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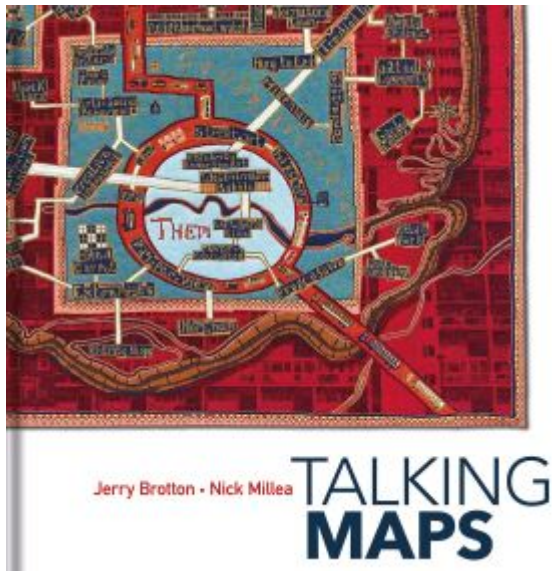


Figure 1: Talking Maps book cover.

Brotton, Jerry and Nick Millea. Talking Maps. Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2019. 205 p. \$55.00. LC: ISBN: 978-185124-515-4

Talking Maps, at first glance, is an exhibit catalog. The book was produced to accompany an exhibit at the Bodleian Library that was on display from July 2019 to March 2020. However, the book does more than simply reproduce the exhibit, it expands on the concept of maps as a conversation between the mapmaker, data gatherer, and map reader. Using maps from throughout history to illustrate the ties between story and cartography, the authors created an enjoyable read that is beautifully illustrated (there are 120 full color plates!).

The book is comprised of 10 chapters, each dedicated to a specific topic, where the connections between human experience, communication, and cartography are explored. The authors provide a brief history of cartography before launching the reader into their conversation around the function, style, and creation of maps. The conversational style of the book works incredibly well for the topic. The reader is directly asked, through sometimes open-ended questions, to think on the concepts being introduced, question their view of the world around them, and analyze how they interact with maps.

Personally, I was quite enamored with Chapter 8, which is focused on imaginary



cartographies. Using well known examples of imaginary maps, including More's Utopia, Stevenson's Treasure Island, and Lewis' Narnia, the reader is asked to critically examine the science and art of cartography. The authors ask us to consider what an imaginary map is, it easy to classify maps depicting fully unreal/imagined landscapes, but no map truly depicts the 'real' world. Rather every map is crafted by the mapmaker's decisions: what to include on the map and the inverse, what gets left off? Also included in this chapter are several of Tolkien's maps from *The Ambarkanta*, which show the formation and shaping of Arda before, during, and after the "Changing of the World." The authors' walk the reader through the well realized and in-depth world Tolkien created for his Legendarium and how Tolkien was influenced by "real" cartography and cartographic techniques

While there is diversity in the topics included in the book, the examples used to illustrate both the authors' arguments and the book itself are Eurocentric. The authors do acknowledge this in their introduction to the book, noting that the work is influenced by their specialization and the collection held at the Bodleian. Even with this (very much appreciated) acknowledgement, I believe the minimal inclusion of non-European focused or created maps is a disservice to the book. Scattered throughout the work are maps held in collections outside of the Bodleian, the book could have offered a more diverse and comprehensive view of the world by including more maps from other collections to emphasize the commonality and differences of cultural storytelling and world views on map making.

All in all, the book is an engaging read and a delight to the eyes. For those who are new to maps or curious about them, this is a great introduction to maps as social constructs. Individuals who are immersed in the world of maps will find a return to well-known and beloved cartographic works. As an object, the book is beautifully produced and eye-catching due to the bright colors and well produced images of the include maps. It would make a good addition to a library collection looking to expand their holdings on the social, artistic, and cultural influences on mapping.

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