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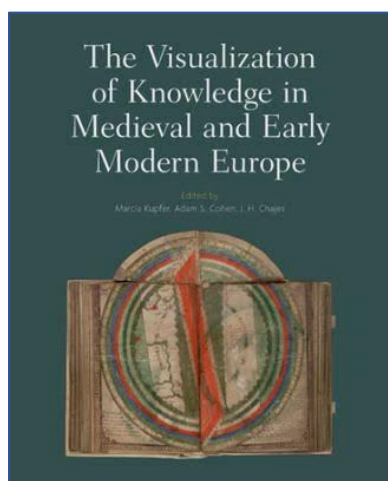
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PEREGRINATIONS

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Review of Marcia Kupfer, Adam S. Cohen, and J. H. Chajes, editors. *The Visualization of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2020.

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The meanings of diagrams, schematics, maps, sign systems, notations, and other visualizations of knowledge are at the core of Marcia Kupfer, Adam S. Cohen, and J. H. Chajes's recent edited volume *The Visualization of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Developed from a 2014-2015 working group and a 2016 workshop, the project was funded by the Israel Institute of Advanced Studies (IIAS) at Hebrew University, and the Israel Science Foundation. Like the workshop, the volume spans topics ranging from the 7th to the 17th centuries, and it features an introduction followed by 19 chapters divided into four thematic sections or parts: "Visualization between Hand and Mind;" "The Iconicity of Text;" "Graphic Vehicles of *Scientia*;" and, "Diagrammatic Traditions." Chapter authors include, in published order, Mary Carruthers, Lina Bolzoni, Jeffrey F. Hamburger, Beatrice Kitzinger, Lesley Smith, David

Stern, Ayelet Even-Ezra, Yuval Harari, A. Mark Smith, Barbara Obrist, Marcia Kupfer, Faith Wallis, John Haines, Peter Murray Jones, Linda Safran, Adam S. Cohen, Madeline H. Caviness, Lucy Freeman Sandler, and J. H. Chajes. Together, these chapters investigate diagrammatic, imagistic, iconic, figural, amuletic, and mnemonic shapes of images, texts, tables, diagrams, and other designs in medieval and early-modern manuscripts and prints, stained-glass windows, and architectural monuments. The authors probe the definitions of fraught terms like diagram or *figura*, covering Christian and Jewish material from the Latin West and Byzantium, as well as the transmission of Arabic learning to those contexts. In this way, *The Visualization of Knowledge* is a helpful guide for readers who are looking to tackle the complex world of premodern and early modern epistemologies and ontologies as well as diverse cognitive and image theories.

As Marcia Kupfer states in the introduction, the visualization of knowledge is a process that is not only made manifest through, but also requires, “the mutual interaction among mental imaging, language, and graphic mediation” (10). As the editors note in their Acknowledgments, the book was initially conceived to encompass a far wider geographic reach, but was ultimately tailored to focus on contexts in Western Europe and Byzantium. The inclusion of three chapters dedicated to Jewish knowledge cultures is especially welcome, as are the essays devoted to other areas of study often overlooked in mainstream art-historical scholarship on these topics. For example, John Haines’s short chapter on musical notation and Yuval Harari’s

contribution on Jewish magic manuals are exciting additions to the volume that complicate one's notion of medieval discourses on knowledge and knowledge gathering. Also complicating these notions of medieval knowledge systems, albeit in a Byzantine Christian context, is Linda Safran's striking chapter concerning Byzantine diagrams, a woefully understudied topic. Safran's chapter introduces a rich corpus of largely unknown materials, including the 14th-century *Meteorologica's* zodiacological diagram on fol. 279r (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS gr. 2244), a 15th-century manuscript with astrological excerpts, and a rendering of a Paschal or computistic hand used to help calculate the dates of the Easter full moon (London, Wellcome Library, MS MSL 60, fol. 61v).

