Postcolonising the Medieval Image

Edited by Eva Frojmovic and Catherine E. Karkov

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4 Mandeville’s Jews, colonialism, certainty, and art history

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Introduction: Certitude, then and now

This essay will bring a postcolonial gaze to an eclectic array of subjects, including medieval and modern images and texts, and modern scholarship thereon. It is the result of my thinking not so much about medieval geographical images and texts, like the small gem that is the Psalter Map, Matthew Paris’s Map of the Holy Land, and the Book of Sir John Mandeville, to which I will shortly turn, but rather, with and through them, because doing so has led me increasingly to think about certitude, about the feeling of deeply rooted certainty (or the wilful quest to achieve it through repeated assertions thereof). There are several types of certitude that I would like to think about, here. There is the certitude of the colonial viewpoint, secure in its superiority over the Other, of the correctness of its own perspective; of the medieval geographical enterprise; and of the historical and art historical viewpoint brought thereto, ever seeking the correct answer to the ‘problems’ art presents, especially art of a presupposed benighted culture at a remove from our own in place or time. I will tackle each of these briefly, in an attempt to explore some of the issues that I believe underlie many discussions of medieval art, especially of medieval images of maps and monsters. In so doing, though, I hope to make a few broader assertions about the value of postcolonial thinking, within and beyond art history. I will begin, though, with a medieval book.

The assemblage of Mandeville

The Book of Sir John Mandeville is a baffling, frustrating text, whose putative narrator is an ‘enigma for historians’. The text tells us that it is the product of ‘John Mandeville, knight – although I am not worthy, born and raised in England in the town of St Albans, who from there have crossed the sea in the year 1322’. However, it is actually an assemblage of earlier texts, first rendered in Anglo-Norman French around 1350, produced by a now-anonymous author/complier, or series thereof. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Iain Macleod Higgins clarify, it ‘is a literary pastiche ... of perhaps three dozen sources’, such that “what [Mandeville] can remember” about the eastern world is drawn almost entirely from others’ works. There is, then, no ‘Mandeville’; similarly, there is no singular version of ‘his’ Book. Its derivative nature did little to dim its popularity, however. The Book is often referred to (anachronistically) as a medieval bestseller, with ‘popularity ... greater than that of any other prose work of the Middle Ages’, there survive some 300 manuscripts in
nine languages, all of which contain a matrix of ‘interpolations’. Here, I will focus primarily on the so-called Defective, Cotton, and Egerton recensions. I chose these particular versions because they contain later accretions that substantially transform the tone of the text in the direction of certitude, accretions that were retained in the most popular subsequent versions.

Mandeville and ‘tolerance’

Much scholarship on the Book falls into one of two camps: works that celebrate it as a notably early high-water mark of ‘tolerance’ and works that condemn its virulently anti-Jewish sentiments (though many scholars do not consider these issues). Mary B. Campbell, Iain Macleod Higgins, Stephen Greenblatt, C.W.R.D. Moseley, Caroline Bynum, and Karma Lothric predominately support the former position, each arguing for the text’s tolerance, for its breakdown of Us/Them dichotomies, for its efforts to encompass the perspectives of others and situate the Western European Christian male perspective as one of many. Bynum summarises her view of the Mandeville narrator’s perspective as essentially relativist: ‘What is remarkable to one may be expected to another; as Mandeville observed, to the one-eyed, those with two eyes will seem deformed, and to those of other religions, Christians will be the cannibals’. Lothric similarly recreates in Mandeville a sort of proto-post-modernist ‘utopia’ – to use her term – ‘a mirror society fashioned on an ... ideal’. To do so, she argues that Mandeville ‘implicitly criticises his anti-Judaic episodes in his book’. She concludes that by the end of the Book, ‘many fundamental Christian principles, and the presumptive superiority of Christian devotion [are] demolished’.

These scholars all find interest, use, and merit in this curious Book. Mandeville’s tolerance runs sharply aground, though, each time the Book turns (as it does several times, and beginning within the prologue) to descriptions of Jews. The noteworthy, if not unexpected, blind spot has been the subject of texts by Benjamin Braude (who calls such passages ‘blood-curdling’), and Geraldine Heng, who writes, ‘The Travels’ conscious project of relative tolerance ... must thus be read, and weighed against, the Travels’ unremitting virulence toward Jews, a people who seem to constitute, for the Travels, the one species of otherness to which no humane generosity can be shown’. Marcia Kupfer, discussing the presence of several non-Latin alphabets in some recensions, quips, ‘Alphabet soup does not a recipe for tolerance make’. Miriamme Ara Krummel argues that ‘Mandeville’s desire to convert, change, and alter Otherness expresses intolerance, for in attempting to assimilate Otherness into the Mandevillean world, Mandeville is not so much trying to understand as to eliminate difference’.

In an essay and an eloquent plenary at the International Medieval Congress, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen attempts the difficult task of finding some small middle ground between these poles, between Mandeville the open-minded ‘hedonist of knowledge’, and Mandeville the paranoiac anti-Semite. To do so, he reads against the text, between its lines, and unearths expressions of justifiable Jewish outrage embedded within the words of the Book, which perhaps unintentionally gives voice to those it seeks to abject. In essence, he answers Gayatri Spivak’s postcolonial quest for ‘a text that can “answer one back”’, with the original text, itself.

How do we square the nearly universal tolerance evinced in the Book with the venomous anti-Jewish passages it simultaneously contains? In actuality, while this seems like a contradiction, the contradiction is based on modern misunderstanding of the
notion of ‘tolerance’ in Mandeville’s time. In modern parlance, ‘tolerance’ is used to describe a positive appreciation of otherness. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, provides the following definition: ‘The action or practice of tolerating; toleration; the disposition to be patient with or indulgent to the opinions or practices of others; freedom from bigotry or undue severity in judging the conduct of others; forbearance; catholicity of spirit’.

Similarly, if we turn to the favourite reference tool of students – Dictionary.com – we find a current layman’s definition: ‘a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, practices, race, religion, nationality, etc., differ from one’s own; freedom from bigotry’.

When we read medieval Christian sources on ‘toleration’ of Jews and Judaism, however, we are in a rather different world. Sara Lipton provides extensive discussion of the notion in her *Images of Intolerance*, arguing ‘Augustine ... required that Jews be maintained in a subjugated state as testimony to the fact that they had lost spiritual legitimacy and all claim to temporal authority’. Kupfer clarifies Augustine’s argument with great precision:

> [T]heir blind preservation of the Law, although futile as far as their own redemption is concerned, bears spiritual fruit for the Church. Augustine’s argument ... secures a place for the Jews, properly reduced to the condition of vanquished captives, ... living Jewishly for the benefit of the Church, and only to the extent that their living so benefits.

Many medieval commentators borrowed from Augustine, some with respect and others with revulsion and mockery regarding the Jews and their ‘Old Law’. This is a version of toleration not free from but *predicated upon* bigotry, not objective or permissive but subjective and subjugating. The Jew in this formulation is tolerable because he tolerat (Latin, tolero, tolerare), that is, he supports Christian scripture, but he does so while he ‘gaze[s] away from it ... although he preserves the physical text, he is presented as unwilling or unable to see or benefit from the knowledge contained within’. In short, the Jews are tolerated not as an expression of ‘catholicity of spirit’, as the OED would have it, but ‘for the use of Christians, not for their own use’.

