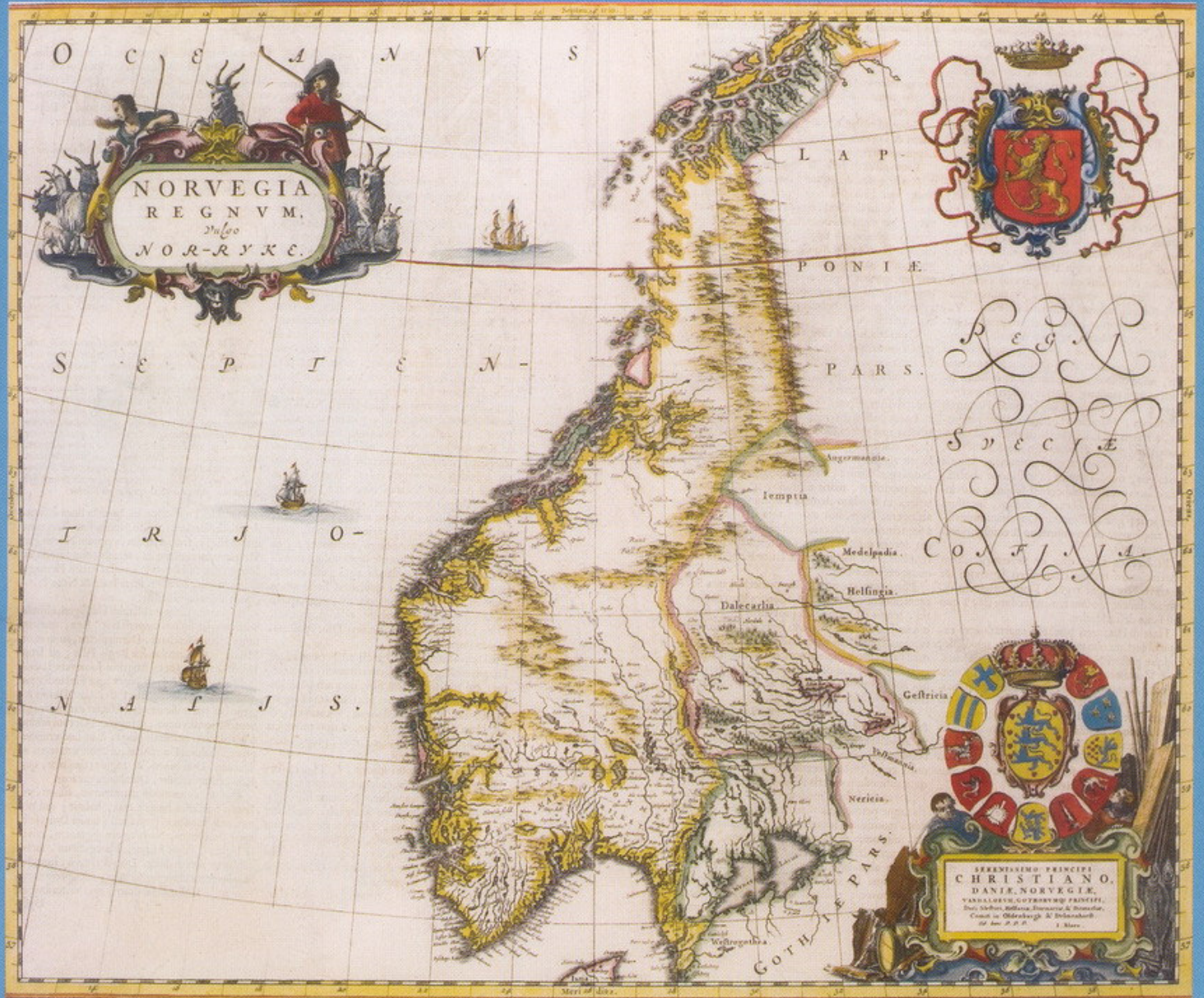


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FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE EARLY MAPS