When the work is read sequentially, there is a distinct rhythm to the layout of the sections and chapters. Because the book is organized chronologically, the reader is moved forward and then backward in time with each new section. With no clear section dividers or page breaks, it is this waffling back and forth between the early Middle Ages and the later premodern world that cues the reader that they are in a new section of the book. Part I, "Visualization between Mind and Hand," deals with issues of memory (Carruthers, Bolzoni) and the artistic and mental processes of formulating diagrams (Hamburger), with the authors offering condensed versions of their longer works. Carruthers ("Geometries for Thinking Creatively") returns to the diagram of the

Figure 1
Diagram of
cognition,
miscellany,
Cambridge,
University
Library, MS
Gg.I.I, fol.
490v. Photo:



cognition image from the Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. I.I miscellany (**Fig. 1**), so often cited in discussions of medieval memory, and reflects on its use in recent scholarship. She offers a refreshing reminder on the image's role as "the diagram of continuous process, not an anatomical map of separate material actors in the brain" (36). Hamburger ("Mindmapping: The Diagram as Paradigm in Medieval Art – and Beyond") then takes up the issue of defining diagrams, as well as exploring their entanglements with desire and worldbuilding (64). This essay is derived from the subjects of Hamburger's recent monograph, *Diagramming Devotion: Berthold of Nuremberg's Transformation of Hrabanus Maurus's Poems in Praise of the Cross* (Chicago University Press, 2019) and the edited volume with David J. Roxburgh and Linda Safran, *The Diagram as Paradigm: Cross-Cultural Approaches* (Harvard University Press, 2022).

Part II, "The Iconicity of Text," analyzes the composition of texts and images in manuscripts and prints, the roles of paratexts in Jewish magical contexts, and the functions of tree diagrams. A compelling conversation between Christian and Jewish modes of knowledge is put forth in the essays by L. Smith and Stern. Smith, in "Biblical Gloss and Commentary: The Scaffolding of Scripture," lays out how manuscript pages of the 12th century and beyond formulated hierarchies between Scripture and its commentary. Here, the history of the Gloss is distilled very effectively, although somewhat at the expense of decoration. This is followed by Stern's "The Topography of

the Talmudic Page,” which, in addition to providing a useful background of the Babylonian Talmud, takes up a similar question as L. Smith: probing the layout of the page and how it constructed and created hierarchies of knowledge. Discussing how Jewish scribes effectively—and creatively—appropriated the formats of Latin glossed manuscripts, Stern argues that while as Christians stressed coherency in their *Glossa*, Jews made “no attempt to summarize and present a single authoritative Jewish interpretation of the Bible” (145). Therefore, one should not be surprised to find that the formats in the Talmudic codices do not invite harmonization or systemization, but rather celebrate “the richness of Scripture’s meaning, its multiple meanings” (145). Both L. Smith and Stern, as well as other authors throughout the book, make use of their own excellent diagrams to explain the pages they examine.

Part II includes essays by Kitzinger, Even-Ezra, Harari, and A. Smith covering a broad swath of material, from Gospel books’ self-reflexivity, “staging” of knowledge, and how they bring the figural and diagrammatic together (Kitzinger, “Framing the Gospels, c. 1000: Iconicity, Textuality, and Knowledge”) to the relationship of form and content in scholastic tree diagrams (Even-Ezra, “Seeing the Forest Beyond the Trees: A Preliminary Overview of a Scholastic Habit of Visualization”). The two other chapters focus on Jewish magical texts and “the power of human language to act upon the world” (184) (Harari, “Functional Paratexts and the Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Jewish Manuscripts of Magic”), as well as the radical

changes brought forth by the new technologies of the printing press (A. Smith, “More than Meets the Eye: What Made the Printing Revolution Revolutionary”). The manifold connections among the verbal, visual, and diagrammatic are brought to the fore in Part II and weave a densely intricate web of how codices were used, performed, viewed, and studied in the medieval and early modern periods alike.

The third section of *The Visualization of Knowledge*—“Graphic Vehicles of *Scientia*”—brings the reader into the realm of medieval science, containing explorations of pre-modern worldbuilding (Obrist, Kupfer), constructions of time (Wallis), visualizations of music (Haines), and the codification of medicine (Jones). A highlight of this part is Haines’s short essay (“The Visualization of Music in the Middle Ages: Three Case Studies”), which introduces readers to the ways in which medieval musical notation and computus hands are intertwined with memory and astrology. Haines’s three case studies reveal the somatic qualities of medieval music theory, especially with regard to the Guidonian hand (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 55, fol. 168v) that is the subject of case study number two. An expansion of these case studies would have been welcome, but the essay lays groundwork for an exciting area of study that may bridge the separation between art history and musicology in medieval studies, *à la* Margot E. Fassler.

