GIS SOUTH

Louisiana in the Lost and Found

JENNIE LIGHTWEIS-GOFF

Maps are approximate [. . .]; symbols like the boot are even more so.
—BRETT ANDERSON, "Louisiana Loses Its Boot"

Between Culture and a Void

Home lies between "culture" and "avoid." Danny runs a gallery among "rich hippies." Sharon is searching for a house in the "East Fixies." Shane tarries at "the Gentrification Station." Mike and Carol grew up halfway between "the Sopranos" and "cheap cigarettes." Tom finds himself among "quiet gays," though they're often so quiet as to blur the border with nice Midwestern church ladies. Dana rides her bike from "humans piled in concrete siloes" to run the back of the house in a Minneapolis restaurant. Katie and Burke are too far north, even by Minnesota standards, for anyone to map them, though a colleague once said that hilly Duluth was "the San Francisco of the Midwest." When I teach at the top of Mississippi, I am crowded by white suburbanites who fled Memphis for Southaven in successive waves of white flight. When I am in Memphis itself I live with "unhip hipsters and artists," dovetailing neatly with my partner Chip's sense that, born in the 1970s, we were hipsters that peaked too soon. Sometimes, by way of explanation for that condition, I tell people I grew up halfway between Asheville and Athens. Then they know I'm a product of the southern bohemia, such as it is.[1]

All of the descriptions of place in the paragraph above come from colloquial city maps—usually Judgmental Maps, the internet's repository of intimate cartography—and the informal geographies our new neighbors teach us when we begin to put down roots.[2] At home in New Orleans, a city with four centuries of settler colonialism and four distinct nationalisms shuffling its place names, I have heard dramatic shifts in less than a decade on a single block in the Sixth Ward. When I got to the block, white neighbors called it

Lafitte and Black neighbors said Back of Town. Treme grew and so did Bayou St. John, though mainly from real estate agents wielding slick cardboard signs. Mr. Freddie likes to say Mid-City—as aspirational as that is for developers, and as inaccurate to municipal mappers—because he has lived here all his life and, even when flush with cash, has never felt the need for a car. "It *is* in the middle of everything," he says. If the city ever tears down the crumbling overpass that bifurcates the neighborhood from the richer, whiter portion of the Treme, the blocks once known as the Lafitte may yet be annexed by the French Quarter or reintegrated with what preceded the I-10 Corridor. The reunion might simultaneously restore traditional names and feather the nests of already richly remunerated developers.[3]

All this to say, my city requires an intimate cartography: that is, a mapping practice that shows the spaces that were, the spaces that exist, and the spaces that will come to ruin when the waters rise again. While new media mappers from the smartphone navigator to the local cartographer tease with these possibilities, they ultimately fail to chart landscapes built for capital. New Orleans is "a palpably vulnerable city on a shifting terrain," in Barbara Eckstein's words, but maps of the city fix the present in place.[4] This condition is paradoxically *most* harmful and *least* visible in a place where the margin of the water persistently moves to swallow habitable land, and where that same land sinks and cracks to displace inhabitants. An honest update requires minute-to-minute attention on interfaces seemingly designed for present, rather than future, orientation. Shapes like the Crescent and the Boot remain on branded maps despite land loss and rising waters. Contemporary digital media's collaborations with and dependency on capital produce the illusion of static, mapped space, albeit overlaid with touristic and affective landmarks, that this essay critiques. To borrow a phrase from new media theorist Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, regarding the flooded and flooding oil-rich zones of the Gulf South, we "update to remain the same."[5]

This essay begins with the intimate cartography of Judgmental Maps because such proximity seems possible, if not wholly accomplished by the mapping technologies that users carry in their pockets. Tracking the names appended to and rescinded from space matters, perhaps especially in coastal southern cities in danger from rising waters, in interior cities (like Nashville and Atlanta) that are bywords for gentrification, and in every place vulnerable to climate change (which is to say, every place). Bereft of notions of regional, racial, and political innocence (however false) that follow urban transplants to

Portland and San Francisco, southern cityscapes are shaped by displacements and erasures that become visible: mappable, even. Projects like Paper Monuments work toward that aim with their poster installation counter-memorials that augment the white-washed history of New Orleans, but they are decidedly analog, deliberately local.[6] This essay measures the distance between the smartphone map and the vulnerable city, traveling from a "tweetstorm" by game designer James L. Sutter to the prestige project of Rebecca Solnit and Rebecca Snedeker's *Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas* (2013), and, finally, to a remapping of Louisiana by journalist Brett Anderson. At each turn, I consider not only what the digital makes possible, but also what the user—that unmappable variable—resists.

