Visualising Spaces: The Illustrated Map as a mode of communicating Fact, Fiction and Feeling.

Abstract

Communicating thoughts, facts and narratives through visual devices such as allegory or symbolism was fundamental to early map making and this remains the case with contemporary illustration. Drawing was employed then as a way of describing historic narratives (fact and folklore) through the convenience of a drawn symbol or character. The map creators were visionaries, depicting known discoveries and anticipating what existed beyond the agreed boundaries. As we now have photographic and virtual reality maps at our disposal, how can illustration develop the language of what a map is and can be? How can we break the rules of map design and yet still communicate the idea of a sense of place with the aim to inform, excite and/or educate the 'traveller'?

As Illustrators we need to question the purpose of creating a 'map': what do we want to communicate and is representational image making the only way to present information of a location? Is creating a more personal interpretation a form of cartouche, reminiscent of elements within the Hereford *Mappa Mundi* and maps of Blaeu, and can this improve/hinder the communicative aspect of the map? Looking at a variety of historical and contemporary illustrated maps and artists (such as Grayson Perry), who track their journeys through drawing, both conventional journeys and emotional, I will aim to prove that the illustrated map is not mere decoration but is a visual language providing an allegorical response to tangible places and personal feelings.

Introduction

An 'illustrated map'. What do you imagine? You are perhaps looking at a large shape of green surrounded by blue or turquoise. The green shape is populated with sporadic text including place names and the occasional image of a building, animal or human. There are maybe references to the country's nature, cuisine and climate. Palm trees or penguins, maybe a happy tourist with a huge suitcase, stepping off a plane. These maps can usually be found in magazines, or in children's atlases; of the latter there have recently been several beautiful produced books (*Maps* by Aleksandra Mizielińska and Daniel Mizieliński, published by Big Picture Press, 2013 being a fine example). These maps are often designed with a positive and inviting atmosphere. The context of their production determines the design, as these maps (if not situated in a book) often accompany an article within a magazine that is describing the country, often listing the 'things to do' for the would-be traveller.

Maps that have an illustrated element such as a drawn character, playful typography or patterns that have been designed to somehow communicate an aspect of a location are varied in both subject and appearance. Placing them into the categories 'Fact', 'Feeling' and 'Fiction' is a useful device that could

be seen as rather rigid separations, whereas in fact these separations often merge into each other depending on the objective of the map creator.

Fact

Within his comprehensive book, *Great Maps*, published by DK Books, Jerry Brotton (2014: p.7) describes what most scholars now broadly agree to be the most useful definition of a map, "a graphic representation that presents a spatial understanding of things, concepts, or even events in the human world." Atlases (produced for children) are an inviting format to present the vastness and diversity of our planet, to a younger mind. An illustration is an opportunity to embellish cultural identities (which can often employ stereotypes, for good or bad) and make an informative image. An aerial photographic map does not necessarily describe anything other than the geographic properties of the country, which is where an illustrated map can be very useful to an art director. The arrangement of happy characters and objects dotted around the page involved in personal narratives is a device employed to obtain this positive atmosphere.

This aesthetic possibly owes much to the artwork of artists such as M. Sasek in his *This is…* series of world guides published by Universe Publishing. His visual language often simplified recognizable buildings and figures, and allowed an abstracted arrangement not always constrained by perspective and scale. Salvatore Rubbino's *A Walk in London*, published by Walker, 2012, includes informative map designs that also apply these design ideas. This approach to the abstraction of reality in terms of scale of individual elements and the intentional editing of the image (to focus on the most important buildings and characters) can be traced back to the earliest maps such as the *Mappa Mundi* in Hereford cathedral and back even further (almost 40,000 years ago) when graphic shapes were first carved into rocks in order for people to understand their place within their environment. (Brotton, 2014: p.7)

Winner of the 2015 Katie Greenaway Award, William Grill, explores the use of the map as a story telling device within his book, *Shackleton's Journey,* published by Flying Eye books (fig. 1). Including a map gives a certain authenticity to this story, as the reader must navigate this vast land just like the expedition. It is perhaps this form of map and usage that we are most familiar. Having a visual representation to refer to helps the reader to empathise with the scale of the undertaking, the dangers encountered and the drama of the landscape. The whole book is fastidious in the level of detail and information, and is presented in an extremely orderly manner, featuring the traditional traits of a usable map, as summarised by Brotton. Grill's use of scale and composition within the more representational page spreads sit alongside the map, giving us the intimate realities on a human level and also a more removed overview of the whole adventure.

Figure 1. *Shackleton's Journey* by William Grill, commissioned by Flying Eye Books.

Saul Steinberg's iconic cover for *The New Yorker* offers something a little different. The intended naivety of *A New Yorker's View of the World* is reminiscent of early world maps that implied the presence of a far off 'foreign'

land, without much knowledge and understanding of the geography or inhabitants. He produced this sarcastic image in 1976, and the simplified appearance of the world outside of Manhattan does perhaps indicate the rather introverted nature of New Yorkers at that time? Here he is being intentionally naïve with the design of the rest of the world, New York, full of details, road names, people, cars, with the rest of the world being reduced to simple featureless shapes. Steinberg's work is an example of how the map and our understanding of the map can be twisted, subverted and experimented with to communicate fact and fiction in order to create an observation or feeling about a certain place and its inhabitants.

