

Sphering the Square

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The world is flat! You may have heard,
From some suspect blue-checked ex-bird.
But before you raise vociferous objection,
Pray bend an ear to this: Projection!

Start with Mercator, adored, maligned,
Set course for truth in one straight line.
"But how can it be," the neophyte cries,
"That Greenland is such a marvelous size?"

Cylindrical, then, tis not so fair,
Let's conform it conically, à la Lambert.
Of course the problem we then decant:
No parallels can line with the secant.

But can we not make all else equal?
Preserve the relative area per Wiechal?
Pseudoazimuth, all bets to hedges,
The only concern comes at the edges.

Perhaps you'll dare to take a Stab,
A pseudoconic equal jab
Right through the heart for a map learner
And leap into the world of Werner!

Well, think of an orange, pull off the peel,
Press it flat, 2D, wholemeal.
You'll see the problem; Monmonier's thesis,
To flat the sphere is always specious.

So when need be for a spatial caper,
Some formula to put the world to paper,
Tell all your friends, "The world is round!
At least for those of us earthbound!"

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Author's note:

Two years ago, I was perusing the archives of the bulletin and stumbled upon a poem¹ that was read aloud at the 1973 conference. I re-read it for the 2023 conference, and was inspired to craft a new one for 2025. The subject of map projections is perennial and rife with possibility for lively turns of phrase.

¹Daniels, R. (1973). "Come one and all who show with pride" [poem]. *Bulletin - Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives (ACMLA)*, (13), 7-8. <https://doi.org/10.15353/acmla.n3>