

Book Review
**Everything Sings:
Maps for a Narrative Atlas**

Denis Wood
Siglio, 2010

and

**Making Maps: A Visual Guide to Map
Design for GIS, 2nd edition**

John Krygier and Denis Wood
The Guilford Press, 2011

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I have nothing to say
(A Reflection on *Everything Sings* and *Making Maps*)

The first book arrives¹

Blue cover, white pumpkins

I crack the first page

Ira Glass

“These maps are completely unnecessary,” he says

I have nothing to say

Panic, heart beats faster

Denis is messing with my head

Maps as poems

I’ll give you poems...

I throw the book on my desk and walk away

Why did they want my comment?

I have nothing to say

¹ Wood, D. 2010. *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narratives Atlas*. Los Angeles: Siglio Press.

Narcissistic dreaming
 University of Wisconsin, David Woodward's seminar
 Maps as representational practice
 Best friend Josh, dead way too early
*London Underground Map of 1933*²
 Maps are art, maps are science
 An MFA in cartography, that's what Josh thought we needed
 I have nothing to say

Maps as power
 "Destroy existing modes of mapmaking," Denis says
 Easier said than done
 Maps as art-science/science-art
 The binary collapses
 The scrutiny is too much to bear
 I have nothing to say

As Denis might say, fuck that...
 I must have something to say
 I have written about maps
 Thought about maps
 Torn maps up
 Reoriented maps

I don't think so, Ira Glass...
 "These maps are unnecessary"
 I know that he doesn't mean it literally
 They are completely necessary
 They not only tell stories
 They expose moments of power-knowledge
 They trace routes r-o-u-t-e-s and lay out roots r-o-o-t-s
 Bicycle deliveries, newspaper routes, starting from home
 Time-space, space-time maps—lifted off the ground (is this our
 goal?)
 What happens to these maps of time-space in the age of the
 Internet, I wonder?

² Hane, J. 1996. *London Underground Map 1933*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Wisconsin, Department of Geography.

Layers of theoretical insight

“Neighborhood is process, a process place,” Denis says

That’s right

“General reference maps pretend otherwise”

“Has the hubris to present the world, you know... *as it really is*,” he continues later

Italics for effect and affect

Damn right, Denis

And, maps can tell us...

“Boylan Heights: process-thing unfolding in space and time”

Foldings of space and time

A poststructuralist impulse, with clearly Marxist tendencies

Landlords stretching space, Denis avers

Taking capital from Boylan Heights

Simple lines, densities appear

People are disenfranchised

Maps expose the truth of economic power and authority

More than art

Maps are argument

Just read *Making Maps: A Visual Guide to Map Design for GIS*

As John and Denis say,

“We have to mess with our spherical world to get it flat”

Distortions, area, shape, distance and direction

But, we are making arguments

That’s what we do with maps

Colors are “an agnostic sin,” they exclaim

“Never use them for mere decoration”

We can sin with maps

But, as they suggest, “color is emotive”

“Angry red, calm green”

Can you see the poetry in maps?

“They are not rules.”

“There are no rules.”

But the foldings
 Maps fold, spaces fold
 Not just maps and spaces but map spaces
 Maps are intertextual objects that demand interrogation
 They go beyond their own boundaries
 They are always more than they seem
 Map spaces are both object and subject

Ah the critical Foucauldian impulse with a dash of Judith Butler's
 performativity theory
 My friend Steve and I always thought that was clever³
 Maps are partialities, temporary manifestations
 Feelings, emotions, rituals, practices
 Maps as critical humanistic possibility
 Maps are so much more than science
 Dare I say it, more-than-representational?

Contour lines of assessed value
 Denis exposes connectivities
 Patterns in space
 Not contours of altitude or temperature
 But, assessed value
 Assessed value, really?
 Power articulated, power exposed
 "The world didn't ask for them," Ira Glass says of these maps
 But I think the world needs them!
 Goddam brilliant

³ The original argument was articulated in: Del Casino V. J., Jr., and S. P. Hanna. 2000. Representations and identities in tourism map spaces. *Progress in Human Geography* 24 (1)23–46. You can also see: Hanna, S. P., V. J. Del Casino, Jr., C. Selden, and B. Hite. 2004. Representation as work in 'America's most historic city.' *Social and Cultural Geography* 5 (3)459–481; and Del Casino, V. J., Jr., and S. P. Hanna. 2005. Beyond the 'binaries': a methodological intervention for interrogating maps as representational practices. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 4 (1)34–56; and the edited collected, *Mapping Tourism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

Toward the end, Denis explains, “I set the type on our IBM compositor”
“PMT stood for Photomechanical Transfer,” he continues
I have no idea...
I don’t make maps...
I critique them
What use am I?
But, the art of science, the science of art
I see it now
Perhaps not
Am I completely full of shit?
Probably
I am definitely no poet
Just another damn academic in the audience
“When I talked about these things,” Denis says
“at the obligatory faculty-student colloquia,” he continues
“I was met with blank stares,” he opines
Jaw open, totally exposed
I have nothing to say