Italy looks like a boot (apparently) and New York…well, according to Veit Schuetz, looks like another male body part. The *New York Subway Penis Map* (fig. 2) is a poster by the Berlin-based Illustrator created in 2000 for a Cosmic Art Enterprises art show. Borders have defined countries and cities into various shapes, with some having a direct or indirect resemblance to animals and objects. Perhaps it is something within the human mind to find a character within these shapes.

Figure 2. *New York Subway Penis Map* by Veit Schuetz commissioned by the CAE Gallery New York. Prints available © www.veitschuetz.com.

The shape of the country itself is perhaps as memorable and representative of the nation as the flag. This has been used to great satirical effect by Peter Brooks (*The Times* political cartoonist). He uses maps in the same way as the father of the satirical cartoon James Gillray (1756-1815). A fine example of Gillray's use of maps is *The French Invasion or John Bull (George III) bombarding the Bum Boats* (1793). England and Wales take on a human form that is excreting ships towards the French coast.

In his cover for *Spectator Magazine*, Brooks manages to use the map of Britain as a rather odious character for his piece *A Yob Kicking an Old Lady*. Instantly recognizable to the viewer (a mainly British readership), it gives a sense of place and makes a depressing statement about the inhabitants. Brooks also cites Fred W Rose (1849-1915) as another key influence in his work. His *Serio-Comic War Map for the year 1877*, skilfully captured the fear across Europe and the sabre-rattling of that era. Russia is depicted as a sinister Octopus with tentacles infiltrating neighbouring territories. In 2008, Graeme MacKay, a cartoonist for the *Hamilton Spectator* in Canada parodied Rose's work to depict Vladimir Putin stretching his tentacles across the map of Europe (fig. 3). "By adapting a cartographic cartoon with a pedigree of over a century, MacKay proved the viability and adaptability of the Cartographic Land Octopus, which continues to stretch its tentacles across the globe to this very day." (Jacobs, 2014)

Figure 3. *Russia in 2008* by Graeme MacKay, commissioned by the Hamilton Spectator.

Providing anthropomorphic qualities to a country, taking the borders to be the limits of its body and giving it a personality seems to be a natural process for an illustrator. The desire to tell stories and devising characters to tell the tale, no matter how short that tale may be, sometimes within a single image. Martin Haake's work is a sensitive arrangement of found and drawn shapes, colours

and textures. For a commission illustrating an article about cyber-attacks and their origins within Asia, he was able to take a graphic representation of China and convert it into a rather sinister character (fig. 4). This is an illustrated map, but the map is part of the image rather than the entire context. The lettering in this image is extremely important, as possibly without it the identification of this unusual shape may not be apparent to all and therefore the impact of this editorial image could be compromised. The scale of the 'China' text also helps convey the geographic and political strength of this character, especially when compared to the tiny 'South Korea', identified with much more slender writing. The relationship between image and text within this image and maps in general is as important in conveying meaning, as it is within a picture book.

Figure 4. *Hack Pack* by Martin Haake, 2001, commissioned by E-Volve.

Fiction

Drawing is for some a cathartic act. The process may offer a sort of meditative experience for the artist while the final image and its clarity of communication with the audience may be a secondary consideration. In 2013 images of an incredibly intricate 'map' (fig. 5 and 6) were posted onto social media websites. The artist is alleged to be a Japanese man who is not a professional artist, and the work was produced some thirty years ago and subsequently stored in an attic. It seems that (according to his daughter who discovered the work) that the maze-like map was not produced for display or for the eyes of anyone other than the artist himself. The image (33 x 23 inches) took seven years to complete, a timescale that may be unfathomable to the contemporary illustrator where deadlines can often be hours and days rather than months and years. But this is an illustration of a man's contemplation. When looking at it, the eye seems to naturally follow the nearest path until it becomes obscured by another path that cuts across or it simply disappears under the numerous branches that almost look like veins or pipes within a gigantic organism. Possibly, he is mapping the human brain, his own brain, a myriad of organic wires that to those of us who are not neuroscientists, seems to be as un-navigable as any far off, unknown land may be.

Figure 5. *Untitled* by an anonymous artist.

Figure 6. *Untitled* by an anonymous artist.

Comparisons could be made with the work of Adolf Wölfli (1864-1930), the creator of an imaginary autobiography (estimated to be over 8,000 pages long). Within intricate repeating patterns, he created and visualized his imagined world and his personal journey through a multi-dimensional landscape. His mix of text, image, pattern, idiosyncratic use of musical notes and viewpoint result in many images that resemble maps. He allows us to navigate through a representation of his worldview. The resulting artwork is beguiling not only in its visual qualities and craftsmanship but in the complexity and intensity of the world Wölfli created. The term 'visionary' seems to be appropriate here as his work was admired by his contemporaries such as Jean Dubuffet and André Breton. Wölfli's ability to give a two-dimensional form to his perceived world through the forms of maps, collages and drawings, could be attributed to his schizophrenia.

The work is comparable to the *Jain Cosmological Map (c.1822-1830)*, found in the British library in London. Jainism (which originated in India) divides the 'cosmic space' into separate worlds. The resulting maps are full of esoteric symbols, overlapping pattern, text and wondrous creatures, much like the universe that Wölfli depicts within his work. Perhaps his mental condition enabled him to see and express another world and to travel throughout this land, producing an astounding body of work. But does this type of work adhere to the definition laid out by Brotton? Is this the 'human world'? The more permissive response would be, yes, as the human mind and our perception of the world is of as much importance as the tangible. What Wölfli created, was to him, 'Fact'.

