequence” in case he couldn’t accommodate the first four

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(Douglas Stewart, letter to Kenneth Slessor, 17 February 1963: NLA MS 3020 1/5/353).⁵ Herbert Jaffa regarded “The King of Cuckooz” as autobiographical and focused on “the uninhibited and unmixed humor of ‘The King of Cuckooz’, [which though] rare in Slessor’s poetry... [was] much less rare in the man himself” (1971, 82). Singling out the narrator’s professed “appetite,” Jaffa recalled Slessor’s fondness for good food and wine (Jaffa 1971, 81–82), and referred readers to Jack Lindsay’s reminiscences of his friend in *The Roaring Twenties* (Lindsay 1960). Slessor’s personality helped him create for *Cuckooz Contrey* other bigger-than-life characters “who indulge in what physical life offers and are secure in their passions” (Jaffa 1971, 128). These include not only the King of Cuckooz but also William Hickey (“The Nabob”) and John Benbow (“Metempsychosis”), whom fans of *Treasure Island* (1883) will recognize as the name behind the “Admiral Benbow” inn (Slessor, Haskell, and Dutton 1994, 384).

CREATING “THE KING OF CUCKOOZ”: A TALE OF TWO CATALOGUES

Like Robert Louis Stevenson, Slessor “kn[ew] where romance lurks for the discerning to apprehend” (Review of *Cuckooz Contrey* 1932; NLA MS 3020/8/20):

One of its chief haunts is maps, especially old maps in which lacunae are filled by fanciful illustrations and entries indicating allurements and terrors.

Slessor found Norton’s map of Algiers almost immediately while perusing the 1929 Francis Edwards catalogue, *Old Maps of the World*, otherwise known as *Ancient Geography; a Catalogue of Atlases & Maps of All Parts of the World from XV Century to Present Day* (Francis Edwards 1929). On the fifth page of the 130-page *Atlas* draft in his poetry notebook (March 2, NLA MS 3020/19/1/62), Slessor put *XX* beside the phrase he was quoting—“The King of Cuckooz Contrey”—and, under it, *XXX* beside “The place wher the King of Englands Fleet did ride’ by Robert Norton, Muster Mr. of his Ma^{ts} Fleet” [*sic*]. In the right margin, just above these quotes, another *XXX* highlights “Plan of Argier (Algiers).” The quantity of *X*’s is arresting. Prior to this page, eight phrases had earned a single *X* but only one merited *XXX*—a parenthesized “note” reading “vanished empires, lost kingdoms, forgotten lands & provinces, crumbled boundaries” (February 18, -s61). These *XXX*-quotes are related: two pages later, Slessor listed “The King of Cuckooz Contrey” among his “Lost Countries” (March 6, -s65). Meanwhile, at the top of “Atlas 6,” the phrase “Algiers map” is accompanied by the following list: “the King’s House,’ the Arsenal,’ the Janzaries House,’ Marabutts House,’ Emperors Castle,’ drawn in red, green & yellow” (March 4, -s63). In these exotic names Slessor had discovered his entrée into what was to become “The King of Cuckooz”: “The King of Cuckooz Contrey/... Argier,/ With Janzaries & Marabutts/ To bid the...” (March 16, -s75).⁶

After he'd finished "The King of Cuckooz," Slessor wrote the following note at the top of the page that opens "Post-roads," the sequence's second poem (April 5, -s90: emphasis mine):

(1) The King of Cuckooz

Note

—Robert Norton *probably took* part in the English expedition to Algiers sent against the Barbary pirates in October 1620. On his manuscript map, the unknown hilly country to the south of the Bay is coloured green and marked "Part of the King of Cuckooz Contrey."

The facts quoted are from "Old Maps of the World" published by Francis Edwards Ltd.

While editing or crossing out as much as he kept, Slessor named for the first time his source for "The King of Cuckooz" (and, as it turns out, for *The Atlas* as a whole). Later, at the end of *Cuckooz Contrey*, he acknowledged the Francis Edwards catalogue in his "Author's Note" on the sequence itself (Slessor 1932, 75). Then, after excising the acknowledgment, Slessor reused his manuscript "Note" to compose his "Author's Note" for "The King of Cuckooz." Only in parentheses did he add "Argier,' of course, is pronounced with the g soft, as in 'Algiers'" (ibid ; Slessor, Haskell, and Dutton 1994, 359).⁷

Slessor's quotations are lifted from item 487 of *Old Maps of the World* (Figures 1 and 2), to which the poet's header "Old Maps" on "March 16" probably refers (-s75). The Francis Edwards entry warrants both annotation and quotation in full not only because of the catalogue's rarity, but also because Slessor took so much from it. In the annotated entry below, underlines indicate the phrases that Slessor copied into his notebook. Italics highlight that part of the item's title used by Slessor as his epigraph for "The King of Cuckooz." The sentence in CAPITAL LETTERS became his epigraph for *Cuckooz Contrey*, and the **section in red** will be explained shortly (see below, page 17) (Francis Edwards 1929, 105–106):

Original Manuscript Map on Vellum 1620

487 NORTON (ROBERT)

The Platt of Argier [Algiers] and the p[ar]ts adoiyning within the view thereof made by Robert Norton the Muster Mr of his Ma^{ty}s Fleet ther A^o Di 1620 & by his owne carfull & dilligent obseruations then not without danger," 22 7/8 by 19 1/2 ins., 1620. £180 [p. 105]

A drawing of a full-rigged ship marks "The place wher the King of Englands Fleet did ride." THE UNKNOWN HILLY COUNTRY TO THE SOUTH OF THE BAY IS COLOURED GREEN AND MARKED "PART OF THE KING OF CUCKOOZ CONTREY."

The town itself is shown with the divisions of the various streets, the King's House, the Arsenal, the Janzaries House, the various

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fortifications, position of the guns, &c. Outside the walls the “Townes Castle,” “Emperors Castle” and the “Marabutts’ House” are shown, also the water supply of the Town. The whole is beautifully drawn and coloured, the title being enclosed in a fine cartouche of red, green, and yellow.

An English fleet was sent against the Barbary pirates in October 1620, and an attack was made on Algiers in May 1621, but without much success, and the rovers captured above 30 English ships in the same year. It does not seem to be recorded, however, that Norton had a share in this expedition. In 1624 he received the grant of a gunner’s room in the Tower, and in 1627 he was granted the post of engineer of the Tower of London for life. He wrote the *Gunner’s Dialogue*. [p. 106]

FRANCIS EDWARDS LIMITED · Africa		
474	BLAEU Morocco and Fez, 20 by 15 ins., 1662.	10s
475	Another Copy, coloured.	£1 5s
COSTES DE L'AFRIQUE		
476	Sur la Mer Méditerranée, long folding sheet, coloured, with inset plans of Straits of Gibraltar, Algiers, Tripoli, Pierre Mortier, c. 1720.	12s
477	Costes de l'Afrique. Qui comprend le Royaume de Maroc, &c., folding sheet, coloured, Pierre Mortier, c. 1720.	6s
478	DE LISLE (G.) North Africa, Morocco to Tripoly, folding sheet, coloured, c. 1715.	6s
479	DE WIT (F.) Barbaria, folding sheet, coloured, Amsterdam, P. Mortier, c. 1695.	5s
480	DUFOUR (A. H.) Carte du Gouvern. D'Alger, et d'une partie du Bassin de la Méditerranée, folding sheet, 1844.	6s
481	FEZZAE ET MAROCCHI Folding map of Fez and Morocco, ships, and decorative title, 13 by 10 ins., Ogilby, 1670.	6s
482	GOSSET (MAJOR, R.E.) Plan of the Bay, City and Environs of Algiers, folding sheet, Wyld, 1830.	6s
483	HONDIUS (H.) Map of Morocco, with inset view of Penon de Velez, ships and decorative scroll work (small corner missing), 1620.	8s
JANSON (J.)		
484	Nova Barbariae, decorative sheet with animals, coloured, 20½ by 14 ins. [1670].	10s
485	Africae Propriae Tabula [Tunis, and adjacent country], 20½ by 14½ ins., 1660.	5s
486	HOMAN (I. C.) Statuum Moroccanorum, fine folding sheet of Morocco, coloured, with inset views of Morocco and Mequinez, 1728.	7s
Original Manuscript Map on Vellum 1620		
487	NORTON (ROBERT) The Platt of Argier [Algiers] & the p[ar]ts adioyning within the view thereof made by Robert Norton the Muster Mr of his Ma ^{ty} Fleet ther A ^o Di 1620 & by his owne carfull & dilligent observations then not without danger, 22½ by 19½ ins., 1620.	£180

Figure 1. Item 487, p. 105, of the 1929 Francis Edwards catalogue *Old Maps of the World, or Ancient Geography; a Catalogue of Atlases & Maps of All Parts of the World from XV Century to Present Day* (London: F. Edwards Ltd.). This is the first page of item 487: Robert Norton’s 1620 Platt of Argier [Algiers] and the p[ar]ts adioyning within the view thereof made by Robert Norton the Muster Mr of his Ma^{ty} Fleet ther A^o Di 1620 & by his owne carfull & dilligent observations then not without danger.” The third of four catalogues in the short-lived “new series” produced in 1929, *Old Maps of the World* and its companion booklets were larger and far better illustrated than the more than 500 Francis Edwards catalogues preceding it. Courtesy of Francis Edwards Ltd.

A drawing of a full-rigged ship marks "The place wher the King of England's Fleet did ride." The unknown hilly country to the south of the Bay is coloured green and marked "Part of the King of Cuckooz Contrey." The town itself is shown with the divisions of the various streets, the King's House, the Arsenal, the Janzaries House, the various fortifications, position of the guns, &c. Outside the walls the "Townes Castle," "Emperors Castle" and the "Marabutts' House" are shown, also the water supply of the Town. The whole is beautifully drawn and coloured, the title being enclosed in a fine cartouche of red, green, and yellow.

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488 ORTELIUS (A.)

Fessae, et Marocchi . . . [Fez and Morocco, and Canary Islands], with inset map of the Congo, coloured, 20 by 15 ins., 1595. £1 15s

A very fine decorative map with ships, monsters, large titlepiece, etc.

489 PTOLEMY (C.)

Northern Africa, 3 sheets, Basle, 1542. £3

490 WARD (CAPT. CHARLES)

MS. Plan of the Sea Defences of the City of Algiers, showing the fortifications, barbour, town, forts shipping and soundings, with a key to the shipping, 31 by 22 ins., 1816. 15s

For continued Piracy, Algiers was successfully bombarded by the British fleet, under Lord Exmouth, 27th August, 1816. The ships on the map being placed from marks made on the Original Plan by Lord Exmouth, and from information received from officers who took part in the action.