Bright Lines

Space is rendered diffuse by a dishonest public sphere in which we "make space" for new ideas and build "safe spaces" for their expression. Humans navigate concrete space. Cartographic intimacies offer vernacular names and local navigations, orientations provided by neighbors and natives, rather than by guidebooks and Yelp reviews. They are a kind of colloquial response to spatial critical theory and cultural geography. If smartphone mapping offers the potential to make sense of intimate locality, the difference between ideal and actual use has blunted much of that potential. On a linguistic level, a scholar looking for resources on mapping will be diverted by how often "mapping" simply means "conceptualizing" in the humanities and social criticism, despite accessible digital technologies that make mapping both literal and possible. The mapping and navigational technology of the small screen produces distance from urban environments, exacerbating conditions that have turned cities into branded and owned spaces.[7] For digital humanists, "curation—as opposed to automation—is the dominant paradigm [. . .] for the creation of digital resources in general, and for cartographic or geographical resources in particular."[8] Branded, static maps of a sinking city are in need of constant revision, the condition ignored by Sutter and addressed by Anderson. Popular digital media cartographies curate with surprising consistency from already-existing maps; indeed, their persistent strategy seems to be neither curation nor automation, but overwriting.

City-sized cartography relies on reader knowledge of the good and bad mall, the new and decaying Krogers and Wal-Marts within particular communities, but the maps often use a distanced template, sourced from Google Maps. With the exception of a single, jokey faux-nineteenth-century map of San Francisco for Gold Rushers, Judgmental Maps is a repository of screenshots, overwritten with text from MSPaint.[9] Are these routes *into* our places—especially southern spaces, so often graphed for prisons, cheap labor, and oil extraction—or routes *away* from them? With mapping technology at our disposal, do we stay on decontextualized blocks to which we have been navigated? Do we zoom out, an epistemological practice that locates us in space? Do we pinch, to place our bodies on a local landscape with less context? Do we find "random" buttons, which have seemed scarcer over the lifetime of the internet? Digital optimism, such as that espoused by media corporations and educational institutions, imagines alternative-to-paper projects as producing a more democratic public sphere; it proves an unpalatable extension of the internet-fueled, deregulatory zeal of the late millennium, and of the "disruption" mania of the last two decades.

Despite the necessary skepticism of new media theorists such as Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, the realpolitik roars back with reminders that we are governed by digital optimism. In a single week in February 2020, the Iowa Democratic Party tried (and failed) to count votes by smartphone app, and, using artificial intelligence, Barnes & Noble curated a list of "Diverse Editions" for Black History Month without a single Black writer.[10] According to the bookstore, the artificial intelligence they used defined editions by white writers who offered no racial designation for characters as "diverse." Flush with tech cash, even (and perhaps especially) liberals imagine disruption as the solution to persistent social problems, as though tech is a carbon-neutral alternative to the petrochemical industries of which they offer legitimate criticism. To each of the questions above, I offer the less optimistic option: navigational technology is directional, not random; atomizing, not social; distancing, not intimate.

Innovation is nonetheless possible by interrupting habituation, not simply to technology but to the built environment. Digital theorists Christian Ulrik Andersen and Soren Bro Pold figure the city as another interface, mediating human access to both urban space and urban time.[11] In their consideration of "territorial interfaces," they describe how two smartphone applications resist the cognitive encryption of Google Maps. British artist Graham Harwood's *Perl Routes to Manipulate London* simultaneously reproduces the visual effects of William Blake's multidimensional London, with its "charter'd streets" and "blackning Church[es]," and quantifies the exploitation he found there.

