

Debra Higgs Strickland

Otherness on the Hereford World Map (c. 1300)

This study examines the Hereford World Map (c. 1300) in relation to modern theoretical concepts of Otherness and marginality to expose disjunctions between medieval and modern ideologies. As an authoritative synthesis of Classical geographical learning and Christian theological beliefs, the landmasses, islands, and waterways of the Hereford Map are populated by hundreds of tiny icons and inscriptions that represent the world's cities, biblical and mythological characters, animals, birds, monsters, and more. Among these are many identifiable Others, whose cartographical locations do not fit easily into modern theoretical frameworks but rather signal more complex relationships between Us and Them, and between centre and periphery; especially in England, where the Map was made and displayed. Moreover, Otherness on the Hereford Map is performed not only by the usual actors – the so-called Monstrous Races and non-Christian outgroups—but also by the divine personages dispensing justice in the celestial space depicted at its summit. My analysis of selected imagery reveals that certain of the Map's figures and places commonly identified by modern critics as marginal in fact lay at the conceptual centre of medieval Christian identity. Moving away from the centre – margins paradigm, I also examine how medieval cartographical strategies of alignment, juxtaposition, and directionality enhanced the work's didactic value for medieval pilgrims, and I identify examples of lessons that were retrievable with or without the assistance of cathedral guides acting as interpretative intermediaries. I conclude that the presence of Others on the Hereford Map helped medieval viewers locate themselves in its geographical spaces and in its Christian worldview, which suggests that the theoretical concept of Otherness remains a viable tool for expanding our understanding of the cultural and ideological complexities of medieval *mappae mundi*.