**Mandeville and colonial certitude**

Having thus dispensed with ‘tolerance’, I will turn to Mandeville’s certitude, which should bear on the debate sketched above. On multiple occasions throughout his text, the fictive narrator of the *Book* tells us of his ignorance: ‘There are many other diverse countries and many other wonders over there that I have not seen at all, and do not know how to speak properly about’; ‘I was not able to know any more about them’; ‘as they say, for I have not seen it’; or yet more subtly, ‘I had heard’. Indeed, many of the most vehement statements regarding the veracity of the text – containing myriad marvels, more than some of its main sources – are evidence of what Moseley calls ‘the asseverating interpolations that become frequent in later texts’. Statements added to the Middle English Egerton Manuscript that enhance this effect, include ‘I, John Maundevill e of tham, and tharfor trowez it for sikerly it es soothe [I, John Mandeville, ate of them, and therefore believe it, for certainly it is true]’, and ‘Trowez all this, for sikerly I sawe it with myne eghen and mykill more than I haue talde yow [Believe all this, for certainly I saw it with my eyes and much more than I have told you]’.37
Campbell argues that the Book rejects most modes of establishing its truth:

Scorning as he does, with effects already discussed, the conventional strategies of inducing belief in his readers (truth claims, refusal to report what will be too hard to credit, reliance on the auctoritas of his sources), he is forced to rely on a kind of proto-verisimilitude.\(^{38}\)

However, the stress on first-person observation and experience – increasingly present in later versions of the text – is just such a conventional strategy. I would argue, instead, that the narrator’s confessions of uncertainty are nothing more than a ‘reality effect’,\(^{39}\) to use Roland Barthes’s term, no more significant than other details that establish ‘proto-verisimilitude’. Cohen similarly argues that details of Mandeville’s life are ‘truth-effects, attaching the story to what seems a historical personage with lived experience, securing the narrative to a bulwark, a seeming veridicality’, an effect furthered by very specific chronology of Mandeville’s travels.\(^{40}\) The following assertion about the land of Prester John provides an instructive example:

In his land there are many Christians of good faith and good law and in particular those of the same country [as Prester John], and they all commonly have their chaplains who sing the mass and make the sacrament of the altar from bread as the Greeks do. But they do not say as many things at the mass as one does over here, for they say only what Our Lord’s Apostles taught them, such as Saint Peter and Saint Thomas and the other Apostles sung the mass, saying Pater Noster and the words with which Our Lord’s body is consecrated. But we have many additions that the popes have since made about which they know nothing.\(^{41}\)

Since there was no kingdom of Prester John,\(^{42}\) all the details about it are inventions – ‘Mandeville’s’ or otherwise – so this level of precision is of interest. The author might merely note that in this kingdom, the priests practise Christianity a bit differently, but instead specifies, for example, that they not only follow Greek practices, but also, that ‘they do not say as many things at the mass as one does over here’. This does not move the narrative forward, and is not a major point discussed further. Embedded within it, though, is an Us/Them dichotomy. Campbell argues this divide is undercut:

Mandeville’s terms for West and East are ‘on this half’ and ‘in that half’. Halves of what? Of one physical, spherical world in which the laws of nature operate unilaterally and where if one sails far enough one ends up back home.\(^{43}\)

Cohen, though, reads more closely the narrator’s tale that ‘I heard told when I was young [about] how a brave man once left from our regions to go explore the world’,\(^{44}\) and finds a different implication:

Would [Mandeville’s medieval readers] have realized that Mandeville’s failure was perhaps to have almost circled the world, but to have returned before he could arrive home by a route that would have changed his perspective, that would have queered his orientation, that would have made him see what remains stubbornly in place when a voyager who wants to ‘see the world’ carries with him and transports back the failings of his home?\(^{45}\)
One world or two? It is all a matter of perspective, of orientation.

Returning to the rich but purely invented details that fill the Book – indeed, the passage about the ‘brave man’ just cited has no known source ⁴⁶ and may be a rare invention of the author/compiler – I find that they are somewhat analogous to Barthes’s description, in the writings of Flaubert and Michelet, of ‘details that are “superfluous” (in relation to structure)’. ⁴⁷ He writes that ‘such notations are scandalous (from the point of view of structure) or, what is even more disturbing, they seem to correspond to a kind of narrative luxury, lavish to the point of offering many “futile” details’. ⁴⁸ Such ‘useless details’, ⁴⁹ though, are used by authors to ‘infuse their stories with a sense of verisimilitude’ ⁵⁰ – the same quality Campbell finds within the text – that produces the ‘reality effect’. Of course, medieval texts operate on principles different from those of nineteenth-century novels, such that what often strike modern readers as digressions at times seem to take over the majority of a text. However, here I mean to note not the larger patterns of digressions and textual diversions, but the parenthetical statements, the subclauses and asides filled with nuggets of detail – they use bread rather than wafers for the Eucharist. These are superfluous, in that they do not advance the main narrative, but on the other hand, are essential to the larger project of constructing the narrator as knowledgeable and reliable.

We can bring this same gaze to the images that accompany manuscripts of the Book, such as London, British Library Harley 3954 (East Anglia, c. 1425–50), containing the ‘Defective’ version.⁵¹ From the start, we find images of Mandeville, himself, rather than merely of the places and beings he sees. In these images, he is at times the central protagonist. On the first folio, for example, we see Mandeville twice within a simultaneous narration (Figure 4.1). To the left, he stands, well dressed and fashionable, before the gate to a city (presumably St. Albans). He wears robes with heavy, swagged sleeves indicative of wealth, a large, bejewelled necklace, and floppy hat, as he takes leave of an adoring crowd that kneels before him. To the right of the same panel, he receives a blessing from a priest. Neither of these scenes appears in the text, itself. Indeed, this manuscript does not contain the so-called preface (before the prologue), which stresses Mandeville’s origins in St. Albans, England. The image, then, provides a wealth of further details superfluous to the plot, but that help construct Mandeville, from the start, as a trustworthy and, yet more notably, devout narrator, as a man who, despite his evident wealth and status, still kneels humbly before the priest, on the gentle, green turf of England.

In other scenes – particularly, at times, those that might seem less credible – we see Mandeville outside the scene, in the margins, as a witness, often with his traveller’s staff, hat and bag. On folio 54v, for example, we find an impressive image of a griffin abducting a knight, complete with his armour and horse, to feed its young (Figure 4.2). The monster is grand and heraldic, and considerable attention has been paid to its representation, such that it has tri-coloured feathers, offset against its scruffy, bluish feline legs. Just below and to the left of its hind claws, pressing right up against the margin – likely not trimmed much, since the outer prickings are still clearly visible well within the current outer edge ⁵² – we find Mandeville. He seems to be heading off stage right to escape, but his gaze is fixed back on the remarkable creature his witness serves to verify.

