Expanding the Genre of Maps with the Creation of Cultural Maps

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ABSTRACT

Previously, maps have been used for practical applications like denoting geography and cultural or commercial sites of interest. New, cultural maps, conversely, explore what is not typically mapped and do not readily serve the same functions traditional maps do. Cultural maps instead attempt to display the specificity of the ideologies of individual cultures by displaying the scope and complexity of different narratives at work inside communities. Using previous research on maps, genre, visual rhetoric, and mapping as visual representation of cultural conventions, this paper will describe how cultural mapping has expanded the genre of maps by exhibiting secondary narratives about a community. These maps do this by using the pre-existing arbitrary and subjective nature of maps. Cultural maps also extend the rhetoric of narration by grounding the text in a specific location and the culture surrounding it. I will also be analyzing cultural maps such as those created by Rebecca Solnit in *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas,* Denis Wood in *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas,* and contributors to *Laramie: A Gem City Atlas* (a creative atlas of Laramie, Wyoming) in order to demonstrate some of the key changes and implications of creating cultural maps for genre studies, the public, and communities as a whole.

Key terms: Maps, cartography, culture, social, rhetoric, genre, communication, and narration (rhetoric)

INTRODUCTION

In the Spring of 2011, writer Rebecca Solnit was invited to lead a workshop for the University of Wyoming as the MFA Program in Creative Writing's Eminent Writer in Residence. The class focused around Solnit's newest book, *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas*

(2011), in which Solnit reimagines San Francisco through a collection of 22 creative maps. The atlas includes such maps as "Monarchs and Queens: Butterfly Habitats and Queer Public Spaces" which details butterfly habitats and queer-friendly public havens, and "Cinema City" which describes filming locations for Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* juxtaposed against San Francisco's theaters, both ones that are currently operating and ones that have closed down. Solnit herself admits these are impractical maps; however, she isn't creating an atlas as a tool to be used, but as a way to describe some of the complexities of a city that traditional maps leave out. Solnit argues that there are an infinite number of ways to describe a territory and her atlas is meant to be a small selection of personal interpretations of her hometown.

Solnit helped direct the class to create an atlas of Laramie, Wyoming, and I was fortunate enough to be a part of the project as well. The project sparked my interest in looking at maps in a completely different light. Solnit was producing unusual maps that didn't just display information but commented on social, historical, and personal issues. At the same time I was taken aback I wondered what had prevented us from using maps like this before. Solnit's workshop influenced my research into cultural mapping. These are maps that embrace the arbitrary nature of all maps and confront the viewer with new subjects. The subjects may be impractical, personal, or imaginary; the maps may include new elements or different formats that discard conventions like grids, scales, or landmarks; and they have a new purpose, not to be a tool to describe geography but a *narrative* for viewers to learn about the people of the community.

Maps are a synecdoche referring to the grand narrative of a community. We use maps, particularly cultural maps as narrative fragments that are connected with a community's larger, dominant narrative. The information provided on maps acts as an allusion to the culture so that

simply by looking at a map, the viewer recalls the larger story about an environment according to our cultural experiences. In literature, this might involve referring to a single event (ex: Eve biting an apple) to recall the entire story (ex: the fall of man as Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden, etc.). Likewise, when we see a map of New York City, it may make us think of tall buildings, bustling streets, and large groups of people. In fact, when we use phrase "reading a map," our language shows our underlying acceptance of maps as a narrative.

Maps bring the public's attention to the rhetoric that goes into cartography and how it reproduces already present ideologies and expounds new ideologies. Cultural mapping, in particular, allows the focus of cartography to be on its narrative quality rather than geography. Cultural mapping displays and subverts the worldviews of entire communities by exploiting our expectations for the genre of map-making through its unconventional subjects and format.

BACKGROUND

THE MAP: Perception vs. Reality

We have a glamorized view of maps as the ultimate authority on the depiction of landscape. Maps are supposed to be scientific, objective descriptions of the earth's surface and use a variety of rhetorical devices in order to maintain that guise of legitimacy. There are grids, symbols, and numbers indicating the correct orientation and scale of the map as if to convince us that this is a precise documentation of the world. Our most common experience with maps is probably online street maps depicting the urban landscape that we use to navigate a city. We've grown accustomed to using maps as a tool, and have learned that they reliably depict our environment. However, we should be more critical of the real nature of maps as documents that depict a simplified, arbitrary, subjective world through visual rhetoric. I will consider the

interplay between how we think maps are used, how they actually function, and how this is changed by cultural mapping.

Maps simplify the world. In their article "Ideology and the Map: Toward a Postmodern Visual Design Practice" Barton & Barton (1993) argue that maps often represent an optimistic version of reality that reduces the world into our cultural accomplishments. In their words, "The map must isolate key iconic features to symbolize the city…A cursory survey of such maps reveals a focus on icons representing culture, recreation, civic, and commercial sites" (55). The places that are mapped, therefore, are places that authority figures deem important. Viewers then see the special site, perhaps a historical building, and learn that this site is important. Denis Wood (2010) expands on this idea of maps as a positive world by claiming that traditional maps always depict the world as we want it to be. City maps don't depict homeless shelters, slums, or potholes, they focus on community spaces, like parks, or proudly display how metropolitan a town is through its street system. The beauty of maps is that they reduce the complexities of the world to focus unrelentingly on a just a few, positive relationships. Despite this reduction we also don't see the intimate or personal in maps. Absent are the independent used-books stores or the best places to read outside during the summer. We see a landscape of lines and symbols that have, we believe, squeezed out only the essence of our environment and we accept those symbols as reality. In truth, these maps seek to become a purer version of reality to a community because of their simplicity.

Just look at the materials that the city of Laramie provides tourists as a way of creating a story for the city. The simple street map (*See Appendix A, Figure 1*) names major streets, highways, and bodies of water as we would expect. The buildings that the city chooses to highlight are the Wyoming Territorial Prison & Old West Park, the Albany County Fairgrounds,

the Ivinson Memorial Hospital, the City of Laramie Recreation Center, and all of the buildings that are part of the University of Wyoming (although they are unlabeled). Besides the yellow interstate and its colored marker, the only colors are the bright blue bodies of water and a cheerful green indicating the parks and the cemetery in Laramie. This map provides a quaint and generic overview of Laramie featuring some historical buildings, recreational centers, and a noncommittal reference to the city's biggest draw: the university. The city officials have effectively represented Laramie as an average, small town in America, despite the fact Laramie—or any city for that matter—is unique. In other words, this simple street map of narrates a story of Laramie as an idyllic rural town by emphasizing positive places like parks and historical sites.

When looking at a single city map this closely it's easier for us to realize that this map is intentionally designed by a person with biases. For example, I wonder why the city doesn't include the American Heritage Center, the University of Wyoming Art Museum, the Laramie Plains Civic Center, or even the Laramie Visitor's Center, public spaces that I believe tourists would be interested in. Or why have they chosen to include the cemetery and to make it the same color as parks in Laramie? Does it imply that Laramie is a wholesome town that honors its deceased? These questions make it apparent that there was someone who was constructing Laramie with their own ideas of what is important about the town. They choose how to simplify a community and therefore wield the power to direct how viewers perceive it.

Although cultural maps still simplify, they also introduce new conversations about a location. For instance, since cultural maps reflect their cartographers' personal interests they are more likely to bring private subjects into the public sphere because these cartographers don't rely on those in power to make decisions about what is worthy of being mapped. For example, one of

Solnit's maps, "400 Years and 500 Evictions," documents key locations in the lives of four San Francisco centenarians. It's a map that serves no practical purpose for anyone and only carries personal significance to very few, but still we are attracted to the intimate glimpse into the lives of these people. Such maps reveal a changing desire among mapmakers and viewers to bring maps into the everyday rather than the bureaucratic. Communities have already seen what authority figures want us to know and think about our territory, and now we crave the secondary, untold narrative that cultural maps offer.

Because people create maps, they are inherently arbitrary. All the elements cartographers place on maps are subject to their whims and personal tastes. Certainly, they may repeat certain icons and symbols, but standardization does not mean something is more scientific or factual. From a visual rhetoric point of view, our culture has merely accepted blue lines to symbolize rivers when those lines could just as easily be green lines. Cartographers make us believe they are representing a scaled-down version of our world, but maps are simplified and can't accurately depict reality. Cartographers decide what to include and exclude from a map according to their predilections: what streets, mountains, bodies of water, and buildings to display.

Wood (1993) discusses how even satellite images of Earth are constructed to confirm our expectations of what the world should look like. Take the map created by Tom Van Sant and Lloyd Van Warren based on a satellite photo of the Earth as an example (*See Appendix A, Figure 2*). The map seems like an authoritative depiction of the world with its photographic details of the Earth's surface. Even the map's title, "Earth from Space," asserts that this is not *a map of* Earth, rather *is* Earth. We want to think that this is finally the perfect map, one that displays Earth with photographic accuracy without using symbols and shapes. Unfortunately, this is just

an illusion. Van Sant removed the all of the clouds from the original photo pixel by pixel, enlarged some of the rivers to make them more visible, removed large man-made structures, and altered the colors of the land and water to match our expectations for the temperate regions to be a lush green, the mountains to be an icy white, and the oceans to be a rich blue (p. 92). Besides these design changes, the map is unavoidably distorted since it is depicting the three-dimensional world two-dimensionally. Maps are creatively constructed documents meant to confirm or generate our perceptions of the world.

Another convention we've set up for maps is that they must be functional. We believe maps display the information we want to know, tell us how to navigate through an area, familiarize us with our surrounding, or offer us insight into relationships within a community. However, functionality is defined by a culture and is subject to change. For instance, in the past authorities believed that maps should describe landscape in relation to sacred spaces. Beatus maps from the 10th century depict the medieval worldview in the context of the *Commentary on the Apocalypse of Saint John* (*See Appendix A, Figures 3.1 and 3.2)* (Wood, 1993). These maps only show four continents, are oriented towards the east (where people believed paradise was located), and note religious landmarks. Beatus maps are meant to portray visions from Christian history, not geography. We would not consider such a map useful today, but to fulfill the spiritual needs of its original audience these map are very functional. What we believe is significant is malleable according to the pulls of our social values. We take the standardization of most world maps for granted. Modern conventions insist that North should be at the top of a map, the equator horizontally centered, and, if we live in the West, that the Atlantic Ocean should be in the vertical center. Yet maps didn't start using these conventions until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Wood, 1993). We find "McArthur's Universal Corrective Map," which

is created to be the Earth from Australia's perspective, comical because it's "upside down" (*see Appendix A, Figure 4*). However, such maps, though still rare, are more common in the southern hemisphere. Our society believes that important things should be displayed on the top (or first) so it's only natural that territories like Australia would want promote their community by orienting their map towards the south in order to put themselves at the top (Barton & Barton, 1993; Wood, 1993). This reflects maps' ability to influence a community's self-understanding: McArthur's recognizes the hierarchy within maps and altered the world map to privilege Australia and improve the community's self-worth.

