Articoli/2:

Navigating Myriad Distant Worlds

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Abstract: This essay attempts to draw connections between medieval maps and their many monsters, digital cartographical interfaces, and modern experiences of the world. Each impacts our understandings of the others. The medieval notion of speculum – the metaphorical mirror that allows us to see our worlds and ourselves more clearly – draws attention to the very process of spectatorship. The modern notion of telesthesia – perception at a distance, borrowed from Cultural Studies, becomes a unifying discourse, allowing us to bridge the gap between medieval and modern, East and West, us and them, viewer and monster.

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We are, all of us, quite adept at navigating multiple worlds. We do so simultaneously, and without noticing, all the time. We not only inhabit a number of imbricated worlds, but also obliviously pass though the worlds of others. As Johanna Sinisalo writes:

Odd how there can be cities and cities. Cities within cities [...] There's the city of a certain kind of woman, who judges a street by the kinds of shops there are, the classiness of the fashion shops, the perfumeries, jewelers, shoe stores. An alcoholic's city, on the other hand, consists of pubs, sausage stands, liquor stores, alleys where you can piss without being picked up for indecent behavior, other drunks' pads where you can scrounge the prince of a drink or a bed for the night. And he doesn't even notice the designer boutique because it's got no function for him, just a the fashionable lady doesn't see that sleazy dive — it doesn't exist for her [...] The bus driver's city is a mass of routes, stops, traffic lights, hills, and of corners that look completely insignificant, except that their dark magic lies in their trickiness under certain winter conditions1.

These cities are simultaneously present, but are only visible to certain people, or certain species, even («The dogs’ city is built up of smells [...]»2). My child’s town is not my own, though we walk side-by-side through it. All of these issues are intensified when we add time into the equation. As we walk through a given landscape, it is a commonplace that we walk over the layers of history, and yet actually comprehending and

2 Ivi, p. 105.
articulating this is something of a substantive challenge. In this essay, I will consider medieval maps and recent digital cartography projects as they influence our understandings of each other. I will turn in particular to those most recondite inhabitants of maps, the monsters that dwell at the borders, but also at times invade the center. Through the notion of telesthesia, I hope suggest some ways we might bridge the conceptual gaps between medieval and modern, East and West, “us” and “them,” viewer and monster.

The HyperCities project («a collaborative research and educational platform for traveling back in time to explore the historical layers of city spaces in an interactive, hypermedia environment», developed at UCLA and USC3) attempts to allow us access to these layers of history, largely by overlaying historical maps of locations over satellite photography, as demonstrated in a screenshot of London, with an overlay of a map from 1854 drawn up in relation to a cholera outbreak (See Fig. 1). Zooming in, and then decreasing the opacity of the overlay, reveals that the workhouse — no doubt hard-hit by the outbreak, is no longer there, structurally as well as institutionally (See Fig. 2).

This element of Hypercities, then, shows the selective chronological nature of maps. Medieval maps, like the great Hereford Map, ca. 13004, are less frozen in a single time than modern maps, owing to their explicitly Christian perspective: as top-down renderings of the world, they present the perspective of God, who exists omnisciently, and therefore out of the flow of time. The maps contain a fluid merging of historical elements — current, recent and distant — and yet the maps themselves are, of course, entirely embedded within their moments of production. As Evelyn Edson writes, “The hand of the mapmaker is guided by a mind located in a certain time and place and sharing inevitably the prejudices of his or her surroundings”5. Indeed, as Denis Wood reminds us:

There is nothing natural about a map. It is a cultural artifact, an accumulation of choices made among choices every one of which reveals a value: Not the world, but a slice of a piece of the world; not nature but a slant on it; not innocent, but loaded with intentions and purposes; not directly, but through a glass; not straight, but mediated by words and other signs; not, in a word, as it is6.