Suzanne Lewis describes a similar dynamic whereby illuminators in thirteenth-century England positioned John within and outside of the narrative of Revelation, such that his appearance becomes ‘an authenticating witness to the truth of his
visions’.53 He even, like the figure of Mandeville beside the griffin, at times ‘runs away from the violence’ within the image,54 as in an image from the Dyson Perrins Apocalypse (English, c. 1255–60) (Figure 4.3). In both cases, the witnesses – Mandeville and John – are seeing quite marvellous sights, things that even a fairly credulous audience might doubt, and so, in both cases, we find images of the witness staring at the sight in
question. As Lewis writes, John ‘rushes away through the frame, pulling his skirts protectively around him, [but] still cannot resist turning a last, fleeting but consternated glance at the fascinating and powerful creature’ – the seven-headed dragon from Revelation 13:4–6; Mandeville likewise turns back in his flight to gawk at the griffin making off with horse and rider. The illuminators of these figures have both added one more detail to enhance the apparent veracity; both witnesses are shown afraid, in motion away, surely a rational response to either sight, and a source of identification for their viewers.
‘Affermed & preved be oure holy fader’

The very specificity of the representations, and of descriptions throughout the text, undercut the narrator’s statements of modesty with which I began, statements that Moseley finds so engaging, such that ‘the diffident boasting is amusing; but gradually his trustworthiness as a guide for us in our response is built up’.56 To the contrary, they may be seen as a necessary element, given the ‘spurious’57 nature of his claim to be a first-hand witness. Ultimately, the diffident asides and verifying images and statements of witness are grounded in an absolute statement about the truthfulness of the Book; at the end of the text – after he has given accounts of the whole of the wide world, discussing routes from England to Constantinople, Greece and Cyprus, Egypt and Babylon, Jerusalem and its surroundings, Syria, Tartary, Albania and Libya, India and Java, Ceylon, Canton and Cathay, Tarshish, Prussia and Russia, Persia, Korea, the Caspian Mountains, the Kingdom of Prester John, Earthly Paradise, and many, many points in between – the Mandeville narrator asserts that we should:

Know that in all these countries about which I have spoken, and on all these islands, and amongst all these diverse peoples that I have described to you, and the diverse laws and the diverse beliefs they have, there is no people – because they have reason and understanding – who do not have some articles of our faith and some good points of our belief ... But they do not know how to speak perfectly [without error], for they have no one to explain it to them, except insofar as they understand it with their natural understanding.58

Further, in both the Defective and Egerton manuscripts,59 we find another addition in a position of great significance; just before the final paragraph of the work, the author grants it papal approval:

I made my way in my commyng hamward unto Rome to scow my buke till oure haly fader the Pape. And I told him the mervailles whilk I had sene in diverse cuntrees, so that he with his wise counsaile wald examine it with diverse folke that er in Rome, for thare er evermare dwellmen of all nacies of the world. And a lyttill after when he and his wise counsaile had examinde it all thurgh, he said to me for certayne that all was soth that was therin. For he said that he had a buke of Latyn that conteyned all that and mykill mare, after whilk buke the Mappa Mundi es made; and that buke he schewed me. And threfore oure haly fader the Pape hase ratified and confirmed my buke in all poyntes.60

(In coming homeward, I made my way to Rome to show my book to our holy father the Pope. And I told him the marvels which I had seen in diverse countries, so that he with his wise council would examine it with diverse folk that are in Rome, for there live men of all nations of the world. And a little while after, when he and his council had examined it all through, he said to me for certain that all was true that was therein, for he said that he had a book in Latin that contained all that and much more, after which book the Mappa Mundi is made; and he showed me that book. And therefore our holy father the Pope has ratified and confirmed my book in all points.)
At greater length, the Cotton manuscript reads:

And yee schull undirstonde if it like you that at myn hom comynge I cam to Rome & schewed my life to oure holy fadir the Pope & was assoyled of all that lay in my conscience of many a diverse grievous point, as men must needs that ben in company dwelling among so many a diverse folk of diverse secte & of beleve as I have ben. And amongs all I schewed him this tretys that I had made after informacioyn of men that knewen of thinges that I had not seen myself, and also of merveyles and customes that I had seen myself, as fer as God wolde geve me grace, And besoughte his holy fadirhode, that my boke mighte ben examined and corrected by avys of his wise & discreet conseill. And oure holy fader of his special grace remitted my boke to ben examyned & preved be the avys of his said conseill, be the whiche my boke was preved for trewe in so moche that they schewed me a boke that my boke was examyned by, that comprehended full moche more be an hundred part, be the whiche the Mappa Mundi was made after. And so my boke, all be it that many men ne list not to give credence to no thing but to that that they seen with hire eye, ne be the auctour ne the persone never so trewe, is affermed & preved be our holy fader in maner & forme as I have said.61

(And you should understand, if it please you, that in my coming home, I came to Rome and confessed to our holy father the Pope, and was absolved of all that lay in my conscience about many a diverse grievous point, as is required of all those who dwell in the company of so many diverse folk of diverse sects and beliefs, as I have. And, in the company of all, I showed him the treatise that I had made after information from men that know of things that I had not seen myself, and also of marvels and customs that I had seen myself, as far as God would give me grace, and I besought his holy father that my book might be examined and corrected by advice of his wise and discrete council. And our holy father, in his special grace, sent my book to be examined and tested by the advice of his said council, by which my book was proved to be true in so much that they showed me a book by which my book was examined, which contained full much more than a hundred parts, after which the Mappa Mundi was made. And so my book, albeit that many men do not wish to give credence to anything but that which they have seen with their eye, no matter how faithful the author or person, is affirmed and proved by our holy father in the manner and form that I have said.)

These additions, clumsy or deft, were quite enduring, thanks to the use of the Cotton version of the text (containing this passage) for the print edition of 1725, which would represent the text to most readers of English in the subsequent centuries.62 The assertion of papal endorsement goes well beyond the earliest known Mandeville narrator's own degree of certitude, as the Insular French text contains several statements of ignorance. Instead, the added passages conclude in similar language in both the Defective and Egerton tradition and the Cotton version, that the pope confirmed the Book:

Defective/Egerton:

And so my boke, all be it that many men ne list not to give credence to no thing but to that that they seen with hire eye, ne be the auctour ne the persone never so trewe, is affermed & preved be our holy fader in maner & forme as I have said.
(And so my book, albeit that many men do not wish to give credence to anything but that which they have seen with their eye, no matter how faithful the author or person, is affirmed and tested by our holy father in manner and form, as I have said.)

Cotton:

oure haly fader the Pape hase ratifed and confirmed my buke in all poyntes.

(our holy father the Pope has ratified and confirmed my book in all points.)

Once these additions have been made, the Book, then, bills itself not as mostly accurate or largely correct, not as the imperfect product of the humble narrator who at the outset of his text modestly asserts ‘I am not worthy’, but rather, as a totality confirmed by the highest authority ‘in all points’. In reading such statements, we must bear in mind the nature of this text, which claims to be something it is not, and so is a forgery – and the deceit is not redeemed by calling the work a “romance of travel”, since it presents itself as historical. The blurring of the ‘real’ and the ‘fictional’ creates much of the frisson of the Book and other related texts. Indeed, the texts and images also blur eye-witness accounts and second-hand accounts (‘I chewed him this treys that I had made after informacioun of men that knewen of thinges that I had not seen myself, and also of merveyles and customes that I had seen myself’), which is all the more significant since nearly the entire text is pieced together from the accounts of others. Who knows what is, then, at the core of the text?

Returning to the text from Mandeville about the priests of Prester John’s kingdom, quoted above, we find that their priests ‘do not say as many things at the mass as one does over here ... we have many additions that the popes have since made about which they know nothing’. The ignorance, it seems, is entirely theirs, and the possibility is never mentioned that we (that is, the ‘we’ of the text, Western European Christians, perhaps even English Christians) might know nothing about additions or important retractions that they have subsequently made. Similarly, as the concluding paragraph states, ‘there is no people – because they have reason and understanding – who do not have some articles of our faith and some good points of our belief’. It remains unconsidered that ‘we’ might bear some articles of their faith. This is a paradigmatically colonialist view, and it should not surprise us to find it in the Book, or in other medieval texts treating the East. Indeed, while Edward Said might not explicitly address the medieval back-story to colonialism in his foundational 1978 text on Orientalism, the ‘prehistory of Orientalism’ is there implicitly, throughout.