491 WELLS (E.)

A New Map of the North Part of Antient Africa, engraved by Spofforth, 1700. 5s

Figure 2. Item 487, p. 106, of the 1929 Francis Edwards catalogue *Old Maps of the World, or Ancient Geography; a Catalogue* (London: F. Edwards Ltd.). This is the second and last page of item 487: Robert Norton's 1620 *Platt of Argier* [Algiers]. Note the length and detail of the Norton entry compared with other items on pp. 105–106. Courtesy of Francis Edwards Ltd.

The point is not to criticize Slessor: poets create original works by borrowing from others, and comparisons help us understand the creative process. The annotations simply emphasize what attracted Slessor to this particular item in an ephemeral map catalogue. Certainly the length of item 487 stands out. Dividing the catalogue's 852 entries by 133 pages yields 6.4 entries per page. Yet Robert Norton's map takes up two-thirds of a page, the space of four entries. Several other items are equally long, but most of them describe an entire atlas, not a single map, and they are little more than lists of countries/regions mapped on separate pages within their atlas. Another detail caught Slessor's eye as well. *The Platt of Argier* is one of only four manuscript maps offered in *Old Maps of the World* (items 313, 515, 556). The centered, italicized heading "Original Manuscript Map on Vellum 1620" draws as much attention as its price. Though

£180 may seem like a bargain today, only two maps and six atlases were selling for more.

But something else sparked his creativity. For over a decade, my assumption has been that the catalogue led Slessor to Norton's map. Familiarity with maps, whether individual or generic, is revealed in the work of several poets whom Slessor admired (Dutton 1991; Hawke 1998–99). Shakespeare immediately comes to mind (Turner 2007, 419–420 and n.58), not only because he, like the map-obsessed Donne (416–417 and nn.31–33), was Norton's contemporary, but because "Shakespeare's passion for siege warfare" may be linked "with his remarkable interest in sexually besieged women" (Woodbridge 1991, 338). Slessor favored other poetic models of bygone and partially fictitious cartography closer to his own time. Thomas Hardy, famous for his novels set in "South Wessex" and for the maps with which he illustrated his semi-fictitious county, composed "The Place on the Map" (1914: see Haft 2001, 34–35); Robert Frost wrote "A Brook in the City" about a rivulet whose existence is acknowledged only on "ancient maps" (1921); and Marianne Moore penned "Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns," a paean to the unicorn and Olaus Magnus's magnificent "marine map" of 1539, the *Carta Marina* (1924: see Haft 2003). But the longer I've compared Slessor's poem and notebook with Norton's actual map, the more convinced I've become that "*The King of Cuckooz*" is a poetic response—not to the map itself—but to a particularly lyrical description of it. And that description does not come not from a famous poem or work of literature, but from a pre-eminently practical and expendable catalogue, no trace of which exists today in any of Australia's public libraries or archives.

The longer I've compared Slessor's poem and notebook with Norton's actual map, the more convinced I've become that "The King of Cuckooz" is a poetic response—not to the map itself—but to a particularly lyrical description of it.

Slessor's strategy was thoroughly modernist. In 1917, T.S. Eliot had remarked: "One of the ways by which contemporary verse has tried to escape the rhetorical, the abstract, the moralizing, to recover (for that is its purpose) the accents of direct speech, is to concentrate its attention on trivial or accidental or commonplace objects" (quoted in Thomson 1968, 13). Australian poet/essayist A.D. Hope believed Slessor had achieved just that: "Slessor's great triumph was to take the unpromising material he found to hand, to accept the romantic farrago and create a genuine poetic world" (ibid., 130).

Old Maps of the World is not just any catalogue, however. Just compare its description of the *Platt of Argier* with the one in the Sotheby & Company catalogue dated April 23–24, 1928 (see Migrations 1928, 63). Titled *Catalogue of Exceedingly Rare and Valuable Americana* (Figure 3), the Sotheby & Company booklet deals with "important English books and manuscripts largely from the library of Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland (1564–1632), at Petworth House" (Sotheby & Co. 1928). Because Percy "owned maps, . . . globes and Saxton's *Atlas*, and he [had] bought two copies of Ortelius's 'Theater of the worlde' for £1 in 1610" (Steer, Eden, and Bendall 1997, 1:29), it is not surprising that among the items auctioned by Sotheby's of London on April 23rd were two precious works by Norton. Item 110 may have been a first edition of his *The Gunners Dialogue, with the Art of Great Artillery*, described as "apparently unrecorded and the only copy known" (Sotheby & Co. 1928, 46–47). Item 81 reads: "MAP. ALGIERS. THE PLATT OF ARGIER & the p[art]s adjoining within the View thereof MADE BY ROBERT NORTON..." (ibid., 36). Though only one-third of a page long, item 81 is

almost identical to item 487 in the Francis Edwards catalogue (Figure 4). The few details that distinguish the Sotheby & Co. entry are the words “see lot 110,” after “The Gunner’s Dialogue”; a reference to an article on Norton in the

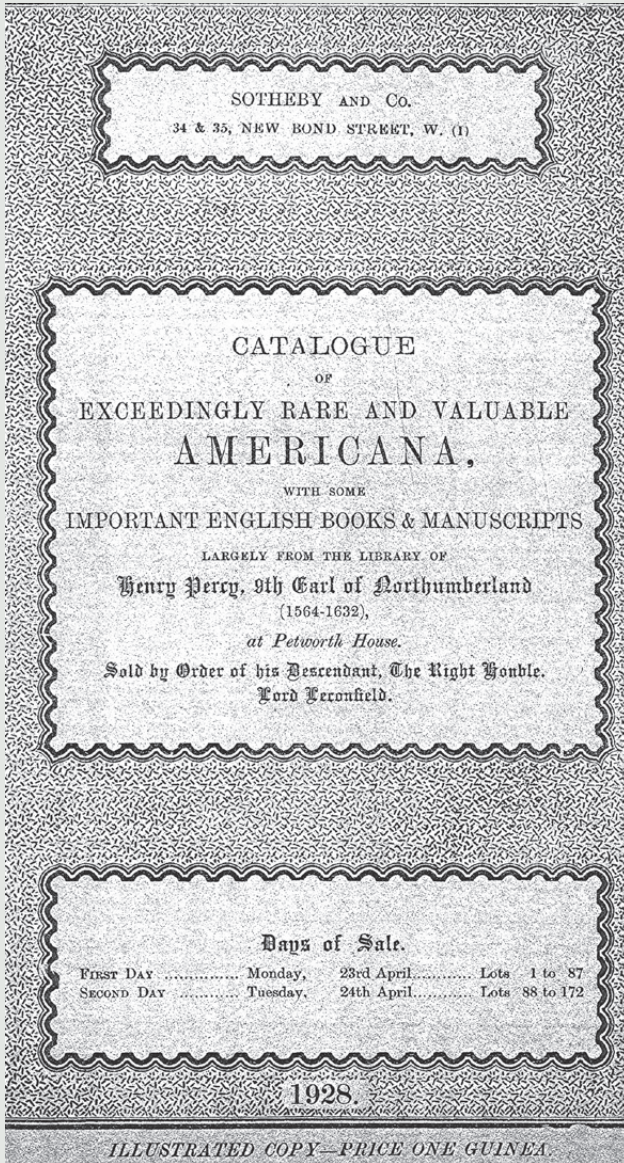


Figure 3. Cover of the 1928 Sotheby & Co. Catalogue of Exceedingly Rare and Valuable Americana: With Some Important English Books & Manuscripts, Largely from the Library of Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland (London: Printed by J. Davy and Sons). This beautifully illustrated 81-page catalogue measures 25.4 by 17.8 by 1 cm (10 x 7 x 3/8 inches). Among the treasures auctioned off in London by Sotheby & Co. on April 23, 1928 were two important works by Robert Norton (d. 1635): a possible first edition of *The Gunners Dialogue*, with the *Art of Great Artillery* (1628: item 110, pp. 46–47), and his manuscript map of *Algiers* (1620: item 81). Courtesy of Sotheby’s.

Dictionary of National Biography, the absence of a price for the map (or any other item); and the phrase “original coloured map drawn on vellum,” which the Francis Edwards catalogue transformed into “Original Manuscript Map on Vellum 1620.” The two catalogues’ nearly identical wording and proximity in time allow us to make the following inferences:

(1) Francis Edwards Ltd. purchased Norton’s manuscript map at the Sotheby & Co. auction on April 23, 1928.

(2) Francis Edwards Ltd. then issued its own catalogue, which, though undated, came out in 1929. Its entry on Norton reproduced, word-for-word, almost everything the Sotheby & Co. catalogue said about the map.

(3) *Old Maps of the World* didn’t just lift material from its source catalogue, however. It also added a price and, far more crucially, a detailed description of what the map actually shows. *As the red section in my reproduction of entry 487 indicates, this new detail accounts for a third of the Francis Edwards entry* (see pages 12–13, above).

81 MAP. ALGIERS. THE PLATT OF ARGIER & the p[ar]ts adioyning within the View thereof MADE BY ROBERT NORTON the Muster Mr of his Mats Fleet ther A° Di 1620 & by his owne carefull & dilligent obseruations then not without danger, ORIGINAL COLOURED MAP DRAWN ON VELLUM 22 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. by 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. 1620

** A drawing of a full-rigged ship marks “The place wher the King of Englands Fleet did ride.” The unknown hilly country to the South of the Bay is coloured green and marked “Part of the King of Cuckooz Contrey.”

An English fleet was sent against the Barbary pirates in October, 1620, and an attack was made on Algiers in May, 1621, but without much success, and the rovers captured above 30 English ships in the same year.

It does not seem to be recorded that Norton had a share in this expedition (see Art. NORTON in D.N.B.). In 1624 he received the grant of a gunner’s room in the Tower, and in 1627 he was granted the post of engineer of the Tower of London for life. He wrote “The Gunner’s Dialogue” (see lot 110).

Figure 4. Item 81, p. 36, in the 1928 Sotheby & Co. Catalogue of Exceedingly Rare and Valuable Americana: With Some Important English Books & Manuscripts, Largely from the Library of Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland (London: Printed by J. Davy and Sons). Although there is no evidence that Slessor ever saw the Sotheby catalogue, its item 81 was copied extensively into the 1929 Francis Edwards catalogue (item 487). But the 1929 catalogue also added pizzazz, turning the dull opening of the Sotheby & Co. item “Map. Argiers. The Platt of Argier...” into the eye-catching “Original Manuscript Map on Vellum 1620.” Courtesy of Sotheby’s.