Are all maps intended to help the viewer or is their very complexity intended to confuse, to disorientate and therefore to make the viewer consider the subject matter in a less literal manner? A number of maps such as the thirteenth-century *Psalter World Map*, *Ebstorf Mappa Mundi*, and *Hereford Mappa Mundi*, are filled with images of strange beings, often located in remote and mysterious countries. These 'monsters' may indeed illustrate a vile demon roaming the land or it could be a particular group of violent people, an area that doesn't seem to support life or a complicated mix of all these elements. These maps that ask for a degree of imaginative engagement could be a result of the creator's lack of knowledge but their purpose could also be to serve as a warning of the unknown.

Belief and certainty are investigated within Grayson Perry's *Map of Nowhere* (fig. 7) where he is "Parodying the intellectual constructs of religion." (Bell, 2008). He maps the personal and tangible experiences of his life as well as thoughts, social pressure, expectations, work and so on. The whole piece is part homage, part parody of the *Mappa Mundi*; which like many early maps included a great deal of religious imagery. Perry's depiction of the ethereal sunbeam of heavenly light, coming out of his bottom, helps to give this piece the desired sarcasm and there are elements of satire throughout.

Figure 7. *Map of Nowhere*, 2008 by Grayson Perry. Courtesy the Artist, Paragon Press and Victoria Miro, London © Grayson Perry.

Why select this composition, this format, this genre within which to work? The synergy of text and image arranged in the main body of the piece without being restricted by scale and proportion is the graphic language of maps with which we, as observers, are familiar. The black and white diamond patterned ring around circular elements (often a compass) and dashed or wavy lines to denote water, are all signifiers of a map that have been used in countless designs. We therefore know that this artwork is meant to be explored. We trace our finger over the image and discover what we can about this place that is called, 'Grayson Perry'.

When discussing his 1971 film, *A Walk Through H: The Reincarnation of a Ornithologist*, Peter Greenaway (2011) refers to the map as, "an extraordinary palimpsest to tell you where you have been, where you are at this present moment, and where you could be, and even in subjective tenses, where you might have been, where you could have been." He produced ninety-two paintings of maps that formed the spine of the story where an ornithologist

uses these visual clues in a complex journey towards the unknown. The maps themselves are a mix of painting and drawings on a variety of paper scraps, which add texture, multiple visual layers and a sense of the 'artifact', much like the work of Wölfli.

Stephen Walter's *Nova Utopia* (fig. 8) is an exciting example of a map that offers a fictional narrative whilst containing political commentary about the world we live in today. Using Thomas Moore's 1516 book *Utopia* as a guide for this work, Walter has created a large black and white map that has a coded story as complex as any story penned by Tolkien (who was also partial to including maps as a visual guide to his intricate worlds). The story runs over centuries and charts the rise and fall of 'Utopia', the increase in trade and competition between the inhabitants, which ultimately results in the segregation of the land after a civil war. This end view of Utopia (renamed 'Nova Utopia' after the revolution) is very much at odds with the idea of the egalitarian society that was the starting point in the story.

Figure 8. *Nova Utopia* by Stephen Walter, © Stephen Walter.

Wordplay and pictograms indicate different people, locations and geographic features, a 'key' is embedded into a border of the map and is reminiscent of the cartouches utilised within the work of map pioneers Willem and Joan Bleau (1571-1638 and 1596-1673). Much like the place names of villages, towns and cities around our world, the names shown on *Nova Utopia* give a clue to their inhabitants and subsequent history. 'Stannah Bay' is *Nova Utopia's* Eastbourne. 'Prora' is the name of one of the coastal towns, and it shares its name with an unfinished Nazi project on the Baltic coast. This was to be the place where the Aryan race would spend its holidays. 'Ray Mears Tours', and 'Giftshops' are clearly defined in one area as examples of the commercialization of the island. Walter states, "Nova Utopia sits somewhere between the wonderful, the beautiful, the entertaining, the rich, the sublime, and the ridiculous." (Brotton, 2014: p.241)

This artwork challenges the viewer's level of visual literacy, cultural and historical knowledge and the experience of reading this map is something that takes time, patience and probably several visits, much like a novel.

Phrenology—an idea developed by Franz Joseph Gall in the early 19th century. By mapping the different parts of the brain, an assumption of the mental characteristics of a subject could be made. The side profile of a human head with a dotted line indicating the different areas/personal qualities is a visually intelligent idea in terms of trying to explain the inner workings of the brain. This approach, albeit flawed, was an attempt at depicting fact. However, this rather contrived idea of assigning personality traits based purely of physical form does result in some unsavoury examples of map-making from this era. *The Open Country of a Woman's Heart* by D. W. Kellogg (c.1833-1843) (fig. 9) is an incredibly misogynistic explanation of a woman's way of thinking. The image of a heart is divided into different lands, each assigned with a euphemistic name. The 'Sea of Wealth' enters the heart through 'Jewellery Inlet', where you make landing in an area called 'Love of Dress', before heading over to 'Sentimentality and 'Coquetry'. The more

appealing land of 'Good Sense' and the 'Region of Platonic Affection' are unfortunately rather small tracts of the island in comparison, which would indicate they don't really dominate this world.