These are qualities born by maps that we ought celebrate, rather than condemn. In our own maps, they allow us to make arguments7 — as, for example, the Mercator Map might give way to the Hobo-Dyer Equal Area Projection Map, or even to the South-Oriented version thereof. As a corollary to this, the maps of others allow us to examine, quite literally, their views of the world, and in so doing, their worldviews. Even our own can be shown to us with new clarity by looking at maps. I am primarily

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3 HyperCities Project (accessed April 2012).
4 Images of a black-and-white reproduction are available here, and some color images are here, or the beautiful little Psalter Map, ca. 1262 (For an image see here)
interested in medieval cartography, which is perhaps among the more transparently ideologically manipulated of mapping forms, though it is not really any more compromised than other systems. Medieval maps have been increasingly of interest in the scholarly world, with many publications over the last decade including those by Dan Terkla, Marcia Kuiper, Kathy Lavezzo, Evelyn Edson, P.D.A. Harvey and David Woodward, and others. They are, though, difficult works, that have historically fallen down disciplinary cracks between the history of cartography, history of art, and literary studies, but are also often simply hard to read — visually and textually. Martin Foys, Shannon Bradshaw and I have been working, for the last few years, to create a new interface — *Virtual Mappa*\(^8\) — to facilitate interaction with these knotty works. As we approach a functional prototype, I have been thinking about the ramifications of digitizations of medieval cartography.

Martha Dana Rust, Director of the Medieval and Renaissance Center at NYU, recently organized a conference on “The Digital Middle Ages and Renaissance,” writing that «the primary question we’d like the conference to address is ‘how do digital tools and media change our object of study?’ (along with ‘how do the same change our methods of research, publication, and teaching?’)»\(^9\). This echoes the central question posed at a conference sponsored by the Mellon Foundation in Paris in January of 2010: "How do new technologies allow us not only to do the same things we used to do, faster and more easily, but also to do *new* things and ask *new* questions?"

Foys makes an argument in this direction, writing in about the Cotton Map:

> Reading the eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon *mappamundi* — the oldest such English map surviving — as a form of a virtual world more analogous to the digital environment of virtual reality than physical geography can reveal much about this famous map’s cultural mechanics and meaning\(^10\).

In an article and then a book chapter, Foys explores the ways that virtual reality and other digital interfaces can allow us to re-conceptualize the *Anglo-Saxon Cotton Map*. He sums up a section of this discussion by writing that:

> the map produces many Englands: the past, Othered colony of Roman conquest and then missionaries, the present geographic island, and, most importantly, the desired stable political entity in the process of moving in from the edge of the world and assuming a centric role in, at the very least, a larger corner of Europe\(^11\).

This reading is perceptive, and the method opens up exciting possibilities. I’d like to add additional layers of mediation between us and the “many Englands” of the Cotton Map, as we can now experience it

\(^9\) M. D. Rust, email to all conference participants, November 13, 2011, on file with author.
\(^11\) Ivi p. 11.
digitally. Few people have the opportunity to examine the original manuscript — British Library, Cotton Tiberius, B.v, a positively stunning miscellany with other geographic and cartographic works, including a Zonal Map, the Wonders of the East and even diagrams of the constellations that are, in essence, maps of the stars.

As we move forward through our present decade, we are leaving behind the static and often dingy print reproductions we once dealt with, and the low-resolution, poor-contrast images by which these were followed, as we have increasing access to high resolution digital images of medieval materials. Hopefully, the Virtual Mappa interface will become one of the standard tools for study of medieval materials. If and when it does, though, the basic fact of its excellent images and simple interface will not mean that now, users have simple and straightforward access to works, their contents, and the experience of their landscapes. Instead, as we engage medieval maps, we traverse a complex series of layers, while experiencing what John Hartley and McKenzie Wark (a self-described member of the Australian field of Antipodean Cultural Studies) refer to as «telesthesia—perception at a distance»[12]. This is accomplished through technological means, or “vectors”. The vector is, for Wark, a category that includes «any trajectory along which bodies, information, or warheads can potentially pass»[13], and includes the Internet, by which we are working to distribute images of and information about medieval maps (and also the journal containing this essay), but which would certainly also include the maps, themselves.