Ringed by Blakean river maps and vistas of the Thames, its Perl program code calculates "the gross lung-capacity of the children screaming from 1792 to the present" and "the air displacement needed to represent the public scream."[12] Harwood's intervention refuses to erase the history of capital in order to enable seamless (and guiltless) navigation of space; his GPS does not elide the miseries of coal, oil, and imperialism. Another application, Serendiptor, interrupts Google Maps' step-by-step directions through city streets to insert a little serendipity: bum a smoke, touch a statue, shred a receipt, accompany the lonely. Like the unwanted and infelicitous landing prompted by dice on a game board—those little maps—Serendiptor can send the flaneur backward or forward on urban streets. Produced by artist and architect Mark Shepard, it "dissolve[s] the boundaries of urban zones, such as the boundaries between the public and private, or work and leisure, and make[s] the adjoining moments, the travel and transportation itself, pleasurable."[13] While this situationist, phenomenological relationship to the city is possible through the apparatus of digital media, it is filtered by the structural biases of the algorithm.[14] When I went off in search of Serendiptor, my search engine recommended that I download Uber instead.

After years of contraction of and eulogies for "the good internet"—the harvest of often feminist, progressive, anti-authoritarian writing on sites like Gawker, Deadspin, Feministing, and Jezebel, sites that have receded as monopolistic platforms like Twitter and Facebook have swollen—we ought to acknowledge that Google Maps chose the side of the Bad Internet in 2016, when it began branding users' flânerie with instructions to "turn right near McDonald's" or "pass Dollar General on the left."[15] We pinch. We dislocate. Without intention, we choose the familiar. Capitalism produces more options and fewer choices. Urban space erupts with distractions, stickiness, inertia, collisions, and delay, the pleasures and dangers of people fricating together. Smartphone navigation of that space, by contrast, offers what Bill Gates famously described as the key benefit of the internet in the Bill Clinton years: "friction-free capitalism."[16]

The touristic vision of New Orleans proffers "a city-sized act of civil disobedience" against the "techno-driven, profit-crazy, hyper-efficient self-image of the United States."[17] The extractive economies of oil and private prisons are erased, even excused, in that vision. Long imagined as an exception to both national and regional norms, New Orleans was transformed into a fantasy landscape in a recent moment of viral mapping. "If this came in from a

freelancer," wrote game designer James Sutter of the image of the city provided by Google Maps, "there are half a dozen things that would raise my eyebrows."[18] Sutter's nine-post Twitter essay critiquing New Orleans's "totally unrealistic" landscape earned viral boosts from reliable content aggregators including Bored Panda and DeMilked. (See Fig. 7.1.) Curated content under clickbait headlines affirmed preconceptions of New Orleans as somehow unreal, a place one might observe on a fantasy map. It is a place that has "no right to exist" by the rules of capitalism, or by the related logic of the navigable small screen.[19] Between New Orleans's body and its map lie many distinctions without differences since it is so often mediated by the tourist's imaginary and a sentimental rhetoric around climate change that positions it—but never, say, warming Nashville—as a preeminent city without a future. This notion of New Orleans as nearly fictional, passing into the mists like Avalon or Brigadoon, is not undone by more rigorous accounts of it as unfathomable, accidental, improvised, inevitable, and impossible.[20]

Sutter leaves the political dimensions of landscape untouched in his reading of New Orleans as fictional setting. To many of Sutter's readers, the notion that landscape is contingent and constructed would likely startle. But little could be as *un*natural as New Orleans's putatively natural features highlighted in these tweets. In August 2017, a handful of blocks in New Orleans (including my own) accrued, in the course of a single, ordinary, unnamed afternoon rainstorm, more water than they received during Hurricane Katrina, calling attention to what Elizabeth Kolbert describes as "a sort of Trojan Solution. Since marshy soils compact by de-watering, pumping water out of the ground exacerbates the very problem that needs to be solved. The more water that's pumped, the faster the city sinks. And, the more it sinks the more pumping is required."[21] An ordinary day's flooding produced by a seemingly minor rainstorm should raise alarms. Apocalyptic destruction will not arrive during hurricane season, with the irregularity of the hundred-year storm; apocalypses will arrive with the frequency of bank holidays. Considering expansive land loss, the September 2017 (and May 2019) floods from unnamed storms might also highlight the optimal purpose of a digital media map: to enable users to see how the land shifts and recedes, to show how terrain disappears in real time. Residents of vulnerable terrain do not benefit from a digital climate that overlays words onto branded, static, corporate maps. The navigational technology of Google Maps has become ordinary, but, "habit + crisis = update."[22] Our lives may depend on an update that is not yet here.