Multiple certitudes

There are several competing certitudes at play, here. I will first consider the certitude of the colonial viewpoint. To epitomise the perspective, we might look at nineteenth-century writing, which is more direct about such matters than twentieth- and twenty-first-century writing tends to be, at least in scholarly and mainstream outlets rather than in the great proliferation of blogs and other websites that take a decidedly colonial view of the world. In 1849, for example, Benjamin Disraeli declared in House of
Commons that 'race implies difference, difference implies superiority, and superiority leads to predominance'.

The Mandeville author, like Disraeli after him, is locked into the perspective of his subject position. If people are different, for Disraeli and others, one must be 'better' than the others – a clear inverse of more recent postmodern notions of pluralism, and a sharp point of contrast for the emergent concept of the post-human. Lochrie argues for Mandeville's 'embrace of cultural and religious difference' as 'more than an expression of tolerance: it is an insistence on the provincialism of European knowledge, Christianity, and cultural achievement'. There are passages in the *Book* that support this perspective, particularly those discussing the non-Christian 'Bragmans' ('Brahmans'), 'a good and trustworthy people, and of a good way of life according to their belief and good faith', and Gynosopes, 'also a good and trustworthy people and full of good faith'. It is difficult to grasp the overarching philosophy of the text. On the one hand, it argues: 'I believe God always loves those who love him and serve humbly in virtue and loyalty ... as Job likewise did ... That is to say that He had other servants than [those] under Christian Law'. On the other hand are the passages regarding 'the cruel Jews', 'the worthless Jews', whom the 'Alkoran' – the holy book of the Saracens – 'says are wicked because they will not believe that Jesus was sent by God'. In short, God loves everyone who loves him, even those who are not Christians, except the Jews, who are to be rejected because they are not Christians. Still, there are traces of the colonial perspective even within the oft-praised passage on the 'good and trustworthy' Bragmans, which notes that they 'are not Christians', and therefore 'do not have perfect law'.

**Blank spaces**

That Edward Said wrote his dissertation on Joseph Conrad is not, I imagine, unrelated to his publication of *Orientalism*, as few modern authors are as troublingly eloquent in their construction of Africa – for medievals, often included as part of the 'East' – as the author of *Heart of Darkness*. But just as it was a map that set Marlowe on course for the African interior on a steamboat in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the discipline of geography is necessary to the colonial project. For Sylvia Tomash, geography 'always enjoins an element of control, of conquest, even of ravishment'. As Marlowe, the narrator of *Heart of Darkness*, reminisces:

> When I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, 'When I grow up I will go there.' ... But there was one yet—the biggest, the most blank, so to speak—that I had a hankering after.

The grip with which maps held the young Marlowe is much like the pull of the *Book*, the draw of examining the unexaminable, grappling with the inconceivable. As Alfred Hiatt writes, 'the blank of the map is here a space onto which various forms of fantasy can be projected—it is imbued with glory, glamour, and “delightful mystery”.' Indeed, it is 'the biggest, the most blank' section of the map the draws Marlowe, the section of the map most open to the inscription of a colonial viewpoint upon it.
It was the prevalence of this very sort of thinking that pushed Said towards his writing of Orientalism. As a Palestinian-born Protestant Christian, he was ‘a minority inside a minority’. At the time of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Said was teaching at Columbia. US coverage of the war, which strongly favoured the Israeli position, galvanised for him a Palestinian identity that had not been central to his self-conception earlier. For Said, the essential problem was at least in part geographical. ‘For him’, as Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia write, ‘the Zionist slogan, “A people without land ... for a land without people...”’ saw Palestine as “the European imperialist did, as an empty territory paradoxically “filled” with ignoble or perhaps even dispensable natives”. In many respects, this is how Matthew Paris’s Chronica Majora and other medieval geographies depicted the region. Matthew was a thirteenth-century polymath Benedictine monk of St. Albans – by chance the same locale claimed as the home of the narrator of the Book of John Mandeville. Michael Gaudio writes that Matthew Paris’s mid-thirteenth-century itinerary from London through Jerusalem, filling seven folios in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 26, ‘treat[s]s nature negatively as a space of discontinuity between sites of civilization ... Emptied of meaning, the natural world thus becomes a non-space that allows human interpretation to enter into the cartographic text’. No less, though, Matthew’s explosive, ever-expanding map of the Holy Land, replete with foldout flaps grasping for more territory, is largely clear of autochthonous inhabitants (Figure 4.4).

There are but two human figures, besides the boatloads of colonialist crusaders arriving on the shores: a lone Bedouin, one of the ‘rich merchants who in these regions are rich from gold and silver, from precious stones, silk and spices, oxen, mules, camels, and swift horses that can endure much exhaustion’, described by the accompanying inscription. This is a figure by nature not rooted to a particular place, not able to make a claim to the region he is clearly just passing through, and a featureless outline of a figure who seems to be disappearing down the gullet of the crocodile beside Ninive la grant (Nineveh the Great; the figure is actually Jonah, being vomited up by the Great Fish on the city’s shores). Neither conveys the least sense of possession of the land around him, and both will soon be gone. Building on Spivak’s notion of ‘worlding’, introduced in her essay ‘The Rani of Sirmur’, Jodi Byrd writes that this necessary ‘emptying out of meaning and presence marks the arrival of the colonizer’. Indeed, it is through ‘[t]his “worlding of a world”’ that the coloniser ‘naturalizes the European order as dominant in the land by imaginatively transforming the Native Other into an empty referent’, culminating when ‘the settler finally declares the land uninhabited’.

Even naming the territory in question was fraught – and remains so: Canaan. The Land of Israel. Judea. Palestine. Bilad al-Sham. The Holy Land. The Promised Land. These terms – all in use in the Middle Ages and today – accreted to the territory over millennia: Canaan, the Land of Israel, Judea, and the Promised Land are biblical designations; Palestine is a Roman designation; Bilad al-Sham is medieval Arabic, though it was also used by medieval Judeo-Arabic-speaking Jews; the Holy Land is a Christian designation. In the very first line of the Book of John Mandeville, the region is referred to by three terms: ‘the land beyond the sea – that is, the Holy Land, which is also called the Promised Land’. The ‘promise’ originates in Genesis 12:1–12 and is reconfirmed in Exodus 6:5–8. However, as Higgins notes, ‘Paul uses the idea symbolically ... reframing it in Christian terms’. Yes, the land was promised, but to whom?
As Cohen argues (via Derrida, via Hegel97), the act of naming is a controlling manoeuvre: ‘A fixation is born of the twin desire to name that which is difficult to apprehend and to domesticate (and therefore disempower) that which threatens’.98 Mapping the land is similarly contested, and has been since the Middle Ages. The texts of the Book of John Mandeville, with their references to mappae mundi (in the papal-confirmation passages cited above),99 invite comparisons with medieval maps. Matthew Paris provides what are among the more elaborate medieval images of the region.100 More typical maps like the contemporary Psalter Map are different from Paris’s maps in many respects (Figure 4.5). The oecumene – the inhabitable world – encircles Jerusalem, and is in turn ringed with monsters (particularly in Africa but also in the North-East, were the wall containing Gog and Magog appears). Such collections of monsters appear on several surviving maps, including the Hereford, Ebsdorf and Duchy of Cornwall Maps.101

These wonders, central to Mandeville and key to the Psalter Map, are largely absent from Matthew’s maps. Monsters and other exotic Others, though, are not incidental
Figure 4.5 Mappamundi, Psalter, London, British Library, Add. MS 28681, fol. 9r, c. 1265 (photograph: The British Library Board, reproduced under Creative Commons).
to the function of many medieval maps, but rather, are frequently essential components thereof. They provide the needed counterpoint to Jerusalem's centrality, based on — among other texts — Psalm 73 (contained, of course, in the Psalter that houses the Psalter Map), which claims that God performs the work of salvation 'in the middle of the earth'. Indeed, the centrality of Jerusalem is highlighted in the Book of John Mandeville more ardently than in other travel narratives. Matthew's maps, though, do not centre on anything, certainly not Jerusalem, which is a smallish square on the right. An inscription below Jerusalem declares it 'the midpoint of the world', unneeded on the Psalter Map, where the city's centrality is obvious.