THE GAME OF GOOSE

and its influence on cartographical race games

by Adrian Seville

Everyone in this country is familiar with the game of *Snakes and Ladders* – a simple race game, played with dice, and using tokens that move along a track towards the winning space. In continental Europe, however, people are more familiar with the *Jeu de l'Oie* (*Game of the Goose*, *Gioco dell'Oca* etc). This game has a long and distinguished history. It has its roots in the Italy of Francesco de' Medici (1574–87) but diffused into France, Spain, Germany and the Low Countries, reaching England in 1597, where it was popular for the next two centuries. The game is played on a spiral track, traditionally of 63 spaces, using double dice. The 'good' spaces, where the player advances, are traditionally marked with a goose. There are also hazard spaces, such as a *prison*, where one waits to be released by another, or *death*, which requires the player to begin again. The numerological structure and the symbolic meaning of the hazards show that this game was conceived as a game of human life, with Cabalistic significance. Nevertheless, it is a game of pure chance and of no skill: fast and furious, and well adapted to gambling.

It is therefore remarkable that the Game of Goose has spawned hundreds of educational games

as variants, in addition to literally thousands of other variants intended for less-worthy purposes such as advertising, propaganda and entertainment. The process of development began in mid-17th century France, when Mariette published a *Jeu Chronologique* (Paris 1638), intended to assist the teaching of history to the *cadet* class in the colleges established for the education of young noblemen. Other publishers followed, and other aspects of the curriculum, as well as aspects of the education of young noblewomen, were covered too: Heraldry, the Art of War, the Art of Conversation etc. – and, indeed, Geography. Most of the geographical games were cartographic; and it is these games that form the subject of this article.

These cartographic games, often classed within 'Cartographical Curiosities' [Hill, 1978], are numerous, though many are no doubt lost because of the ephemeral nature of games printed on paper. Thus, to the end of the 19th century, Whitehouse [1951] gives 30 published in England, while D'Allemagne [1950] lists 19 French games. There are also examples from other European countries. It is not possible to give an exhaustive treatment within the scope of a short article. Instead, some examples of the main sub-genres

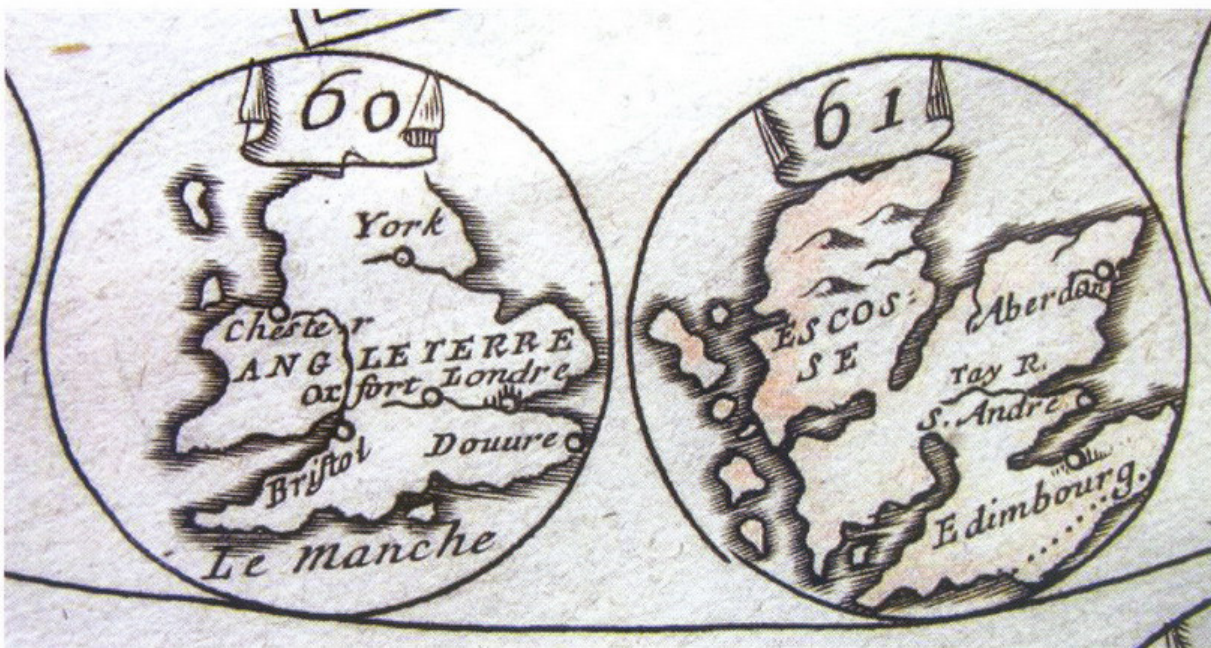


Fig. 1
This charming map of England and Scotland is a detail from Duval's *Le Jeu des Princes de L'Europe* (Paris, 1662)

will be given, chosen to illustrate perceptions of England.

