
REVIEWS

Jill Desimini and Charles Waldheim, *Cartographic Grounds: Projecting the Landscape Imaginary*

Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2016. ISBN 9781616893293, hb, 272pp., 200 col. ills. US\$50

Architects create plans for their work. To this end they need to understand the landscape they work with, as well as key fixtures, natural and manmade. Made before soil is turned, such plans are by nature proposals and do a lot to present the concept and the manner of its realisation to other parties. In this they have much in common with cartography which ultimately – irrespective of technical expertise – remains a pitch about the way things might be. Architectural plans are often not as visually ambitious as they could be and this perception has generated the starting point for this book. Indeed, few of us see beyond simple, black and white plans or an artist's impression based on them. Authors Jill Desimini and Charles Waldheim of the Harvard Graduate School of Design (one an assistant professor and the other with a named Professorship) have teamed up to present and discuss graphically persuasive examples from both cartography and architecture. These have been chosen for the way they utilise developments from mapmaking, historical and contemporary, to arresting and more effective ends. These models are collected around ten areas of relevance for both fields, forming separate chapters: Sounding, Spot Elevation, Isobath/Contour, Hachure/Hatch, Shaded Relief, Land Classification, Figure-Ground, Stratigraphic Column, Cross Section, Line Symbol and Conventional Sign.

If the point of this book is to provide evidence for how cartographic methods can inspire the humble plan, then the success or not of the undertaking lies in the models provided. It's never hard to find maps of striking appearance, but here the authors eschew overtly decorative maps in favour of those with more technical agendas. These include alpine, geological or military cartography, or those maps with an engineering focus. Some of these maps surprise with their contemporary look, such as the Clarence King's 1876 map for the United States Geological Service of the Nevada Basin (figure 7.8), where false colour combined with delicate, coloured contouring looks either like a Japanese kimono or a game of Candy Crush. Another nineteenth century example, a schematic plan of mine shafts and tunnels, uses colour to indicate depth (figure 7.9). Both of these maps look as if they were made yesterday.

Inspirational maps are not the dominant material, however: outcomes from the world of architecture and urban planning are foregrounded and it's here that the book demonstrates its value. Each of the ten sections listed above is richly illustrated with demonstrations where individuals and companies have pushed expectations for prospective planning. Some have been made for the book, many by Desimini, while others pre-exist and have been sourced for use in the book. The section *Isobath/Contour* has an excellent example from 2007 produced by a group of companies and organisations, led by the Parisian firm OLM (figure 2.14). Their plan for the port lands at the mouth of the river Don in Toronto exploited water altitude data to show the reinvigoration of marshy areas. The resulting image shows the proposed interrelationship as a near-glowing section, clearly demonstrating the value added to the surrounding, man-made forms. In *Sounding/Spot Elevation*, Swiss Group Atelier Girot employ point-cloud models for a location in Brissage (Ticino, Switzerland) in an unusual way, not visualising the data points but instead, using the underlying coded points. The final, 2013 plan rather ambitiously 'collapse[s] the distance between the represented and real terrain' – nonetheless producing a very appealing and informative view of existing and proposed structures. There are many fascinating examples to savour. In what might seem an unpromising section – *Hachure/Hatch* – Japanese firm Junya Ishigami + associates [*sic*] present their 2011 plan for a cafeteria at the Kanagawa Institute of Technology. The full-page

reproduction could easily be overlooked for more colourful and dramatic examples but, upon reading what the subtle, semi-abstract patterning of the overlapping information indicates, a design of great pleasure and beauty for the users is revealed. By integrating floor and roof plans the relationship between indoor and outdoor is shown, with structure and foliage exquisitely balanced.

Such examples indicate that the book is something of a visual feast, surely enjoyable for both architect and non-architect alike. Is there anything not to like? Title notwithstanding, projections themselves are not interrogated. Perhaps architects' reliance on the digital has incorporated a recent cartographic problem: believing that software (re)solves this problem. The accompanying essays – there are short contributions from two other authors – appear as tightly circumscribed as the imagery is fulsome. As an example, James Corner is mentioned as publishing an influential essay in 1999, “The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention”, but the wider role his work has played in inspiring the kind of innovations showcased by this volume remains uncertain. It could also be said that not all the plans excite as much as the ones mentioned above, or function without concern. In the section *Conventional Sign*, two designs flummoxed this reviewer. One seemingly attractive drawing (figure 10.14) is politely described as using a ‘hieroglyphic-like language’ – you would indeed need a Rosetta stone to decipher what each sign ultimately refers to. A quite different plan (figure 10.15) uses a neutral, mid-grey for such evidently boring things as waste treatment plants, recycling and regeneration, a great pity for the region in Taiwan attempting to manage a complex situation. Conventional signs indeed? Fortunately, the majority of examples do not suffer from these problems. Finally, the scope of contributions, with a few exceptions, derive from the usual suspects of Europe, North America and Japan.