There is, though, a negative aspect to this remote perception via vectors. Hartley argues that the guiding spatial principle of telesthesia is what he calls “Theydom”: «Individuals in Theydom are treated as being all the same; their identity consists in being ‘unlike us’, so they are ‘like each other»[14]. Thus, we need only one exemplar for any monstrous race: we see not a Blemmye but the Blemmye, not a Cynocephalus but the Cynocephalus. Each example allows for the vital property emergent from Theydom—difference: «the contrast between Wedom and Theydom is visualized as bodily opposition. Theydom is dark, threatening, glazed-eyed terror»[15].

Like the vector, this principle of Theydom is applicable to both medieval maps (in particular, the distant regions populated by monsters) and modern technologies used to disseminate them. The lands we might well call Theydom are vital to the organization medieval world maps, objects that are, themselves, essentially devices to facilitate telesthesia. Further, once digitized, these formerly individual, tangible, unique, hand-crafted, sequestered objects, with strictly controlled spatial and temporal access, become infinitely available anywhere, anytime, while simultaneously ceasing to be precisely that which draws me to them: tangible, unique, hand-crafted, sequestered, and old. The digital images

[13] Wark’s use of “vector” is based on the work of Paul Virilio, such as Lost Dimension, New York 1991.
bear none of these qualities; they are not even, properly speaking, things that might bear such qualities.

Still, the medieval maps, themselves, are hardly simple, unmediated objects, phenomenologically straightforward artifacts to be experienced for what they are, since they always, by definition, point away from themselves. They are mediated and mediating agents of telesthesia, vectors by which images from throughout the world are carried back to the observer, safely ensconced in the side aisle of Hereford Cathedral, standing before a lectern in the library at Christ Church, Canterbury, or perhaps seated on a bench in the cloister in Thorney Abbey. Wark charts the development of the vectors of telesthesia as a developmental process by which they grow more technologically sophisticated:

From the telescope to the telegraph and telephone, from television to telecommunications, the development of telesthesia means the creation of, literally, dislocated perception and action. Dislocating the action from the site via the vector allows the use of power over the other without implicating power in the scene of the other.16

The first element of this list is easy to pass over in the flow of tele-technologies that follow, but merits a brief pause. The telescope is a pre-modern invention named for its ability to allow us to perceive objects in the distance («τῆλε ἁρφα Off, at a distance + σκοπ-εῖν to look»17). As the user peers through a series of lenses and/or mirrors, his activity is analogous to that of the user of the medieval map, one of many literary and artistic types of the medieval notion of the speculum (mirror). As elucidated by Jeffrey Hamburger, the mirror was a prominent metaphor in the Middle Ages, based on neo-Platonic reception of Pauline writings including I Corinthians 13:12 and Romans 1.20, which came to be seen as «a metaphor, not for the transience of experience and the limits of human knowledge, but on the contrary, for the beauty of nature and the possibilities of sensory perception»18. Through a sensory experience of the created world, medieval Christians believed they could gain understanding of its creator. As Romans 1:20 reads, «invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur»19. The world, then, becomes a mirror of God’s plan, such that Augustine would write «the

16 M. Wark, Virtual Geography, cit. p. 43.
19 «For the invisible things of [God], since the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made». B. Fisher, I. Gribomont, and R. Weber (eds.), Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem, Stuttgar, 1969.
circle of the earth is our great book. In it I read the perfection which is promised in the book of God.  

The presence of the great multitude of monsters and other marvels that fill distant (and sometimes more local) regions were central to the role of the mappae mundi as mirrors of a divine plan for Creation. Wark invokes the concept of “the other,” a term frequently used to characterize those against which groups and individuals define themselves. On medieval world maps, there are many “others,” but the most dramatically presented of these are the monsters that frequently fill the maps’ edges, forming a ring around the outlying regions of the world. Telesthesia allows us to experience such distant phenomena as if present (spatially and temporally) and perhaps to even exercise power over distant locales and beings. As Wark writes of imagery of the first Gulf War:

Events have no particular scale, duration, or topos. The media vector renders equivalent a tiny gesture or a major battle... The site of the event also shifted from time to time. Did the Gulf war take place in Kuwait, Baghdad, or Washington? Was the site the Middle East or the whole globe?