I would like to dwell on the small but fiercely contested square of Jerusalem for a moment more. It contains within it three structures, and no peoples. Why? By the time Matthew made this map, the Crusader Kingdom was over, Jerusalem was in ruins, destroyed by the Khorezmians, and the Christian sites he depicts — the Holy Sepulchre (lower right), the so-called Temple of Solomon (which was the home of the Templars, upper right) and the Temple of the Lord (upper left) — had all been converted or reclaimed by Muslims. That the Temple of Solomon was the converted and expanded Al Aqsa mosque, and the Temple of the Lord was really the Dome of the Rock highlights the brevity of the colonialist Crusader Kingdom. As Lewis notes, Jerusalem is the 'only instance on the Palestine map in which Matthew uses Latin for the descriptions and captions of the city and its landmarks, perhaps ... to underline the present reality that the Holy City no longer existed in its former Christian state and now belonged to the past'. At the same time, the city's features and monuments are inscribed in the timelessly current language of the liturgy.

**Pasts, presents, and futures**

We might connect Matthew's image of Jerusalem with the Book of John Mandeville's construction of the Jews who, as Higgins writes, 'inhabit only the past and the future', and are thereby denied their present-day humanity. As such, both land and people are held in a sort of animated suspension. In the prologue, the Book associates the Jews and Jerusalem, but also links them to the past ('for at that time this land belonged to the Jews'). Later in the text — indeed, in a passage just before that describing the land of the griffins discussed above (see Figure 4.2) — the Book presents the Jews as projected into a future rooted in 'apocalyptic fear'. Where the Book conflates 'the Jews of the Ten Tribes, who are called Goth and Magoth [Gog and Magog]', the narrator sharply notes, 'the Jews do not have their own land [anywhere] in the whole world' except their enclosure behind the Caspian Mountains; they are consequently dispossessed from the 'Promised' Land. Instead, it is said that they will come out in Antichrist's time and that they will slaughter a great many Christians.

Andrew Colin Gow explains that

> [t]he identification of the apocalyptic destroyers Gog and Magog with the Ten Tribes of Israel ... was a product of the twelfth century. It first appears in scholastic circles, but owes much to a literary tradition concerned with the place of Christendom in this world more than in the next.

This apocalyptic conception of the Jews is found on all three of Matthew Paris's maps of the Holy Land, where they are inscribed behind the wall of the Caspian Mountains.
Lochrie argues that the Book is not only utopian in nature, but constructs ‘a “cosmopolitan” utopia rather than an “insular” one, constructed through Mandeville’s vast travels rather than tucked away in an isolated corner, somewhere’.\(^{112}\) And yet, as on Matthew Paris’s map – indeed, as on all three of his maps of the Holy Land – there is an ‘isolated corner’ of deeply dystopian nature. At the upper-left corner, crammed in behind the wall of the Caucasus Mountains, in the region conventionally associated with the apocalyptic hordes of Gog and Magog, Matthew writes:

Here dwell the Jews whom God enclosed through the prayer of King Alexander and who will come forth on the eve of the Day of Judgment and will bring great destruction to [or openly massacre]\(^{113}\) all the people.\(^{114}\)

Indeed, the ‘“cosmopolitan” utopia’ of the Book is predicated on the insular enclosure of the Jews. As Cohen notes, ‘Mandeville, so cosmopolitan that he renders promiscuous nudist communist cannibals comprehensible, nonetheless has nothing good to say about Jews.’\(^{115}\) They are visually excluded and contained on Matthew’s maps, and textually contained in Mandeville’s text: ‘the Jews do not have their own land [anywhere] in the whole world except this land between the mountains; ‘they cannot get out by any route; ‘a large number of people could not climb out; ‘they have no way out’.\(^{116}\)

The illustrated manuscript of the Book discussed above, Harley 3954, provides an image of the moment when the Jews are walled in behind the Caspian Mountains (Figure 4.6). The text informs the reader that the Jews were enclosed in the Caspian Hills, and that they are of the people of Gog and Magog, two assertions stressed by the captions in the right margin. In the image, we see a great mass of figures, some in armour and helms and others wearing crowns or other elaborate and fanciful headgear, suggesting that these are some of the twenty-two Jewish kings imprisoned with their followers. The image bristles with swords and spears and is splashed with bright red, looking much like the splatters of blood that appear in numerous illustrations to this point in the manuscript. The background is a dusky maroon that waves and sways, looking like flames of hell – an impression furthered by the flame-like rocks that seem to press the Jews towards the water on the right; this perhaps implies that their temporal imprisonment is a foretaste of the eternal imprisonment that awaits these ‘enemies of Christ’. Outside the rough and jagged walls, we see Alexander directing two workers with shovels, putting the finishing touches on the work God began. Above them, the Caspian Gate looms at an oblique angle. The image supports the textual assertion that ‘they have no way out’, that the Jews are excluded from the otherwise ecumenical world of the oecumene. It also, though – like the Book and like Matthew Paris’s conspiracy theories\(^{117}\) – presents these contained Jews as numerous and heavily armed. In addition to the spears many carry, they have a portable armory on a wagon, being pulled by a horse at the centre of their enclosure. The implication is that they are contained for now, but, since they are conflated with Gog and Magog, will eventually overrun their walls, and all of Christian civilisation beyond.

The exclusion of the Jews is not merely an oversight in the otherwise cosmopolitan view of Mandeville; it is the essential ingredient. As Krummel argues, by Christianising Otherness, Mandeville obliterates Otherness, changing the identity of Others to absorb them into his version of Christendom: ‘Otherness must be erased and effaced – that is, eliminated’.\(^{118}\) All except for the Jews, the one irreconcilable
Other that grants meaning to the ‘universal’, the ‘catholic’, the ‘ecumenical’ stance of the medieval Church.