Ultimately, it wasn’t the length or historical detail of the Francis Edwards entry that appealed to Slessor. It was its poetic evocation of precisely the concrete images and exotic words that so intrigued him: “The King’s House,” “the Arsenal,” “the Janzaries House,” “Marabutts House,” “Emperors Castle,” “drawn in red, green & yellow” (Francis Edwards 1929, 106). These phrases,

assiduously copied by Slessor into his notebook (March 4, -s63), are the very ones that *Old Maps of the World* introduced into its description of Norton's map. And they, along with others on that catalogue page (Francis Edwards 1929, 106), inspired him to begin "The King of Cuckooz":

The King of Cuckooz Contrey
Hangs peaked above Argier
With Janzaries and Marabutts
To bid a sailor fear...

"THE KING OF CUCKOOZ" MEETS THE PLATT OF ARGIER

But why discount Norton's map as the visual inspiration for "The King of Cuckooz"? To answer this question, we need to compare the plan with Slessor's poem.

Norton's 1620 Platt of Argier has been housed in the National Maritime Museum in London since November 1970 (Gillian Hutchinson, e-mail to author, September 23, 2009). Recently the museum reprinted the map in *Treasures of the National Maritime Museum* (NMM, Clifton, and Rigby 2004, "Pirates and Privateering," 148–149) and digitized it for online viewing.

Prior to these efforts, however, locating a reproduction of Norton's manuscript map would have proved very difficult. Neither the 1928 Sotheby & Co. catalogue nor its 1929 Francis Edwards counterpart depict the plan. Furthermore, the Sotheby & Co. catalogue suggests that *during Norton's lifetime*, his *Platt of Argier* came into the possession of Henry Percy. Three centuries later, Percy's library—including Norton's map of Algiers and a rare copy of *The Gunner's Dialogue*—was auctioned to Francis Edwards. For the next forty years, from 1928 to 1970, there is little record of the *Platt of Argier* until the National Maritime Museum purchased it from an Amsterdam dealer of maps and fine books (Gillian Hutchinson, e-mail to author, September 23, 2009). Of all the Francis Edwards catalogues published during that period, only *Old Atlases and Books on Astronomy and Cartography* depicts the map (Francis Edwards 1936, item 1) and it appeared several years after Slessor composed "The King of Cuckooz." Could he have sent away for a photograph? A note beside another manuscript map in *Old Maps of the World* states that "a photograph can be supplied to an intending purchaser on application" (Francis Edwards 1929, 108–109, item 515). But no evidence of such a photograph exists in Slessor's meticulously preserved papers. Which means that, beginning in 1928, a window opened in which to view and purchase Norton's vellum manuscript, a window that allowed Slessor—through a particularly succinct and evocative catalogue description—to learn enough about the map's appearance to create "The King of Cuckooz." He probably never saw the map, not even in facsimile, while writing *The Atlas*—and perhaps never in his lifetime.

"The King of Cuckooz" thus "stands for" the map, in the same way a map can be said to stand for a territory. The very meticulousness with which Slessor took notes on the catalogue's report of the Algiers plan makes him a poetic

cartographer selecting and manipulating data for his own map, or “controlled fiction” (Muehrcke and Muehrcke 1978, 103; see Wood and Fels 1992, 78, 88; Harley and Laxton 2001, 52, 162–163, 106–107, 251). Ultimately about the power and delights of the imagination, the poem remains thoroughly grounded within the medium of language, however, even in those instances where the poet looks to other sources of inspiration, such as maps.

The *Platt of Argier* would not have disappointed him, however (Figure 5). While accurately depicting what Norton’s contemporaries reported of the town (see Yver [1913–1927] 1987a, 1:258–261; Spencer 1976, 29–30), it resembles “The King of Cuckooz” in combining threat and romance. With the delicacy of a landscape painting, Norton’s map pictures a bay full of waves surrounded by a green, mountainous countryside. Within the bay, a single large ship represents the expedition that James I of England sent against Algiers in 1620–1621. The ship floats upon the words “The place wher the King of Englands Fleet did ride,” which Slessor turned into “When by the Bayes of Africa/ King James’s Fleet did ride” (lines 35–36). Several rocky islets and “The Mould” (“mole”/“breakwater”) shelter smaller vessels. West of the harbor is the red triangle of Algiers, an imposing and picturesque town that rises to its heavily fortified “peak,” the citadel known as the “Cassabaw” (“Casbah”), complete with arsenals and barracks. The Francis Edwards catalogue describes the map’s depiction of the buildings, ramparts, and guns inside Algiers; and just outside, its monuments, water supply, and free-standing fortifications or “castles.” Surrounding the town are thick walls, punctuated by gates and bastions, and topped by an impressive array of cannons. Along the eastern walls, near the rocky outcrop that parallels the mole, “The Ianizaries House” identifies the largest of the barracks where up to 600 Ottoman soldiers known as janissaries were housed and fed (Spencer 1976, 32; Wolf 1979, 60). Outside the northeastern wall stands “The Marabutts House.” This traditional circular building capped with a blue roof and crescent moon most likely entombs a revered holy man, known in North Africa as a “marabout.” Such “patron saints” were believed to protect Algiers from disaster (McDougall 2006, 146; Spencer 1976, 77); corsair captains, when sailing past the shrine of a favorite marabout, would dip their flag and utter a prayer before departing in search of booty and slaves (Wolf 1979, 143). The map’s yellow neat line, while missing on the right side, encloses the rest of the scene, which is oriented west, as we can tell from the cardinal directions written inside each line. At bottom-left, an elaborate cartouche in green, red, and yellow frames the map’s title, copied faithfully into *Old Maps of the World* as well as Slessor’s epigraph for “The King of Cuckooz.” Beside the cartouche there seems to be a narrow peninsula, though it is actually the African coast stretching east from Algiers towards “Cape de Montafooz” (lower right corner). Just inland, the pale green area bears the tantalizing words “Part of the King of Cuckooz Contrey.”

For Slessor, the name “Cuckooz Contrey” couldn’t have been more romantic. Today, an internet search for “Cuckooz” uncovers only Slessor’s book and the explicit lyrics of “One Flew over the Cuckooz Nezt,” a 2001 album by B.G. Evil. The name also evokes the migrating cuckoo birds that breed in northern Algeria (Wilkin [1900] 1970, 97; Hollom 1988, 129), or Cloudecuckoo Land, the comic utopia of the Greek playwright Aristophanes (*The Birds*, 414 BCE). On the other hand, the resemblance between “Cuckooz” and “cuckoo” made

Slessor's biographer Geoffrey Dutton speculate that the poet, distressed by his wife's infidelity, called his collection *Cuckooz Contrey* because "'cuckoo' is so close to 'cuckold,'" 'contrey' to the 'country matters' of Shakespeare" (1991, 136). To Slessor, whose poetry notebook lists *Cuckooz Contrey* among "Lost Countries" (March 6, -s65), the attraction was precisely that it was "unknown." Despite his enthusiasm for "master[ing] the period" whenever he composed "an historical poem, or a poem touching history in any way" (Thomson 1968, 39), the mystery of the name freed him to create his own "take" on the mysterious King of Cuckooz. That Slessor "got it wrong" is not surprising given how little is known, even today, about Norton's delicately colored military map. Or about his role in the 1620–1621 English expedition against the Barbary pirates of Algiers. Or about the complex feuds between and among European powers and the heterogeneous populations of the Algerian coast during the three centuries of Ottoman occupation.

BARBAROSSA AND "THE KING OF CUCKOOZ"

Slessor modeled the King of Cuckooz most obviously upon the first Ottoman pasha of Algiers. Kheir-ed-din—better known as "Barbarossa" or "Red beard"—is one of the most charismatic leaders in history.⁸ Born in the Levant (Wolf 1979, 6) or Mytilene (Abun-Nasr 1987, 148), Barbarossa became leader of Algiers after the death in battle of the "original" Barbarossa, his elder brother, Aroudj, whom the people of Algiers had invited into their city (1516: Wolf 1979, 8) to help rid them of their Spanish overlords.

The trouble had originated when Ferdinand and Isabella began expelling those who refused to convert to Christianity or apostatized from it, and Spanish Muslims embarked on more than a century-long flight to Algiers and other parts of coastal North Africa (*ibid.*, 175). These so-called "Moriscos" then convinced the Muslim population to join them in raiding the coasts of Spain and its territories. In retaliation, Ferdinand established fortified positions called "presidios" along the coast of the Maghrib—the area extending from Tripoli to Morocco—in order to chasten the most powerful of the North African "pirate" states (*ibid.*, 1, 67; Spencer 1976, 16). The jihadist raiders of Algiers found themselves frustrated economically and militarily as soon as the Spaniards built a presidio, packed with cannons (1510), on the largest of the harbor islands for which Algiers was named (Arabic, *El Jezair*; "the islands": Reclus and Keane 1886, 268; see Morgan [1731] 1970, 214–215; Spencer 1976, 4). Barbarossa recognized that he lacked both the weapons and men to repel the Spaniards, and that he was outnumbered by the tribesmen of the interior. He therefore took a step that altered the history of Algiers and the central Maghrib for the next three hundred years: he wed Algiers to the Ottoman Empire, thus creating the Regency of Algiers.

In 1519, Barbarossa became pasha of Algiers and received reinforcements from the Sultan: 4,000 Anatolian recruits, cannons and other munitions, and 2,000 janissaries—members of the Sultan's elite and fiercely loyal militia, originally composed of those taken as "boy tax" from the Balkan Christian communities conquered by the Ottomans (Wolf 1979, 7, 10, 57–58). Ten years

later, Barbarossa freed Algiers from two decades of Spanish occupation by destroying the presidio (1529). To prevent another from being built, he began construction of the massive mole that still extends from the town to the island on which 200 Spanish soldiers had been garrisoned (Yver [1913–1927] 1987a, 1:258). Promoted in the mid-1530s to High Admiral of the Ottoman Empire, Barbarossa left Algiers as “the western base of the Ottoman empire” (Wolf 1979, 30). He spent his last decade terrorizing the Mediterranean and winning so much booty that he became a legend in his own time. A 1537 raid on the Greek islands (so we are told) won him 1,000 girls, 15,000 boys, and 400,000 pieces of gold (Lewis [1929] 1969, 79). Another account dismisses the “malicious French report” that in 1546, while in his sixties, Barbarossa “died exhausted by the manifold vices of the harem” (Bradford 1968, 203). Edward Currey, whose *Sea Wolves of the Mediterranean* is in the Bayldon Nautical Collection along with Charles Lewis’s Famous *Old-World Sea Fighters*, begrudgingly praises this enemy of Christendom (Currey 1928, 45):

In this man [Kheir-ed-din] the genius of the statesman lay hidden beneath the outward semblance of the bold and ruthless pirate.... With a brain of ice and a heart of fire, he looked out, serene and calm, upon the turbulent times in which he lived, a monstrous egotist desiring nothing but his own advancement, all his faculties bent upon securing more wealth and yet more power.