Since media images allowed viewers all over the world to watch at a distance the war unfolding, the images spread the war wherever they were viewed. In a disturbing passage, Wark invokes the image of a video, heavily broadcast and rebroadcast, of the Iraqi dictator — a different sort of “monster” — with a group of hostages, highlighting «the medium close-up where Saddam Hussein touches that boy. A dictator caresses his hostage in our bedroom».

The distances are collapsed via the vector of television. Where, then, are the events depicted on medieval maps happening? They are not happening in their “correct” location, since they are invariably over (the Expulsion of Adam and Eve, the Parting of the Red Sea) or not yet begun (the Last Judgment, the establishment of the Heavenly Jerusalem). Simultaneity is, of course, not an element of any medieval technology of communication across large distances. The events, then — the expulsion from the Garden or the parting of the Red Sea on the Hereford Map; the arrival of crusaders in the Holy Land on Matthew Paris’ maps — are not occurring in the locations in which they are represented on the map. Rather, they are occurring primarily, and in some cases exclusively, on the surface of the vellum, in the ink and paint of which they are made, and therefore within the very rooms where the maps are housed.

Much of the visual excitement on medieval maps is rooted in the heart of Theydom — an ever-shifting location clearly marked out by the presence of monstrous races, of our Others, of them. The Hereford Map contains one of the more striking examples of this principle of Theydom, with a dense concentration of monstrous races along its southern edge.

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23 M. Wark, Virtual Geography, cit. p. 6, emphasis added.
nearly twenty beings that challenge us with their bodies that are distorted reflections of our own. Marcia Kupfer writes in regard to the Ebstorf Map’s image of the Veil of Veronica or Volto Santo (the miraculous image of the face of Christ, imprinted on the veil of Saint Veronica when she offered it to Christ as he carried the cross toward Calvary): «the Face looking out delivers the stern message that, like the first parents, every sinner must submit to God’s penetrating gaze».

A number of these being seem to “break down the fourth wall”, to stare out at us from the surface of the map. These figures give a jolt to the viewer, as if, while we spy on them through a telescope, they turn their gaze toward us, seeing us as we see them. Starting at the western edge of the region – the lower edge, and therefore the portion most proximate to the viewer standing before the map, and also to the English viewer’s home within the map – we encounter first the cyclopean king of the Agriophagi Ethiopians, who «eat only the meat of leopards and lions» [solas panterarum et leonum carnés edunt]. He stares directly out at us with his single eye. He displays his large and ornate scepter while raising a hand in an ambiguous gesture, neither welcoming nor forbidding. Working eastward, counterclockwise around the rim of the world, we then encounter the Maritime Ethiopian, who stares at us with all four of his eyes as he gestures at the troglodytes to the left. Following the curve of the southern edge of the earth, and of the Nile River that parallels it, we meet the gazes of the Epiphagi, people with their «mouth and eyes in their shoulders» [os et oculos habit in humeris], and the similar Blemmyes, with their «mouth and eyes in their chest» [os et oculos habit in pectore]. Both are armed, the former with a club and staff, the latter with an arrow. Toward the eastern terminus of the Nile, we are the object of another cyclopean gaze, now from the Sciapod, who, we read, «are [also called] Monoculi» [idem sunt Monoculi]. This explains the figure’s single eye, but does not explain the casual and perhaps friendly manner in which this one-legged, one-eyed person waves at us. The figure’s head is tilted as if with curiosity about us, just as mine was when, with a jolt, I realized we mirrored one another. Across the span of the ecumene, across the 700 years between the creation of the map and today, this Monoculi and I seem as if in the very same space, as if communicating directly, if mutely. The viewer is at once pushed away from these monstrous races, clearly so geographically distant from the medieval viewer as to be utterly unreachable, and equally temporally distant from the modern viewer, and yet also drawn in by them, pulled into communications and contacts. The representative of the Ambari, «a people without ears ... the soles of whose feet are opposed» [Gens sine auribus, Ambari dicta, quibus adversis plantis], stands just above the Sciapod/Monoculi, as if emblematizing this very interaction. His feet and legs suggest movement to the left, that is, to the West, toward the home of the mapmaker and its intended audience, but the rest of his body seems as if in motion to the East, toward

25 M. Kupfer, forthcoming.
27 S. Westrem, The Hereford Map, cit. #973.
28 Ivi, #971.
29 Ivi, #963.
30 Ivi, #961.
the edge of the great Eurasiafrican landmass that occupies almost the whole of the map's space. Again and again, these distant monsters turn their eyes toward us, and the unusual nature of their eyes — one, two, four — draw our attention to vision and to the act of looking, to the telesthesiac experience of looking at the inhabitants that mark the far edge of the world.

