

Alida C. Metcalf, *Mapping an Atlantic World, circa 1500*

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020. Pp. 224.
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As the author notes, this book began with an interest in early maps of Brazil. Metcalf went from questioning how Brazil was depicted by early cartographers to asking larger questions about how the Atlantic region came to be the focus of exploration and mapping. In *Mapping an Atlantic World, circa 1500*, Metcalf seeks to present a comprehensive thesis: that early maps of this area ‘offered a vivid new image of the Atlantic Ocean and persuasively promoted an interconnected Atlantic World’ (p. 3). In other words, mapping created a new ‘historical moment’, a realization that there was a more comprehensive geography: one that included Europe, the west coast of Africa and the Americas.

The author begins with a look at maps and representations prior to the period in question. Chapter 1 thus examines ancient Greek views of the Atlantic Ocean, medieval world maps, and especially the 1450 cartographic work of Fra Mauro. The chapter ends with a discussion of the famed globe of Martin Behaim, and notes a transition from the ancient and medieval view of the Atlantic as peripheral or simply unknown to an object of purposeful investigation and exploration. This is a very useful introduction in the context of Metcalf’s main theme. However, one quibble is that the bibliographic entries for this chapter do not mention a work that has almost the exact same focus, *A Sea Discovered: Pre-Columbian Conceptions and Depictions of the Atlantic Ocean* (Toronto, 1994), an extensive work by this reviewer that would have provided further background and analysis.

Chapter 2 presents what Metcalf sees as a critical shift, with the maps that begin to appear after the initial voyage of Columbus. The 1500 *Carta Universal* of Juan de la Cosa, the later *Carta del Cantino* and the 1507 map by Martin Waldseemüller are presented as marking a ‘new vision of the world in two hemispheres’ (p. 30), with their particularly notable delineation of the Atlantic Ocean as an important space between Europe, Africa and the Americas. This chapter conveys clearly the picture of a European community of navigators, cartographers and mapmakers (and printers and engravers) bringing together knowledge of the Atlantic world.

Chapter 3 looks at specific chartmakers, and here the author applies some of her historical and cultural interpretation, noting, for example, that the compass rose on the *Carta Universal* ‘does more than simply present knowledge about geography’ (p. 48); rather, Metcalf argues, this iconography emphasizes that the Atlantic Ocean can be navigated, and safely. This is part of what Metcalf sees as the role of charts and maps in representing this Atlantic space as one of commerce and connection. The subsequent chapter examines the appearance of printed maps, and how that led to a societal conception of a map as an everyday object.

In Chapter 5, Metcalf makes the important observation that maps contain not just outlines and toponyms, but also imagery, and she discusses how those images rendered meaning in the cartography of this period. She examines the colours used by mapmakers, the depiction of animals, and especially the inclusion of parrots in the New World and Africa. The book also argues that vignettes such as one of a Portuguese trading post in Africa on the *Carta del Cantino* are signifiers of the importance of Atlantic trade. Again, Metcalf does well in contextualizing this kind of cartographic and artistic activity historically – calling these images ‘visual codes’, she argues that ‘they documented the

circulation of peoples and animals through the Atlantic' (p. 109). A final chapter analyses images of cannibalism in sixteenth-century maps, with a historical and cultural critique concerning how those images reified and reinforced anthropological stereotypes.

In her conclusion, Metcalf cites a traditional history of cartography argument – that of J. B. Harley – which states that maps are an exercise of power, objects that make legitimate a state's claim to territory and the authority of the state's military conquests. Metcalf argues a contrary point, stating that the first recording of the Atlantic regions by map-makers betrays no clear sense of this kind of 'control'. These early cartographers made their own decisions in terms of depictions and representations, and determined how the Atlantic world would come to be visualized and understood. For Metcalf, 'chartmakers and mapmakers were historical actors', with a marked degree of independence of terms of how they created works for their audience (p. 141).

For historians of cartography, the maps presented by Metcalf are well known, and some of the accounts and descriptions here – such as that concerning the Waldseemüller map – have been presented by other recent writers. However, *Mapping an Atlantic World, circa 1500* places those cartographic pieces in a different perspective, and indeed Metcalf describes herself as a 'social and cultural historian' entering 'into the world of historical maps' (p. xi).

For historians of science who do not specialize in cartography, Metcalf's book thus provides an excellent introduction to both mapping of this period and the building of an Atlantic locus in terms of European views of the world, and subsequent exploration and trade. The book is well organized and systematic in its historical presentation, and the reproductions, including several colour plates, are both attractive and useful. It should be noted that while the bibliography includes a listing of all the cartographic works discussed in the book, the author also has set up a website (<https://acm5.blogs.rice.edu>) that has digital reproductions of all the figures and plates from the book. These are highly recommended, as readers should examine these maps and their imagery in detail.

Mapping an Atlantic World, circa 1500 will be a highly engaging book for historians of science who wish to learn about the practice and importance of cartographers in this period. In addition, the book presents the beginnings of an intriguing argument that, through the work of mapmakers, along with explorers and navigators, the focus of European attention shifted to the western seas, and created new concept – that of the Atlantic world.

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Nancy Rose Marshall (ed.), *Victorian Science and Imagery: Representation and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture*

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A welcome development in the history of science in recent decades has been an increased focus on the interactions between the sciences and the visual arts. Nancy Rose Marshall