Slessor adapted stories of Barbarossa, subsequent pashas, and wannabes to make his hedonistic King of Cuckooz into the stereotypical “lustful Turk” with wives and concubines galore. After all, “earlier Eurocentric historians and sensationalist writers on piracy give us an impression of Algiers as a kind of ravening horde in a state of perpetual arousal” (Wilson 2003, 29; see Wolf 1979, 61; Marcus [1966] 1967, 200–219, “The Lustful Turk”). Portraits of Barbarossa show him with “as fierce a beard” as the King of Cuckooz, whose beard Slessor’s narrator compares with his own (see Bradford 1968, opposite 112; Wolf 1979, 124). If Geoffrey Dutton once complained that “the galleons and pirates of Captain Bayldon’s books were also Lindsay’s stock-in-trade” (1991, 144), Lindsay’s illustration on the frontispiece of *Cuckooz Contrey* shows three views of a heavily bearded monarch, attired in a plumed turban and caftan, and surrounded by galleons and armed adventurers (Figure 6). In every view, his King of Cuckooz resembles an Ottoman pasha, like Barbarossa, being conveyed in outrageous style and accompanied by naked beauties. Slessor himself emphasized the wealth of the town, whose fame and fortune depended almost entirely upon privateering in the sixteenth century and outright piracy in the seventeenth (Wolf 1979, 54, 113). Captives, whether kept for slaves and or sold for ransom, were the basis of Algiers’ economy. And though unusual, female captives did marry the corsairs who put “the silver manacle around [their] dainty leg.” A young Italian noblewoman, for example, is said to have wed the much older Barbarossa (*ibid.*, 166). Besides “silver,” the poem’s “satin boots,” “royal bamboo,” and “Sultan’s pearl” echo the exotic products that flooded into the town following raids on coasts and merchant vessels. Fra Diego de Haëdo, the Spanish author and Benedictine monk imprisoned in Algiers from 1578 to 1581 (*ibid.*, 341), described the “Gold, Silver, Pearls, Amber, Spices, Drugs, Silks, Cloths, Velvets, &c.,... whereby [this Den of Thieves] have rendered...this City the most opulent...[in] the World: insomuch that the Turks call it, and not

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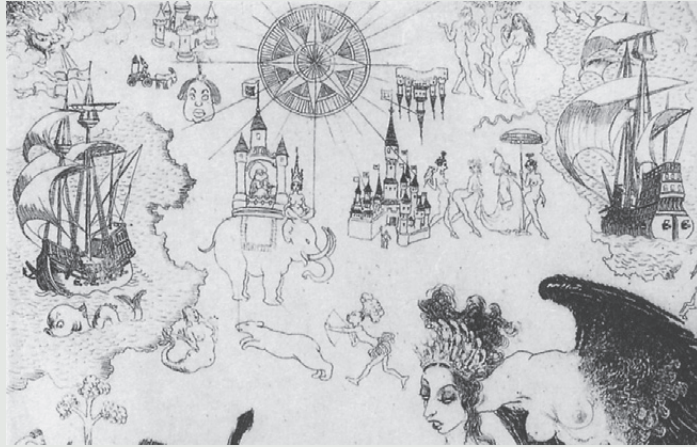


Figure 6. Two views of the King of Cuckooz on Norman Lindsay's frontispiece, the only illustration in Kenneth Slessor's *Cuckooz Contrey* and a visual counterpart to the *The Atlas's* recreation of the world portrayed on seventeenth-century maps (Sydney: Frank C. Johnson, 1932). This detail (upper-left) shows the king as he rides on an elephant (Slessor's "snow-white elephant"), and is conducted from his "floating castle" by naked beauties holding a parasol and a large bird ("the King's own hunting-falcon"). The third view, with the king carried on a litter by four "naked Concubines," appears near the right margin below the hovering Harpy. Standing like the rest of Lindsay's figures on an old chart, the heavily bearded monarch attired in a plumed turban and caftan not only stands resembles Barbarossa/Kheir-ed-din, Algiers' most charismatic corsair and pasha. © Lin Bloomfield, Odana Editions, Bungendore, NSW, Australia.

without abundance of reason, their India, their Mexico, their Peru" (quoted in Morgan [1731] 1970, 593–594). Although Slessor ornamented his poems and home with such luxuries, "The King of Cuckooz" doesn't dwell on the finery befitting its king. Nevertheless, Slessor would have enjoyed what Dey Sidi Hassan (1790–1798) reportedly wore during an interview with the American consul to Algiers (quoted in Spencer 1976, 65):

"His feet [were] shod with buskins bound upon his legs with diamond buttons in loops of pearl; round his waist was a broad sash glittering with jewels, to which was suspended a broad scimitar, its sheath of the finest velvet..."

Just as his predecessors had done with Barbarossa, Slessor created his King of Cuckooz by wedding the "lusty Turk" to the romance of the pirate (see Heers 2003, 232–236) (Figure 7).

Without its defenses, Algiers never could have remained affluent for three centuries. Over and over "The King of Cuckooz" refers to Algiers' "walls," "fort[s]," and "battlement[s]," its "basilisks" and "cannon-balls," its "Janzaries and Marabutts/ [that] bid a sailor fear." Barbarossa, through his union with the Ottoman Empire, put together in Algiers the tripartite system that



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Figure 7. Plan of Algiers, by Antonio Salamanca, 1541 (or after one of the engravings derived from it). Plate 59, volume II in *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, edited by Georg Braun, Franz Hogenberg, and Simon Novellanus [van den Neuvel] (Cologne: Gottfried von Kempen, 1575). Like most Braun and Hogenberg maps, this one features a “native” in local attire. The regal man in the Ottoman turban and caftan stands, in the lower left, precisely the same place where Norton wrote “Part of the King of Cuckooz Contrey” on his plan. On this map attributed to Antonio Salamanca (c. 1500–1562: Skelton 1965, volume 1, xlii and pt.2, plate 59; Tooley 1999–2004, 4:94), the words behind the Ottoman gentleman say nothing about Cuckooz, but lament the disastrous defeat of Charles V in 1541, the year the original map is believed to have been created (Tooley 1939, 22 [96]; Braun, Hogenberg, and Skelton 1965, 1:xlii). Instead of Norton’s single European ship, the small, easily maneuverable vessels of the Algerian pirates appear in the harbor. Otherwise, Norton’s plan covers the same area and employs the same orientation and colors as the larger (30 x 43.5 cm) hand-colored copperplate shown here. This map is made available online by Historic Cities, a website created by the Historic Cities Center of the Department of Geography, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Jewish National and University Library. <http://historic-cities.huji.ac.il/algeria/algiers/maps/braun_hogenberg_II_59_b.jpg> (August 3, 2011). Courtesy of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem & the Jewish National and University Library.

maintained perhaps the most enduring “foreign army of occupation” (Wolf 1979, xi). That system included the pasha, who owed his power to the Sultan in Constantinople; the corsairs, who, like Barbarossa, sailed the seas for prizes; and the janissaries, the foreign infantrymen whom Barbarossa introduced and helped to organize into a corps of mercenaries that policed the city, protected it from its neighbors, and expanded its power throughout the central Maghrib. Slessor’s “ram with stars their basilisks” imagines cannons shooting the very stars that, spangled across a green background, decorated the corsairs’ flag of Algiers (ibid., 114). Even his charming “like a tempest driving flowers” alludes to the savage

northeasters that repeatedly humbled invaders. One devastated the Spanish armada escorted by Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor (1541), for whom such tempests were called “Charles’s gale” as recently as the early twentieth century (Lane-Poole [1901] 1970, 119). Slessor’s comparison of his King to a tempest also has precedent: “Often it has been remarked,” says one historian, “that the very Elements, the Tempests themselves, have seemed to fight for the no less tempestuous Algerines” (Morgan [1731] 1970, 301). To many Europeans, “well-guarded Algiers” appeared “invincible” and “totally secure under the protection of a mightier God than theirs” (Spencer 1976, 23, 29, 26, respectively). Ultimately, Ottoman Algiers would survive twelve major attacks before falling to the French in 1830 (Reclus and Keane 1886, 268; Wolf 1979, 333)—more than two centuries after Norton made his military map, and exactly a century before Slessor wrote “The King of Cuckooz.”

ROBERT NORTON AND KING JAMES’S FLEET: ALGIERS, 1620–1621

James I, King of England from 1603 to 1625, mounted one of those failed attacks in 1620.

Attacks by Algiers on English shipping had begun in earnest during the 1580s as a result of the decline of the Ottoman navy after Lepanto (1571) and the Sultan’s belated decision (1587) to curtail the ever more independent and powerful Algerian regency. England, though hostile to Spain and technically at peace with the Sultan (1585–1604: Wolf 1979, 178, 184–185; Lane-Poole [1901] 1970, 162), nevertheless found herself increasingly at the mercy of “this den of thieves,” to use Haëdo’s scathing term for Algiers (quoted in Morgan [1731] 1970, 593–594). The corsairs reduced the power of their pasha even further and gave only lip service to the Sultan in far-away Constantinople (*ibid.*, 575ff.; Wolf 1979, 187–198). To compound the problem, after James I signed a peace treaty with Philip III of Spain in 1604, Englishmen-turned-pirates brought to Algiers their light sailing ships as well as the skills necessary to slip through Gibraltar and navigate the Atlantic Ocean (Morgan [1731] 1970, 627–637; Braudel and Reynolds 1976, 884–886; Spencer 1976, 124–125). Many of these men’s “careers read like improbable romances” (Waters 1978, 2:253). In *True Travels, Adventures, and Observations* (1630), for instance, Captain John Smith reported that John Ward (1553–1623), “a poore English sailer, . . . lived like a Bashaw [“pasha”] in Barbary” (quoted in Waters 1978, 2:253; Lloyd 1981, 48–53; Wilson 2003, 55, 67–68)—*a life-style to which Slessor’s narrator patently aspires*. Between 1609 and 1619, the number of renegades who voluntarily adopted Islam in Algiers included “300 English” (Jean-Baptiste Gramaye 1620, quoted in Spencer 1976, 127). And during the first seven of those years, the pirates of Algiers captured as many as “466 British vessels” on the high seas (Clowes et al. 1897, 2:22, and Waters 1978, 2:253: cf. Wolf 1979, 184). So intolerable had matters become that in 1616 the English ambassador to Spain, Sir Francis Cottingham, is said to have written from Madrid (quoted in Morgan [1731] 1970, 629):

“The Strength and Boldness of the Barbary Pirates is now grown to that Height, both in the Ocean and Mediterranean Seas, as I have never

known any thing to have wrought a greater Sadness and Distraction in this Court.”

There was certainly reason for Slessor’s King of Cuckooz to be so nonchalant.