Our interpretation of maps is subjective. As I mentioned earlier, we trust maps because we believe they portray reality nearly perfectly. This trust makes maps powerful. Like text or graphs, maps can skew information according to our intentions.

In Amy Propen's article, "Visual Communication and the Map: How Maps as Visual Objects Convey Meaning in Specific Context," she describes communicative qualities of maps as persuasive documents which confirm the subjective nature of maps (2007). She describes a court case that centers around a dispute over which of two maps represents an environment more accurately. In this court case, the two opposing parties altered the same map in order to prove their points. The Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC) accused the Navy and National Marine Fisheries Service (Navy/NMFS) of using its Low Frequency Active sonars (LFA) in a larger part of the North Pacific Ocean than it is permitted to. The Navy produced a map that minimized and obscured information about the size of the area where it used its sonar in order to argue its case (*see Appendix A, Figure 5*) and the NRDC manipulated the same map to emphasized the large size of the affected area (*see Appendix A, Figure 6)*.

The Navy's map uses multiple colors to distinguish between the different provinces of the ocean, but contains no legend to indicate what the colors mean. We don't know if any of the colors indicate areas where the Navy used its sonar. Based on our previous experience with maps and graphs, we might be tempted to group the similar colors and guess that one might represent the affected area. In fact, since the Navy claims that it is only using its sonar in a limited part of the ocean, a viewer might assume that the smallest areas that share the same color are the ones that are affected. The slide obscures information by not mentioning LFA use.

Compare this to the NRDC's map that emphasizes the area that is affected by LFA. This map has a clear message as evident in its title, "Authorized Deployment of LFA: 2002-2003" and a much more persuasive use of color. The prominent dark grey (originally red on the colored version) is labeled as "LFA-affected Ocean." The color choice makes it clear that the size of the affected area, which includes the two largest provinces, is quite substantial compared to the unaffected areas of the ocean. The color red also holds visual cues for "danger" in Western societies so that even without text the NRDC's audience would be alarmed by the large mass of red on the map. Additionally, the NRDC includes the size of each of the provinces in million square miles in the legend in order to provide clear numerical figures to compensate for the distortion of the original NMFS map.

Both of these maps portray the same region yet have dramatically different effects on their viewers. The maps are composed like persuasive essays. Ostensibly, maps are not the objective, passive documents we want them to be. Maps are documents designed by their cartographers to send a certain message about the area they're mapping.

Maps rely on visual rhetoric to be understood. Visual rhetoric describes the study of how graphic elements are used to communicate. Maps are a perfect example of visual rhetoric

because we use maps (a graphic document) in order to communicate information about an area. When we see a map, we consider it as a visual representation of an environment; nevertheless, we are merely reading the map through visual rhetoric. Coming from a highly visually stimulating culture of that floods us with images, symbols, and icons, we in the United States are all visually literate and can interpret a map so well that we forget that how much social knowledge visuals require in order to communicate. Maps use a combination of icons and symbols to convey information and our visual literacy help us instantly read the information maps are telling us (Propen, 2007). Icons are graphics that are meant to resemble the element they are depicting and symbols are culturally accepted graphics that we understand to represent an object. For example, an icon for a house might be a graphic of a square with a triangle on top to show the walls and roof of a house, as opposed to symbolic representation of a house like a circle indicating the location of each home. Maps are just lines and shapes, but we are able to read into these elements as signifiers for physical objects in our environment.

In fact, Barton & Barton (1993) chose to use maps for their argument about visuals as representations of culture because of their unique use of visual rhetoric. Unlike images used for advertising, the viewers don't recognize the biased nature of maps and so maps are a perfect visual representation of ideology:

> For to do its work, ideology depends on its dissimulative nature not being recognized. In this sense, advertising is not ideological, for the interpretive tradition is not on its side in its claims of innocence…What form *is* quintessentially ideological in this sense? What form, in other words, is traditionally viewed as realistically presenting a "neutral" view of reality, as innocent of productive, meaning-creative practice?...the map. (Barton & Barton, 1993, p. 50-51).

In other words, we perceive maps' use of visual rhetoric as natural rather than constructed (p. 53). Barton & Barton use the comical example from Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* where Huck claims that Indiana is pink because he saw it colored that way on a map. However we

come across similar situations in our lives where we have used an out-of-date map: "The map says it's right here! It's *supposed* to be *right here*!" These examples showcase instances where we believe that maps are a perfect reflection of reality.

Other studies in visual rhetoric tell us that simply by displaying multiple images, people will automatically find or make connections in and among the images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Cultural cartographers seem to understand that if they map something viewers will feel a compulsion to find meaning in the elements the cartographer chose to depict. Maps exploit our compulsion to find a story among objects in order to build narrative. For instance, Kathryn Flagg, one of the writers involved with *Laramie: A Gem City Atlas,* mapped abandoned missile silos and areas that have been affected by beetle kill (*see Appendix A, Figure 7)*. While normally we might not pair such data together, when displayed together on a map we can't resist the urge to find a story that connects the two areas. Viewers might not connect the relationship between the data according to the Flagg's intention, as warnings of destruction, but they might find a similar narrative of danger, fear, or helplessness from the warring imagery. One of the worst and best things about visual rhetoric is that there can be myriad interpretations because we all read images differently based on our personal and social experiences. Flagg can only attempt to direct the narrative by drawing from visuals with shared cultural connotations. For example, the map scatters the color red (which has associations of danger in our culture) in infectious-looking splotches across the map. The red is also radiating dramatically from the central beetle. Additionally, the vignette emerging from the center is a somber black and white and uses war imagery such as its fighter airplanes, soldiers carrying guns, and a determined patriot waving the American flag. The silos themselves are the menacing shape of missiles with sharp points. Even

without the title, "Cold War, Warm Planet" the imagery of this map leads viewers towards Flagg's ominous message, if not always directly.

In one sense, cultural maps go back to a time before the construction of a map by a creator was repressed (Barton & Barton, 1993). In the past, a map paid homage to its creator and the process of making the map: there might be an illustration of the cartographer in the cartouche or perhaps sailing ships in the border to reference the journey that was needed to create a map (Barton & Barton, 1993). But between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the cartographer was increasingly removed from his creation. Likewise, cultural maps remind viewers that a map is a product created by a real person, but cultural maps are not just a resurgence of previous conventions. We do not use cultural maps as tools; we see them as artifacts of a particular culture's ideologies.

MAP MAKING AS A GENRE

In the previous section I discussed the different elements and conventions used in maps and how, together, they actually reveal maps as constructed and subjective texts whose meaning is culturally derived. These maps not only tap into our visual literacy, but they also embed themselves into the narrative of an environment (or a community). Cultural maps go beyond physical descriptions of a location; they focus on the intimate subjects particular to a location. A collection of cultural maps has the potential to provide more accurate descriptions the complexities of an environment than possible before.

The following section will explore how the genre of map making, specifically the creation of cultural maps, is used to as a medium through which a secondary narrative about a

community is told. Cultural mapping has expanded the genre of cartography by shifting the function of maps towards a creative and persuasive text and by finally dispersing the authority of who can map and what can be mapped to the genre users.

Modern genre theory is shaped greatly by the work of Carolyn Miller and her essay "Genre as Social Action" (1984). Miller pushes for a definition of genre as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" as opposed to old theories limiting genre to a classification system (159). Miller explains that a genre expresses itself through repeated situations, which she calls "rhetorical situations" or "recurrent situations." These rhetorical situations form because we recognize a pattern of similar events that elicit similar responses. This pattern of responses becomes typified rhetorical action.

Amy Devitt (2004) describes the importance of recurring social action and argues that the relationship between rhetorical situations and genre is reciprocal: situations create genre, but genres can also create situations. An example that Devitt uses of this relationship is of the creation of a grocery list, originally described by David R. Russell:

> So the situation of needing food led to using the genre of the grocery list, which is defined by and takes particular shapes as it is constructed by the situations. Simultaneously, the act of choosing the genre of the grocery list constructed the situation—writing and posting for the rest of the household a grocery list created for them the roles of grocery shoppers, created an expectation that they would gather food at a regular interval, and structured what they would buy and how they would proceed through the store. In addition, using the grocery list created a recurring action and situation where one had not necessarily existed. (24)

Miller (1984) reminds readers that this perception of recurrence is subjective because events never literally reoccur; we only construct the similarities—what Miller calls a "social construct." Using Devitt's example, each time Russell goes to the grocery store will be different: He may be wearing different clothes, going during a different time of the week, accompanied by a different

member of his family, and have a different list of items he needs. Our recognition of recurring situations constructs these genres, which in turn leads us to use these genres.

These rhetorical situations are also affected by culture and other genres (Devitt, 2004). The culture a person participates in can determine how and if genres are formed. For instance, the use of a grocery list speaks to a culture that buys its food rather than grows or hunts for it. Furthermore, our culture itself creates a context of all the other genres in the world. Devitt claims that "genres are always already existing" (28) because of the relationship between genres, what they are and what they are not.

Wood (1993) argues that our environment is experienced as a set of patterns that form rhetorical situations. These patterns have spatial characters that can be mapped. Maps have the potential to depict and shape past, present, and future social interactions we recognize in our environment just as the presence of a grocery list may influence our shopping habits. For instance, Barton & Barton (1993) describe the power of the London Underground Diagram (LUD) to encourage people to use the public transportation by comparing an old LUD map and a recent one (*see Appendix A, Figure 8.1 for 1926 LUD[1] and Figure 8.2 for the current LUD[2] for the maps I will be using*). The 1926 map is designed to show the geographic locations of the stations, whereas the current LUD is inspired by the diagrammatic design of Harry Beck and "sacrifices geographic accuracy in the interests of both readability and consonance with experience." Ultimately this design creates a more usable map for travelers compared to the congested, although more geographically precise 1926 version (Barton & Barton, 1993, p. 65). Because of the simplistic design of the current map, more people might brave the London

[1] Barton & Barton (1993) cite this as a 1924 map of the LUD, but the Transport for London cites this as the 1926 map.
[2] Barton & Barton (1993) use the 1986 version of the tub map in their article. This version is almost the same as the current version I am using in regards to using the same diagrammatic design.

underground than might have with the old map because it makes them believe using the London Underground will be easy. They trust the map as an accurate representation of the system even though "the diagrammatic structure of the underground map is clear, articulate, and legible—all the things that London as a city is not" (p.68). In other words, the presence of the map reflects the recurring situation of traversing The Underground, while at the same time it induces people to use the underground because the route appears established and effortless.

