

Insider Information: The Worlds of Medieval Identities
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A significant portion of late medieval Europe's population thought of themselves as the world. By intertwining historical and literary disciplinary approaches *Insider Information: The Worlds of Medieval Identity* traces the gradual development and repercussions of this phenomenon. Using Katharina Volk's work on metaphorical travelling in Latin writing (*The Poetics of Latin Didactic: Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid, Manilius*) and Natalia Lozovsky's "*The Earth is Our Book*": *Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400-1000* as the starting point, the book shows how later medieval practice diverged from earlier precedent, as knowledge became increasingly spatially-dependent. Maps of the world — both graphic and textual — provided the locations and metaphors of reading-as-travel, and these *mappaemundi* became prefabricated mnemonic structures that helped to transform identity into global geography. Chapters explore the scale of such templates' distribution and their implications for European individuals' cognition, composition processes, and entitlement. Medieval and early modern Europeans came to see the world in themselves, using distant peoples and cultures as caricatured information placeholders within their mental maps.

1. Introduction

We have missed an immense component of how medieval people read, thought, and self-identified: that the geographical components of knowledge encouraged cartographical minds across classes and literacies. This chapter will outline our basic premise that medieval knowledge was location-dependant, that it was specifically global, and that medieval people shaped their concept of self around, and through, this globe. The introduction will explain the basics of medieval maps and present the assumptions that our book challenges: limits of elite pedagogy, prohibitions against prefabricated minds, over-reliance upon itinerary maps, concepts of maps as purely pictorial, and omission of mnemonic schema as identity.

2. Knowledge Sits in Places: Location-Based Knowing

This chapter exposes the medieval British historiographic tradition that relied on descriptions of geographic space to hold textual information: knowledge demanded place, and reading was travel. We show how, starting with Bede in the eighth century and continuing through Ranulf Higden's work in fourteenth century, English historians and writers departed from classical predecessors like Orosius and Macrobius to rely on word-worlds as the landscape throughout which they lead their readers. The reader no longer views knowledge from a distant, impersonal perspective but walks through and among chronicle entries. A concluding note traces the continuation of prefatory maps through J.R.R. Tolkien and into modern fantasy.

3. John Mandeville's Mnemonic Map

This chapter establishes that *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* would have been readily recognizable as a verbal *mappamundi*, and that said *mappamundi* provided a prefabricated, pre-populated, in-demand mnemonic template accessed across classes, genders, and literacies. It thereby uncovers a widespread memory practice, diverging from Francis Yates', Mary Carruthers', and their successors' studies of solely elite practice. The chapter engages with Mandeville scholarship by Charles Moseley, Anthony Bale, Iain Higgins, and Rosemary Tzanaki, and with recent work by Karma Lochrie, Geraldine Heng, and others who use Mandeville's book as a means of thinking about memory or identity.

4. Christine's Way: How the World Writes

This chapter presents a case study of the prefabricated mnemonic practice revealed by the prior chapter: Christine de Pizan's metacognitive early work *Le Livre du Chemin de Long Estude*. Christine explicates her practice of using the pathways of Mandeville's *mappamundi*, populated by all the past writers and her own father, to recollect, reflect and compose. This internalization of the world (per Augustine) elucidates a new aspect of the *homo-mundus* trope, illustrated in the chapter with British Library Harley MS 658. Man dwells on, consists of, is interchangeable with, encompasses, and replicates the world and the generations within it, rendering the *homo-mundus* analogy a collapsed palimpsest of identity.

5. Local and Global Geographies in *The Castle of Perseverance*

This chapter examines the fifteenth century drama *The Castle of Perseverance*'s creation of a community *mappamundi*, which uses the play's staging and story to make its audience a part of a living map. This chapter engages with current scholarship regarding the play's staging, siding with recent works by Andrea Young and Sydney Higgins that favor Richard Southern's 1957 interpretation of the placement of the audience in relation to the *platea* and the players. The connections that we have established between *homo* and *mundus* in prior chapters lend weight to the idea that the audience must have sat, at least at times, within the global play of the stage itself. Uniquely, the chapter considers the implications of the play-as-map in context that go beyond the mechanical demands of the play itself. The actors move throughout this human *mappamundi* as they tell the allegorical story of Mankind and redemption, and the play relies on collective local geographic knowledge to facilitate global world-building across literacies, teaching spatial knowledge as moral geography. *Castle* blurs distinctions between humans, the globe, and the divine, making the audience participatory at multiple scales, and expanding community bounds into broader geographic spaces.

6. Earth Enough: The Incomplete Man

Where Chapters 4 and 5 show the world contained within one individual and shaped by (and containing) many, Chapter 6 turns to the consequent relationships within and between worlds. It traces recurring paradoxes of hunger/satiety, wholeness/incompleteness, consumption/death, and humility/entitlement through the ashes-to-ashes tropes of the *Harley Lyrics*' "Erþe toc of erþe" and other *Earth upon Earth* poems, John Gower's "The Tale of the Three Questions," and Thomas Hoccleve's "The Complaint of the Virgin," an adaptation of Guillaume de Deguileville's *Le Pelerinage Jhesuchrist*. The collapse of mortal and eternal hinges on the concept of an unresolved "enough" and sets the stage for widespread mindsets of expansion, acquisition, and possession: colonialism.

7. Conclusion

The conclusion leverages the book's coauthorship to reflect upon medieval and modern mental praxis, academia's shaping of minds, and neurodiversity. By acknowledging the echoes of a communal memory and mind in the World Wide Web, it demonstrates contemporary readers' increasing opportunity to comprehend medieval reading and composition. Finally, it suggests ways in which the monograph can inform our own reading and writing praxis, collaboration, and relationship to/with the shared world.