Figure 9. *The Open Country of a Woman's Heart* by D. W. Kellogg (c.1833-1843). Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

Feeling

The phrenological map has entered our visual vocabulary and has been used by many illustrators to great effect in their efforts to give a visual appearance to feelings and emotions. Column Five's portrait of *Kanye West, commissioned by Myspace* (fig. 10) is a caricature that satirises this flamboyant celebrity without resorting to the usual facial distortion, seen in many other caricatures. It instead displays his thoughts and emotions that he so often verbalises in public and on social media.

Figure 10. *Kanye West by* Column Five, commissioned by Myspace.

Jeff Fisher, also makes use of the phrenological map within his illustration *Known Unknowns* produced for Time Magazine (fig. 11). The complexities of memory are presented to us in an intricate arrangement of segmented locations that seem similar to the roads and lanes on a busy and slightly confusing city map.

Figure 11. *Known Unknowns* by Jeff Fisher, commissioned by Time Magazine

Why draw a map? Slovenian Illustrator Radovan Jenko's map of Ljubljana, Slovenia (a place he has lived all his life), is an amalgamation of photography, pre-existing maps, scribbled comments, patterns and imagined characters that inhabit, *his* Ljubljana (fig. 12). Exposure at different times to different experiences, to different people, to different stories results in our personal response to the specific area we inhabit. Jenko's map is one of 31 European cities featured in *Graphic Europe*, published by Cicada. It is as informative as any *Lonely Planet* or *Rough Guide* travellers' guide book (some of the maps give a rough geographical guide, some do not) but they also offer the personal reflection of the illustrators who know the city, its features and stories. The Editor of *Graphic Europe*, Ziggy Hanoar (2009: p. 5) describes the ethos of the book as to "…Provide a more informal, intimate insight into the cities. Kind of like a friend showing you how their city makes them feel."

Figure 12. *Ljubljana* by Radovan Jenko, commissioned by Cicada.

We are sentient creatures and this emotional response is surely as important as street names and buildings, in terms of how we understand a city?

Maps can also have more of egalitarian agenda. The *Homeless Map of London*, (fig. 13) is one of many map projects by artist 'Lovely Jojo' (real name Jojo Oldham). The map uses image and text, often using a greater amount of the latter to communicate stories and comments from the people that live there. Cities such as these are a spider's web of interconnecting stories that have direct or (often) indirect influence on the development of that particular place. "Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody." (Jacobs,1961: p238) By cataloguing how people have travelled to the city and how they have ended up without a home, educates the viewer and seeks a

compassionate response from them. Understanding the reality of sleeping-rough and not being included within society and how that feels, is the aim of this work.

Figure 13. *Homeless Map of London* by Jojo Oldham.

Steve Simpson's Dublin map produced for Jameson Whiskey (fig. 14) is a personal geographic map, displaying feelings and comments about the city, obtained from Dubliners themselves. These personal descriptions are used instead of the usual street names to form a heart-shaped Dublin. As a result the vibe and atmosphere of the city is communicated alongside tangible Dublin landmarks, such as O'Connell Bridge and Trinity College.

Figure 14. *Dublin Map* by Steve Simpson, commissioned by Jameson Whiskey.

Dublin is famed for its night life and for having numerous pubs, James Joyce's character Leopold Bloom suggested in *Ulysses* that, "a good puzzle would be to cross Dublin without passing a pub." (Kallwejt , 2015) This quip from Joyce formed a brief given to Illustrator and Designer Jan Kallwejt by *Huskies* design agency. Together they created an interactive map (fig. 15) for the tee-total weekender trying to avoid the ubiquitous stag and hen parties. Kallwejt has been commissioned by many other clients (such as *Honda*) for his busy, somewhat diagrammatic map designs packed with icons and pictograms that are often repeated throughout the piece adding to the complexity.

Figure 15. *How to Cross Dublin without Passing a Pub* by Jan Kallwejt, commissioned by Huskies design agency

His maps seem to capture the noisy, chaotic, and variety of a particular location. A skull here, a smiling face there, lightning bolts, an Elvis impersonator, palm trees, eyes, and ambiguous dancing characters certainly pose a few questions in the viewer's mind when looking at his map of Los Angeles. Showing the less picturesque aspects of a location can be done with a smile. There is a similar theme within Rebecca Solnit's *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas*, published by UC Press, 2010. This diverse collection of maps depicts different aspects of the city, from *Monarchs and Queens (butterflies and queer public spaces),* (fig. 16) illustrated by Mona Caron, to *Poison/Palate* (a map of toxic mines and factories). Solnit states, "It's like that old expression: A poem about something ugly can still be beautiful. A map about murder or urban redevelopment can still be beautiful." (Battilana, 2010)

Figure 16. *Monarchs and Queens (butterflies and queer public spaces)* by Mona Caron and Rebecca Solnit.

Comparisons can be made between Kallwejt's and Caron's work with a *Map of Chicago's Gangland* (published by Bruce-Roberts, 1931) (fig. 17 and 18). The cheery colour palette, intricate design, neat speech bubbles and humorous little characters in fedora hats sit at odds with the content, which slowly reveals itself. Produced to, "…inculcate the most important principles of piety and virtue in young persons, and graphically portray the evils and sin of large cities." (University of Illinois, 2015), it aimed to counteract the public's interest in characters such celebrity criminal Al Capone. Gun battles, explosions, murder, illegal drinking and arrests are among some of the

scenarios that populate this map. It almost has a documentary feel to it, lifting the veil to show the real and less desirable side to this city.