As the user of a tele-scope peers through a series of lenses, users of medieval maps (and of digital interfaces through which we access them) confront such beings through a layered series of conceptual worlds, none of which truly has an authoritative claim to be the “real world”. When we now look at these monsters, especially in digitized form, we invoke (at least) six separate worlds, competing but overlapping, which jostle for dominance as we proceed. These are:

1. the world of the map, which is not necessarily unified, as with the Cotton Map's "many Englands," for example;
2. the lost "real" medieval world it represents, which cannot be brought back even by careful scholarship, through our narrations and expositions and restorations, nor by our reconstructed maps;
3. our potential experiential sense of the same spaces and places in our "real" world (sometimes now filled with relics and ruins of the "real" medieval world, as visible and invisible in layered reconstructions of the passage of time, and sometimes lain bare beneath our feet, evincing the passage of time, if not precisely);
4. our knowledge of our own maps, and those from historical periods between medieval and modern;
5. the world of the digital interface, the "single, simulated register" Michael Camille worried would increasingly be our only access to the «experience of the past»31;
6. and finally, of course, the actual world in which we sit, while engaging all of these other worlds, at times transparent and at others eminently, insistently present.

I would at least potentially place all of these in the same cognitive space, so to speak, leveling them in regard to their truth-value. While we might believe that we know the streets of our hometown more richly than the spaces we encounter in maps, as Sinisalo shows us, we only know these partially; that is, our experience of the "real world" is as partial as that slice of the world presented by a map. Of course, Jean Baudrillard cautions us that our experience of the “real” world is compromised by our experience of manufactured versions thereof32. But we need not have been to the Venetian in Las Vegas in order for our experience of Venice to layered with expectations, preconceptions, hopes and dreams, and therefore removed from some supposed purity of experience. Any and all telesthesiac experiences will impact our experience of a place, inevitably.

These competing world views are all imbricated as we experience medieval maps, as we mentally merge their maps with our maps, tilting our heads to the left in order to see North as the “top” of the world, stretching and distorting their cartography and therefore their worldview

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until it matches up with ours, before, ultimately, finding the familiar in the strange. We thereby allow such maps to fall into place with our mapping conventions, as we chart their “accuracy,” or, rejecting this approach, instead tie them to ancient and medieval texts, as we recall a trip to Lincoln or Winchester or, for that matter, the Ganges or Nile.

One of the layers of experience is, in theory, lost to us: the “real” medieval world remains inaccessible. Their maps, though, allow us to conceptualize how at least a given mapmaker understood the space around him. Foys argues regarding the Cotton Map that:

On the most basic level, the Cotton Map does not operate as we expect modern maps to; it fundamentally fails to offer a stable representation of the primary world of physical terrain, or of the geopolitical contours of the world in a given point in time. Rather, like [Virtual Reality], the map provides a much more fluid and malleable environment that mimics, but fundamentally differs from, the geographic phenomena of primary reality.

We generally envision that our maps are rooted in geographical accuracy, though many elements of maps not only do not reflect the “real world,” but also cannot do so. What is “up”? What font should be used? What language? What color should be used to draw boundary lines or fill in nations?

Is the red of the Red Sea on the Cotton, Hereford and Psalter Maps—often a source of amusement for undergraduates—less accurate than the blue used on our maps, when in fact, many of our rivers are silted up and run brown?

