

The Cartography of Flesh

by Andrea Witzke Slot

If we take the time to realize that we are cartographers of our own small worlds, we might just see our bodies as the landscape we archive, sometimes haphazardly, sometimes with purpose. We might realize that the straits and canals we navigate run along veins, pump through arteries, stimulate muscles into motion, set the reproductive system alight and, in the most heart-rending circumstances, rouse the sympathetic system to make its choice: fight or flight. We might just begin to notice the many small islands that interleave our waterways—small oases and islets—that are guilty of little more than being too damned obvious. Yet it is the lighthouse of discovery—the pulsating search for more—that opens up these waterways and connects the vast countries that are nothing without the others. So take note of the land that lies before you, the waters that lie behind you. Document the roads and rivers that connect the landscape of your flesh. Become your own cartographer by notation: a Darwinian observer. If you imagine the earth from the moon—from Mars—from another solar system—you'll know exactly what I mean. Then and only then will the geologists/archeologists/lovers safely record/uncover/navigate your lands. After all, this is simply the story of a girl and her map: one body drawn inside the watery world of centuries.

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