The most obvious way of constructing a map game is for play to occur on the surface of the map itself, whether along an explicit track or along an implicit track, shown for example by numbering various points successively. Many cartographic games are indeed of this form but, interestingly, these do not include the earliest. These are the games based on the *Jeu de l'Oie* and invented in France by Pierre Duval (1619-1683), well known for his educational maps. One of the distinguished school of French geographers initiated by Nicolas Sanson, he was appointed Géographe du Roi in 1650. His first game was *Le Jeu du Monde*. Published by Mariette in Paris in 1645, it had a spiral track made up of 63 circles, each being a small map of a different country of the world; the final winning circle represented France. There followed two other map games by Duval on a similar plan. First, Etienne Vouillemont published

Le Jeu de France in 1659, in which each circular space was a small map of a province of France. Then, in 1662, Nicolas Berey published Duval's *Le Jeu des Princes de L'Europe*. In this game, each of the 63 circular spaces of the spiral track is a small map of a region or country of Europe, with France as the winning space. A map of Europe in the centre serves as a key. Duval was astute to make his games topical and relevant. Thus, in his 1662 game, the player who lands on 'Holande', space 6, must 'Embark at Flushing for Dover, N^o. 60 England, to assist in the marriage ceremonies of the King of Great Britain to the Princess of Portugal' (author's translation). This, of course, refers to the imminent marriage of King Charles II to Matilda. The game features a special rule, which clearly indicates that Duval sees this as an educational game:

'Who would take profit in Geography concerning Europe should take care to say the

Fig. 2
The earliest known English cartographical race game, *A Journey through Europe* by John Jefferys (London, 1759).



names of the places when he arrives and to read the names of the principal towns'.

This approach also influences the cartography of the maps themselves: they are selective as to detail, concentrating on the key features of each territory (Fig. 1).

By contrast, the first known English cartographic race game is one that sets out an explicit track to be followed on the map itself: *A Journey through Europe, or the Play of Geography* invented by John Jefferys and published by Carington Bowles (London, 1759). (Fig. 2) The rules begin:

'The Journey through Europe is to be played in all respects the same as the Game of Goose. Whoever begins to spin the Totum first must place his man on the very number that turns up...'

The 'totum' (later known as the Teetotum) is a top-like spinner, used because in this period the

use of dice was frowned upon, as associated with gambling and cheating. Jefferys' game is not of 63 spaces, suggesting that the numerological significance was lost on him. Nevertheless, the game has considerable structural similarity to the traditional *Jeu de l'Oie*. The chief characteristic of that game is the doubling forward of the throw when a goose space is encountered. In Jefferys' game, the equivalent spaces are '...any number where a King lives', and the player who lands on such a number has the privilege of reckoning his spin twice over. Unlike in the Duval game, there is no reference to stakes or payments. Indeed, the benefit to the winner is not monetary:

'He who rests on N^o.77 at London wins the play, shall have the honour of kissing the King of Great Britain's hand and shall be knighted and shall receive the compliments of all the company in regard to his new dignity'.

Instructions for other numbers impose delays and send the player off to appropriate destinations.

Fig. 3
Wallis's Tour
Through England
and Wales by John
Wallis (London,
1794). Note the
complicated instructions
for playing the
game on either side
of the map.



Figs. 4a & 4b
(opposite page)

Europe
Delineated by John Betts (London, not later than 1827) clearly showing all the borders and divisions of the countries in Europe in the early 19th century. The detail definitely has a moral tone, which could apply to today's calls for frugality.