The result was that the normally war-adverse King of England bowed to pressure and sent against Algiers the Vice-Admiral of England, Sir Robert Mansell (1570/71–1652: Thrush 2004, 36:537). Mansell left England at the head of a fleet comprising 18 ships, 2600 men, and 500 cannons (Lane-Poole [1901] 1970, 272).⁹ But whereas Admiral Sir William Monson had expressed reluctance in 1617 to launch such an expedition and warned the government to prepare in secret for *multiple campaigns involving as many allies as possible* (Playfair [1884] 1972, 38, emphasis mine; see Monson [1703] 1902, 252–256; Morgan [1731] 1970, 632–639):

James, however, [was] determined to carry out the expedition himself; it was the only warlike undertaking of his reign, and *the fleet which he sent against Algiers was the first English naval force that ever entered the Mediterranean, at least since the Crusades* (Playfair [1884] 1972, 38: emphasis mine).

Both the *Platt of Argier* and Slessor’s narrator hint at the pride and confidence that marked the expedition in 1620, even if Norton has represented “the place wher the King of Englands Fleet did ride” with only a single, over-size ship. Yet, despite its promise and numbers, the “first war between England and the Algerian Regency” proved comically futile (Wolf 1979, 188). The Spanish sent no reinforcements and Mansell didn’t assist a Spanish squadron when it finally arrived and fired upon the town (December 1620). The English fleet then retired to Spain, but misunderstandings prevented Mansell from obtaining Dutch or Spanish aid for his return to Algiers. Of the many hundreds of English captives detained in the corsair capital, Mansell freed only forty. He captured not a single pirate ship during the winter; and in May/June 1621, he sank only one enemy vessel, took another, ran a third ashore, and rendered two others “unserviceable” while attempting to fire-bomb the entire fleet (Mansell 1621, in *Cabala* 1663, 324). Worse still, when Mansell departed for England, the regency captured nearly thirty-five English ships under sail (NMM, Clifton, and Rigby 2004, 149). Not only did suspicions of bribery surround the expedition (Clowes *et al.* 1897, 2:18), but Mansell has gone down as “one of the most inept admirals in history” (Lloyd 1981, 67) and “one of the most corrupt officials in a most corrupt epoch” (Callender 1924, 81). He left Algiers poised to dominate the entire Mediterranean (Braudel and Reynolds 1976, 886) with the town’s 125,000 individuals holding “Scots, English, [and] Irish” among its more than 20,000 Christians captives (Playfair [1884] 1972, 885; see Yver [1913–1927] 1987a, 1:260–261; Spencer 1976, 31, 127; Wolf 1979, 97, 150). The corsairs, at the peak of their power, roamed so far afield that they were attacking ships in British waters.¹⁰ Nevertheless, because Algiers proved a useful, if inconstant ally in damaging England’s enemies *and* trade rivals, the town survived far longer than her size might warrant (Reclus and Keane 1886, 268–269). As Louis XIV famously quipped: “If there were no Algiers I would myself make one” (Playfair [1884] 1972, 159).

Despite its promise and numbers, the “first war between England and the Algerian Regency” proved comically futile.

“Not without danger” suggests Norton’s good fortune at escaping death or capture. Although Algiers ransomed most captives, Norton’s skills would have made him too valuable for release (see Wolf 1979, 161). Slessor’s poem certainly hints at the dangers posed to both sides “When by the Bayes of Africa/ King James’s Fleet did ride.” But whether Norton actually sailed with Mansell has proved a fascinating puzzle. In the “Author’s Note” to “The King of Cuckooz,” Slessor states that Norton “probably took part” (Slessor 1932, 75; Slessor, Haskell, and Dutton 1994, 358). The Francis Edwards catalogue from which Slessor took his information hedges its bet by saying, “it does not seem to be recorded that Norton had a share in this expedition” (Francis Edwards 1929, 106). And the Sotheby & Co. catalogue, the apparent source of the Francis Edwards quotation, cites the *Dictionary of National Biography* as the basis for its skepticism (Sotheby & Co. 1928, 36). That prestigious, multi-volume dictionary emphasizes Norton’s highly technical publications in mathematics (1604–1623) and his books on artillery: *Of the Art of Great Artillery* (Norton 1624), *The Gunners Dialogue, With the Art of Great Artillery* (Norton 1628b), and *The Gunner* (Norton 1628a). As an engineer and gunner, Norton received promotion to the Tower during the years he was composing his artillery manuals. There he was given a “gunner’s room” (1624) and “the post of engineer of the Tower of London for life” (1627)—details from the dictionary (Porter 1921; Glozier 2004) that appear word-for-word in both catalogues. The dictionary is silent, however, not only about Norton’s possible role in the English expedition but also about his career as a surveyor. Elsewhere we discover that for two decades beginning in 1611, Norton was surveying estates in Sussex and Yorkshire as well as in Northumberland (Plackett 2000, 193–194; see Steer, Eden, and Bendall 1997, 2:381, N129). During the 1620s Norton surveyed several manors belonging to Henry Percy, whom Norton, as a member of the royal service, may have met when the 9th Earl of Northumberland was imprisoned in the Tower (1605–1621: Batho 1959, 72; Steer, Eden, and Bendall 1997, 1:29; Plackett 2000, 193 and n.10). One of the estates visited by Norton was Petworth House (Plackett 2000, 193 n.10), Percy’s principal residence (Batho 1957, 435). The library at Petworth House housed several of Norton’s surveys (Steer, Eden, and Bendall 1997, 2:381) in addition to his *Platt of Argier* and a rare copy of *The Gunners Dialogue*. Norton had originally dedicated that book to the Duke of Buckingham (Norton 1628b: Glozier 2004, 41:185), the very gentleman who, as Lord High Admiral, had sent Mansell to suppress the pirate base at Algiers (Thrush 2004, 36:539).

Norton’s mapping skills, his military service as officer and ballistics expert, his reference on the Platt of Argier to “Cuckooz Contrey,” and his title “Muster Master of his Majesty’s Fleet”—all of these facts point to his having taken part in Mansell’s expedition against the pirates of Algiers.

Norton’s mapping skills, his military service as officer and ballistics expert, his reference on the Platt of Argier to “Cuckooz Contrey,” and his title “Muster Master of his Majesty’s Fleet” (a military term for the person “who takes an account of troops, and of their equipment” [*Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, 1913, s.v. “muster master”])—all of these facts point to his having taken part in Mansell’s expedition. That’s exactly how the National Maritime Museum promotes its map (Waters 1978, 2:446; NMM, Clifton, and Rigby 2004, 49). And even earlier, a 1934 Francis Edwards catalogue asserted that Norton not only sailed to Algiers in 1620, but “it is very likely that [his] valuable plan of the town’s defences, or a copy, was utilized by the expedition that attacked Algiers, unsuccessfully, in the following year” (p. 13, item 48: emphasis mine).¹¹

So what *did* Slessor know about Norton, or the *Platt of Argier*? Nothing more, in all likelihood, than what he found in item 487 of the Francis Edwards catalogue. Several reasons can be cited for such doubt. Just before its entries, *Old Maps of the World* offers brief insights into each of the cartographers named in the epigraphs of *The Atlas* poems—each, that is, except for Norton (Francis Edwards 1929, 6–7). Not one of the books in Bayldon’s collection mentions him, let alone depicts his map. Furthermore, Slessor’s epigraphs for both “The King of Cuckooz” and *Cuckooz Contrey* came directly from the catalogue (5 April, ~s90). The same is true of his spellings for the exotic names in his first stanza: “King of Cuckooz Contrey,” “Argier,” “Marabutts,” and “Janzaries”—the last of which is spelled more accurately on the map as “Ianizaries” (Norton 1620).

But what if “The King of Cuckooz” echoes some detail *on the map* that is not described *in the catalogue*? One word alone suggests that the poet might have seen Norton’s map: the “basilisks” that Slessor’s astrologers “ram with stars... / instead of cannon-balls.” A mythical serpent whose very glance/breath proved fatal, the word “basilisk” had by Norton’s time morphed (like the names of other poisonous snakes) into a type of cannon; more specifically, a big brass cannon capable of shooting 200-pound balls. Although not mentioned in *Old Maps of the World*, the word appears prominently on Norton’s map. “2 Basilisks” is written under two over-sized cannons on the coastal battery running north from Barbarossa’s massive breakwater, “The Mould,” toward “The Marabutts House.” Yet any hopes that “basilisk” may raise are dashed when we discover how many alternatives for “cannon” crop up in Slessor’s draft of “The King of Cuckooz.” Always a stickler for the “right word,” Slessor filled his notebooks with lists of synonyms in order to find the one that “sounded right” and had “the right associations” (Dutton 1991, 147; see also NLA MS 3020 2/1/—). Nowhere is this more obvious than in his “March 22” entry: “And ram their basilisks with stars”; “And ram with stars their basilisks/cannonades/parrot-guns”; “And ram their firelocks full of stars” (~s79). In fact, any source on seventeenth-century cannons could supply “basilisk”—just as Norton’s *Gunners Dialogue* (Norton 1628b, 2–3) might have informed Slessor that “falcons” and “fowlers” were small cannons, a detail that turns “The King’s own hunting-falcon” into a double entendre.

Finally, since no living thing animates Norton’s map, Slessor’s “snow-white elephant” may come from four famous lines by Jonathan Swift (*On Poetry, a Rhapsody*, 1733, 1.169–182), whose “combination of the satiric and fantastic in voyages of explorations” pervades *The Atlas* (Inglis Moore, in Thomson 1968, 168). Once again, it is *Old Maps of the World* that highlights these verses (Francis Edwards 1929, “Preface,” 4):

The collection of old maps has in the last few years assumed a position of considerable importance. There is a mystery and romance about old maps that their modern counterparts can never hope to rival. In the eighteenth century it was fashionable to condemn geographers who

... “in Afric maps
With savage pictures fill their gaps,
And o’er unhabitable downs
Place elephants for want of Towns.” ... SWIFT.

So what did Slessor know about Norton, or the Platt of Argier? Nothing more, in all likelihood, than what he found in item 487 of the Francis Edwards catalogue.

To-day that is the essence of their charm...

Slessor could hardly have failed to read these words that open the catalogue (ibid., “Preface”). *The Atlas*—his poetic “collection of old maps”—shows that he agreed.

CUCKOOZ CONTREY REVEALED

Despite the charms of Robert Norton’s map, no evidence exists that Slessor ever laid eyes on it. Nor is there any evidence that he discovered what “Cuckooz Contrey” meant, except as one of his “Lost Countries” (6 March, -s65). Bayldon’s library, however marvelous in terms of British naval history, offered the poet no clues for uncovering the identity of “Cuckooz.” Other maps and sources contemporary to Norton, however, demonstrate what his *Platt of Argier* only hints at—that “*Cuckooz Contrey*” was an influential Berber kingdom and neighbor of Algiers in the century leading up to Mansell’s expedition of 1620–1621.