I would therefore suggest that we consider the mappaemundi (and their digital images) as simulacra, in Baudrillard’s formulation, as signs that lack referents, as copies with no originals; they do not point to “real” locales or beings. Rather, the maps are, themselves, their own truth, their own reality. Like the simulacrum, which straddles the border between the real and the not-real, the maps function similarly, as they are (in their material sense) wholly artificial, the product of artifice, and yet can simultaneously function as if they were real. The Hereford Map, for example, allows the viewer to mentally traverse territory, to peer as if through a telescope and perceive not only major sites and events occurring on the other side of the world (the Red Sea parting), but even minor and insignificant ones (a pelican pierces its breast to feed its young, beyond the Caspian Sea). The operative visual principle of such maps is disconcerting. At once, we see the entire world and tiny details of life occurring within it. Of course, the pelican is not to be understood as larger than the Caspian Sea; nor, though, does the map make use of hieratic scale. The figure of Jesus at its apex is relatively large, for example, but the figure of the Roman emperor Augustus at the lower left is considerably larger. The pelican dwarfs the image of the Crucifixion, just east of Jerusalem, such that this common bestiary symbol of Jesus’ sacrifice («for my chicks’ sake

M. K. Foys, Virtually Anglo-Saxon, cit., p. 11.

Such concerns are elucidated well in M. Monmonier, How to Lie with Maps, 2nd ed., Chicago 1996.

J. Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation, cit., p. 6.

Ivi, p. 3.
I rend my heart» [pro pullis scindo michi cor] is much larger that its prototype — the image of the actual sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. These curious variations in scale throughout the map allow the viewer to see both great distances and minute details, giving the viewer the sense that he is peering through a telescope with one eye, while gazing unaided with the other. This experience is eminently telesthesiac.

Still, following Baudrillard, these simulations do not quite undercut the reality of the actual real world, but rather, reveal the fantastic nature of the world in which we walk (and which, of course, contains the maps): As with Baudrillard’s example of the Tasaday, so too, with the maps. They contain a great many points and elements — ordinary, wondrous, and divine — whose representation here, whose “reality principle”, likewise relies entirely on their total inaccessibility to the medieval viewer. The monstrous races at the world’s edges, or the island associated with Paradise at the easternmost limit, or, on some maps, of Christ himself, rising out of the world, were all present, potent realities, which would not be disproved through travel. The only perspective that would validate or invalidate the presented reality of the maps is that of God. As he looks down upon creation on the Hereford and Psalter Maps, he does so from the only vantage point that might render the chaos around us as an intelligible plan.

How might the digital images of medieval maps also be seen as simulacra? They do have real, tangible things behind them, sheets of animal skin marked with ink, paint and gold. On the other hand, since the maps can be seen as simulacra, they seem to point away from themselves, and their digital images do so doubly. When we look at the parting of the Red Sea on the Hereford Map in a digital image, we are looking not at the digital data, itself (incomprehensible to humans), nor at the map, itself, nor at the Red Sea. Further, we are not looking at its parting, a moment purported to have taken place in the distant past. But there is yet another way in which we see a simulacrum, rather than a straightforward image: when we as modern scholars study medieval artifacts, we are generally looking at them to see what their original artists, patrons, and audiences would have made of them, rather than what we as modern viewers would. We are therefore attempting to look at an impossible thing—the medieval object in the Middle Ages, rather than the medieval-produced object as it exists in our present world. The medieval object is lost. Efforts to restore such works only highlight the gap between the present artifact and the medieval work that once existed. The Folio Society informs us, regarding their 2010 facsimile of the Hereford Map, that:

To create this restored reproduction, The Folio Society has used digital technology to peel away the years and reveal, as much as possible, the glory of the medieval original. In it, the background vellum has been cleaned, lettering and drawings strengthened and, most strikingly, the original gilding and spectacular colouring of rivers and oceans have been restored [...] This is by no means an
attempt to recreate the original in every particular — some detail is lost for ever — but it is the most authentic version possible.

But how is this authentic, and to what? It does not look like the actual map does, now, nor like the map did when it was first made, nor like the map looked at any point in between. This is a fully artificial image, creating a new version of the map unlike any that has ever been viewed. With the help of a colleague, I have digitized this image, removing the image yet further from a “real” image. Technology has come a long way from the days of Xeroxes of Xeroxes, in ever diminishing clarity, but this should not lead us to feel as if our technologies have has brought us back to the actual artifacts — as they now exist—or to the originals — “lost for ever”.