Many of these refer to aspects of commerce of the period. For example, he who lands on N^o 23 Frankfurt must stay one turn to buy Printer's Black to send to England [Printer's Black, also known as Frankfort Black, was an ink made chiefly from burnt wine lees, and was in demand for ink-washing prints because of its good transparency]. There are also references to the Hanoverian connection:

'He who rests at 28 at Hanover shall by order of the King of Great Britain who is Elector be conducted to N^o 54 at Gibraltar to visit his countrymen who keep garrison there'

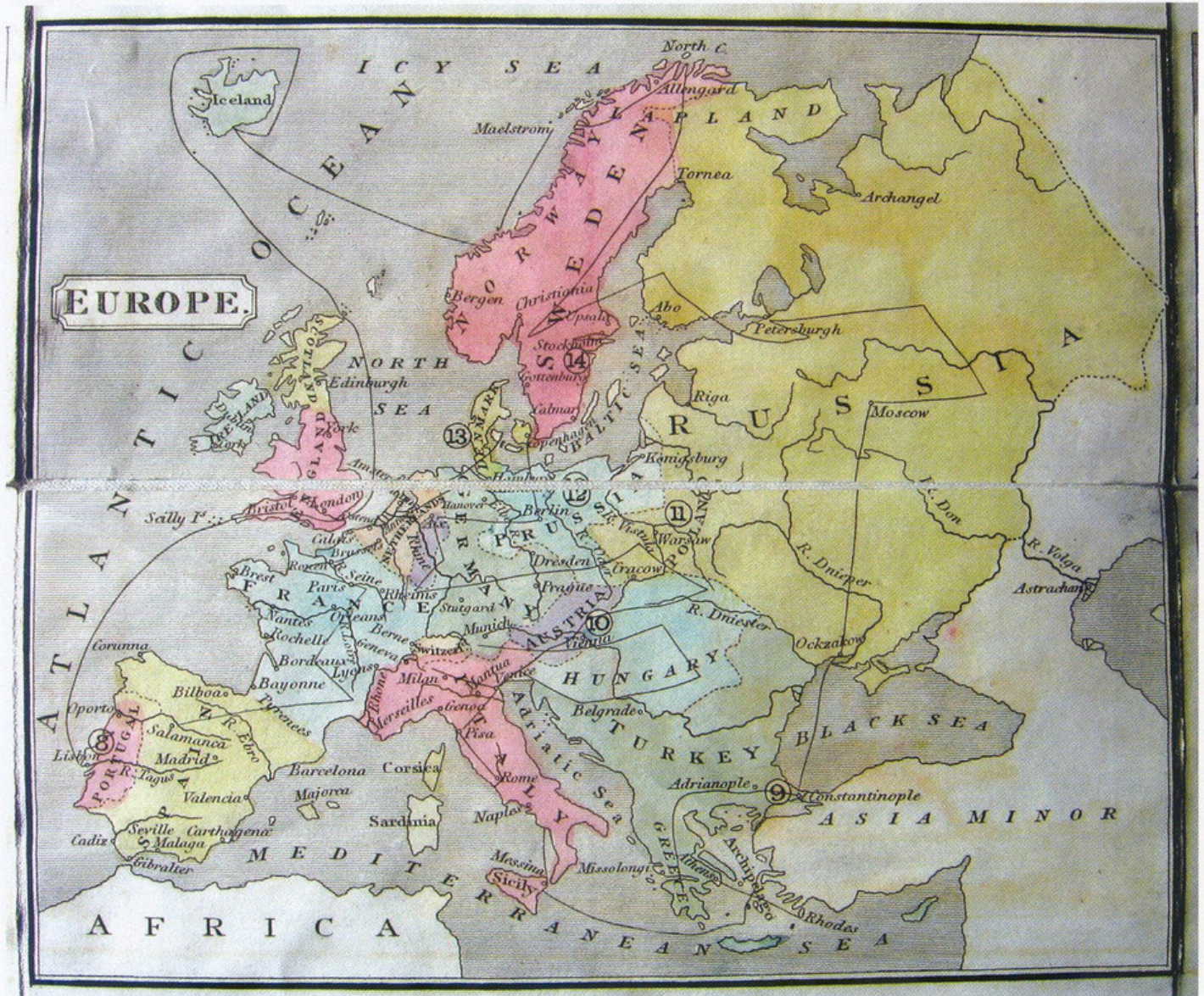
while the Protestant hatred of the Pope is all too evident:

'He who rests at N^o 48 at Rome for kissing the Pope's Toe shall be banished for his folly to

N^o. 4 in the cold island of Iceland and miss three turns'.