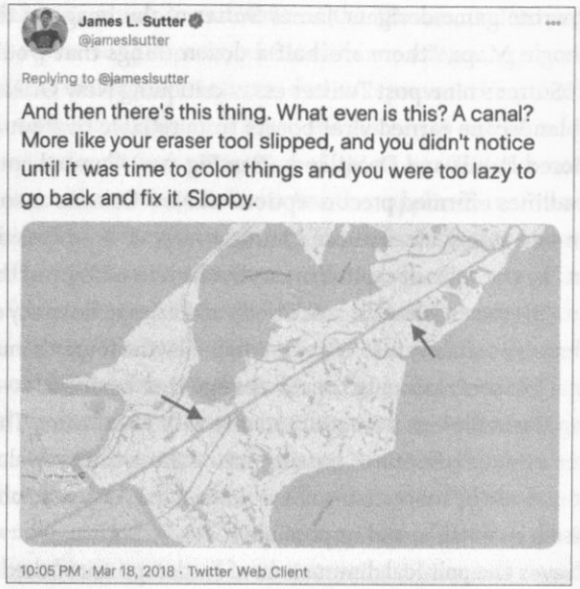

Fig. 7.1. Mapping Industrial Fantasy. Screenshot by author. Tweet by James L. Sutter, "And then there's this thing," March 18, 2018, 10:05 P.M.

The land is not simply slow and low, swampy and decadent, fantastic and wild. It is synthetic and industrial. Next to screenshots of "artificial" shipping outlets to the Gulf of Mexico, Sutter asks, "What even is this? A canal? More like your eraser tool slipped, and you didn't notice until it was time to color things and you were too lazy to go back and fix it. Sloppy."[23]

This flippancy abuts even the most destructive features of Louisiana's industrial, petrochemical landscape: most famously, the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, or Mr. Go. The seventy-six-mile channel provided a shortcut between the Port of New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. Built with public moneys from the Army Corps of Engineers for the private benefit of the shipping industry—thereby socializing the risk and privatizing the profits—the channel invited even larger ships into the Port and intensified flooding after Hurricane Katrina. It breached nearly two dozen levees touched by its waters. By rare bipartisan environmental action, Mr. Go closed for traffic before Christmas 2007. According to a 2005 article in the *Washington Post*, Mr. Go crafted "a hurricane highway, a storm-surge shotgun pointed at the city's gut."[24]

I find myself riveted by the *Post*'s image of a gut-shot Louisiana, and by

Solnit and Snedeker's later specification of New Orleans as a fragile, filtering liver.[25] Seldom the first choice for an assassin, a bullet in the gut chooses maximum pain and a slow bleeding rather than the immediate kill. Thanks to the stylized violence of the movies, I now imagine New Orleans as a wounded Mr. Orange [Tim Roth], gray-skinned and nearly bloodless from the bullet in his belly at the conclusion of *Reservoir Dogs*. This is perhaps an apt image for a city both drowning in and drained of oil: drowning as it is drained, dried as it drowns.[26] Though the infamous graffiti reading "Katrina, you bitch" got far more attention, on a ruined house in the Lower 9th Ward, a resident spray-painted "use this to fill MRGO!" over the names of the displaced.[27] For the predominantly Black residents of the Lower Nine and their white working-class neighbors in St. Bernard Parish, Mr. Go was a leviathan, a murderer, the world ending in neither fire nor ice, but water. Google is not Exxon, and Twitter is not British Petroleum, but the present forms of digital mapping and navigation inhibit the collective capacity to see the connections between the environmental violence of industrial capital and the social distance produced by extractive economies. Friction-free capitalism has never gone away: our networks promise liquidity and immediacy, but they offer, through branded maps and #FollowYourNola posts, fixed images of land that is literally disappearing.

Screenshot maps nonetheless fix and capture, erasing the ground's disappearing act. An "interesting-looking design," Sutter writes, ablating the guiding hand of capital on the map of New Orleans. Digital optimism would have us hope that a person who wonders "what even is this?" at the sight of Mr. Go would simply look it up with the instruments at their disposal, since it is the same instrument they use to tweet. An online culture that enables and encourages users of these technologies to read, revise, and even critique geospatial maps can enable a more equitable distribution of a needful knowledge: that is, it can teach its readers that just as Hurricane Katrina was a manmade failure of flood protection, the geographical boundaries of a place are as constructed as its political and digital borders. The network of canals, waterways, and bridges that strikes Sutter as fantastical is, in fact, a too-real construction of the same "fever dreams" that brought finance capitalism to the Deep South to build plantations.[28] The lakes that are not quite lakes—Borgne, Pontchartrain—have been dredged to make room for massive oil tankers. The landscape *is* fantasy: the fantasy of men with dollar signs in their eyes. Industry carves a violent, nonconsensual cartography into the flooded, oil-rich United States and global souths that has profited a few and flooded the rest.