On the other hand, the genre of mapping can be more abstract. Traditional maps repeatedly depict a certain, dominant narrative dictated by those in authority. This is an elite narrative depicting the success of a community. Cultural maps, on the other hand, consistently counter this elite narrative by producing maps that depict the ordinary, often producing a negative depiction of the environment. For instance, cartographer Denis Wood created a map called "Police Calls" which depicts the frequency of police calls in different parts of his hometown. Illustrating this mundane information takes the glamor away from a community as described on traditional maps. Instead of a narrative of a perfect city, cultural maps provide and opportunity to show how an area is ordinary, and thus imperfect.

Another precept of genres is that they are defined by the people who use them and bring meaning to the events (Miller, 1984). The power to create genres is in the hands of the public rather than the critics because genres depend on community acceptance in order to exist. For instance, when the Impressionists first started producing paintings, they considered their work art, but the culture resisted accepting their dramatically different paintings into the cultural definition of art. Eventually, the community expanded its definition of art and Impressionist paintings are now completely accepted as a form of art. Granted, critics might sway the public,

but it is up to the community's collective understanding of a rhetorical situation as a genre that makes the final decision.

By accepting that the public creates genres, we can study genres as a window into how people behave and make decisions (Devitt, 2004). We can push this one step further, by saying that our use of genres is a manifestation of our ideology (Barton & Barton, 1993). According to Althusser (1968) ideologies have material existence in the world. They are not lofty, intangible ideas but values that have a presence through our actions. A person may claim or even believe he is religious and upholds his faith's values, but he proves what his ideologies really are by performing actions like praying or going to church. By analyzing the elements we include in maps and our use of maps, we reveal our ideologies.

Maps are the material existence of a community's ideologies. They confirm the boundaries of our community, legitimize the governing body of that territory, and tell us what is important to our environment and what is not. Looking at old maps of the British Empire, we see clear examples of how a governing body creates a dialogue about the superiority of their community (*see Appendix A, Figure 9)*. First of all, the map boasts the power of the empire to viewers by only differentiating between what is and isn't a British colony (the colonies are highlighted in orange). It creates the idea that there is an Us and an Other for the British citizens at that time period. Second, the framing illustrations project diverse cultures interacting harmoniously in order to reinforce obedience throughout the artificial community their colonization has created. There are also images of nationalism and authority to depict the righteousness of the British to rule over all its colonies, like the female figures at the top of the map proclaiming "freedom," "fraternity," and "federation." The Empire uses these maps to promote community and to help form an elevated self-value for their readers (or intimidate

viewers who have yet to be colonized), but most of all the maps depict the Empire's belief in its power and right to rule.

By expanding the genre away from maps as tools that convey information, we can move instead towards maps as a reflection and creation of self-generated ideologies centered around specific territories and describe the motives of cultural mapping. Some of the maps being created for the *Laramie: A Gem City Atlas* include locations of ghosts, influences of Asia, locations of stray animals, and the public spaces that feature taxidermied animals. These maps, as Ira Glass put it, "are completely unnecessary. The world didn't ask for them. They aid no navigation or civic-minded purpose" (6). He is referring to the cultural maps produced by Denis Wood, but his statement is applicable to most, if not all cultural maps as well. These maps *are* completely impractical, *but only under our traditional understanding of a map.*

Cultural maps ask to be read for their resistance to the dominant narrative, for the alternative story they tell about a community, not to be used for practical applications. They emphasize the persuasive nature of maps to confront viewers by flaunting the subjective and arbitrary. These maps even allude to their author's personal interests. Cultural cartographers welcome anything to be mapped by anyone, not just the landmarks cities deem most important by trained cartographers. At the same time, cultural maps work by maintaining a delicate balance between previous map conventions and original innovations to mapmaking. Karen Lefevre describes the necessity of naturalizing inventions in order to integrate them into society (1987). Completely new inventions must be made comfortable for people by surrounding them with familiar elements. For instance, since cultural maps expand the genre of map making, some cultural maps still reference established traditional conventions in order for the public to recognize them as maps. Tasha LeClair, one member of *Laramie: A Gem City Atlas,* created a

map of ghosts and cottonwoods in Laramie (*see Appendix A, Figure 10).* The subject of this map in unconventional, but visually, we immediately recognize it as a map. It bears the familiar markings of streets, highways, and rivers. There is a framed colophon indicating the title and we know the dots signify places. Even though the map depicts Laramie at night (as indicated by the dark background) these recognizable signs lend authority to the map despite the changes. By naturalizing this new kind of cultural map by referring to old conventions, viewers can quickly overcome their surprise and begin analyzing the map's narrative. Denis Wood's "Pools of Light" on the other hand, maps the patterns streetlights make on the ground of Boylan Heights without using any previous map-making conventions (*see Appendix A, Figure 11).* Wood's map also depicts a location at night, but there is no sense of scale, environment, landscape, or traditional symbols in his map. As a result, some viewers may have trouble considering "Pools of Light" a map at all. So, in order for changes that cultural mapping brings to be accepted into the genre of traditional maps, we must recognize it as having the recurring qualities that traditional maps have, *if* cultural mappists want their creations to be understood as maps.

Despite the fact that maps have always been manifestations of the social values, the decisions about what those values are have not been generated by the users of the genre. Cultural map-making finally introduces the public into the process of creating maps that reflects personal and community-driven merit rather than the contrived worth administered by those with cartographic skills or with power. Cultural mapping more overtly gives regular citizens the opportunity to confirm, subvert, or ignore the dominant narrative as they see fit in their maps. While viewers still have the opportunity the reject the narrative cultural maps present, the mere presence of an alternative depiction of their community gives the secondary narrative an opportunity to be recognized.

ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL MAPS

With a better understanding of how both traditional and cultural maps function, its possible analyze a few of the most famous modern cultural maps (and mappists) to see explore the potential of the cultural mapping genre. First, I will evaluate the maps of Rebecca Solnit, who first influenced my research on cultural mapping, then the maps created by cartographer Denis Wood, who I discovered through my research, and finally analyze the map I created for *Laramie: A Gem City Atlas* from a creator's point of view.

Even though Solnit recognizes the fact that everything (or nearly everything) can be mapped and has experimented with new subjects to map, she veers away from implementing all the artistic freedoms that map design offers. Solnit still implements maps as a way to describe a landscape using mostly conventional formatting (street views, use of symbolic markers like dots, northward orientation, etc.). For instance, the maps in *Infinite City* visually meet our expectations of what we think maps look like: there are streets, waterways, points indicating specific locations, and labels all displayed with precision. The visual additions are the most surprising element to these maps, but that's what they are: additions. There is a visual disparity between the rigid structure of the map and the illustrative qualities of some of the artwork. For example, take "Tribes of Francisco" where the figures are more placed on top, rather than integrated into the map (*see Appendix A, Figure 12*). There seems to be a struggle in Solnit's map to veer completely away from the conventions of mapping.

Solnit is also hesitant to rely on the map as an autonomous document. Instead of using her maps as a synecdoche, she feels compelled to supplement the narrative of the map with

lengthy essays in order to explain her maps. She doesn't allow the viewer either to have their own interpretation of the map or for there to be multiple interpretations.

In 2010, Denis Wood published his atlas of Boylan Heights, North Carolina titled *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas*. This atlas contains a collection of over thirty maps, some hand drawn, on a wide variety of subjects that invite viewers to see Boylan Heights a real and specific place. Wood, I argue, started the movement towards cultural mapping as described in my essay. Wood believes in atlases as a narrative because they force an order onto maps that readers can't help but derive meaning from: "Any order will give rise to a narrative reading which will—it's the nature of reading—be imputed to the subject" (Wood, 1993, p. 10). Like Wood, I believe in the possibility of narratives within maps—which Wood likes to call "the poetics of cartography." This idea captures Wood's hope that maps can resonate with the kind of emotions poetry elicits, an idea inspired by a poem that was so powerful that he was moved to tears the first time he read it (Kenneth Patchen's "The Orange Bears"). Wood believes the emotional impact of poetry derives from its specificity, a poem's ability to make the reader believe that its subject is real and unique. Cultural maps can accomplish this same level of specificity that can make a community more realistic. Clearly there is a connection between maps as more than visuals or information, we are describing maps bearing the same communicative weight as literature.

We can see that Wood fully accepts maps as a narrative tool because he uses maps as a medium of discourse by playing with their forms, rather than just an *additive image*[3]. The stories of Boylan Heights Wood's maps tell are the focus of the book rather than the brief textual descriptions he provides. Wood's subjects are also extremely self-derived and deal with such

[3] A combination of text and image where images amplify or elaborate on text or visa versa (McCloud, 1993).

intimate issues about the city that some maps act as a study of the mundane. By documenting the ordinary, Wood achieves the specificity he believes makes an impactful narrative, but it also gives us an example a clear example of how the narrative of the ordinary is used in the genre of cultural mapping. Wood's atlas includes maps ranging from a mailman's route, to the color of the leaves in different areas of the city, to patterns of power lines, to the pumpkins on people's porches during Halloween. Wood doesn't seem concerned with making a dramatic social commentary; instead he is interested in exploring the different facets of his hometown. As Ira Glass states in the introduction to *Everything Sings*, "What [the maps] chart isn't Boylan Heights exactly but Wood's feelings about Boylan Heights, his curiosity about it, his sense of wonder at all the things about the place that are overlooked and unnamed" (2010, p. 6).

Wood overthrows all our expectations of what a map should and can do through his series. For instance, in "Lester's Paper Route in Space & Time," Wood depicts the route of a paperboy through a surreal-looking map using a space-time ribbon over a city map (*see Appendix A, Figure 13)*. Like almost all of Wood's maps, this map combines form and content to create a map where it's difficult (if not impossible) to separate the graphics from the map and derive the same information. Wood's investigation of the form and content of his maps stretch readers' definitions of maps into new directions, to the point where some readers might not even be able call them "maps" at all. Yet, they are spatial representations of Earth, and what else do we expect from a map? In fact, his collection of maps is able to illustrate the complexities of an environment better than traditional maps do so, according to Glass, "Denis Wood's maps are a far more accurate depiction of Boylan Heights than any normal map could ever hope to be" (Glass, 2010, p. 7). Wood shows how cultural maps *may* refer back to conventional cartography,

but also how they can be unabashedly subjective, personal, and emotional works that strip away map-making conventions.