The two examples mentioned recently may demonstrate how difficult such work remains. Most of the plans, however, dramatically propose their case for action and, as a collection of persuasive documents, such a volume is valuable – arguably, not least as a time capsule. The website for the Harvard Graduate School of Design states that it “encourages students to create a more beautiful, just, and coherent world through the study of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning and design”. As the world becomes increasingly dominated by the built environment – the expanding dull grey patches revealed on Google Earth – future humankind may wonder how extraordinary design sat alongside this burgeoning reality. This book won't answer that question, but it may reassure you that such work is being done.

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Debbie Hall (ed.), *Treasures from the Map Room: A Journey through the Bodleian Collections*

Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, 2016. ISBN 9781851242504, hb, 224 pp. inc. 120 colour plates. £35

Some books we buy to help us learn a skill, pass a course or supply a dinner party recipe to impress our friends. Others we buy to relax, escape, or to distract us from the everyday of our lives. If we have to move every few years for study, a job, or for family reasons, the home is a functional space and books need a clear justification to be allowed to occupy that space. Sometimes books get relegated to boxes in the garage to be opened in the future, when finally they will take their place of honour on our shelf. Yet, in and amongst the ‘everyday’ (the ‘profane’) erupts the special, the inspirational (the ‘sacred’); and on rare occasions we afford ourselves the luxury to buy a book to explore and to inspire. *Treasures from the Map Room* is such a book allowing the reader to be transported to other spaces and times in this world and in the worlds of his imagination.

The book is divided into thematic chapters where the essence of each topic is explored through maps accompanied by artful commentary. The reader will encounter what would usually be expected in such

a book, such as a review of travel and exploration maps (chapter 1); an examination into the spread of geographical knowledge and science (chapter 2); or urban evolution and development as seen through city plans (chapter 5). There is an exploration of darker subjects, such as war (chapter 4), and lighter ones in the form of fantasy and fun maps (chapters 6 and 7). The duality of purpose in maps is specifically explored in chapter 3, both the functional – the expression of ownership – and the decorative – the expression of pride. Above all, what is visible at every turn of the page is the art involved in each and every one of the maps illustrated in the book.

Maps are invariably an exploration of society, its understanding of the space it inhabits and its self-knowledge. It is thus fascinating to follow the writers' descent into the realm of war maps. These are not just functional drawings to identify best tactics on the battlefield (e.g. to identify areas where tanks can be driven: p.132), but they can also serve for propaganda: to boost national pride, sometimes at the expense of accuracy (p.116), or perhaps rebuke the European gold and slave trades in Africa (p.114), or chastise through satire (pp.187-189).

In contrast to the message embodied by war maps, are knowledge and science maps, where the human spirit of pursuing scientific enlightenment shines through. Knowledge is light keeping the 'Dark clouds of ignorance' (p.76) at bay. Humans are seen to prod the earth and uncover its composition (p.74) and peak into the heavens to learn the structure of the universe (pp.56-62). Furthermore, imaginary maps explore the human psyche using the 'familiar' as a design technique and ultimately as a tool for perception analysis (pp.204-208).

The pleasure of exploring these map treasures comes also from what maps indirectly tell us of their time and their use. For example, practicality can dictate the need to print maps on other materials than paper (p.128); or practical religious applications led to map covers made to open like a diptych for use in prayers (p.86) or include medical advice for those on a pilgrimage (p.168).

In a dissonant world, where disparate sources present fragmented information and the overall picture can be elusive, books like this are not just for dreamers. This book is partly an aspirational purchase to grace the house and make it into a home. However, it also fulfils a primary function as a reference book. It provides an insightful guide through a journey into the spaces of our world, the fabric of society, into our minds and ideas over time. Without being infantile, it is a 'children's book': it shows the child alternative perspectives on reality, and, it invites the adult to relish the wonder of youthful discovery.

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Eamon Evans, *Mount Buggery to nowhere else: the stories behind Australia's weird and wonderful place names*

Hachette Australia, Sydney, 2016. ISBN 9780733635588 pb, 9780733635595 ebook. vii+279 pp., illus., A\$30 pb, \$17 ebook.

Why is it that despite how much and how often we use toponyms (place names) linguists, geographers, cartographers and historians know so little about how they actually work? Why is it that place names are less prone to change than other aspects of language like accents and pronunciations? And how is it that regardless of how well furnished a map or smartphone may be with place names and directions, we still bloody well get lost? And why are so many Australian places named after knobs?

Eamon Evans's 280-page book lists hundreds of place names — colonial, Aboriginal, German, and other — that adorn our country. It is an entertaining, non-academic read with a playful manner, which charts place names from the serious — the many names for Australia, for example — to the jocular, like Australia's many rude and dirty topographic monikers. Many of Evans's humorous stories go a way to responding to some of the scientific inadequacies and toponymic foibles so common in place naming studies. And after I've spent almost a decade inundated with often sterile and uninspirational place name theory and how it may fit within more general research in onomastics, the study of proper names, Evans's tongue-in-cheek take is more than welcome.