But smartphone mapping, too, may be defined by its "leakiness." Because of its centrality to the neoliberal economy, it "erodes the distinction between the revolutionary and the conventional, public and private, work and leisure, fascinating and boring, hype and reality, amateur and professional, democracy and trolling."[29] It might also make visible the invisible flows of capital. A responsive digital map could offer a key fleshed out not simply by scale, but by time and artificiality, by points and shadings that demarcate features built for oil and gas. In New Orleans, Mr. Go; in New York, dredge marks that show the expansion of Manhattan's land and the ghosts of its freshwater ponds. Instead, Sutter's tweet-storm evades or even excuses the slow-motion hurricane of Louisiana's land loss by asserting the unreality of a persistently vulnerable place; New Orleans becomes a city without a history. This distortion lands like another shot to the gut, considering how often its history has been celebrated as consolation prize for the notion that it has no future.

Freelancers in the business of fantasy—role-playing games, speculative novels—draw by hand, emblazoning unreal cities with Germanic fonts and Gothic features. But like the local cartographers of Judgmental Maps, Sutter simply uses screenshots from Google Maps with his own textual additions. As a result, he proffers a branded map, where the red names Crowne Plaza French Quarter and Renaissance New Orleans Warehouse District Hotel take up more space than labels for waterways. Four years before Sutter's critique, restaurant critic and Katrina survivor Brett Anderson wrote a long-form essay on *Medium* to fleetingly record the changed shape of Louisiana. Though Louisianans and people farther afield are accustomed to hearing that the state loses "a football field every hour to coastal erosion," we are simultaneously visually assailed with the branded image of its boot shape.[30] If we take climate change seriously, we must acknowledge not only the way land loss chips away at the state's shape, but that the small screens of our smartphones provide distance from that flux.

Cutlass or Compass

Lush with images of gators and pelicans, with sousaphones morphing into cypress trees, Solnit and Snedeker's *Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas* shares with Sutter an inclination toward the fantastic, even if its tone leans toward passionate attachment to (not skepticism of) the Crescent City. Describing New Orleans as at "the bottom" of the continent and its riverways,

but also "at the center of the American unconscious," it offers "immortal wellsprings" of popular culture and "hard ground of disputed memory."[31] That is to say that the politics of the city are its environment, and its environment political. Considering that aesthetic (and the book's lavish production), it is curious that the maps within it are so hyper-realist, wedded to the same immediately identifiable templates used by Sutter and the wags at Judgmental Maps. They offer maps with names like "Ebb and Flow," "Sites of Contemplation and Delight," and "Snakes and Ladders" (wherein ladders are acts of Katrina heroism, and snakes are acts of destruction, often at the hands of the police). But the waterline is exactly where you would expect to find it, were you to imagine New Orleans as fixed in place, rather than harried by the River, the Gulf, and Pontchartrain.[32] Only one of its twenty-two maps offers the representational surreal necessary to represent the "specifically cartographic problem [. . .] of stuff that is neither solid nor liquid": images in the chapter "Oil and Water: Extracting Petroleum, Exterminating Nature" show the city beset by seabirds, casting shadows over the city and the state.[33] But there, below their vulnerable, oil-slicked wingspan is the Boot, a familiar shape that appears on every Louisiana highway sign. If you have ever had the dubious pleasure of sitting in a Louisiana courtroom or visiting one of its infamous prisons, you may also notice that the Boot provides an insouciant belt buckle for swaggering prison wardens and guards.