Maps not only mirror and create ideologies, they portray the multiple values that are grounded in a place, and the culture that surrounds a particular community. That community could be Boylan Heights, North Carolina; San Francisco, California; or Laramie, Wyoming; regardless, these cultural maps are in tune to the rhetoric of the communities and react to them specifically. Cultural maps reject the idea that maps are scientific documents elevated above biases like time and cultural values. Instead these maps both intertwine themselves with the privileged narrative of the community and resist it. As Wood (2010) expounds, "Denied by science, resisted by modern art, the narrative reading [of atlases] is inescapable. *Make the most of it!* After all, objectivity does not consist in suppressing an unavoidable subjectivity. It is achieved by acknowledging its intrusion so that the reader is relieved of the necessity of ferreting it out" (p. 11). Cultural maps create an opportunity for scholars to analyze the rhetoric in cartography and thus the conversations that make up a community. Cultural mapping gives us the opportunity to study maps as social narrative and investigate the rhetoric they display about their creators and communities.

Consider the map that I created for the *Laramie: A Gem City Atlas,* "Saloons and Salons," which depicts all the beauty salons and bars in Laramie (*see Appendix A, Figure 14)*. My map is embedded in its location and derives its narrative from the viewer's cultural understanding of Laramie and the narrative it brands itself with. Maps and other promotional items that the Laramie Visitor's Center provides attempt to market Laramie in two ways: as a remnant of the untamed Wild West and as a place that is more nature than man. References to the Old West abound in the marketing materials published by the city: stereotypical slab-serif

typography, sepia photography, and images of a cowboy straddling a bucking horse. Likewise, the pamphlet for the historical tour of downtown Laramie includes such historical events as hangings of outlaws and interactions with famous Western criminals. On the side, advertisements also use full-color photos depicting the outdoors to entice visitors. These images portray mountains, flowers, and wildlife and promote the idea that Laramie is brimming with unexplored, uncorrupted nature. I've provided the page three of Laramie's Visitor's Guide in my appendix because it juxtaposes both messages prominently (*see Appendix A, Figure 15)*.

My map of beauty salons and bars subverts our expectations of Laramie as it is branded and forces the viewer to consider the relationship between the two businesses in Laramie. The map acknowledges and questions the message of Laramie as the Wild West that the authorities have built up. By showing that Laramie has twenty 23 bars (includes bars, pubs, and lounges), but 34 beauty salons (includes hair, nails, and tanning services) my map contrasts the idea of a hearty, rough-and-tumble, beer-drinking, knee-slapping, horse-riding, truck-driving, Western Laramie with Laramie the modern, domesticated, commercial, and vain. It confronts viewers with a comparison in order to tell a different story, Laramie: The Wild and the Fabulous. I used the map as a text that transcends the idea of map as tool because it serves no practical purpose. While twenty-three bars is a hearty number for a city of about 25.5 thousand people, it is clear that this is not the untamed West (US Census Bureau, 2006). Laramie, like most towns, has modernized and adopted the same industries as the rest of the country.

My map also points out that, not only has Laramie urbanized, but it also how the narrative of Laramie as the "manly" West the city attempts to align itself with falls apart in my map. Instead of emphasizing traditionally male stereotypes about the city (cowboys, untamed

nature, and bars) my map feminizes Laramie by representing traditionally female interests: beauty salons, tanning services, and nail polish.

Visually, my map harkens back to conventional maps with its symbols and format so that the contrast between our visual expectations and reality is intensified once we discover the content of the map. For example, the title is designed to play off the Western typography that is prolific in Wyoming's marketing. I also excluded a lot of information from my map like street names, alleys, parks—even the names of the respective businesses (saloons and salons) are left out in order for the landscape to look like a place that's still undeveloped. I don't believe my map needs to display the names of the bars and salons, merely the density and ratio of the two spaces in order to impact the viewers. Even the colors of the map are congruent with the Laramie's narrative: there is no stark white; instead everything is muted earth tones (mostly brown) printed on cream-colored paper. However, I belittled all of this Western rhetoric with the rhinestones I pasted over the location markers (not pictured in the digital version). Again, there is a contrast between something depicted as rugged but having materialistic elements that can't be ignored.

Finally, there is the imagery I used: the juxtaposition of the shot glasses and bottles of nail polish set up across the bottom border like the abandoned glasses at a bar whose graphic quality mimics the irregularity of old woodcut printing. They are designed to look similar. Indeed, I chose to pair the two visuals because of their resemblance to each other. It's another way to ask the viewer to consider the relationship between salons and saloons in Laramie. They are physical manifestations of the combatting narratives of Laramie with the intention of the salons and their message of modernization being the victor. Again, these images bring attention to the feminine in Laramie. These images are not meant to remind the viewers that there are

women in Laramie, but to emphasize that the dominant narrative of Laramie as a male isn't representative of the liberal, college-town that Laramie really is. While the city might only want to represent Laramie historically, my map forces readers to think about one of the many ways that Laramie diverts from the elite narrative.

What is happening within this map? I created which doesn't conform to the old conventions of map making. It is a map is made by someone who is not an authority figure: I am neither in a position of power, nor someone with an intimate knowledge of Laramie since I am native to Nebraska; it is a map that doesn't present the optimistic, dominant narrative of Laramie: my map doesn't highlight the civic or historical locations, rather it shows places of intoxication and vanity; and my map throws off the guise of a factual document: even ignoring the rhinestones and the playful depiction of shot glasses and nail polish, my map lacks a scale so there is no reference to my map as a scaled-down depiction of reality. It's a cultural map, a map that represents a specific narrative about city as part of the larger, grand narrative the city tries to tell audiences about itself. The locations I highlight in my map are not inherently provocative, but because viewers of "Saloons and Salons" can't help but think about Laramie and it's story when they see it, the pairing of the two businesses becomes significant.

CONCLUSION

Rebecca Solnit immersed our class in a new text called cultural mapping. She challenged us to think differently about our city by asking us questions like "What gender is Laramie?" By thinking differently about our city we began questioning how our environment *is* portrayed and how it *could* be portrayed. Solnit helped us realize that maps can do more than just reflect information; our values could talk to us through maps.

Laramie: A Gem City Atlas may be one of the first scholastic responses to cultural mapping. The project required students to develope narratives for Laramie and create our own maps to portray these narratives. I believe it gave us a new perspective on the amount of artistic, interdisciplinary construction that goes into maps and the power maps have to communicate. The atlas will also produce tangible academic and creative response to cultural mapping and using an atlas as a narrative.

Cultural maps are may not be useful as navigational references, but they are a perfect embodiment of a culture's ideology preserved in place, time, and location. Individual maps can function as autonomous vignettes into their creators' worldviews. Cultural maps uniquely elevate subordinate narratives of a community and a collection of these maps has the ability to depict the complexity of a culture much more accurately than current maps allow and can resonate on a more personal level with its readers.

However, the implications of this genre extend beyond academic criticism and theory, into the public realm. Cultural mapping proposes the public participate in the creation of maps of their communities and therefore expand the narratives portrayed about their environment. This engagement allows maps to be specific to locations by showcasing the myriad of values within them. Previously, maps have been left to the so-called experts to guard how a community is portrayed and therefore continue a certain, dominant narrative of an environment. This perpetuates the history and future of a culture (and how it views itself). By allowing the public to create maps of the ordinary narrative, we allow for the representation of a community to be built by multiple narratives.

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Appendix A: Images

FIGURE 1: City of Laramie Street Map. (City of Laramie)

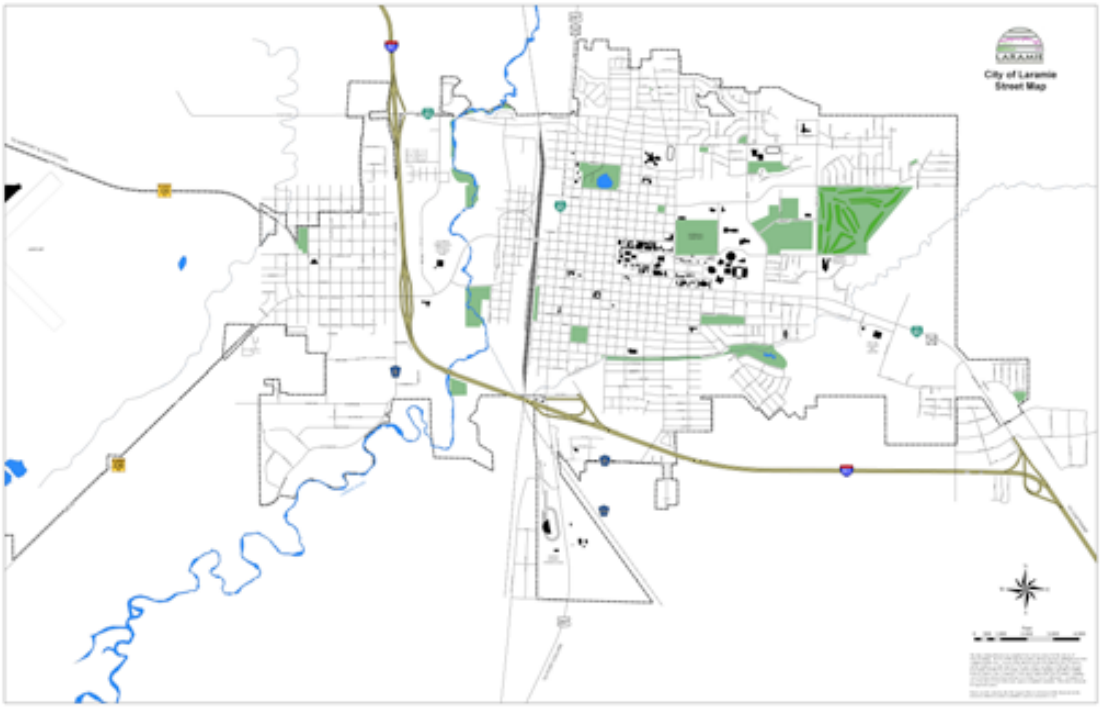


FIGURE 2: "Earth from Space Atlantic Centered" by Tom Van Sant. (Wood, 1993)