In Mandeville’s formulation (based on Christian writings from Paul, forward), the Jew cannot be assimilated into the larger – even global – community, into Christendom,
because they are wilfully blind to Jesus and his message, ‘stone-hearted, according to the Christian hijacking of Ezekiel 36:26’.[19] The Jews remain wilfully and eternally apart, locked into a pre-Advent past and therefore unable to be part of the ‘utopian’ future of Mandeville’s world. ‘Judaism was a static and sterile relic, unchanged and unchangeable since the coming of Christ rendered literal observance of the Old Law obsolete’.[20]

But what of Jerusalem, of the ancestral land of the Jews, of the region ‘promised’? Formerly the home of the Jews (‘for at that time this land belonged to the Jews’)[21]) it has been lost by them, as their ‘old law’ is superseded by the ‘new’.[22] Returning to Matthew’s image of Jerusalem, we find it is evacuated of its Jewish inhabitants, filled primarily with Muslim structures appropriated by Christian colonisers. The Temple of the Lord – the Dome of the Rock – appears at the upper-left corner of the city, with its great copper dome clearly represented.[23] The labelling of the Dome as ‘Templum Domini’ – no longer in Christian control when the map was made – is hopeful, wishful, perhaps even defiant. Indeed, the Book’s narrator calls the structure the ‘Templum Domini’, but notes that ‘[t]he Saracens allow neither Christians nor Jews to enter, for they say that such foul people ought not to enter or rest in such a holy place’.[24] And still, the Dome of the Rock remains fraught with significance, seven and a half centuries later, as it is among the most visible landmarks of the still-contested city of Jerusalem.[25] Denis Wood makes brief mention of Matthew Paris in a chapter on the modern mapping of Palestine, which he characterises as ‘a paradigm of the history of mapmaking’.[26] Indeed, the legacy of this conflict is echoed in the flag-like emblem of Hamas (Figure 4.7); at its centre is an image of the Dome of the Rock, and above it, a map of the land, itself, hangs like a knife. Beneath the Dome, ‘Palestine’ is written in Arabic, declaring through denomination (as well as language choice, as significant as Matthew’s use of ecclesiastical Latin within Jerusalem on his map) the ‘correct’ identity for this land.[27] The name, the Dome, and the sliver of territory above them emblematise – as did Matthew’s representation – either victory or unjust deprivation, depending on viewpoint. Such a use of cartography on emblems and flags is uncommon, though its political use is standard. No major world powers currently have maps of themselves on their flags. Among the very few countries that do are other sites of great contestation; the flags of both Kosovo and Cyprus bear images of their territory. This is likely the result of the fraught nature of the control of these territories. Mapping results from many impulses, including imperial confidence, but also longing – Sylvia Tomasch’s ‘Geographical Desire’[28] – and anxiety. It should be noted that the seax-shaped territory on the emblem is not a geographic reality, but a dream, a hope, a rallying cry for Hamas – and a threat directed at Israel – as it shows a Palestine without Israel; just so, Matthew’s Templum Domini is a memory and dream and a hope for reconquest. An explanation of the Hamas emblem from The Palestinian Information Center reads: ‘The map is indicative of Hamas’s attitude that the conflict aims to restore (from the occupiers) the entire Palestine with its Mandate borders and that Hamas rejects the issue to be limited to the lands occupied in 1967’.[29] Maps from the Arab world are frequently configured in similar fashion.

These geographical works – the Book of John Mandeville, the Psalter Map, Matthew Paris’s Map of the Holy Land, Heart of Darkness, and even the emblem of Hamas – all emanate from or embody the desire to generate certitude, the conviction that one side (be it that of the Crusaders or the English back home, of Hamas or, of course, the Israeli government) holds a monopoly on truth. In the Book of John
Mandeville, this certainty is particularly hard-won, increasing both within the text and over time as additions were made by later authors/compilers/translator, from admissions of the limitations of the narrator’s knowledge to the ultimate papal imperium granted regarding ‘all points’\textsuperscript{130} therein. By the end of the Defective/Egerton and Cotton versions, the narrator has found the certitude necessary to make his judgments about which groups are ‘good and trustworthy people’\textsuperscript{131} about whom ‘God always loves’,\textsuperscript{132} and who is beyond the pale.

**Conclusion: Art historical certitude**

The certitude discussed here, though, is not constrained to political or religious or territorial battles. In *Our Beautiful, Dry, and Distant Texts: Art History as Writing*, James Elkins argues against the certitude that very often characterises the academic endeavour, the desire to crack the nut, to solve the puzzle. The flaw Elkins finds in this line of thinking – if applied universally – is that not all works of art are puzzles, or perhaps put differently, not all puzzles presented by works of art have solutions. Just
because we are confronted with something we do not feel we fully understand does not mean that we must be able, with enough diligence, to come to a clear conclusion about it. Art history may present instead 'a thicket of problems that can have no clear solutions: if they were clear, they wouldn't be art history'. At issue in the works of art themselves, and in the art historical approaches brought to bear upon them, is that much of what we do is not as deliberate and logical as we might think. As Elkins writes:

Much of art history ... is not entirely conscious ... Thinking about art and history, I think, is like daydreaming: we drift in and out of awareness of what we're doing. Sometimes it may be clear what impels me to write a certain passage; other days, I have very little idea why a certain theory rings true, or a certain phrase sounds right.

This essay results as much from daydreaming about tangentially related topics – colonialism, Matthew Paris, The Book of John Mandeville, Hamas, Conrad – as from a carefully considered and rational approach. Daydreaming, yes, but not mere daydreaming; in combining these disparate subjects, I have worked to generate an art historical argument as hybridised as the medieval works it considers, and the beings they in turn contain. I hope the result produces what Karen Eileen Overbey, in characterising postcolonial art history, describes as 'contiguity and contingency [calling] attention to imbalance, to contact, and to border zones'. I aim to keep one eye on the present as I keep the other on the medieval past, not in order to reify the premodern/modern divide, but rather, in order to erode modernity's practice of defining itself against a medieval Other. The arguments made here are self-evidently not the only ones that might be made about any of these works and objects, and are not attempts to have the final word on any discussions about them, but instead, to explore a series of layers of significance we might find within them. Finally, part of my hope in engaging in such extended daydreaming, is to retain a measure of wonder in the process of receiving (most of) these works, a quality often associated with Mandeville, but which is, ultimately, undercut to the point of eradication by the assertions of total accuracy at the end of the text. As Bynum writes, 'wonder was a response to something novel and bizarre that seemed both to exceed explanation and to indicate that there might be reason (significance – not necessarily cause) behind it'.

We continue to live in a world characterised by colonial perspectives that insist that the perspective of those in power is not a perspective, at all. This view of the world would certainly be familiar to the Mandeville author(s). Other peoples throughout the world, he tells us, 'do not know how to speak perfectly [without error]'. Only with a sense of certainty of one's own correctness, one's own definitive and normative status in the world, can another speaker's words and manner of speech be deemed incorrect, impt, simply wrong.

In a published lecture, F. Donald Logan directly addresses 'the problem of certitude' for the medieval historian. He provides a wonderful list of the sorts of expressions – reminiscent of Mandeville's claims of incomplete knowledge – used by historians: '[i]t seems probable' ... 'it would not seem improbable' ... 'the evidence suggests' or 'seems to suggest' ... 'one should perhaps conclude', and so on. In raising the issue, though, Logan falls back on a fairly traditional position: certitude is always desirable, and possible to achieve when sufficient empirical evidence is present. We know this is the case,
he argues, when ‘reasonable people agree’ on the conclusion. The trouble, here, is that we are back to the position taken by Mandeville: the eminently reasonable narrator asserts the validity of his own text, and pope, along with ‘his wise & discreet counsell [wise and discrete council] all do agree, and are confirmed in their opinion by the contents of ‘a buke of Latyn that conteyned all that and mykill mare, after whilk buke the Mappa Mundi es made’ [a book in Latin that contained all that and much more, after which book the Mappa Mundi is made]. Of course, the mappa mundi referred to here is a fiction, along with the entire interpolation, and would not perhaps have been more likely to conjure in the reader’s mind a map like the Psalter Map than like Matthew Paris’s Map of the Holy Land, and yet the contents of the latter would nonetheless have provided just this sort of asseveration, not for Mandeville, who never was, but for his readers, who were legion.