The marketing of the Boot is relentless. But for fourteen years, the state of Louisiana has failed to produce an updated paper map of its own borders, so the shape is merely memory of what has been lost since the last survey. As Solnit and Snedeker argue, a paper map enables you to "take charge," while digital mapping requires you "take orders."[34] To this I would add and affirm the paradox that this essay struggles with: the most flexible technology is, in fact, as unlikely to get an update as its analog parent. In early 2014, Brett Anderson began his remapping of Louisiana by searching for a paper map, documents once produced by the United States Geological Survey and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. The former no longer produces paper maps, allowing analog navigators to print from their website instead. The latter prints in response to demand; in 2014, the organization still possessed a stockpile from 2000, so no demand existed or seemed to. This condition leaves Louisiana in a permanent stasis, where the paper map retains authority, while the ubiquity of the digital map delays its revision and reproduction. Travelers and residents alike depend on Google Maps, a re-

source "programmed to spit out the granular information we need to get from point A to point B."[35] That information does not, incidentally, consider the environmental effects of the driving it encourages and enables; its tendency to route drivers onto secondary roads to avoid delays has proven that their "perfect selfishness" leads to "deterioration of driving conditions."[36] Friction-free capitalism: move fast and break things.

With mappers and fishers, Brett Anderson went in search of the state's shape, and found a body butchered and bleeding: "on our map, the real map, the boot appears as if it came out on the wrong side of a battle with a lawnmower's blades. It loses a painful chunk off its heel in Cameron and Vermilion parishes. A gash cutting off the bird's-foot delta [. . .] from the center of the state is reason to consider amputation."[37] What startles me in this image is not the desiccated bird's foot displacing the Boot, but the tenuousness of its attachment to the rest of the national body. Louisiana, an ambivalent and belated entry to the settler-colonializing United States, sits precariously at the edge of a nation that once annexed it and is now determined to quarantine its coming climate catastrophe. Ideologically diffuse and motile, Louisiana's body is its objective correlative. Neoliberalism contracts state power, forcing those of us who live in space—which is to say, all of us—into such derealization that we cannot visualize the ground on which we are standing, or locate it through official channels. We rely, instead, on digital resources on the privatized internet. In resistance, Brett Anderson has made his revision of the Boot available for distribution. (See Fig. 7.2.) Long ago, another environmentalist, the poet Gary Snyder, said that his work "may be reproduced free forever."[38] But how long will forever last?

Below New Orleans, the land evaporates even on the inaccurate, obsolete Google Maps iteration of the state. Press a wet sponge and let the water burst from the pores, or sew tissue together and watch the needle "shred [. . .] and rip with every stitch."[39] Manhattan is a fist, and San Francisco is a heart, but New Orleans, as Solnit and Snedeker argue, is the fragile liver that swallows the poison the rest of the nation consumes. These images—the sponge of the sea, the sponginess of the body—will give one a firmer visual sense of Louisiana than any obsolete map or fixed navigational instruction can. "All the texture you've got going on in here? It looks rad, I'll give you that," writes Sutter. "But killing yourself like this in a map turnover is pointless, because no cartographer is going to bother recreating every little puddle."[40] The language used by Solnit and Snedeker, Anderson, and Sutter four years apart, and in

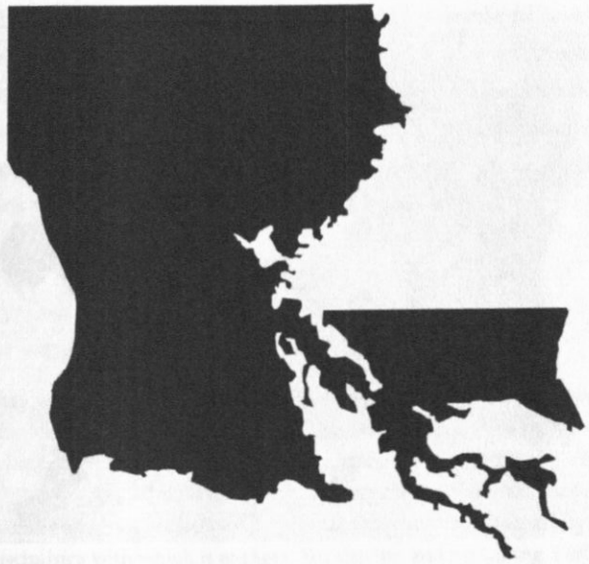

Fig. 7.2. The Revised Boot. Image in Brett Anderson, "Louisiana Loses Its Boot," September 8, 2014.

dramatically different idioms, has a curious symmetry. Louisiana bleeds out in a surgical bay, its liver dissolving in a doctor's hands. Louisiana runs over its foot with a lawnmower. Louisiana kills itself. In the face of its self-injury, entirely too few people in power will map what has been lost, plan for the losses to come, or put the blame where it is due when catastrophe arrives on routes accelerated by and for industry.