Figure 3.1: Beatus map portraying the 10th century Christian world. (Wood, 1993)

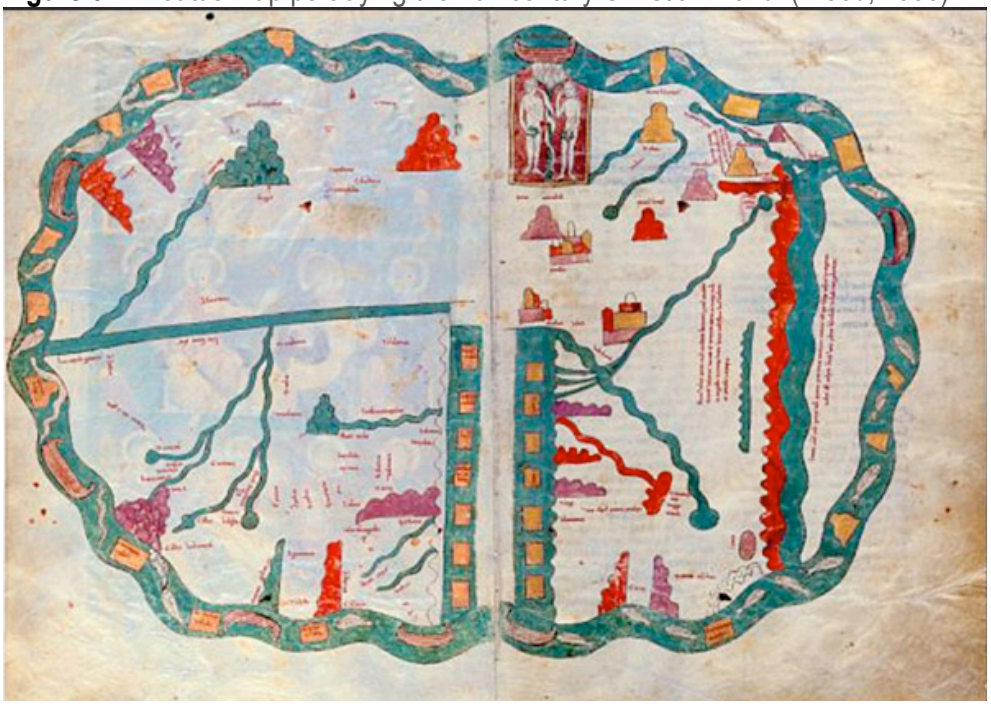


Figure 3.2: Beatus map, modern translation. (Wood, 1993)

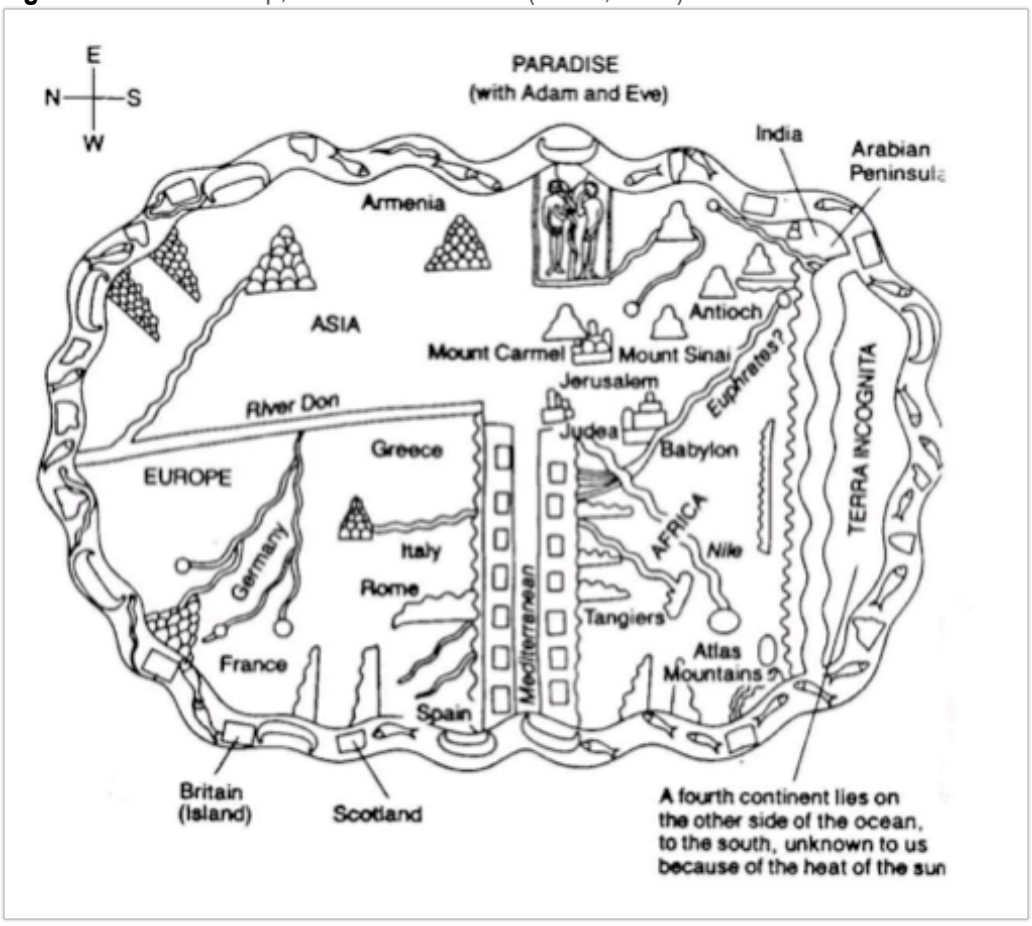


Figure 4: McArthur's Universal Corrective Map of the World. (Wood, 1993)

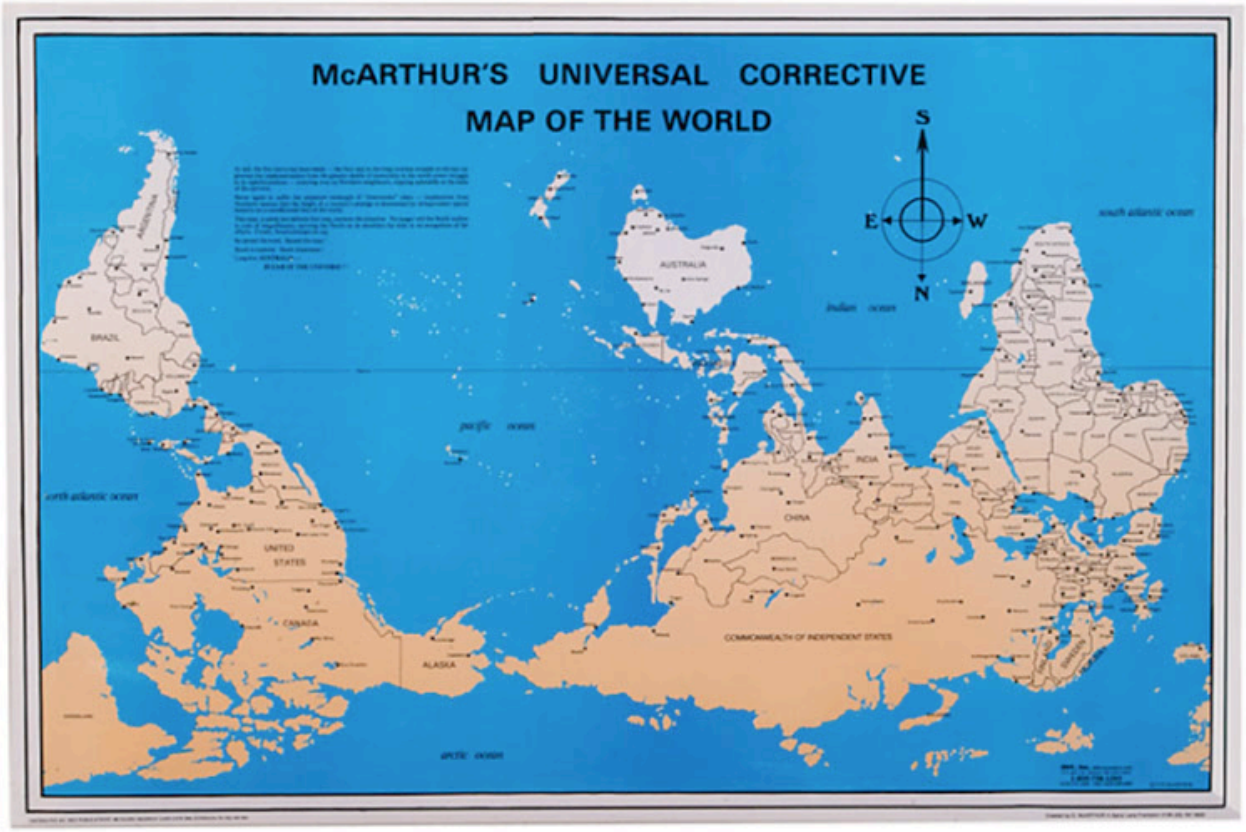


FIGURE 5: Navy and Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) map from their presentation. (Propen)