Figure 17. *Map of Chicago's Gangland* published by Bruce-Roberts, 1931
Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago

Figure 18. *Map of Chicago's Gangland* published by Bruce-Roberts, 1931
Photo Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago

"More people use more maps than at any other time in human history, but we have not lost sight of their beauty, romance or inherent usefulness." (Garfield, 2013: p. 443)

The map is often a single design containing a multitude of selected imagery that describes different stories, ideas and information about that certain place. It can be intentionally simplistic; communicating the facts that are required by the intended viewer; the creator edits the reality and removes arbitrary elements. This is a highly visual way of communicating a sense of place. Other emotions can be stimulated through the complexity and ambiguity of the map. Mapmakers can manipulate their viewer, placing them in the map and making them feel the sense of confusion of being lost or found. It seems counter-intuitive that a map, a device many of us use as a way to give a sense of two dimensional order to a multi-dimensional world, can intentionally get us lost, but as Peter Greenaway (2011) states, "That's part of the game because, in a sense, you have to interpret a map and its full meaning is not always available because maps are about codes."

The book, *Where You Are*, published by Visual Editions, 2013 is a project that's intention is to explore the idea of getting lost. Sixteen artists share their maps covering subjects such as places they have *almost* been to, a landscape made up of literary features and the day-to-day changing topography of the items placed on their work desk. The resulting maps are intentionally confusing, and sometimes visually removed from the very thing they are mapping. It is up to the viewer to decode them.

As an illustrator it is the compositional design attributes of a map that intrigues me; the ambiguous shape that offers something different to react to rather than the usual rectangle or square of the paper. The opportunity to draw architecture, flora and fauna that are different and varied, the chance to draw myths and legends and depict them alongside these factual elements as if they co-exist in the make-up of the city, the country. The past and the stories of the place, are in fact as important as to what can be seen on the streets today.

Within maps, feelings and opinions (both positive and negative) can be expressed, to inspire, to attract, to warn, to protest and to educate. "Now that it is possible to travel right round the globe, the real challenge lies in staying at home and discovering the world from there." (Schalansky, 2012: p.9) The work of travel writer Bill Bryson could be referred to as 'armchair tourism', a description applicable to those of us who delight in discovering the world through text (from writers like Bryson) and through image, rather than just personal experience. There is something truly exhilarating about travel adventures (such as Shackleton's) from the comfort of your own environment, and the illustrated map is one visual form within which this can be achieved.

Fact, feeling and fiction can coexist within the format of a map and the resulting imagery can be both entertaining and provocative. The map can also be used and subverted within other formats such as the satirical image. A map is a device that helps define groups of people and their respective cultures within a tangible graphic shape. It helps communicate ideas and views about a particular group and location and therefore enables a visual dialogue between the commentator, illustrator and viewer. A map can be employed to communicate the simplest and the most profound messages. It is not purely a decorative image that has to sit alongside text, it can communicate facts, a sense of place and understanding of geographical properties, in its own right. It can be used as a format for communicating stories, myths, legends and complex narrative structures, and it can transfer a sense of emotion to the viewer-how the illustrator felt/feels when in the place they are drawing. Maybe it is the map itself, the artwork being created, that is the place being 'mapped'. The reader is, in turn, creating their own mind-map of the location through the process of interaction and it is this interaction between creator, created and observer that makes the map such an intriguing form for illustrators to investigate.
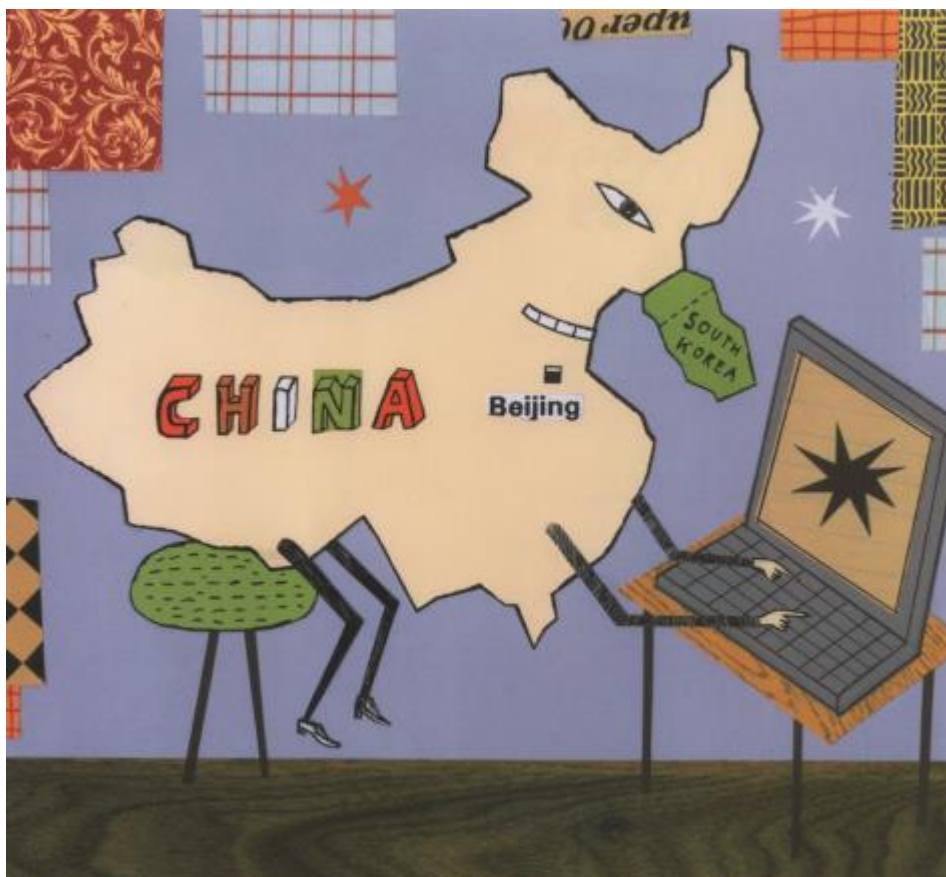
Illustrations