Down in Terrebonne Parish, Anderson and his traveling companions see a watercolor by Brooks Frederick called "No Means No"; in it, a male-bodied figure who looks as though he has been plucked from a Kara Walker silhouette fucks Lake Pontchartrain.[41] (See Fig. 7.3.)

Louisiana appears as a representatively vulnerable and feminized body ripe for exploitation. So much is excused in New Orleans with regard to its decadence, its decay, and its status as a company town for Marriott and British Petroleum. Its decadence lures people here; its wild hurricane parties don't even leave the storm off the guest list. Often framed as an antonym for progress, decadence is a word that dogs New Orleans, but the word "fits squarely within the all-too-visible operations of so-called progress in the modern world, with all its excesses of production and consumption, extraction and exploita-

Fig. 7.3. Drill me deep and never leave. "No Means No," watercolor, courtesy of Brooks Frederick. Image featured in Brett Anderson, "Louisiana Loses Its Boot," September 8, 2014.

tion, waste and inevitable fallout in the pursuit of profit."[42] Suffice to say, it is not sex and license that hasten decay; a cash and carry economy kills. Mediated affective attachments to New Orleans remove friction from the path of petrochemical capitalism.

The mayor's office and municipal buildings where I vote and pay taxes (though paying *attention* is the far more essential qualification for living in New Orleans) sit on Perdido Street. After Katrina, there was a period of political tension about the presence and permanence of Latinx recovery workers; it was not uncommon to hear New Orleanians complain about the sound of Spanish conversation, as though the city were not itself part of the Spanish Caribbean. The contemporary mayor's office and city hall were built on a street with a Spanish name; it is scarcely the only one, though its name bears more symbolic weight than Salcedo, Lopez, Galvez, and Miro. *Perdido*, after all, means *lost*. Long ago, when I spent too much time on bar stools, I heard a potentially apocryphal story. According to my interlocutor, it was once the case that every neighborhood in New Orleans had a street called *Perdido*. Surveyors noted that people called the lowest-lying street in the neighborhood by that Spanish name because they could watch as it got lost under water when rain

came. But in a functioning, modern city, it wasn't possible to have seventeen streets called Perdido: one for every ward. And so they were lost to regularized maps that militated against repetition. Power preserved Perdido Street for itself and, with it, the capacity to conceal our shape, our loss, and the ground we have ceded to the design of destruction. To borrow Sutter's phrasing: such are the "rules of a real-world city."[43]

NOTES

Dedicated to Tom Nehrbass.

1. This essay was written with research support from the Department of English and the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies at the University of Mississippi, as well as intellectual support from Robert Tally (scholar of space) and Michele White (scholar of new media), who augmented my limited, exploratory claims about the spaces in which I live. This essay is therefore a collaboration between the familiar space of my city and the unfamiliar disciplines with which it engages. For driving and navigating, I offer thanks to Chip and to Tom.

2. Though Judgmental Maps is searchable by city, local maps do not generate unique web addresses for reference. Interested parties can look for New Orleans, Big Sur, Brooklyn, Atlanta, New Jersey, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Mississippi, and Memphis.

3. Van Huygen, "How Nine New Orleans Neighborhoods Got Their Names." Among the curious spectacles of post-Katrina life in New Orleans is the persistent advocacy from left and right alike for the preservation of "traditional" lifeways, as though the age of name or durability of a practice is an argument for its maintenance, and as though there is one authentic habitation for one's subject position. Shannon Powell, New Orleans drummer and neighborhood fixture, reminded *Mental Floss* in 2017 that "Treme" is a name that is at once historical and bracingly new, winking at long-dead planter Claude Treme (1759–1828), who gave his surname to the blocks around Place des Nègres, or Congo Square. Before gentrification of the neighborhood, that name was not widely used—or even offered in its French pronunciation—by its longtime residents.

4. Eckstein, *Sustaining New Orleans*, 9.

5. Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*.