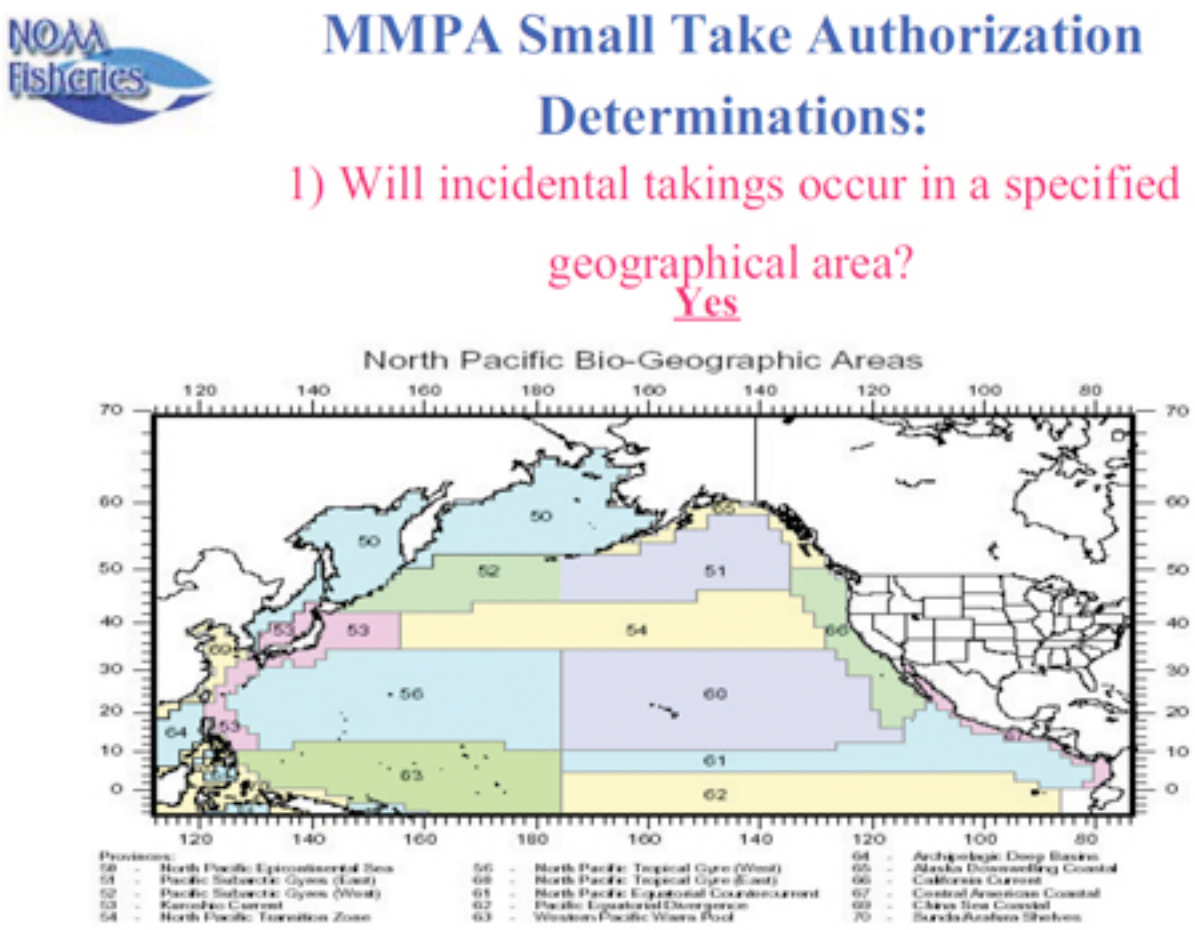
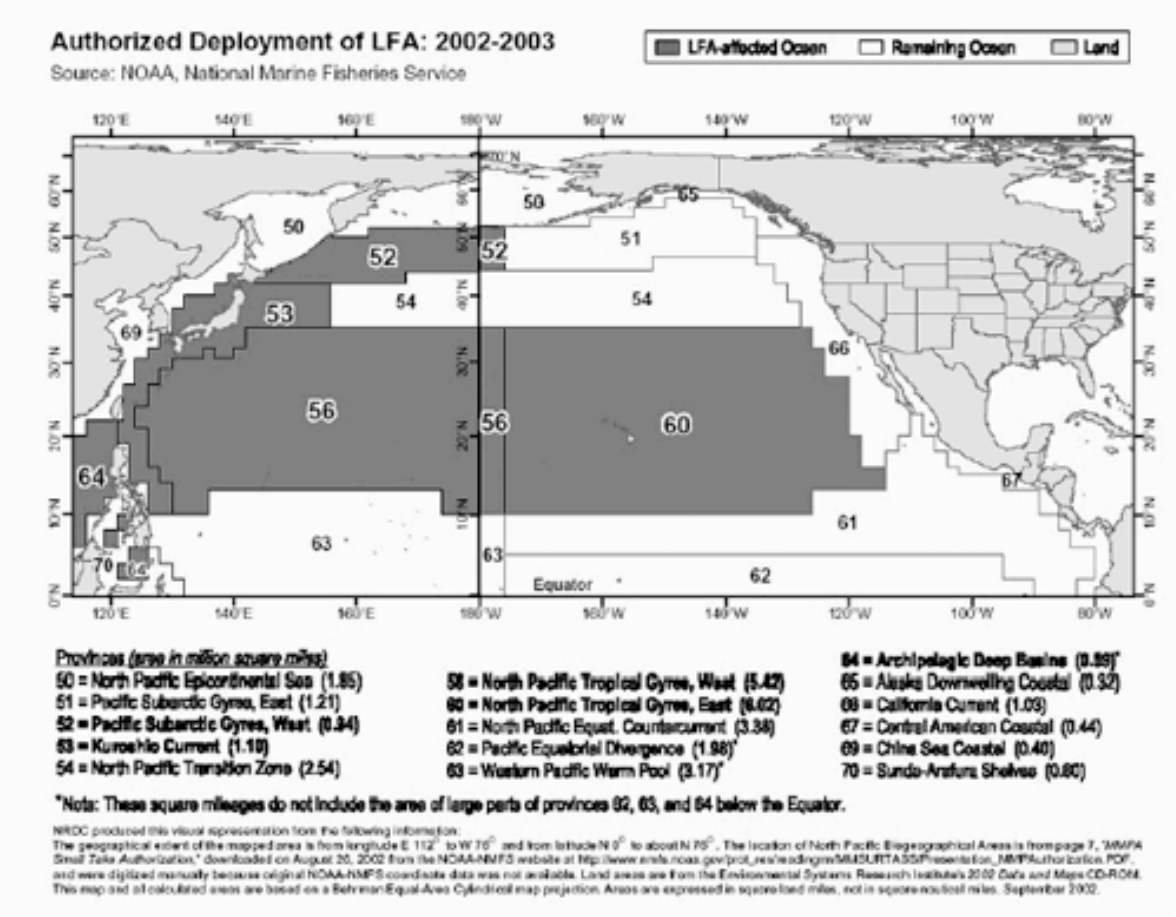


FIGURE 6: Natural Resource Defense Council map in grey scale. (Propen, 2007)



Inset from above:

Provinces (area in million square miles)
50 = North Pacific Epicontinental Sea (1.85)
51 = Pacific Subarctic Gyres, East (1.21)
52 = Pacific Subarctic Gyres, West (0.94)
53 = Kuroshio Current (1.10)
54 = North Pacific Transition Zone (2.54)
56 = North Pacific Tropical Gyres, West (5.42)
60 = North Pacific Tropical Gyres, East (6.02)
61 = North Pacific Equat. Countercurrent (3.38)
62 = Pacific Equatorial Divergence (1.98)*
63 = Western Pacific Warm Pool (3.17)*
64 = Archipelagic Deep Basins (0.99)*
65 = Alaska Downwelling Coastal (0.32)
66 = California Current (1.03)
67 = Central American Coastal (0.44)
69 = China Sea Coastal (0.40)
70 = Sunda-Arafura Shelves (0.80)
*Note: These square mileages do not include the area of large parts of provinces 62, 63, and 64 below the Equator.
NRDC produced this visual representation from the following information:
The geographical extent of the mapped area is from longitude E 112° to W 76° and from latitude N 0° to about N 76°. The location of North Pacific Biogeographical Areas is from page 7, "MMPA Small Take Authorization," downloaded on August 26, 2002 from the NOAA-NMFS website at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/readingrm/MMSURTASS/Presentation_MMPAuthorization.PDF, and were digitized manually because original NOAA-NMFS coordinate data was not available. Land areas are from the Environmental Systems Research Institute's 2002 Data and Maps CD-ROM. This map and all calculated areas are based on a Behrman Equal-Area Cylindrical map projection. Areas are expressed in square land miles, not in square nautical miles. September 2002.

FIGURE 7: "Cold War, Warm Planet" by Kathryn Flagg. (Art by Kelsey Alyse Giroux, cartography by Shizue Seigel).

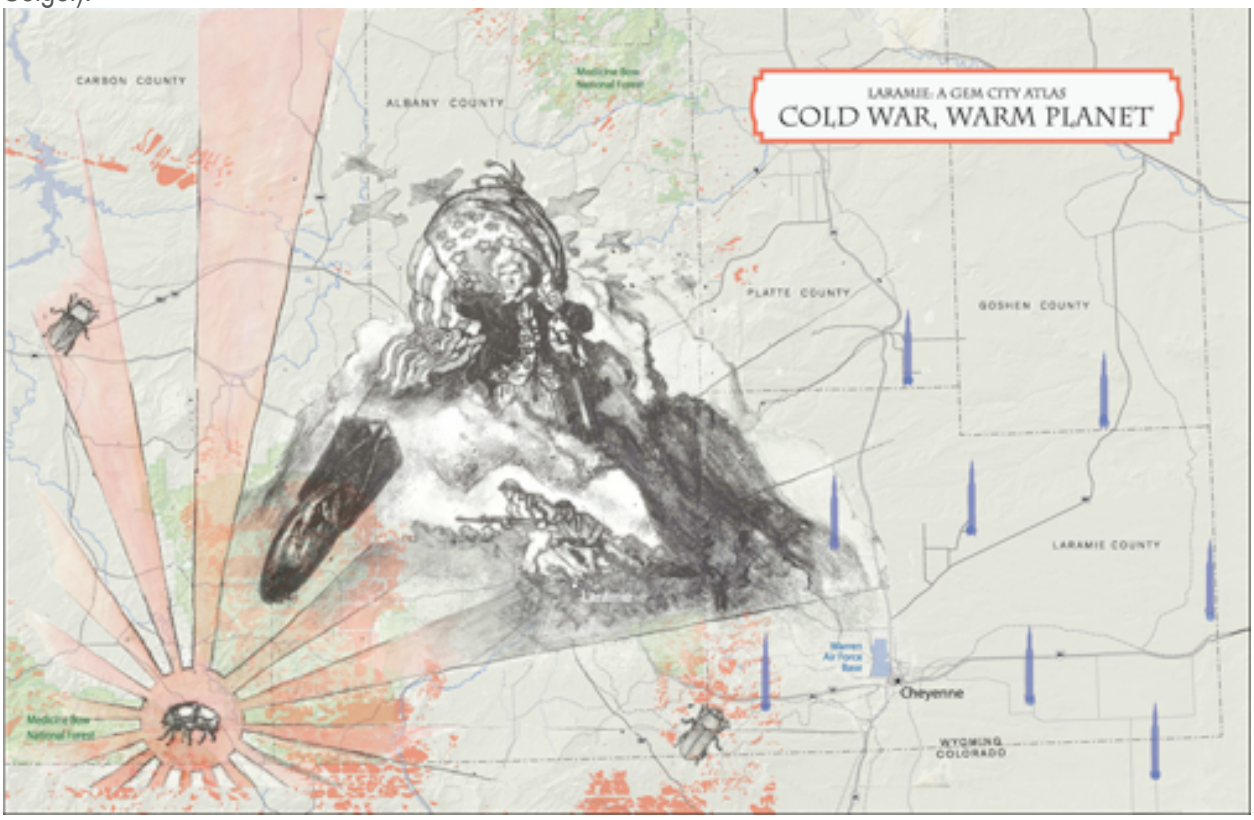


FIGURE 8.1: London Underground Map, 1926. (Transport for London)