Fig 1.
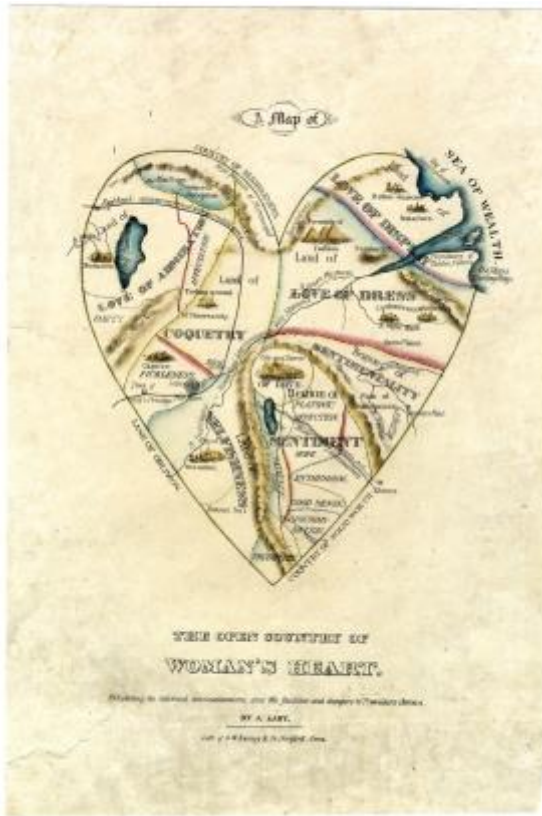

Fig 2.
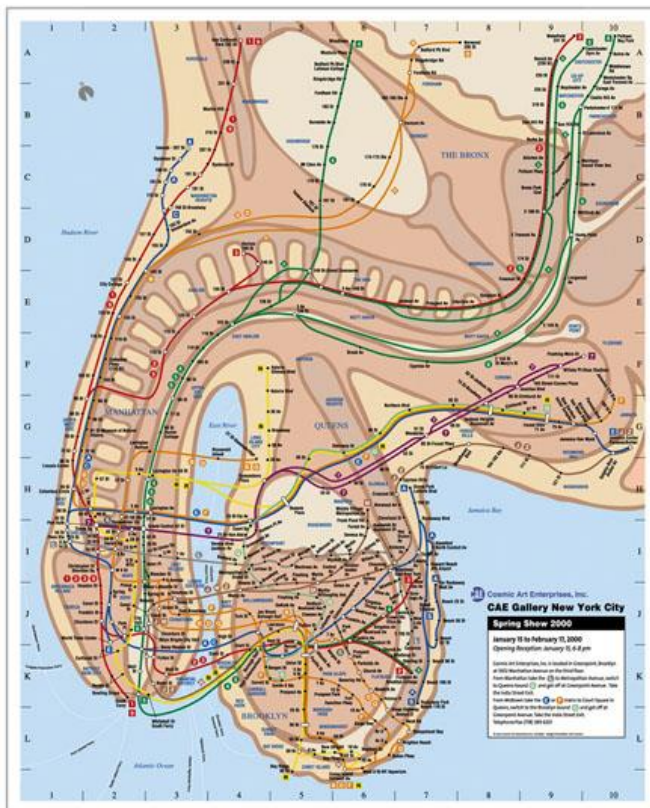
Fig 3.

Fig 4.