Which, then, is the ‘correct’ interpretation of the Book of John Mandeville, that it is an early, utopian beacon of tolerance, or a bastion of recycled racism and hate? Not surprisingly, it is both. The best to be found in the Book lies in its doubts and its openness, which have led to its positive reception by so many self-aware and open-minded scholars; the worst to be found in the Book lies in its fiery certitude about the absolute intolerability of the Jews. Logan asks:

[How can we have certain knowledge of events beyond our own experience? ... For the medieval historian who deals in a period that ended six hundred or so years ago the issue of certitude is particularly acute. The sources can be exigous, fragmentary, perhaps contradictory. How certain can the medieval historian be about the medieval world?

If there is a lesson to take from the amalgamation of texts and images that comprise the Book of John Mandeville, this hodgepodge, this patchwork of others’ experiences, perspectives and ideas, I do not think it lies in the specifics of its broadmindedness regarding Others, which is inevitably (and tragically) incomplete. Instead, I believe it lies in its equally incomplete motion towards doubt and uncertainty. And I must be right, for our holy father the Pope has ratified and confirmed my essay in all points.

Notes

1 My thanks to Marcia Kupfer and Eva Froimovic for excellent suggestions on drafts of this essay, and to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen for sharing unpublished work on Mandeville, and for declaring that my closing line works.


7 As Higgins, Mandeville, xxi, notes, ‘If TBJM was composed, as claimed, in the later 1350s, then it was made in a period of much traffic of people and books between England and France during the Hundred Years’ War ... In such circumstances, an English knight, or an English cleric claiming to be a knight, could have composed an Anglo-Norman book on the Continent, while conversely a French knight or cleric claiming to be an English knight could have composed the work in Continental French in England’.


9 Higgins, Mandeville, ix.

10 Cohen, Pilgrimages, Travel Writing’, 625.


15 Karma Lochrie, ‘Provincializing Medieval Europe: Mandeville’s Cosmopolitan Utopia’, PMLA, 124.2 (2009), 592–9, at 598. This is the most direct definition Lochrie provides for ‘utopia’, and it is a useful one. She writes, here, of ‘an isolationist ideal’, because she is describing typical utopias, in contrast to what she views as Mandeville’s ‘utopian cosmopolitanism’.

16 Lochrie, ‘Provincializing Medieval Europe’, 598.

17 Lochrie, ‘Provincializing Medieval Europe’, 596.

18 Higgins, Mandeville, 3. The Book opens with an extended sentence of a page and a half that, partway through, reads, ‘in this very worthy land the heavenly king wished to lead His life and be harmed by the cruel Jews’.

19 Geraldine Heng, Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 429, n. 11. This important point is curiously buried in an endnote.


27 Sara Lipton, Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible moralisée (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 56.

28 Lipton, Images of Intolerance, 56. See also Jeremy Cohen, Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), for an extended argument on the Augustinian traditions of 'Jewish witness' and 'toleration'.

29 Kupfer, '... lectes ... plus vrayes', 102.

30 Lipton, Images of Intolerance 56–7, provides several examples.

31 Lipton, Images of Intolerance, 75, discussing a Bible moralisée image depicting 'A Jew seated beside but turned away from a Gothic choir screen: a visual expression of the Augustinian proposition that Jews must be allowed to live among Christians because they are witnesses to and keepers of the Law'.

32 Lipton, Images of Intolerance, 76.

33 Higgins, Mandeville, 184, 37, 16, 37. These passages come from the putative 'original French' version, (vii), known as Insular. Higgins notes that this may be the earliest of the versions surviving, and is the basis for Higgins's translation, cited here as Mandeville. For more on the debate over which French text - Insular or Continental - is the earlier, see Higgins, Mandeville, xv-xvii, esp. notes 20 and 22.

34 Campbell, The Witness and the Other World, 154, notes that the Book contains several marvels added to a passage borrowed from Odoric, who has pointedly excluded them.


36 Higgins, Mandeville, 201, from the Egerton manuscript (British Library MS Egerton 1982).

37 Higgins, Mandeville, 202, also from the Egerton manuscript.

38 Campbell, The Witness and the Other World, 158.


40 Cohen, 'Pilgrimages, Travel Writing', 619. According to the text, Mandeville leaves for his travels in 1332 and returns in 1366.

41 Higgins, Mandeville, 177.

42 The fictional nature of this compiled text is covered in most writing on the legend. For brief discussion, the origins and speculations on the great endurance thereof, see Asa Simon Mittman, 'Premier John: A Utopian Fantasy of the Crusaders', World History: Ancient and Medieval Eras (ABC-CLIO, 2011), http://ancienthistory2.abc-clio.com/ (accessed 14 October 2011).

43 Campbell, The Witness and the Other World, 125.

44 Higgins, Mandeville, 114.

45 Cohen, 'Pilgrimages, Travel Writing', 622.

46 Higgins, Mandeville, 114, n. 390.

47 Barthes, The Rustle of Language, 141.

48 Barthes, The Rustle of Language, 141.

49 Barthes, The Rustle of Language, 142.


52 The first several gatherings, including that containing this folio, are of the usual eight bifolios, and are trimmed to just beyond the prickings (0.3–0.5cm). The last two gatherings
containing the Book of Mandeville are of ten bi-foldios, and are trimmed rather more generously, with approximately 1.5cm beyond the prickings, though in the current binding they are all roughly even, when the volume is closed.

53 Suzanne Lewis, Reading Images: Narrative Discourse and Reception in the Thirteenth-Century Illustrated Apocalypse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 20. The correspondences in form and function are so strong that I am left to wonder if these thirteenth-century English manuscripts might have been influential in the design of the fifteenth-century English Book manuscript.

54 Lewis, Reading Images, 20.

55 Lewis, Reading Images, 136.

56 Moseley, introduction to The Travels of Sir John Mandeville, 17.

57 Arthur Percival Newton was an early critic of the Book, and writes, ‘one of the most popular books of the Middle Ages … [is] the spurious work called Mandeville’s Travels’. See Arthur Percival Newton, Travel and Travellers of the Middle Ages (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1926), 12.

58 Higgins, Mandeville, 183-4. Emphasis added and gloss (‘without error’) inserted in text from Higgins’s footnote.

59 Moseley, notes to The Travels of Sir John Mandeville, 189, calls this addition to ‘the English versions of the Book and one late-fifteenth-century Latin MS’ a later ‘clumsy interpolation’, though Higgins, Mandeville, 200, considers ‘the E maker’ – the anonymous producer of the Egerton manuscript – ‘not only an alert reader, but also pious, intelligent, and well read’.

60 Higgins, Mandeville, 202-3.

61 Higgins, Mandeville, 202.

62 Higgins, Mandeville, xv.

63 Higgins, Mandeville, 202; translation mine, emphasis added.

64 Higgins, Mandeville, 203; translation mine, emphasis added.

65 Higgins, Mandeville, 5.

66 Higgins, Mandeville, ix, with internal quotation from Josephine Waters Bennett, The Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1954), 39–53. Higgins continues, ‘The sometimes contested distinction between history and fiction was even less clear-cut in the fourteenth century than nowadays, but it was not altogether absent, and it is hard to imagine anyone then reading TBJM’s truth claims as equivalent to those of, say, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Unlike the imaginary realms of romance (even when they contain real forests, castles, or people), TBJM’s alternative worlds are depicted as real, as many of them in fact were’.