Although comprising a range of peoples, the Berbers are the ancient inhabitants of North Africa. From their name comes “Barbaria,” which Slessor found in *Old Maps of the World* among the titles of seventeenth-century maps of Africa (Francis Edwards 1929, 104–105: entries 473, 479, 484). He transformed Barbaria into another of his “lost lands”: “And this is a projection of the world, / ... With pictures of lost lands and vanished towns.” “Where’s the Kingdom of Barbaria/ Where’s Francisca?” (May 31, -s136). “Barbaria,” of course, is just another name for the “Barbary Coast,” now commonly known as the Maghrib (Wolf 1979, 1). Since “Berber” and “Barbary” derive from the Latin *barbari* “barbarian” (i.e., someone who did not speak Latin or Greek) or, more recently, from an Arabic word meaning “to speak rapidly and confusedly,” these names did not originate with the people themselves, but may have been given to them by the Arabs who overran the Maghrib from the mid-seventh century on (*OED*, 2nd ed., 1989, 1:946, s.v. “Barbary”; Abun-Nasr 1987, 2, 7). When the Ottomans began competing with Spain for Algiers (Braudel and Reynolds 1976, 884; Abun-Nasr 1987, 167), the town was a small Berber and Morisco port whose surrounding countryside contained an assortment of Berber tribes, especially in the coastal mountains of what is now northeastern Algeria.

East of Algiers lived the Kabyles (Ilahiane 2006, 72), “one of the largest groups of Berbers” (Mattar 2004, 458) and “the major Berber group in Algeria” (Olson 1996, 91). “Kabyles” is Arabic for “tribes” or “clans,” and the name endures in “Lesser Kabylia” and “Great(er) Kabylia,” two plains in the Maritime Atlas traditionally inhabited by these Berbers. Greater Kabylia lies between the sea, from which it is separated by a coastal mountain range and the Sebau/Sebauou River on the north, and the Isser (west) and Sahel-Summan/Soumman rivers (south and east) (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 17, 19). Greater Kabylia boasts one of the tallest ranges in that part of the Atlas, namely the Djurdjura/Jurjura mountains, with peaks reaching 2,308 meters (7,572 feet: Abun-Nasr 1987, 6). On the northern slope of the Djurdjura lay a summit fortress five miles northeast of present-day Michelet along Route N71 (Google Maps, s.v. “Koukou, Tizi Ouzou, Algérie”; Julien 1970, 274; cf. Pelet 1838). The name of

poem. In the spirit of our map-maker and poet, and because poor records and the rulers' adoption of their predecessors' names made charting their family tree nearly impossible even by the mid-sixteenth century (see Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 28), I will refer to each ruler simply as "The King of Koukou."

Little is straightforward about these tribesmen. The Kabyles of the Djurdjura highlands have called themselves "Imazighen" or "Amzigh"/"Amasigh," meaning "Freemen" (Reclus and Keane 1886, 254; Kagda and Latif 2009, 61). Earlier sources from the sixteenth century to the twentieth refer to them as "Azuga" or "Igawawen" or by the clearly related forms of "Zwouwa"—"Zwowah," "Zwawa," "Zouaves," and "Zouaoua" as well as "Zouara," "Soara," and "Soava."¹² The Zwouwa/Zouaves forms may reflect the name assumed by the Kabyles after abandoning their capital-fortress, Koukou (Morgan [1731] 1970, 69–70, 262; Brett and Fentress 1996, 164–165; Google Maps, s.v. "Koukou, Tizi Ouzou, Algérie") (Figure 8). As for "Koukou," it too has several spellings:

"Kouko" (Leo and Pory 1896, 1:281 n.83; Brett and Fentress 1996, 168)

"Kou-kou" (Shaw [1738] 1972, 101)

"Kuko" (Reclus and Keane 1886, 255; Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 19; Pitcher 1972, 107–108; Isichei 1997, 273; Ilahiane 2006, 72)

"Kuku" (Reclus and Keane 1886, 255, 261; Google Maps, s.v. "Kuku, Algeria")

"Cuco" (Marmol, in Leo and Pory, 1896, 1:281 n.83; Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 19)

"Couco" (undated Spanish map in Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 32–33; Rossi 1691; Rousset de Missy 1742)

"Cucco" (Morgan [1731] 1970, 69; 1736 map in Lane-Poole [1901] 1970, 17)

"Couque" (L'Isle 1730a and 1730b; Bowen 1752b)

"Couquo" (Bowen 1752a)

"Chuco" (Konetzke 1955, 419)

"Cauco" (Moll 1711-1717)

The identity of Koukou/Cucco shows how lost the meaning of this "Lost countr[y]" was to Slessor, and how much his fascination with maps has to do with the enshrining of lost histories in cryptic form.

Adding to the confusion of different spellings, languages, and periods is the fact that Europeans didn't recognize the difference between the Berbers and the Arabs of North Africa. A decade after Mansell's expedition, Père Pierre

the Kabyles of the Djurdjura and eastern ranges (Reclus and Keane 1886, 255; cf. Ilahiane 2006, 129).¹³ If there *is* one thing straightforward about the Kabyles, it is summarized best by Joseph Morgan, the English historian and vice-consul at Algiers in the early eighteenth century (Brett and Fentress 1996, 164–165): “The Kabeyls [*sic*]...value themselves excessively upon their Antiquity, Purity of Blood, and Invincibility.... I never yet met with an Arab pretending to count the Kabeyl among the Nations subdued by his Progenitors” (Morgan [1731] 1970, 70–71).

When the Barbarossas came to Algiers, two Kabyle confederations important to our study inhabited the eastern ranges (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 19). Occupying Greater Kabylia with territory stretching down to the small port of Azzefun (Ilahiane 2006, 72) was the Kingdom of Koukou, lying “within sight of Algiers” and three days to the east (Morgan [1731] 1970, 68, 326; Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 27). South and east of the Koukou, across the Sahel-Summan/Soumman river valley in Lesser Kabylia (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 19; Brett and Fentress 1996, 168), were the Banu Abbas or Beni-Abbes, whom some European sources still refer to as “Labes” (Yver [1913–1927] 1987c, 3:281) or “Labbes” (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 19; Pitcher 1972, 107).¹⁴

Like their fellow Kabyles, the Koukou “always had a deserved reputation for fierce independence, of inclination to rebellion, of resistance to any imposition of control over their lives. They usually sided with the upcoming conqueror against the entrenched tyrant, whether either was Berber or not, for greater local control and independence” (Mattar 2004, 460). Nowhere is this clearer than in their long-standing hostility towards their neighbors, the Banu Abbas (Figure 9), both of whose sultans “possessed their own armies and fortresses, and ruled over their feuding peoples with a mixture of patronage, diplomacy, and force” (Brett and Fentress 1996, 158). Mutual animosity conditioned how these rival Kabyle kingdoms dealt with Spain and the Ottoman Empire—the two superpowers locked in a long and bitter struggle for supremacy over the western Mediterranean (Ilahiane 2006, 72). As Morgan reports ([1731] 1970, 69–70):

The Kingdom of Cucco, from a Fortress of that Name, naturally exceeding strong, and now in Ruins, [was] once the Capital and Regal Seat of the Princes of that State, which has made no contemptible Figure. And had it not been for their cruel, and almost incessant Wars with their Eastern and contiguous Neighbors, Beni-Abbas, a powerful Nation, in all respects very much resembling themselves, which have somewhat eclipsed their former Grandeur, their Prince might still have been reckoned among the most formidable Potentates of Africa; and as it is, they have more than once baffled the united strength of Beni-Abbas and the Turks of Algiers; nor are they yet in any wise subject to either, tho' intirely encompassed by them, and other less considerable, tho' no less inveterate Enemies.

Alternately rivals and allies of Ottoman Algiers (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 24), the Kingdom of Koukou went from power in the sixteenth century to decline in the seventeenth, paralleling to some extent the fortunes of the Spanish empire in North Africa.

Spanish writers provide much of what is known about the Koukou. Two stand out: Luis del Marmol-Carvajal (Marmol), who traveled the Maghrib for a

decade after participating with Charles V against Tunis and being enslaved in Morocco; and Fra Diego de Haëdo, the Benedictine monk imprisoned in Algiers while Cervantes was trying to secure his own release (1575–1580: Morgan [1731] 1970, 565; Wolf 1979, 341–342; Heers 2003, 154, 204). Another name in this story is Joseph Morgan. Because his *Complete History of Algiers* (1731) drew so heavily on the works of both Haëdo and Marmol (Brett and Fentress 1996, 165), and because his account of seventeenth-century Algiers and its neighbors also incorporated English and French sources (Wolf 1979, 341–342), Morgan plays a large role in what follows. So does Carlos Rodríguez Joulia Saint-Cyr, author of *Felipe III y el Rey de Cuco* (1953). Long after the Zwouwa confederacy had absorbed the Kingdom of Koukou, that Spanish historian discovered startling evidence among the unpublished documents in Spain's Archivo General de Simancas that the King of Koukou, *less than two decades prior to Norton's Platt of Argier, was corresponding in secret with Philip III of Spain*.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Our sources, though often vague and contradictory, suggest that the Koukou originally collided with the Barbarossas while the brothers were making their way west toward Algiers (Morgan [1731] 1970, 232; Pitcher 1972, 108), and that the Banu Abbas supplied the Barbarossas with aid and reinforcements (Yver [1913–1927] 1987b, 1:471; Julien 1970, 278; Spencer 1976, 19). Once in Algiers, ostensibly to rid the town of its Spanish occupation, Aroudj quickly put his own men in charge. He then assassinated the sheikh who had invited him to Algiers in the first place (Yver [1913–1927] 1987b, 1:471; Spencer 1976, 20; Brett and Fentress 1996, 157), for that sheikh called in the Spaniards as soon as he recognized Aroudj as a threat to his own power (Abun-Nasr 1987, 149). The murder made the brothers mortal enemies of the Koukou: the sheikh of Algiers was not only related to their own king (Morgan [1731] 1970, 410), but had conspired with him to seek the help of the Barbarossas against the Spaniards (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 25–26). In 1519/1520, two years after Aroudj's death, Kheir-ed-din Barbarossa defeated the Koukou in Kabylia, exiled their king, and occupied two cities further east. On his return, however, he ran into the Berber Sheikh of Tunis, who had once welcomed the Barbarossas to the Maghrib, but, troubled by their aggressive expansion, now allied with the King of Koukou and restored him to his kingdom (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 26; Wolf 1979, 14). Defeated in Kabylia and driven back to Algiers (Pitcher 1972, 108), Barbarossa and his men were soon forced to abandon their capital as well (Abun-Nasr 1987, 150). Yet, because the King of Koukou and his allies chose to loot the town rather than govern it, they controlled Algiers only briefly (Brett and Fentress 1996, 158). In 1525, bolstered by new Ottoman recruits and the Banu Abbas, Barbarossa retook Algiers and bribed the Koukou to send him the head of their king (Haëdo, in Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 26 and n.13; Wolf 1979, 14–15). For the next four years, the king's brother fought against the Ottomans. Finally, in 1529 Barbarossa destroyed the Spanish presidio (Wolf 1979, 14–16) and allowed the king's brother to become “chief of Grand Kabylia,” though not without imposing tribute on him (Abun-Nasr 1987, 151; Morgan [1731] 1970, 263–264; cf. Spencer 1976, 25).