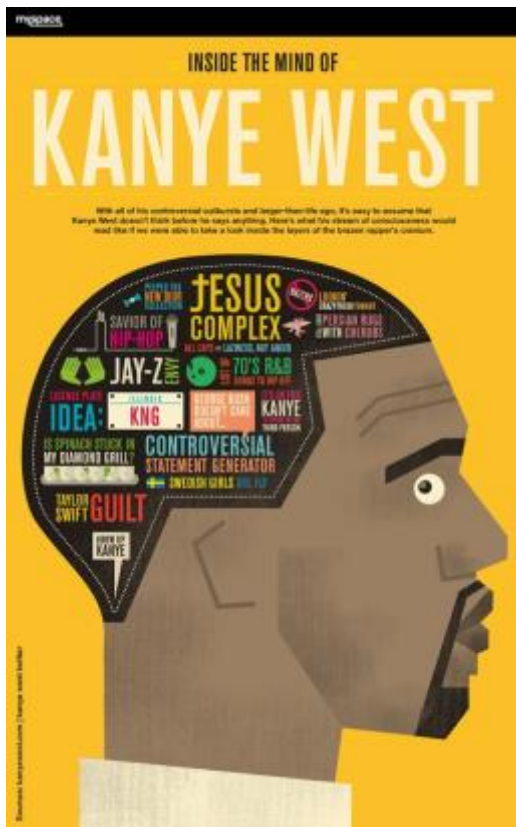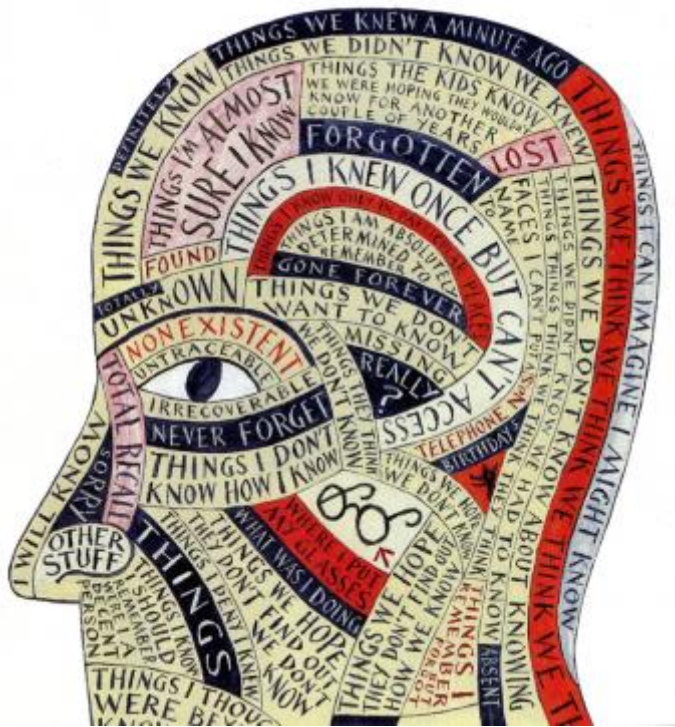Fig 5.

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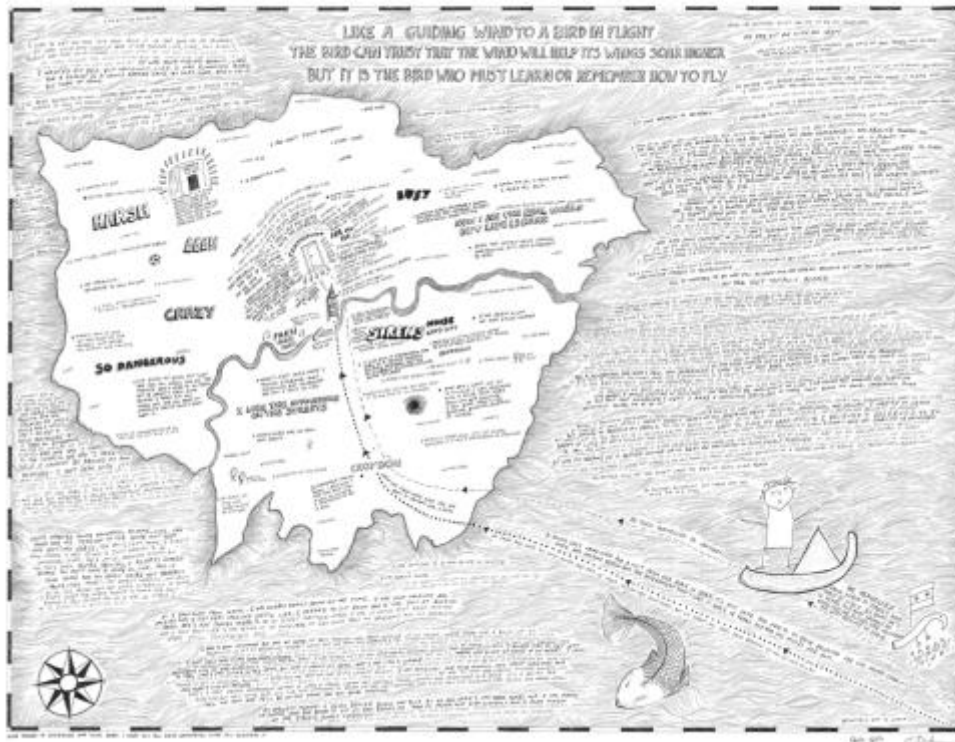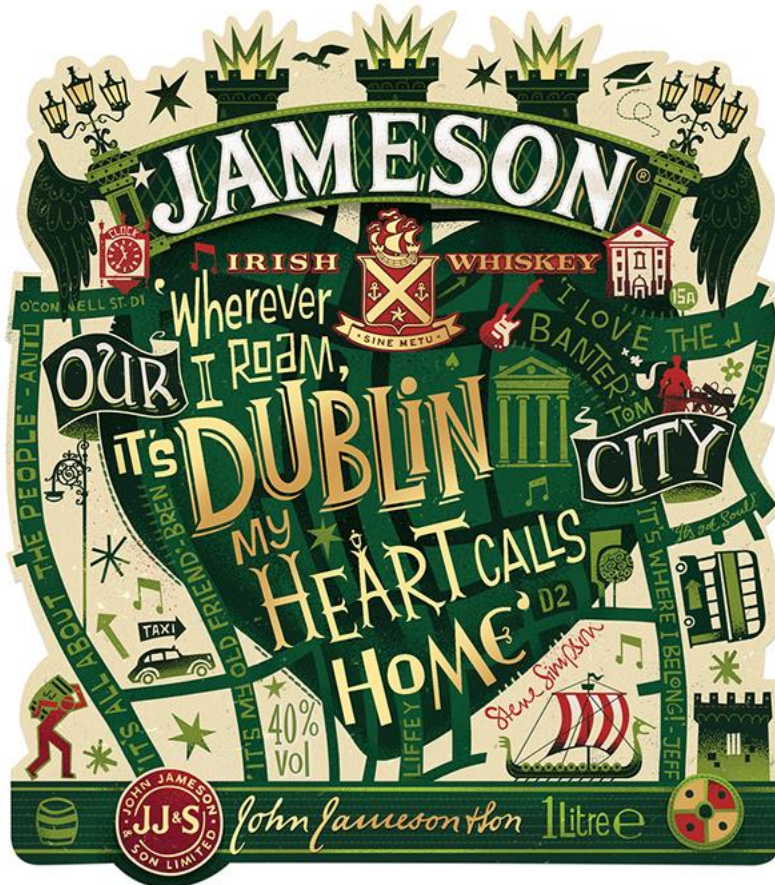