The book begins with a reasonable and justified dis of Lucky Starr and his 1962 claim "I've been everywhere." Evans doubts this claim — fair enough, Lucky lists at least 94 places — and estimates this large country of ours has around four million place names. Visiting all of these sites would take yonks, around half a lifetime tells Evans, and would involve using lots of petrol, shoes, and time travelling beyond the Black Stump and back o' Bourke. He claims the observations and offbeat remarks in this companion save us from doing all this legwork and allows us to sit back and enjoy the often-bumpy yet comical toponymic ride.

I grew up in Adelaide, surrounded by road and place names honouring rich and powerful, dead white men (plus a minuscule number of women). I mean, how many William Streets, Edward Streets, Victoria Everythings, and Queen Elizabeth Otherthings does Australia need? Naming is power, which Evans obviously understands. Furthermore, he takes the piss. And he bloody well should. Our eponymous (of a person) place name landscape is largely boring as bat turd and as stodgy and starchy as badly cooked porridge.

In telling us about the histories and etymologies (origins) of places, the colonial makeup of our pre-European toponymically terra-annulled joint is made real. Take Lake Alexandrina in South Australia: named after Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandrina of Kent, the then heir to the British throne. A nice gesture, but perhaps a wasted one, as the princess much preferred her middle name. We now call her Queen Victoria.

We get quirky introductions to each of the nine chapters — one for Australia and one each for every state and territory — plus more toponymic toilet humour than one could poke a dirty toilet brush at in an outback dunny. The knob gets quite a mention, which we are told is a prominent rounded hill, mountain, or elevation on a ridge, with Chinamans Knob, Governors Knob, Iron Knob, Nimbin's Blue Knob, Spanker Knob, and Yorkeys Knob. I think you get the picture. We're told about Mount Little Dick in Victoria, which Evans hopes is named after a small man named Richard who used to live there and nothing else, Lake Fanny near Mossy Nipple Bend in Tasmania, and a few perky hills also in Tasmania called The Nipples. This feminal place name reminds me of a topographical name on Kangaroo Island I documented back in 2009. The Tits is a place with undulating landscape similar to a woman's corporeal scenery on the left side of Hog Bay Road near Pelican Lagoon. Between the Tits is a fishing ground off Kangaroo Head, which uses the space between The Tits in lining up the ground.

Apart from the colonial propensity for double entendres, some of these places are simply the victim of time: Cockburn (pronounced "ko-burn") was named after the prominent sailor Sir George Cockburn. Intercourse Island, 1,500 kilometres north of Perth, was the site of a productive conversation between Captain Philip Parker King and some local Indigenous people.

The listing of the town Verdun in South Australia gives excellent information about the cleansing-cum-sanitisation of German place names in South Australia during the Great War. Friedrichstadt became Tangari, Neudorf became Mamburdi, and Hahndorf became Ambleside to become Hahndorf again in

1935. “About the only German place name that wasn’t changed,” Evans tells us, “was Adelaide – a city named after a German princess”.

Let’s not forget those place names which are mistakes. For example, Bundle Bundle was bungled to become Bungle Bungle; Mount Kokeby, named after Baron Rokeby, was misspelled as “Kokeby” after a spelling error in one of the town’s first train timetables. Place names are filled with specimens of our laziness and folly.

One can always quibble about what was not given. Regarding the contemporary issue of dual naming, something which could be taken from both a humorous and serious perspective, it was a shame not to have seen a little more beyond the Uluru-Ayers Rock example. For example, Nobbys Head in Newcastle is officially known as Whibayganba. What was formerly known as Grampians National Park in Victoria is now officially called Grampians / Gariwerd. The area contains the dual name Halls Gap / Budja Budja. Dual place naming is a weighty and contentious affair in modern Australian politics and the social cartography of this once unnamed land is dependent on best representing all levels of place naming: Indigenous, British, German, and others. Perhaps this is something for the second edition of Evans’s book, if he’s not too bugged.

The story of Adaminaby, a mining town in New South Wales Evans says was supposedly named in honour of the line, “Ada’s mine it be,” makes one wonder about the credibility of some bush toponymic lore. But Evans happily acknowledges the hazier areas of his research, and ultimately, who cares? Place names are fun and their study should be the same. What Evans offers is an amusing take on a potentially very dry topic. It’s not a weighty book and is minus a conclusion to pull it all together, but it would make a grouse Chrissie present. If wit and quips can be used to good effect to get people thinking about important matters like place naming from a humorous and lively perspective, then Evans’s account is a noble achievement.

Note: this review was originally published 24 Oct. 2016 at The Conversation <https://theconversation.com/buggered-if-i-know-where-i-am-the-stories-behind-australias-weird-and-wonderful-place-names-66923#comment_1117865> and is reprinted with the author’s permission.

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