The Koukou did not submit to Algiers for long. After Barbarossa took the city of Tunis, Charles V retaliated by seizing it for himself (1535: Wolf 1979, 17–21). It took him six more years to attack Algiers, and he did so only after trying to bribe Barbarossa, now High Admiral of the Ottoman Empire, into

Surprising as his assistance might seem, the King of Koukou/Cuckooz had good reason to aid Charles V: the Ottomans, though fellow Muslims, used their janissary armies to rule over the North African countryside, whereas Spain seemed content to control the coast with their presidios.

changing sides (ibid., 26; Abun-Nasr 1987, 154). When Charles V arrived in October 1541, he brought an armada of over 450 vessels and 36,000 men (Wolf 1979, 27). After the tempest destroyed as much as a third of his fleet (Morgan [1731] 1970, 303–305; Abun-Nasr 1987, 155), however, Charles helped his men regroup on the other side of Cap(e) Matifou (Norton’s “Cape de Montafooz”), four miles east of Algiers, and then continue on to more hospitable ports (Wolf 1979, 28). One was Azzefun, the only port harbor belonging to the Koukou (Reclus and Keane 1886, 267; Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 19). Morgan relates that the King of Koukou was heading down the mountains to join the Spaniards when he heard of their tragedy and retreat to Bougie (Bujeya/Bejaia) farther to the east. In that larger, more sheltered harbor the Spaniards received desperately needed food and provisions from the Tunisians, according to a French source, or from the Koukou, according to Haëdo and other Spanish chroniclers (Morgan [1731] 1970, 306–307, 326–327; Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 27). Surprising as his assistance might seem, the King of Koukou had good reason to aid Charles V: the Ottomans, though fellow Muslims, used their janissary armies to rule over the North African countryside, whereas Spain seemed content to control the coast with their presidios (Wolf 1979, 67).

Perhaps the most dangerous threat to Algiers from the Koukou and their allies came nearly six decades later, when Philip III (1598–1621) attempted to finish what his grandfather Charles V had envisaged: the annihilation of Ottoman Algiers.¹⁵ In 1601 Spain sent seventy galleys and ten thousand men to bombard the town. Weather and fear of risks resulted in another failure (Braudel and Reynolds 1976, 1234; see Morgan [1731] 1970, 627, 638; Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 35–40; Allen 2000, 264 and n.26; Feros 2000, 202). Spain tried again in 1603 with a smaller fleet, but more disastrous results (Morgan [1731] 1970, 638; Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 51–55). And yet again the following year, when a few men carrying gunpowder on boats to the Koukou heroically blew themselves up along with four-hundred Ottoman captors (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 66–70). By this time, secret negotiations had been going on between Spain and the King of Koukou since at least 1602 (ibid., 35, 41; cf. Boyer 1970). In 1603, the King of Koukou began to take on Algiers himself (Isichei 1997, 273; Boyer 1970, 37). His correspondence with Spanish officials reveals that he offered them use of Azeffun and nearby Tamagut so that Philip III could deliver instructions for a combined attack on the corsair capital; and so that Spanish vessels could unload 50,000 ducats, munitions, gunpowder and various other gifts (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 51, 71; see 17). Although that expedition ended dismally, the King of Koukou not only repulsed the Ottomans from the mountains, but soundly defeated Algiers’ ally—the king of the Banu Abbas (1603: ibid., 56). Spain subsequently prepared to strike Algiers in 1607. But when an expedition materialized the following year, it attacked Moroccan Larache, and lost (Allen 2000, 215, 222, 300). In 1608, after years of disappointment and neglect, the Koukou abruptly made peace with Algiers (Bono 1955, 251; Konetzke 1955, 419). Yet the King of Koukou continued to correspond with the Spanish king until at least 1610 (Boyer 1970, 38–39). And no wonder, since the treaty with Algiers forced the Koukou into a state of vassalage, ruining their reputation and forcing them to send enormous amounts of money and animals to the pasha (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 77).

And so the stage was set for “King James’s Fleet.” For if Spain could no longer mount an effective assault on Algiers, it certainly encouraged its new

ally, Britain, to do so. The pressure that the Spanish ambassador Count Diego Gondomar put on James I resulted in the failed expedition of 1620–1621 (Morgan [1731] 1970, 641–648). Before Mansell sailed, however, Admiral Sir William Monson, who regarded the entire matter as Spain’s problem, suggested that the British would find the tribesmen as fierce as the regency itself in repelling an attack (Monson [1703] 1902, 2:255):

Now, that Part of Barbary, where Algiers is seated, is a spacious and fertile Country, and abounds in Inhabitants; and tho’ the King of it be a Mahometan, as well as the Algerines, yet they live in perpetual Hatred and War; but so, that if either of them is attacked by Christians, they will presently join as Partners in Mischief; and we shall no sooner land, but be welcomed by 60, or 80000 of those ungodly People.

According to Morgan, the “King” to whom Monson refers is none other than “the Sheikh of Cucco; and these ungodly People are the Zwouwa his Subjects” ([1731] 1970, 640). Which meant that Mansell’s expedition could face two traditional enemies—the regency of Algiers and the “King of Cuckooz”—allied, in common cause, against the British and their allies.

Between Monson’s report and the launching of the expedition, however, disaster struck the Koukou. In 1618, the ever restive King of Koukou was assassinated by his brother (Boyer 1970, 37). Eventually, his son succeeded him (1633: Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 78) and the family continued to thrive nearby, at least into the mid-twentieth century (*ibid.*). But the Kingdom of Koukou never regained the power it had wielded when attempting to wrest Algiers from the Barbarossas and the Ottomans in the first half of the sixteenth century, or when intriguing with Spain in the opening decade of the seventeenth (Boyer 1970, 40). Sometime after 1640, the people abandoned Koukou and their sultans devolved into second-rate tribal leaders even as the Zwouwa/Zouaves—descended from the Koukou—became the dominant confederacy in the eighteenth century (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 78–79). Nevertheless, as Slessor’s poem illustrates, the title “King of Koukou” lived on long after it had any meaning (Boyer 1970, 40).

Norton’s plan shows “the King of Englands Fleet” [*sic*] riding between Algiers and Cuckooz Contrey, though the former sports an aggressive red; the latter, a gentle green. So, what are we to make of that image? When Norton wrote on his map “Part of the King of Cuckooz Contrey” in 1620, did he regard the King of Cuckooz as a *threat* or as a *potential ally*? That too remains a mystery. In 1618–1619, Philip III apparently studied plans by a Frenchman named Antonio Oliver to destroy the pirates in Algiers, but nothing came of it (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 76). A French source suggests that the new King of Koukou restored ties with Spain and rebelled against Algiers, again unsuccessfully, sometime before 1625 (Ernest Mercier 1891, in Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 78). But if such an alliance existed in 1620–1621, we hear nothing about it—or the Koukou—in Monson’s final report on the expedition, even though it was *he* who had warned James I four years earlier about “those ungodly people.” Mansell had under his command “at least two men who had been on intimate terms” with the Algerian pirates (Tinniswood 2010, 110). Moreover, James Frizzell, “an English agent who [had] worked in Algiers since at least 1613” and may even have served as interpreter for Mansell (*ibid.*, 114), would have known *something*, presumably, about the

... the Kingdom of Koukou/Cuckooz never regained the power it had wielded when attempting to wrest Algiers from the Barbarossas and the Ottomans in the first half of the sixteenth century, or when intriguing with Spain in the opening decade of the seventeenth.

state of the Koukou. Yet Mansell does not mention any group but “the Turks” in his report to the Duke of Buckingham on June 9, 1621 (*Cabala* 1663, 324).

That the Koukou remain so elusive on Norton’s map cannot help but invite further speculation. Perhaps there were inherent problems with mapping, or even writing about, the changing alliances in a land full of “Partners in Mischief,” whose political and social histories were as complex as their topography. Perhaps Norton expected that those who commissioned his plan would obtain their knowledge of the Koukou from other, possibly oral, sources. Given the sensitivity of any military intelligence map and the dangers of such a map falling into the wrong hands (Harley and Laxton 2001, 88–89, 165), he may have deliberately eschewed any further description (graphic or otherwise) of the Koukou. Nor does it help that the expedition came to naught, and that Norton’s *Platt of Argier* disappeared into a private library for three hundred years. In the end, all that can be said is that the traditionally unstable power realities on the ground are rendered as delicately by Norton as the terrible firepower of Algiers.

FULL CIRCLE

By the 1630s the Koukou were again up to their old tricks. In 1638 they defeated a janissary force sent from Algiers (Wolf 1979, 210). More provocatively, the King of Koukou threw in his lot with a renegade corsair named Piccinio, known as Ali Bitchnin/Biçnin after his conversion to Islam. Having carried on for years as if he were ruler of Algiers (Spencer 1976, 77), Ali Bitchnin married a Koukou princess to strengthen his authority against the pasha, and later fled to his father-in-law’s stronghold in Kabylia when tensions in Algiers became too great. Before what seemed to be Bitchnin’s victorious return...and his subsequent poisoning (ca. 1645: Wikipédia 2011, s.v. “Ali Bitchin” [*sic*]), presumably at the command of the Sultan in Constantinople (Wolf 1979, 148):

[Bitchnin] owned two palaces in the city, a villa in the suburbs, several thousand slaves, jewels, plate, and great wealth in merchandise. He built a sumptuous public bath and a great mosque in Algiers as a gift to the city. He had his own bodyguard of footmen as well as cavalry, recruited mostly from the Koukou tribesmen whose sultan became his father-in-law.

With this story of power, wealth and desire, we return full circle to “The King of Cuckooz.” Though Slessor’s “Cuckooz Contrey” is a fantasy in almost every way, behind the name stands a once powerful family of self-proclaimed sultans who—because they could not decisively defeat the Ottomans or their own mountain rivals—risk passing into oblivion along with their kingdom.

