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# Mapping Discourse in R.H. Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*

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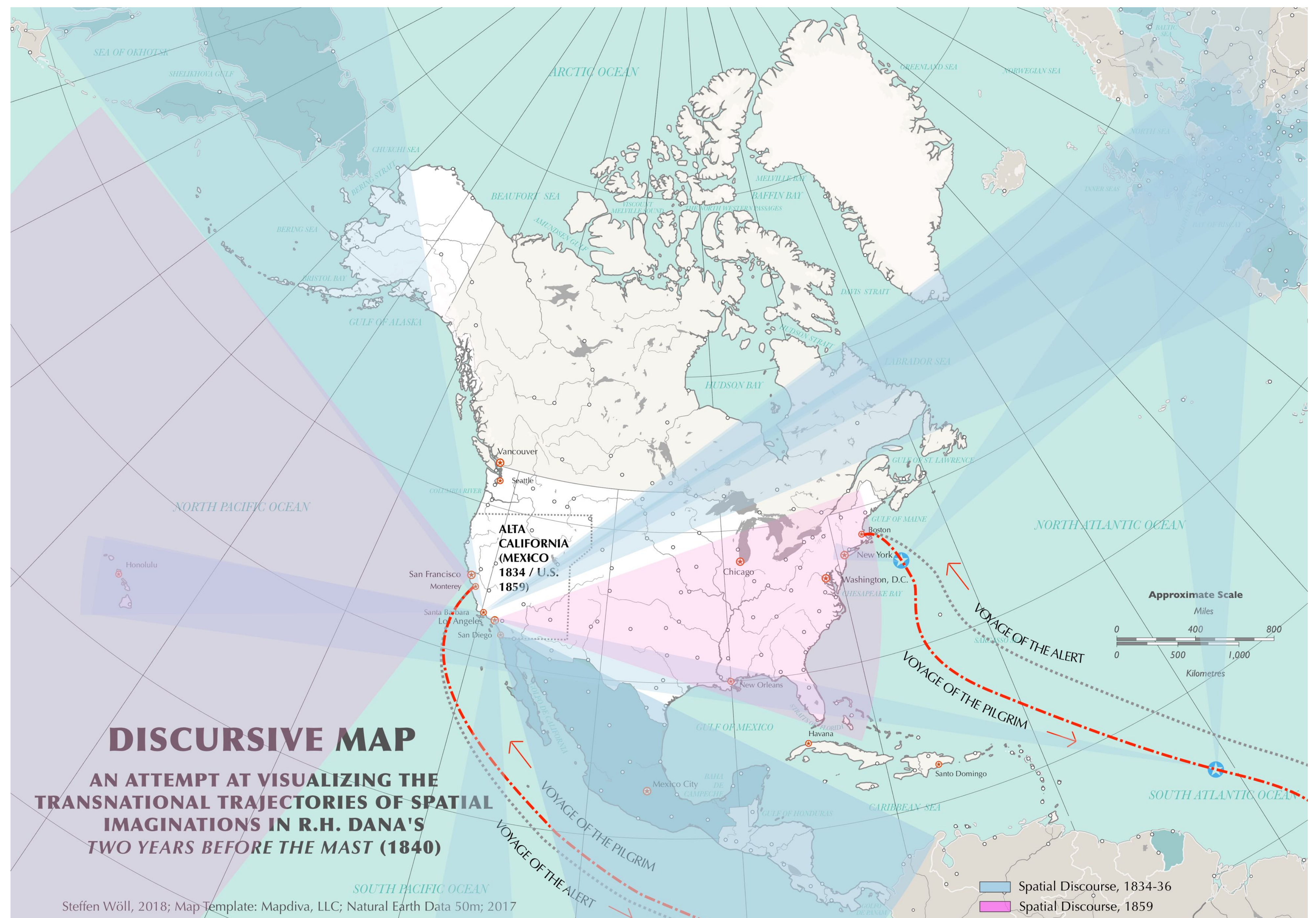
Dissertation Project: "The West and the Word: Imagining, Formatting, and Ordering the American West in Nineteenth-Century Cultural Discourse"

## DESCRIPTION

When **Richard Henry Dana Jr.** visited San Francisco in 1859 after being away for almost a quarter of a century, he found that he had become a man of considerable fame on the West Coast. Coming from a well-to-do family, instead of traveling to the chic resorts of Europe, the young Dana had signed up as a common sailor aboard the *Pilgrim*, headed for California. Because the resulting 1840 book was one of the few (and perhaps the most readable) accounts of California written in English, it **shaped the expectations of many Americans** who moved to the newly acquired western territories after the Mexican-American War.

In my attempt of **mapping the spatial discourses** present in Dana's text, **the blue beams visualize key imaginations during the *Pilgrim's* voyage and Dana's stay on the West Coast from 1834-1836** where he was occupied in processing animal hides and observing the social life in the towns that were still a part of Mexico. These 'discursive beams' **appear diverse, global, and transnational in their outreach**, revealing imagined connections of California with many locations on the globe. They depict California as an assemblage that was at the same time contested and highly interconnected with transnational spaces.

**The purple beams represent Dana's vision of California during his second visit in 1859** and make visible a shift towards the role of the region in national and global contexts. Dana euphorically described the transformation of San Francisco from a picturesque village to the imperial capital of **"the sole emporium of a new world, the awakened Pacific."** This new imagination of S.F. and California had merely two large reference points. First, **the American nation-state**, of whom the region is a proud yet subordinate constituent. And second, **the Pacific hemisphere** with its markets and resources that are open for imperial exploitation.



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## REFERENCES

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