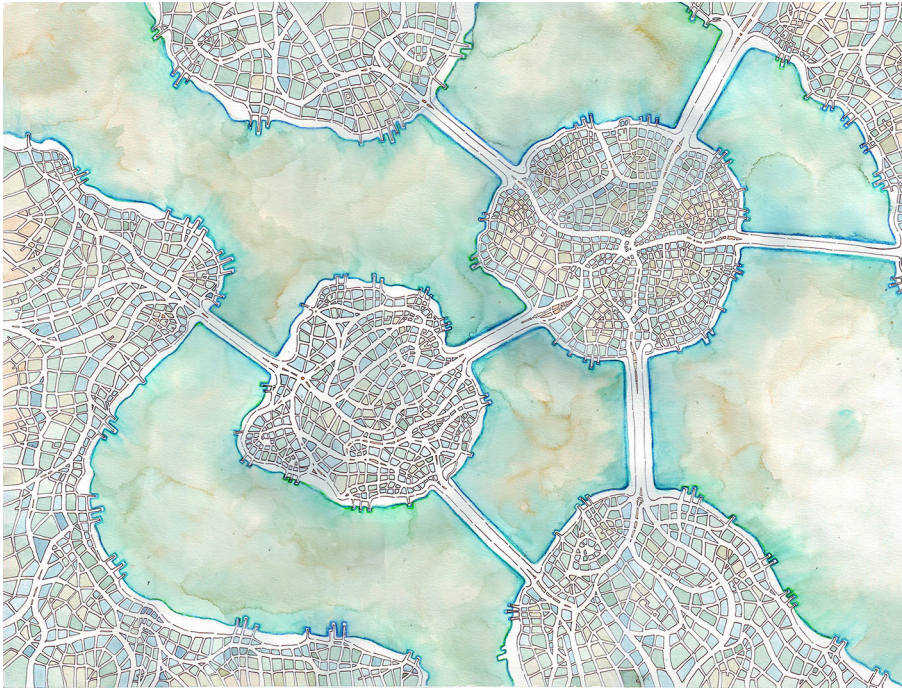

About the Cover



Cover image: ‘Cityspace #179’ © Emily Garfield.

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On 12 April 1961, Yuri Gagarin became the first human being to orbit the Earth. Ferdinand Magellan had, in 1519–1522, circumnavigated the Earth, but neither had he experienced the roundness of the firmament nor had his experience been shared by society, unlike the world’s media participation in Vostok 1’s voyage. Gagarin was the first to have seen, in Mandeville’s words, “alle the roundness of the firmament alle aboute” (Mandeville, 1967, 133):

During the flight I saw for the first time with my own eyes the Earth’s spherical shape. You can see its curvature when looking to the horizon. I must say the view of the horizon is quite unique and very beautiful. [...]



There was a bright orange strip along it, which again passed into a blue hue and once again into a dense black colour (Anonymous, 1961).

His voyage became tangible evidence, a reassuring proof that our view of the world was correct. Naturally, this dazzling conquest of experience was exploited ideologically, and Gagarin (or, rather, his speechwriters) swiftly ascertained that the cosmonaut-traveler saw neither angels nor God during his 108-minute trip beyond the stratosphere. There is a circular irony buried in Gagarin's literalism: Yuri, the world's material messiah to the Heavens, fulfilled Mandeville's prophetic wish to experience and see the spherical shape of the Earth.

Gagarin's seen experience of the Earth's roundness collapsed all sense of scale. His flight echoes the imagined experience of Will, who surveyed Earth from Mount Middle-earth in *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, or Geoffrey, who enjoyed a vista of our planet while being carried in the eagle's talons in *The House of Fame*. Where Will and Geoffrey see how Nature's pattern weaves all existence together, how it connects all creation with itself through *kynde*, Yuri was the first to see the spherical shape that connects all existence, a blue ball spinning its countless parts into place. With Gagarin's flight, all experience of scale became relative.

Emily Garfield's maps of imaginary cities are snapshots of urban organisms, conflating the probable with the impossible, the living with the built, as they model and subvert analogies that tie urban space to microbiological life. Here, too, scale is rendered relative, circular even, as the bird's-eye view afforded to an airplane traveling at cruising altitude becomes indistinguishable from the microscopic lens that reveals the innermost secrets of biological cells. The islands and waterways in *Cityspace #179* express their external connectivity through bridges, proximity, and even the small piers that appear to reach out to nearby shores. But when viewed as cells and arteries, the islands and basins in this work articulate a deep sense of structural connectivity by virtue of inhabiting and sustaining a larger organism. In other words, Garfield's irreverent flaunting of scale allows us to see the connectivity of islands in the sea.

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