The various instructions succeed in making the characteristics of the places visited quite vivid but have no resonance with the original *Jeu de l'Oie*.

Jefferys' game was to have few imitators for a decade or so, but by the end of the century, games using a map were published by several of the major London map publishers: Thomas Jefferys (no relation to John Jefferys), Robert Sayer, John Wallis and Bowles & Carver. Several of these publishers, and others, produced games based on the world map and the map of Europe, as well as games based on national maps. This was part of a general proliferation of engraved race games in the England of the 18th and early 19th centuries, covering educational games of many kinds as well as games of amusement, including the *Game of Goose* itself.



ENGLAND



Harvest home. This is a cheerful sight indeed! The last load is going home and the reapers are no doubt thinking of the hearty supper which the farmer gives them on this occasion. It is to be hoped that they will not abuse his kindness by taking more than will do them good.

Fig. 4b.

Typical of these map-based games is Wallis's *Tour of England and Wales* (Fig. 3) (John Wallis, London, 1794). The tour, shown by the sequence of numbered towns connected by a thin line, begins at Rochester and finishes at number 117, London. The chief interest is in the description of towns:

'32 Marlborough: The traveller must stay here one turn, to dine at one of the finest Inns in the Kingdom

49 Hereford: An ancient decayed place with a large Cathedral in danger of speedy ruin'

By this stage, the English games had little to do with the original *Jeu de l'Oie* in their format or playing rules.

A further sub-genre of map-based games consists of those where the map is supplemented by a series of vignettes of places or territories, the map serving as a key to their location. The game of *Europe Delineated* (John Betts, London, no date but with a publisher's label of 1827) has a central map of Europe (Fig. 4a) surrounded by 14 vignettes of the countries to be visited. That of England (Fig 4b) depicts 'Harvest Home' and takes the opportunity to point a moral message, that the happy reapers should not abuse the farmer's kindness by over-indulging themselves at supper. Moral messages were a frequent feature of 19th century games produced with children in mind.

Some of the maps used in these games are of interest as maps in themselves. For example, in Edward Wallis's *Picturesque Round Game of the Produce and Manufactures of the Counties of England*

and Wales (London c.1830) (Fig.5) the conventional map has been replaced by pictorial representations of each of the counties, keeping within their correct outline. This game was produced by the then relatively new technique of lithography, with additional hand colouring.

Finally, it should be mentioned that not all map-games are played on unicursal tracks. An example is William Spooner's *The Travellers: or, a Tour through Europe* (London 1842) (Fig. 6). This is a coloured map of Europe, with vignettes of many of the places. The game is played on the intersections of lines of latitude and longitude. Movement is determined by the spin of a four-sided tectotum bearing the compass letters N E S W, giving the direction in which the marker is to be moved, to the next intersection. Each player has a different starting point and is required to journey to a specified capital city. Like the *Jeu de l'Oie*, it is a game of pure chance, with no skill and no choice of moves. However, unlike that game,

it is a two dimensional random walk, rather than a progress along a single track.

In the 20th century, lithographed map-based games become widespread, being used for advertising and propaganda as well as for education and amusement. A particular genre includes the many games promoting tourism in Switzerland and elsewhere. An account of these developments is given in a paper by the present author [Seville 2008].

This brief survey may whet the appetite for a more comprehensive study. Many of the games described can be viewed on the Giochi dell'Oca web site <http://www.giochidelloca.it> set up by Dr Luigi Ciompi in collaboration with the present author. The site also contains several papers on the history of Goose, including one by the present author sketching the development of the many variants against the background of strong continuity and popularity of the game in its traditional form. [Seville 1999].