Ultimately, considering these fragmented layers from our image-based postmodern worldview should impact our contemplation of the symbolically fraught and laden medieval worldview. It should push us not only to consider how we experience these works, but also our understanding of the works, themselves. As we engage with, examine, explore, dive into and stroll across medieval maps, and digital realizations thereof, as we experience not only telesthesia but also teles-chrono-thesia, we might conclude — indeed, I would argue — that the “real” medieval world we are theoretically striving toward never existed, as such. All of the fulmination about the lack of accuracy of medieval maps, common in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writing on medieval maps, is predicated upon the notion that there was in fact a real world that might have been clearly and accurately mapped, but while there is of course a sense in which this is correct, there is another way to look at the issue. The maps present spaces for which “accuracy” has no meaning (Heaven, Hell), times that are in the past or future (the Expulsion, the Last Judgment), and monstrous beings that, while believed in by their medieval audiences as real were nonetheless highly mobile, unfixed from any specific geographical location, as emphasized by the duplicative representations of some of these beings on the Hereford Map. We find the Sciapods/Monoculi beyond the Nile, as mentioned above, but also in India, near the top edge of the map, just east of the Hindukush Mountains. The Cynocephali appear in the extreme East, just southwest of Eden, but also on a peninsula just east of Scandinavia. There are four sets of dragons, from the distant East to the distant South, and perhaps

42 My thanks to Erin Herzog, Curator of the Ira Latour Visual Resources Collection, California State University, Chico.
44 See A. S. Mittman and S. M. Kim, Inconceivable Beasts: The Wonders of the East in the Beowulf Manuscript, Tempe 2012, Chapter 6, “Framing the Real”.
45 S. Westrem, The Hereford Map, cit., #963.
46 Ivi, #54.
47 Ivi, #80.
48 Ivi, #442.
49 Ivi, #59, #138-9, #417, #439.
two sphinxes, one northern and one southern. However we read these images — literal and/or symbolic, and simulacrum and/or sign — they refuse to sit still long enough for us to positivistically look for their “accuracy,” however we might define the term in this context.

Even in the case of the seemingly straightforward imagery, though, there were always layers of meaning, mediations of experience and of “reality”. There was no unified experience held by “The Medieval Person”, nor even held by any particular medieval person, anymore than we hold coherent views of our own world(s). The competing worlds of the maps exist side by side (like the simultaneously present yet conceptually — indeed, sensorially — separate cityscapes described by Sinisalo); they exist above, below, and through one another. We see around but also through them as we consider the world as a representation, and as we examine the representation of the world. We gaze on distant monsters, dwelling in the inaccessible reaches of Theydom but simultaneously brought startlingly close via the vector of the map. And while we look at them, they look back at us.

Stepping back, now, from the Hereford Map, the whole suddenly reconfigures itself before my eyes: with the Blemmye and Epiphagi, the Cyclopes and cyclopic Sciapod, and yes, with Jesus at the apex, staring out at me (like the image of the Veil of Veronica on the Ebstorf Map), the round orb of the world becomes as if one large eye, with Jerusalem as its tiny, dilated pupil at the center, recalling the specular late fifteenth-century Tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins of Hieronymus Bosch. At the center of this conceptual map of human sin is a great eye, in the center of which Jesus appears, rising out of the tomb to display his wounds while staring out at us. So, too, the Hereford Map (like some other mappae mundi) is something of a speculum, a mirror, which gazes back at us as we gaze at it. The original intended audience was English, a group relegated to the same outer band of the world as the majority of the monsters it contains. As these viewers made eye contact with the horrible inhabitants of Theydom — of Africa and Asia and even of the far North — they would be confronting beings in positions as liminal as their own. As we strive to access the maps through increasingly facile technologies, we might lose sight of the mediations they create, collapsing the telesthesiac properties of the Internet and of mappae mundi. The maps, though, continue to press back against this through their role as speculum, which causes us to remember our own spectatorship, our own embodied vision.

50° Ivi, #223, #301.
51° For a complete discussion of this organization, see A. S. Mittman, Maps and Monsters in Medieval England, New York 2006, p. 39-42.