68 Higgins, Mandeville, 202; emphasis added.

69 Higgins, Mandeville, 177.

70 Higgins, Mandeville, 183-4; emphasis added.

71 Edward Said, Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) and Ananya Jahanara Kabir and Deanne Williams, ‘Introduction: A Return to Wonder’, in Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages: Translating Cultures, ed. Kabir and Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10. While the focus of this collection is the colonial use of the Middle Ages by modernity (how the Middle Ages came to occupy the position of the “dark continent” for post-Enlightenment Europe), the section on ‘Orientalisms before 1600’ contains essays exploring colonialist texts and circumstances within the pre-modern world. Recent postcolonial scholarship on the pre-modern world has both affirmed and challenged Said’s East-West binary, collectively building up a more complex image of the process of identity formation in conflict but also in dialogue with the East – real or imagined. Kabir and Williams, Postcolonial Approaches, 15. Suzanne Conklin Akbari provides a succinct defence of the use of postcolonial approaches within medieval studies in ‘From Due East to True North: Orientalism and Orientation’, in The Postcolonial Middle Ages, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 31: ‘Postcolonial theory (in all its many varieties), although developed on the basis of modern manifestations of colonialism, can nonetheless be used
to analyze premodern texts’. See also Bruce W. Holsinger, ‘Medieval Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and the Genealogies of Critique’, Speculum, 77.4 (2002), 1195–1227, where a strong argument is put forth that medievalists were in essence practising postcolonial theory before the term gained wide currency in the field of medieval studies.


73 The post-human pushes us to acknowledge that, from a certain perspective, ‘we are all monsters in our singularity’, since we are all unlike one another, to varying degrees. As Patricia MacCormack continues, ‘the post-human emphasizes that we are all, and must be monsters because none are template humans. The human is an ideal that exists only as a referent to define what deviates from it. Just as the monster is predicated on a judgment based upon what defines a normal human, so too, the human is a conceptualized idea which can be figured as a referent defined only through that which deviates from it’. Patricia MacCormack, ‘Post-Human Teratology’, in The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous, ed. Asa Simon Mittman and Peter Dendle (London: Ashgate, 2012), 293–310, at 294.

74 Lochrie, ‘Provincializing Medieval Europe’, 596.

75 Higgins, Mandeville, 172.

76 Higgins, Mandeville, 174.

77 Higgins, Mandeville, 175.

78 Higgins, Mandeville, 3 and 69, 71, 84.

79 Higgins, Mandeville, 172.


82 The earlier medieval text of the Wonders of the East (c. 1000) characterises some of its ‘eastern’ monsters as ‘ungefaengerlich’, that is, ‘inconceivable’. See Mittman and Kim, Inconceivable Beasts.


84 Valerie Kennedy, Edward Said: A Critical Introduction (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 4. Said’s background is quite complicated. He was born in Jerusalem, though his parents lived in Cairo, and he was then partly raised in Egypt, son of a Palestinian-born father who became an American citizen (and owned a paint company in Cleveland) and a mother born in Nazareth, in turn the daughter of a Lebanese woman. For more on this, see The Edward Said Reader, ed. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), xxvi–xviii.


88 Henri Victor Michelant and Gaston Raynaud, Itineraires à Jérusalem: et descriptions de la Terre Sainte rédigées en français aux Xle, XIIe & XIIIe siècles (Paris: Jules-Guillaume Fick, 1882), 127: ‘Ci en a un mut des riches marchandz, e cift de celfes parties fut riche de or e d’argent, de pères preciues e foie e efeecer,de buges, nuls, chameus e chevaus igneux e ki mut poent travaus fufrir’. The translation adapted from that is provided by Lewis, The Art of Matthew Paris, 359. She comments: ‘That Matthew Paris was well aware of the commercial as well as strategic importance of Acre at the end of a major trade route from the interior of Asia to the shores of the Mediterranean is graphically illustrated by the procession of engaging beasts of burden, a camel (camelus), ox (bubalus), and mule (mulus) slowly
making their way along the merchants’ caravan route across the Bedouin territories from Acre to Damascus’.

89 Higgins, *Mandeville*, x, notes that Mandeville’s ‘tolerance’, not extended to the Jews, is also withheld from ‘some nomads like the Bedouins’.

90 See note 24, above.


92 Many others names for this place exist, of course, in other languages, past and present.

93 Israel, on its own, is a modern designation


97 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *System of Ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit*, ed. and trans. H. S. Harris and T. M. Knox (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1979), 221: ‘The first act, by which Adam established his lordship over the animals, is this, that he gave them a name’.


105 Thank you to the reviewer for suggesting this line of argument.

106 Higgins, *Writing East*, 42.

107 Higgins, *Mandeville*, 3; emphasis added.


112 Lochrie, ‘Provincializing Medieval Europe’, 593.


114 Leonid S. Chekin, *Northern Eurasia in Medieval Cartography: Inventory, Texts, Translation, and Commentary* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), 199, translations based on Lewis, ‘with slight corrections’ by Chekin. At greater length: ‘The enclosure of the Caspian Mountains. Here dwell the Jews whom God enclosed through the prayer of King Alexander and who will come forth on the eve of the Day of Judgment and will bring great destruction to all the people. They are enclosed by high and great mountains and cannot get out. This region ... in relation to Jerusalem. But the mountains are far away toward the northeast from Acre and Jerusalem’. See Chekin for a transcription of the Old French.

115 Cohen, ‘Between Christian and Jew’.


117 I.A. Giles, *Matthew Paris’s English History: From the Year 1235 to 1273* (London: G. Bell, 1889), 357–8, available online through the Hathi Trust Digital Library at [http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mu.32000000637670](http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mu.32000000637670) (accessed March 2014), gives an account of a conspiracy whereby a group of Jews plans to smuggle arms to the Tartars, whom Matthew constructs as Jews.

118 Krummel, *Crafting Jewishness in Medieval England*, 74 and 88: ‘Because of their resistance to homogeneity, the Jews could not become part of the national fantasy and were expelled. Because of their perceived difference, Jews are mapped outside the national
English community and grafted onto an undefined elsewhere space deep inside the earth, far under the Caspian Mountains, beyond Cathay.


Lipton, Images of Intolerance, 57 and Kupfer, ‘... lectres ... plus vrayes’, 100–1, esp. note 116.

Higgins, Mandeville, 3; emphasis added.


While now covered in a gold alloy, ‘[t]he original dome was probably of copper over wood, though at a very early date the legend of a gilt dome made its appearance and eventually became a sort of reality’. Oleg Grabar and Said Nuseibeh, Dome of the Rock (New York: Rizzoli, 1996), 22, 26.

Higgins, Mandeville, 49–50. Curiously, the Book credits the Roman emperor Hadrian with the construction of the Templum Domini/Dome of the Rock, claiming that he ‘remade the city of Jerusalem and the temple in the same way that Solomon had; and he did not want any Jews to live there, but only Christians, for although he was not Christian he preferred Christians to all other peoples after those of his own law’.

It merits mention that many Christian websites still refer to the structure as Templum Domini.


Wood, Rethinking the Power of Maps, 239, also discusses the fraught nature of the choice of languages on maps of the region.


The image appears in many websites and photographs, and a number of websites cite a description of the emblem that was originally found on a now defunct website run by Hamas, linked to: http://www.palestine-info.com/hamas/about/index.htm#anchor214634. However, the Wayback Machine Internet Archive provides access to this website. See The Palestinian Information Center, ‘About Hamas’, Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement (no date, Wayback Machine capture 25 January 2001), http://web.archive.org/ web/200101252357/http://www.palestine-info.com/hamas/about/index.htm (accessed 18 October 2011). The Palestinian Information Center, independent of the Palestinian Authority, now runs their site through http://www.palestine-info.co.uk/, but the information about the emblem no longer appears.
journal, *postmedieval*, and of a rapidly growing body of scholarship that seeks to locate within discussions of the distant past relevance for the contemporary world.