Fig. 5
A detail of Cornwall from *Picturesque Round Game of the Produce and Manufactures of the Counties of England and Wales* by Edward Wallis (London, c.1830). Note the graphic images of the tin mining industry



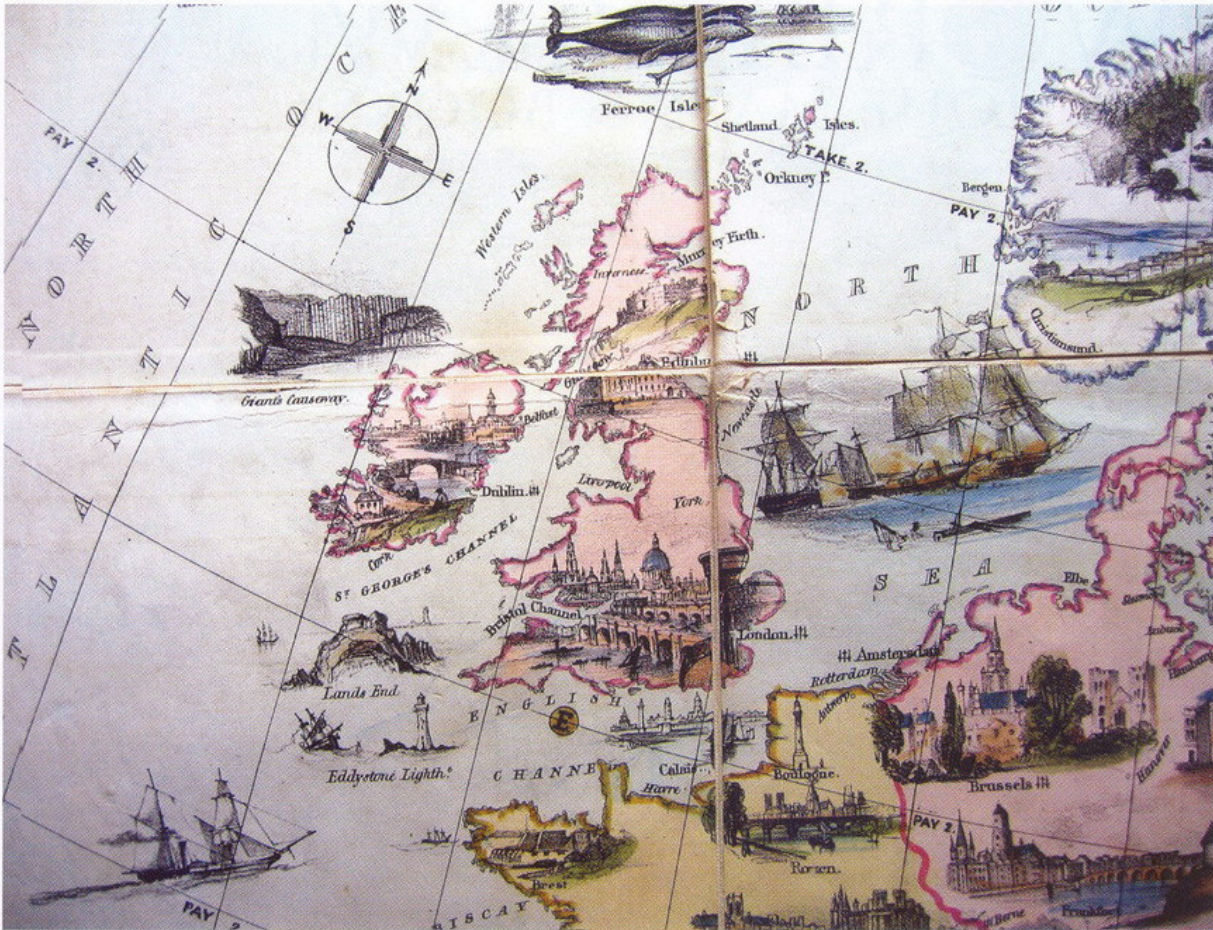


Fig. 6
This wonderful detail is from *The Travellers: or, a Tour through Europe* by William Spooner (London, 1842). Note the Giant's Causeway and the shipwreck just off Lands End. The whaling industry was obviously in full swing off the Shetland Isles.

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studied Physics at Trinity Hall Cambridge, moving on to a PhD at the University of Edinburgh before joining the academic staff of City University. Adrian lives in Chislehurst, Kent, where he is looked after by his four Burmese cats.

Adrian Seville describing the Game of Goose at the recent Board Game Studies colloquium in Lisbon.

The author is a board games historian and collector who specialises in research on the Game of Goose and its many variants throughout Europe. He has a particular interest in cartographic games and is a member of BIMCC. He assisted the Department for Culture Media and Sport as an independent advisor regarding the export of the King George III cabinet of dissected maps, subsequently purchased by the Art Fund.

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