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The frontier of the known world: The allegory of America and the images of Artemis, XVI and early XVII centuries

In a context of great development in the cartographic production the allegorical images of the continents were common in atlas frontispieces, decorated maps, and tapestries during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The tradition to depict Africa, America, Asia and Europe as women is related to the crescent interest in Greek mythology and the elements selected to be part of the representations ensured that the public would be able to recognize and interpret the image.

According to the myth Artemis is the goddess of the moon, the hunting, and the frontiers to mention just some of her attributes. As a huntress using bow and arrows Artemis can be compared to America who is usually portrayed as a warrior using the same instruments. Another similarity is the association both women have with the frontiers. In Artemis' case the frontiers are between the civilized world and the wilderness, between childhood and adulthood. America is located along the frontiers of the known world that also permeates the wilderness and civilization.

This paper's aim is to identify the approximations and distances between the representations of Artemis and America as well as to raise hypotheses concerning the imagery references that influenced the European imaginary of the New World. To support this argument, I chose two paintings from the sixteenth century whose theme is Artemis. Diana the Huntress by an anonymous artist of the School of Fontainebleau, c. 1550-1560, and The Death of Actaeon by Titian Vecelli, c. 1559–1575. I will compare them to the allegory of America of Abraham Ortelius' frontispiece of the atlas *Theatrum orbis Terrarum* [Theater of the World], 1570, Johannes Vrients's world map *Orbis Terrae Compendiosa Descriptio Ex peritissimorum totius orbis Gaegraphorum operibus desumta*. Antverpiae, apud Joannem Baptistam Vrient [The Whole World described from expertly compiled sources. Antwept, at the workshop of Joan Baptiste Vrient], 1596, and the emblem America from Cesare Ripa's second edition of the *Iconologia*, 1602.

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Image Detail, Frontispiece and title page, Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, 1570, Courtesy, Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, <https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:q524n383g.x>