6. Lee and Brand, "Claiborne Avenue." Committed to "equity, integrity, and collaboration," Paper Monuments produces ephemeral paper installations for display in New Orleans public spaces, from street corners to the lobby of the Public Library. Past projects are viewable on their website; they continue to take proposals for new ones. In this endnote, I link to the Paper Monument for Claiborne Avenue, the thoroughfare for African American cultural production that was eroded but not destroyed by the construction of the I-10 Corridor through Treme in 1968.

7. Ulrik Andersen and Pold, *The Metainterface*, 98. Digital media theorists Christian Ulrik Andersen and Soren Bro Pold argue that the jargon around smartphones establishes

a tension between "personal" and "private," words that have long been treated as virtually synonymous. Hence, users treat their phones as extensions of their bodies, but handle them with every expectation of state surveillance.

8. Brown, Baldridge, Esteva, and Zu, "The Substantial Words Are in the Ground and Sea," 326.

9. Burrito Justice, "Judgmental Map of San Francisco in the 1860s."

10. For information on the Shadow App and the chaotic caucus, see Schneider, "What We Know about the App That Delayed Iowa's Caucus Results." For a critique of Barnes & Noble's "literary blackface," see De León, "Barnes & Noble, Criticized for Book Covers, Pulls Plug on Diverse Editions Project."

11. Andersen and Pold, *The Metainterface*, 81.

12. Ibid., 108–9.

13. Ibid., 105–7.

14. See Noble's *Algorithms of Oppression*.

15. For a brilliant eulogy on the "good internet," and consideration of its place in the canon of required reading for undergraduates, see Maciak, "The Good Internet Is History." Maciak borrows the term "the good internet"—a name for the years in which ambitious editors curated early work by writers from Jia Tolentino to Hanif Abdurraqib—from Gawker founder Nick Denton, whose website was maliciously targeted for closure by Paypal founder Peter Thiel. Despite Thiel's legitimate frustration with Gawker, which outed him as gay, his willingness to fund onerous lawsuits against the organization has measurably reduced outlets for investigative journalism on the internet.

16. Gates, *The Road Ahead*, 180.

17. Baum, *Nine Lives*, xiii.

18. Sutter, "Holy cow."

19. Baum, *Nine Lives*, x.

20. These adjectives reference scholarship and popular writing on New Orleans. The texts include Cowen and Seifter, *The Inevitable City;* Lewis, *New Orleans;* Powell, *The Accidental City;* and Solnit and Snedeker, *Unfathomable City.*

21. Kolbert, "Louisiana's Disappearing Coast."

22. Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, 63. I borrow this phrase, which Chun uses to describe the minimization and habituation of catastrophe on platforms like Twitter, to think about what might be gained by a more responsive, adaptable new media environment.

23. Sutter, "And then there's this thing."

24. Grunwald and Glasser, "The Slow Drowning of New Orleans."

25. Solnit and Snedeker, *Unfathomable City*, 2.

26. Tarantino, *Reservoir Dogs.*

27. Moore, "10 Years Post-Katrina."

28. Despite the long associations of southernness and premodernity, the slow states of the Deep South were the fast-moving capitals of capital in antebellum America. "Already vital to the American economy by the start of the 1830s," writes Joshua Rothman, "over the course of the decade cotton crops brought to market by southwestern growers swelled capital accumulation that accelerated national economic development, furthered the rising position of the United States as a global power, and cemented cotton's place as the most significant commodity on earth." Rothman, *Flush Times and Fever Dreams*, 3.

29. Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, 12–13.

30. Baurick, "Is Louisiana Really Losing a Football Field of Land Per Hour?"

31. Solnit and Snedeker, *Unfathomable City*, frontispiece.

32. Ibid., 20, 38, 125.

33. Ibid., 3, 48–49.

34. Ibid., 4–5.

35. Anderson, "Louisiana Loses Its Boot."

36. Madrigal, "The Perfect Selfishness of Mapping Apps."

37. Anderson, "Louisiana Loses Its Boot."

38. Snyder, "Smokey the Bear Sutra."

39. Solnit and Snedeker, *Unfathomable City*, 2.

40. Sutter, "Okay, all the texture you've got going on in here?"

41. Anderson, "Louisiana Loses Its Boot."

42. Azzarello, *Three Hundred Years of Decadence*, 7.

43. Sutter, "Anyway."

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