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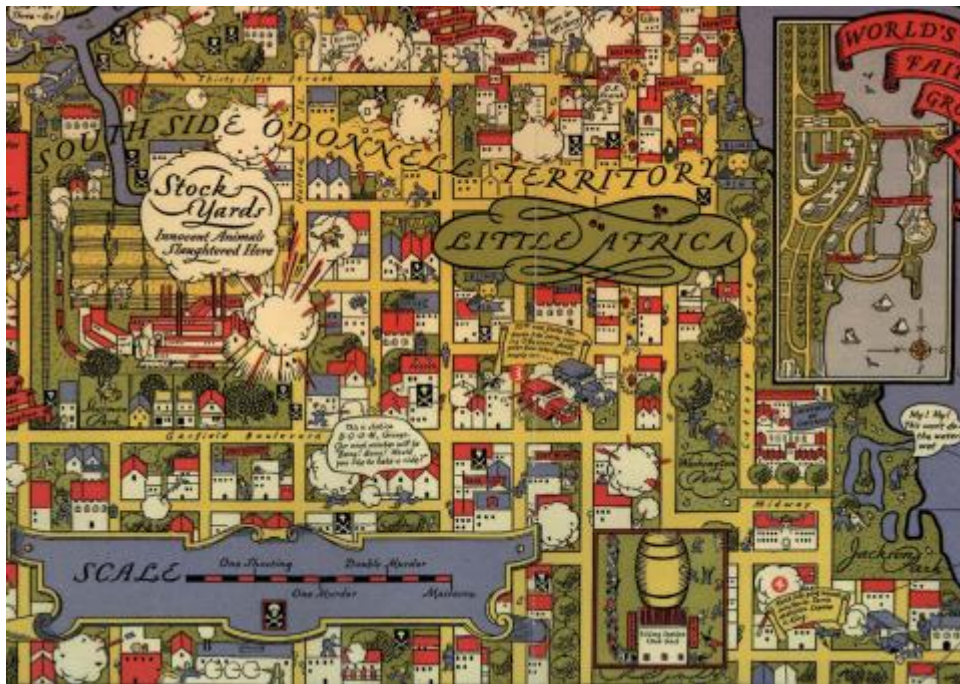
Fig 11.

Fig 12.

Fig 13.

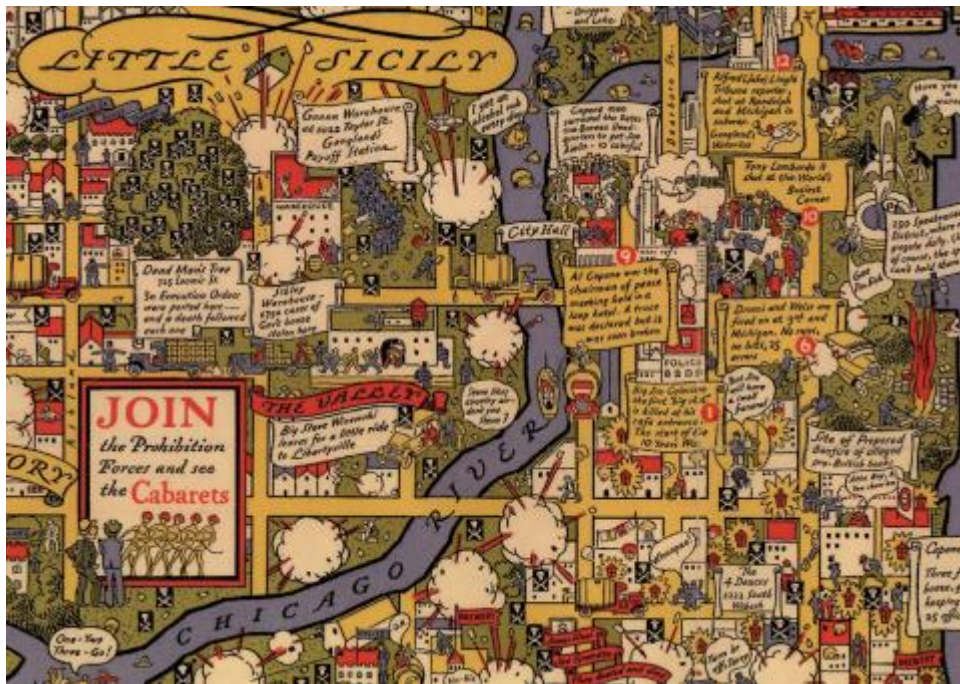Fig 14.

Fig 15.

Fig 16.

Fig 17.

Fig 18.

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