

**Maps of Medieval Thought.
The Hereford Paradigm.**

By Naomi Reed Kline. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001. 261pp., 93 figures. Hardbound. ISBN 0 85115 602 9.

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The fourteenth century mappae mundi located in the Hereford Cathedral in England has captured the interest of scholars in many disciplines, and in this volume, Naomi Reed Kline provides a look at the map from the perspective of the art historian. Her premise is that the careful study and examination of medieval mappae mundi can expand our knowledge and understanding of not only maps, but also medieval art and thought. This lavishly illustrated text, with a color frontispiece of the map and 93 black and white pictures and diagrams, provides a thorough analysis of the content of the map, and the context in which it was created.

The book is divided into four parts, and begins with an investigation of the use of the circle as a conceptual device, not only in mapping, but in other aspects of medieval life as well. The second section is devoted to the specifics of the Hereford map, with one chapter focused on its authorship and patronage, and a second on the medieval map audience. The third and largest component of the volume investigates the symbolization on the map, giving a detailed analysis of the types of animals, monstrous races, secular events such as the voyages of Alexander, and religious events such as the Crusades, that are portrayed on the map. The author concludes with a summary of cartographic context of the Hereford Map and explains how the model she outlines can be applied to the study other mappae mundi, in

particular the Sawley, Dutchy of Cornwall, Psalter, and Ebsdorf maps. The book contains extensive annotations and footnotes throughout the text, a comprehensive bibliography with over 390 entries, and an index.

Maps of Medieval Thought undertakes the detailed examination of the Hereford map, and other circular world views from the Middle Ages, in order to discover how they functioned as objects of art during their own time. The author suggests that maps such as the one in the Hereford Cathedral were not simply representations of geographic space, but were used to illustrate the connection between the worldly realm of geography and the heavenly sphere of creation and the Last Judgment. Included in the volume is a thorough and meticulous categorization and explanation of the pictorial and text symbols on the map. The argument is that any understanding of the text and symbols must be framed within the map reading context of the medieval viewer, and that consideration needs to be given to the narrative role of the map as a device used to help interpret a series of events. By creating a guide for viewing and deconstructing the Hereford map, the author has provided a model that can be transferred to other medieval maps and artifacts.

This volume is well researched, and represents a major contribution to the scholarship regarding the Hereford map. Kline has done an admirable job of integrating the contributions from many disciplines, including cartography, art, and history, to create a useful, comprehensive summary of the literature regarding the Hereford Map. The unique characteristics of the map that allow it to warrant such detailed analysis are first its age, which at over 600 years make it one of our single most important map artifacts. The second

noteworthy characteristic is the size of the map, over five feet in diameter on a single piece of parchment, which is a remarkable technological achievement. Kline provides us with the important details of the history and origins of the map and her record of its provenance is in concurrence with the findings of other scholars. In many ways the Hereford map shares several generic traits with other circular maps of the time period. But the author also notes its many custom details that indicate it was perhaps commissioned for a specific client, most likely, Richard of Haldingham. In that the map is also ornately inscribed with elegant text and related drawings suggests that it was intended for public viewing, so Richard may have commissioned the work in order to put it on display in the Cathedral at Hereford or elsewhere.

As the story of the Hereford map unfolds, several intriguing ideas are put forward by the author. She focuses on the role of the map as a storage device for information, and suggests that medieval viewers retrieved information from the map in a variety of ways. The function or purpose of the circular world map is similar to that of rotae, or circular diagrams, common in medieval schoolbooks. These diagrams work as visual and mnemonic devices to help the reader categorize and memorize the textual information. In the medieval audience both the reading and non-reading individuals may have used the many images on the map as prompts to recall tales and stories, giving the map a role within a larger narrative. One can imagine that the Hereford map was designed for display and perhaps used much as a wall map would be in a classroom today, with a teacher pointing out important places and relating the tales and stories of the various

figures on the map. Or perhaps a medieval museum guide could be found explaining the artistic nature of the map symbols to a group of medieval tourists. The author builds a good case for such a use of the map, and provides many supporting examples from both art and architecture.

One of the most engaging components of this volume is the extensive analysis of the many layers of the Hereford map. These layers include the worlds of animals, people, contemporary events, and events of religious significance. The author suggests that many of the animals portrayed on the map are similar to the animals mentioned in medieval bestiaries. These bestiaries were collections of animal lore that were often used as a moral handbook for Christians, sort of a combination of folklore and theology. These animal images are interpreted at many levels, as an indication of the real and imagined beasts, and also as symbols of the great diversity of all of God's creation.

The analysis of these various worlds pays attention to the details of each symbol, and tends to focus on the objects themselves, rather than their arrangement in geographic space. For example, several placenames are mentioned in relation to the life and travels of Alexander and the Crusades, but the author tends to emphasize the event rather than the place. In the discussion of the travels of Alexander, the author notes that there are 69 placenames on the map relating to the events in Alexander's life. The spatial arrangement of these places seems to be minimized because of the stylized and abstract nature of the representation of space on the map. On page 98 the author notes that the animals are "...scattered like buckshot" on the map, and that place merely acts as a backdrop for the animal symbols. Also,

the Crusades are emphasized as a spiritual journey, rather than the actual travel across the earth.

The volume contains useful and detailed schematic diagrams of the map, which function as guides to the location of various features discussed within the volume, such as the races of people, or types of animals. The diagram on page 50 looks at "The Frame as Time", with numbers added as a key to the various symbols adorning the border of the map. A table is included on the page facing the schematic, which then explains each numbered figure or symbol. For example, the three men in the lower left corner of the map frame are identified as surveyors, and the accompanying caption provides an explanation of their role on the map.

There are six of these schematics for different topics on the map: the cosmological wheel, the frame as time, the world of animals, the world of monstrous races, the world of Alexander, and the world of the Bible. But there is no single schematic for the various placenames on the map, though some places are included in the sections on secular and religious events. It might have been appropriate to include a section, or at least a schematic diagram, on "The Frame as Space", which could coordinate nicely with the chapter and diagram on "The Frame as Time". Placenames are mentioned several times throughout the text, and it is assumed that the reader would or should know where they are, both in reality and also within the context of the map. But this is not necessarily true, and without a guide to the placenames on the map, it is difficult for the reader to reconstruct the relationships among these places or pick them up from the other schematic diagrams. This lack of attention to the nature of geographic space creates an imbalance in the coverage of this

volume. Even though this map is an abstract representation of geographic space, with scale not true across the image, some of the topological relationships remain important. At times, the author seems to maximize the role of the Hereford map as a compendium of information and a "universal chronicle" and minimize its role as the type of representation of geographic space that was familiar and known to the medieval viewer.

At times the use of lengthy and extensive annotations interrupts the flow of the narrative. Several pages have a few lines of text, with the remaining space devoted to parenthetical information. But these criticisms are minor and will not distract the true mappae mundi aficionado. And the extensive references provide a great starting point for newer researchers just discovering the world of medieval mapping.

The author makes a strong case for the inclusion of the Hereford Map within the greater tradition of medieval learning, and suggests it should take its place alongside the other remaining original images and texts of the medieval world. Kline's work will appeal to art historians, medieval scholars, and cartographic historians, and will provide a worthy challenge for the general cartography student. Kline is to be commended for providing cartographers with a glimpse of the artistic connotations of the Hereford mappae mundi. The art world could have benefited from a more detailed analysis of the geographic context, no matter how abstract or stylized it is rendered on the map. The fact remains that this image in the Hereford Cathedral is not a rotae, bestiary, building frieze, or painting. It is a map.