Except for tantalizing clues on an old map, and one poet’s tongue-in-cheek response.¹⁶

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NOTES

1. “NLA” refers to the National Library of Australia, which holds the Papers of Kenneth Adolf Slessor (1901–1971) under the designation MS 3020. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) in Washington, D.C. (April 14, 2010).
2. For brevity, subsequent references to items in the poetry notebook that contains Slessor’s drafts of *The Atlas*—MS 3020/19/1—will be abbreviated “-s#”. For example, “-s242” represents both “NLA MS 3020/19/1/242” (for the paper version) and <http://nla.gov.au/nla.ms-ms3020-19-1-s242-v> (for the online scan). As explained in my Introduction, Slessor drafted *The Atlas* (ca. 1930) in a 1927 desk calendar: neither 1927 nor the date accompanying each entry has anything to do with the actual year, month, or day in which the poet created the various parts of his sequence. Nevertheless, I’ve included the notebook’s “month” and “day” (“September 13”) along with its “page” number (e.g., -s242) to aid identification.
3. “The King of Cuckooz” is reprinted from the Haskell and Dutton edition *Kenneth Slessor: Collected Poems* (Slessor, Haskell, and Dutton 1994, 70–71), whose version differs from the original one in *Cuckooz Contrey* (Slessor 1932, 11–12) only in minor details: e.g., “obseruations” (*ibid.*, 11), vs. “observations” (Slessor, Haskell, and Dutton 1994, 70). Like Haskell and Dutton, I quote the poem in its entirety. Rather than annotating some of Slessor’s consciously baroque vocabulary in notes on the poem (*ibid.*, 359), however, I explain the poet’s word/phrase choices as they become relevant to my article’s larger arguments.
4. As we shall see (below, p. 13 and Figures 1 and 5), Haskell and Dutton read “pts.” as “points” (Slessor, Haskell, and Dutton 1994, 358), in contrast to “parts,” which is the transliteration of the Norton map title offered by the Francis Edwards catalogue (Francis Edwards 1929, 105), and by the National Maritime Museum website. Other discrepancies are equally minor: e.g., Slessor’s “adioning” and “Ma’t’s” for the map’s “adoiyning” and “Mats.”
5. Because he regarded *The Atlas* as “one of [Slessor’s] earlier, more ‘romantic’” works (Douglas Stewart, letter to Kenneth Slessor, 17 February 1963: NLA MS 3020 1/5/353), however, Stewart’s published comments on its opening poem reflect some ambivalence toward *The Atlas* generally (1969, 158–158; rpt. 1977, 73–74):

[*The Atlas*] is alive with Slessor’s own delight in what he has found, moving with utter inconsequence and unfaltering *élan* from the fifty rosy darlings of the King of Cuckooz’s harem... But sometimes you can find things with plenty of consequence in an inconsequential poem. Girls as tempest-driven flowers are things of consequence.

Of more “consequence,” presumably, were the other Slessor poems that Stewart published alongside the truncated *Atlas* sequence in his anthology: “Country Towns,” “Five Visions of Captain Cook,” “Five Bells,” and “Beach Burial”—all of them directly relating to Australia and Australians. That *The Atlas* essentially ignores Australia will be addressed in my forthcoming Epilogue.

6. Except that he couldn’t settle upon the title. “A Mapped” appears above the opening words of his poem (March 6, -s65). Then two titles compete—“An old Atlas” (March 16, -s75; March 18, -s76) and “The King of Cuckooz Contrey” (March 18, -s76; perhaps -s65)—before the abbreviated “The King of Cuckooz” finally makes its appearance (April 3, -s88). After finishing the first stanza (March 16–20, -s75 to -s77), Slessor turned to the second (*ibid.*; March 22, -s79) and the third (March 20, -s77); followed, in order, by the fifth with its simile “like a tempest driving flowers” (March 21, -s78; March 24, -s80) and the sixth (*ibid.*); the fourth and the eleventh (March 22, -s79; March 26, -s81); the seventh (March 24, -s80); and, finally, the twelfth (March 26, -s81). Unfortunately, Slessor’s notebook contains no draft of stanzas eight to ten, or any complete version of the poem. Three details, however, suggest that he had a clear vision of his poem and finished “The King of Cuckooz” quickly. Only three lines prove to be dead-ends in terms of the published version (March 16, -s75; March 20, -s77). Furthermore, each time Slessor listed poems for the sequence, he began with “The King of Cuckooz,” then put a check beside its title (March 18, -s76; April 3, -s88); meanwhile, the other poems shifted position within *The Atlas*, remained unchecked, or disappeared entirely. Finally, “The King of Cuckooz” is the first poem for which Slessor created a note.
7. According to Stanley Lane-Poole, “Europeans spelt the name—Arger, Argel, Argeir, Algel, &c, down to the French Alger and our Algiers ([1901] 1970, 13, n.1).
8. Spellings of Berber and Arab names, as well as descriptions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources, come from Wolf 1979, unless otherwise noted. Historical dates, if not from Wolf or the cited source, come from the *Columbia Encyclopedia* (5th edition, 1993).
9. Unless otherwise noted, both of my paragraphs on the Mansell expedition derive from Morgan [1731] 1970, 644-646; Playfair [1884] 1972, 44; Clowes *et al.* 1897, 2:50-54; Wolf 1979, 186-188; and Thrush 2004, 36:537, who provides the spelling “Mansell.”
10. Geoffrey Callender, whose book *The Naval Side of British History* was owned by Captain Bayldon, offers a particularly striking account of the period following the 1628 assassination of the Duke of Buckingham (1924, 85–86):

The years that followed Buckingham’s death are among the saddest in our maritime history. Not an English river nor an English

harbour was safe from insult... The Algerine pirates were especially daring. They raided the English harbours, in five years carried off 266 ships, and in every case of capture sold the ship's company into lifelong servitude. The honour of England suffered the last indignity when in 1631 the royal fleet fled before a squadron of alien privateers.

The rest of the seventeenth century saw the British repeatedly sending fleets against Algiers, redeeming captives, exacting promises that English vessels would no longer be searched or molested, and then returning within a decade as the round of piracy and intimidation began anew (Playfair [1884] 1972, 44–162; Clowes *et al.* 1897, 2:212ff.; Lane-Poole [1901] 1970, 267–273).

11. Serving in Mansell's botched expedition would have given the "versatile Robert Norton" incentive to share his specialized knowledge of cannons and other artillery (Waters 1978, 2:446, 471). No sooner had Charles I ascended the British throne in 1625, than "every sailor was now ordered to learn to handle firearms and every master to become a competent gunner" (*ibid.*). Recommended reading included Norton's recently published *Of the Art of Great Artillery* (Norton 1624), "wherein I persuade myself"—the author boasts in his dedication—"that the most necessary particulars belonging to the Gunners Art, are more acutely shewed, then in any other Treatise in any language yet extant" [*sic*] (Norton 1628b). When Norton's *The Gunner* appeared a few years later, Captain John Smith added this poetic tribute (Norton 1628a, opposite "Contents"):

Perfection, if't hath ever been attained,
In *Gunners Art*, this Author hath it gayned.

12. For "Azuaga," see Morgan (1731] 1970, 70, after sixteenth-century writers like Leo Africanus and Marmol; and for "Igawawen," see Reclus 1886, 255. Regarding "Zwouwa" and its related forms, see Morgan [1731] 1970, 69–70, and Brett and Fentress 1996, 164–165. "Zwowah" is found in Shaw [1738] 1972, 101, and Brett and Fentress 1996, 168; "Zwawa," in Brett and Fentress 1996, 159–160, 168, and Ilahiane 2006, 72; "Zouaves," in Reclus 1886, 255, and Brett and Fentress 1996, 159–160; "Zouaoua," in Ilahiane 2006, 72; and "Zouara," "Soara," and "Soava," in Leo and Pory 1896, 1:281 n.83.
13. Though Berber is regularly spoken by only a small minority (Abun-Nasr 1987, 3), the twenty-first century has found the Kabyles at "the center of Berber activism and unrest" against Arabization (Ilahiane 2006, 128–129); in 2002, they helped bring about the recognition of Berber Tamazight as an official language alongside Arabic in Algeria (Kagda and Latif 2009, 97).
14. "Banu Abbas" is the preferred spelling in Brett and Fentress 1996, 168, and Ilahiane 2006, 72. "Beni-Abbes" appears in Morgan [1731] 1970, 70, and elsewhere. For "Beni Abbas," see the 1736 map in Lane-Poole [1901] 1970, 17, and Yver [1913–1927] 1987c, 3:281. Earlier citations for "Labes" can be seen on Rossi 1691, plate 112. For "Labbes," see Rodríguez Joulia 1953,

17; and for “Labez,” Rodríguez Joulia 1953, map between 32–33. Another variant is “Abès” (Wolf 1979, 68). In addition to the Koukou and the Banu Abbas, a third group of Kabyles, known as the Banu ‘Abd al-Jabbar (Ilahiane 2006, 72) or Beni Jubar (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 19), held the coast east of Bougie (Bujeya/Bejaia).

15. In the intervening years, the Koukou were granted free trade with Algiers either because their King, after the incident with Charles V, surrendered large quantities of money and livestock, presented his teenage son as a hostage, and offered to pay tribute (1542: Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 27–28), or because the Koukou helped Algiers against the rebelling Banu Abbas a decade later. Whatever the cause, Morgan opines that the tribute received by the Algerian Regency in no way compensated for the long-term damage done by the trade agreement, which enabled the Koukou not only to acquire guns and ammunition, but to become expert marksmen ([1731] 1970, 307, 327–328, 415–418). Furthermore, Barbarossa’s only son, Hassan-ben-Kheired-Din (otherwise known as “Hassan Pasha/Basha”), cemented the alliance by marrying the daughter of the King of Koukou (1559: Yver [1913–1927] 1987c, 3:281; Morgan [1731] 1970, 414–416). After Hassan Pasha died (1570), the King’s daughter and her son, the last of the Barbarossas, continued to live in Algiers “in great Honour and Reputation” (Morgan [1731] 1970, 475). Nevertheless, toward the end of the sixteenth century, power struggles with Algiers meant that the Koukou never really enjoyed the power they had obtained (Rodríguez Joulia 1953, 29). Increasingly, they resented paying tribute and chafed at restrictions imposed by the janissaries stationed in their region (Wolf 1979, 68–69). For more, see Morgan [1731] 1970, 407–423, 492, 522, 600; Julien 1970, 295; Wolf 1979, 66–67, 77; Brett and Fentress 1996, 160; Heers 2003, 18, 120, 170.

16. Stay tuned for Part II of my study. “Post-roads,” the second poem of Slessor’s suite *The Atlas*, imagines the ghost of John Ogilby (1600–1676) surveying “the unmapped savanna of dumb shades” just as he’d undertaken to measure the roads of England and Wales prior to mapping them in his brilliantly illustrated *Britannia* (1675).