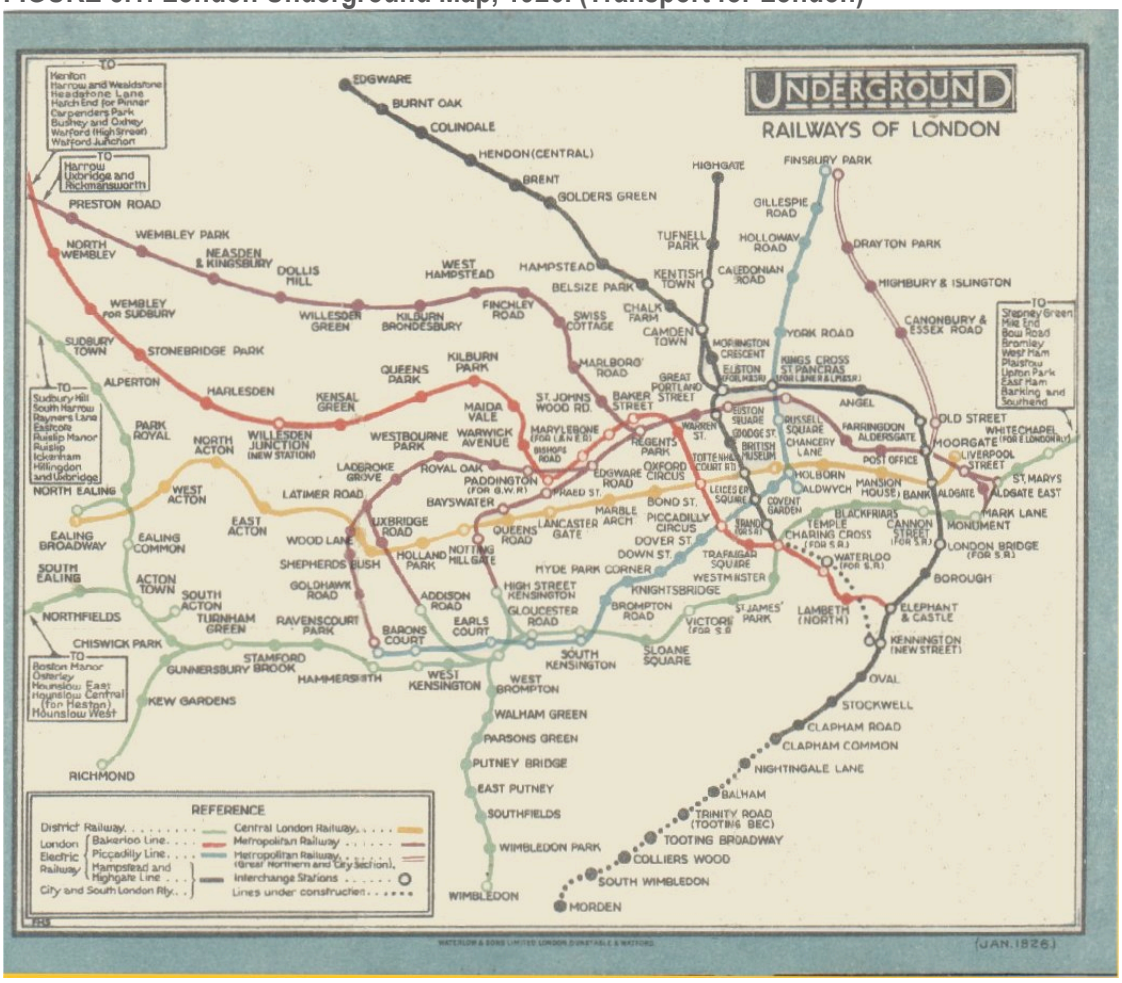


FIGURE 8.2: London Underground Map, 2011. (Transport for London)

FIGURE 9: British Empire, 1886. (Encyclopædia Britannica)

FIGURE 10: "Ghosts and Cottonwoods" by Tasha LeClair.

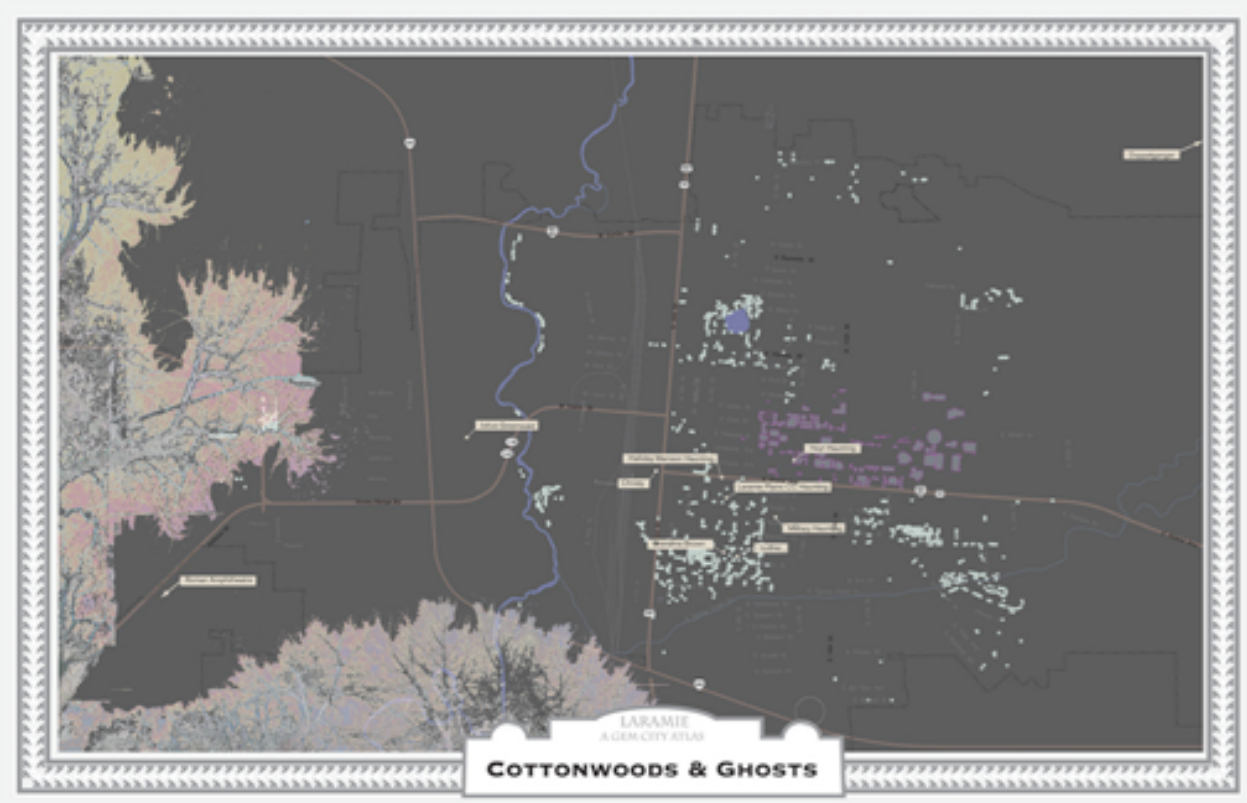


FIGURE 11: "Pools of Light" by Denis Wood. (Wood).

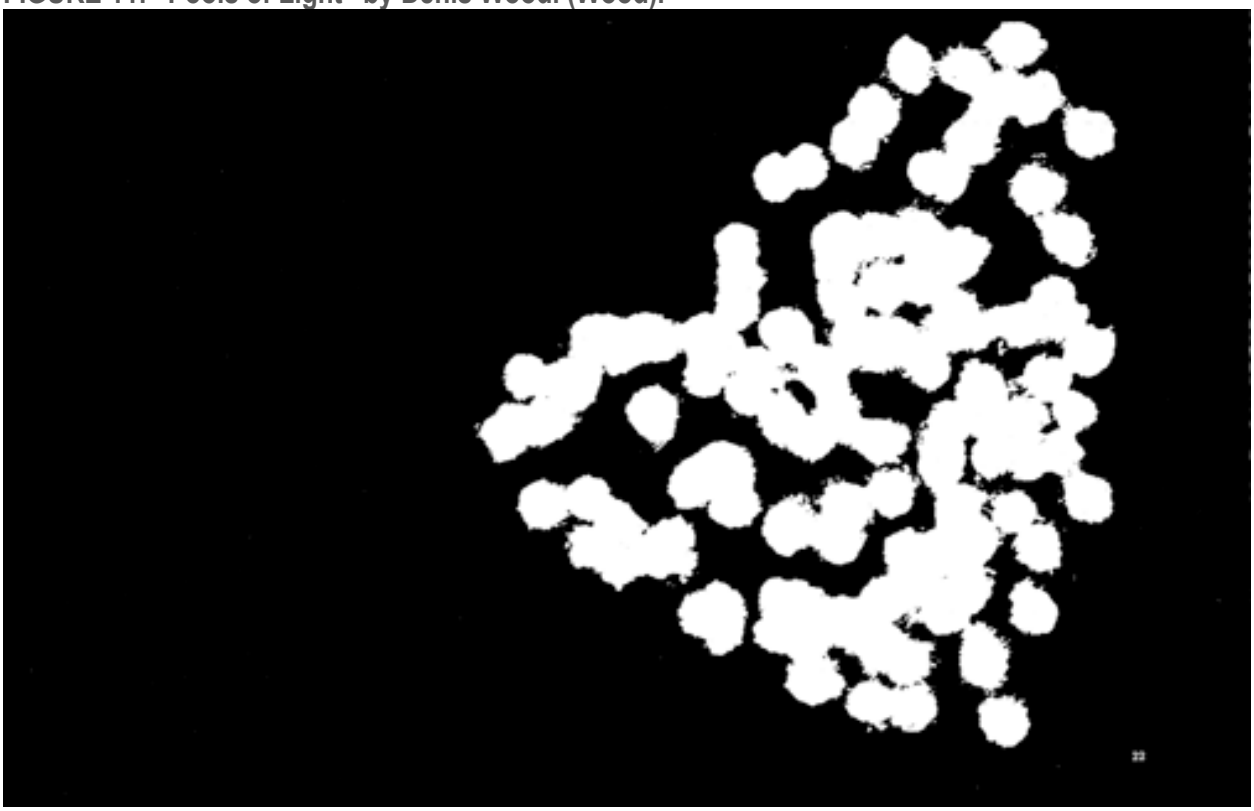


Figure 12: "Tribes of San Francisco." (Solnit, 2011)