The final part of the volume, “Diagrammatic Traditions,” features Safran (“A Prolegomenon to Byzantine Diagrams”), Cohen (“Diagramming the Diagrammatic:

Twelfth-Century Europe”), and Sandler (“Religious Instruction and Devotional Study: The Pictorial and the Textual in Gothic Diagrams”), who grapple with defining diagrams and images from Byzantium and from late Romanesque to Gothic Europe. Here, too, Caviness (“Templates for Knowledge: Geometric Ordering of the Built Environment, Monumental Decoration, and Illuminated Page”) and Chajes (“The Kabbalistic Tree”) deliberate on issues of form, content, and interpretation in stained-glass windows, monuments, and Kabbalistic trees (*elonit*). Caviness’s work is one of the few chapters that explicitly deals with material from outside manuscripts and prints. Caviness traces several forms of what she calls templates or configurations in various medieval art forms, incorporating cathedral ground plans, stained-glass windows, enamel work, and a reliquary. Meanwhile, Chajes, in the final chapter to the volume, brings the reader into the 17th century in his discussion of kabbalistic trees and the *sefirot*.

For a volume that is supported by the IIAS, it is surprising and disappointing to see Hebrew words inconsistently transliterated into English. This practice erases the significance Hebrew letters would have held for the original readers of these manuscripts and prints. Moreover, using both Hebrew and its transliteration consistently in the book would have been useful for non-Hebrew speakers to make better sense of the images. Oddly, words in Arabic and Greek are written out using the proper alphabets in addition to sometimes being transliterated. This aside, Chajes’s

chapter is a multidimensional and fitting end to the volume, incorporating both Christian and Jewish viewers in his concluding points about the intersectionality and versatility of kabbalistic iconotexts as part of ritual, hermeneutics, pedagogy, mysticism, magic, art, and science (468).

This final grouping of five essays would have been instructive at the beginning of the volume, especially Cohen and Sandler's parsing of what constitutes a diagram, an image, a figure, or a diagrammatic image (and vice versa—an imagistic diagram). Cohen's essay is referenced by other chapters in the volume, and it works nicely when read in conjunction with Hamburger's. Covering the 12th century broadly, Cohen ponders what makes a diagram as well as the thorny semiotics of word-image relationships. Similarly, Sandler's staging of the Gothic diagrammatic context is useful for working through the schematic and taxonomic impulse of later medieval diagram traditions and how they fostered devotion, recall, contemplation, or other actions (429). This can be seen in the plethora of images documenting the Instruments of the Passion, including a fascinating example from *Omne Bonum* (London, British Library, Royal MS 6 E VI, fol. 15r, **Fig. 2**).

A final note should be made regarding the printing of *The Visualization of Knowledge*. For the most part, the book is high quality, with images and text appearing mostly clear and in wonderful color. However, one longs not only for separators



Figure 2 Instruments of the Passion, *Omne Bonum*, London, British Library, Royal MS 6 E VI, fol. 15r. Photo: [Link](#) to image.

between the four parts of the volume and for a conclusion, but also for some sort of consistency among the reproductions of the authors' own diagrams. For example, aside from varying in font, the physical clarity of several of the diagrams, most notably those in A. Smith and Even-Ezra's chapters, leave something to be desired.

Additionally, throughout the book, details, either in the body of the essays or in the figure captions, that would orient the reader to both the time and place of each chapter are needed.

As an edited volume concerned with the materialization, configuration, formation, and representation of knowledge, *The Visualization of Knowledge* is an instructive tome for any scholar—art historian or otherwise—looking to dive into the expansive, unending, and difficult topic that is the intersection of medieval epistemology and what might be called image theory. Each of the chapters offers a deep dive into how people living during the medieval and early modern periods used images, diagrams, and texts to construct, reify, and understand their worlds and worldviews. Beautifully illuminated and profoundly complex, the book offers the reader a chance to explore several aspects of Christian and Jewish knowledge as either separate units or as ideas in dialogue. 🐼