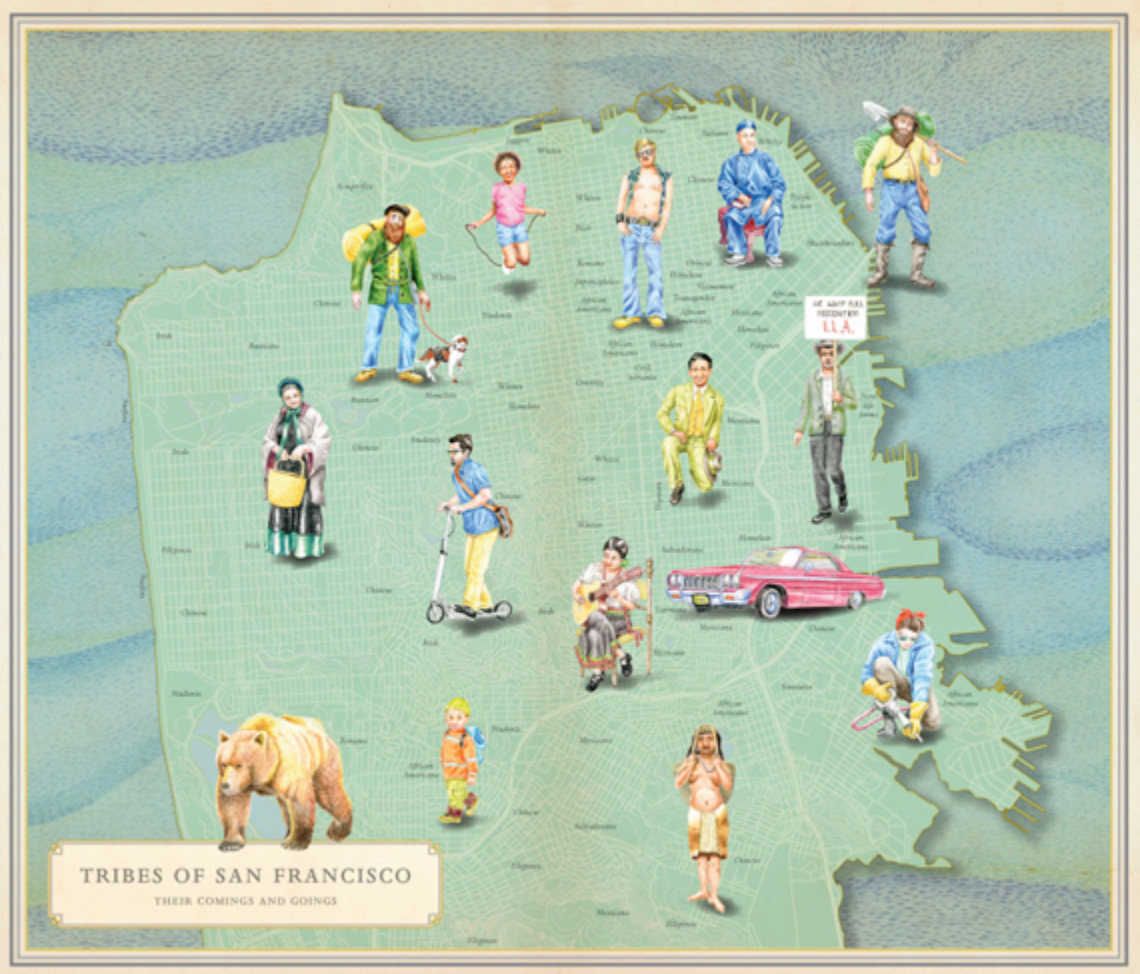


FIGURE 13: "Lester's Paper Route in Space & Time." (Wood, 2010).

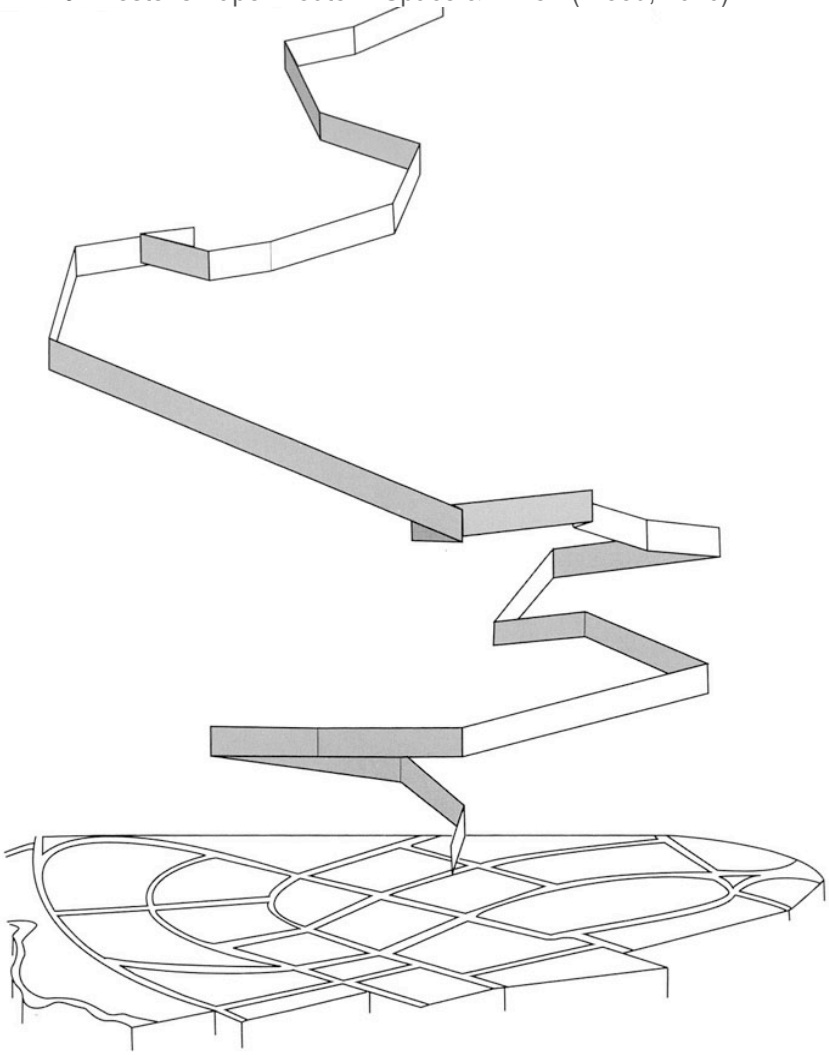


FIGURE 14: "Saloons and Salons" by Jacklynn Pham (cartography by Shizue Seigel). Digital version.

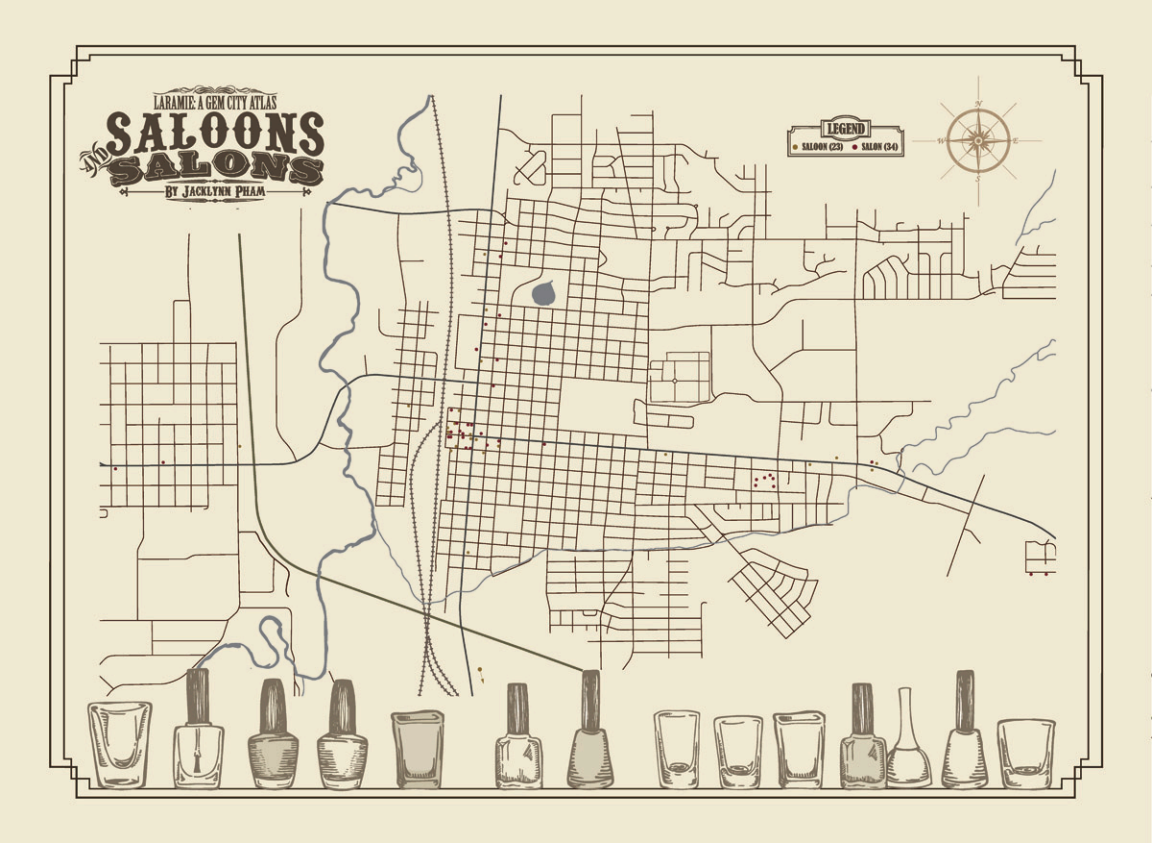


FIGURE 15: Laramie Visitor's Guide, Page 3. (Albany County Tourism Board).