Lynn T. Ramey, *Black Legacies: Race and the European Middle Ages* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 89-110.

5

Mapping the Monstrous

Humanness in the Age of Discovery

While the medieval literary characters Maillefer, Feirefiz, and the blob-turned-child of the king of Tars illustrate anxiety about what sorts of offspring would come from a "mixed" marriage, they do not fully or systematically indicate what medieval people thought about inherited traits. Each character carries a somatic, or bodily, marker that can be attributed to doubts about one of the parents. Gigantic size, piebald skin, and blackness coupled with physical defect are outward signs of their dubious nature. Such concerns were not suddenly put to rest when Columbus sailed or even when Montaigne and Shakespeare took up their pens. If anything, anxiety about the unknown and the people inhabiting it increased with the Age of Discovery.

Sixteenth-century European explorers looked westward to new lands and new resources, but they viewed the peoples they encountered through the filter of ancient and medieval travel accounts. Like earlier voyagers, Renaissance travelers were fascinated by the physical and social differences of the peoples they met. They looked for ways to describe the men and women they came upon. More often than not, and particularly in the very first reports, they followed the medieval models that they had inherited. Medieval travelers, themselves borrowing from Roman accounts, categorized the peoples they met based on physical and social customs, describing "races" of men that were later referred to as the "monstrous races." Verbal accounts of these races, accompanied at times with illustrations or depictions of these peoples on period maps, show a great deal of continuity between medieval travelers and the first Europeans to describe the Americas. These depictions appeared not only in travel accounts but also in literary works of imagined travel, such as Rabelais's *Tiers Livre* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Over time, they became became an integral part of the European imagination of the Other.

As Europeans later wrestled with the problem of the status of New World peoples in European society, they drew on thirteenth-century debates about whether monstrous peoples could actually be considered human. Frank Lestringant states, "If, for example, [Renaissance cartographers depicted] monstrous populations inherited from Pliny, St. Augustine and Isidore of Seville, it was only in order to establish provisional boundaries for a knowledge in a perpetual state of progress."[1] For Lestringant, the monstrous races are put on maps to show the limits of knowledge, acting as indications of the farthest reaches of discovery, much like the crosses erected by early modern explorers to mark their passage through new territory.[2] Lestringant argues that, rather than building on earlier travel accounts, Renaissance travelers turned their backs on the Middle Ages.[3] To the contrary, not only were Renaissance explorers indebted to their medieval forebears—Christopher Columbus used both Mandeville and Marco Polo as references for his own travels[4]—but they had great difficulty interpreting the world through any other lens.

Are Monsters Men? Medieval Perspectives

The story of the "monstrous races" begins in the first century of the Common Era with the entertaining accounts of the Roman sea captain Pliny the Elder. Pliny's *Natural History* is a compilation of the encyclopedic knowledge of his time, augmented by his own insight as a traveler and keen observer. His *Natural History* has been popular ever since the time of its writing, and excerpts from the ten-volume Loeb edition are frequently required course reading almost two thousand years after Pliny's death. Pliny was not the only writer to describe the monstrous races, but due to the liveliness of his accounts and the vagaries of which ancient texts survived, medieval and early modern writers refer almost exclusively to his accounts, citing Pliny by name and calling marvelous peoples "Plinian races." In *Natural History*, Pliny catalogues forty-odd peoples with attributes from cannibalism to excessive hairiness, from those sporting a dog's head to those with no discernable head, just eyes and a mouth in their chests. Just as Pliny celebrated a wide assortment of basic physical properties of animals, minerals, and plants, so he found these races to show the diversity of mankind.

These peoples were wonderful illustrations of the marvels produced by the natural world.

Medieval thinkers, inheriting Pliny's fascination with prodigies and wonders, interpreted the place of the monstrous races in the order of things in radically different ways. The concept of the Great Chain of Being (fig. 5.1), an idea medieval thinkers took from the classical period and passed on to later periods, is perhaps the most common way of understanding how medieval Westerners classified people and things.[5] According to this widely accepted idea, everyone and everything in existence has a place on the chain, visualized as extending from Heaven to Hell. God stands at the top of the chain, followed by the angels and heavenly host. In rough categories, man, then the beasts, then plants, and even minerals have their place extending down into the Earth, where Dante places Lucifer and his cohort at the bottom of the chain. Alternatively, in many pictorial representations the fallen angels appear not to be on the chain at all. In addition to the major groupings on the chain, each individual part of creation has a relative position based on its being closer to or farther from divine perfection. Thus gold would be placed above silver, man above woman, king above commoner. While most variations of the chain do not specify in great detail what belongs where, the question of where to place the monstrous races clearly preoccupied medieval thinkers. Were these races men or beasts?

Adding urgency to that question, the idea that God intended for all mankind to be saved also shaped the discourse on monstrous races. The ideal of the "universal church," a Christian church whose message of salvation was available to and aimed at all, dominated Christian thought early on. Universalism puts a heavy onus on Christians, since the possibility for all to be saved rests entirely on access to the truth of the Gospel. Separate from the beasts, man alone has the capacity to reason, understand, and embrace Christianity's message. A necessary corollary of universalism is that while salvation is available to all men, it is denied to all who are not men, those who are incapable of receiving the message. Clearly beasts are not men, but the humanness of others—women, Jews, blacks—has sometimes been called into question.

Thus it comes as no surprise that one of the most popular questions surrounding Plinian races was whether they could be considered men or not. Augustine of Hippo (d. 386) raises the problem in his chapter of the *City of God* (*De Civitate Dei*) titled "Whether Certain Monstrous Races

Figure 5.1. The Great Chain of Being, showing the relative positions of all things. Didacus Valads, *Rhetorica Christiana*.

of Men Are Derived from the Stock of Adam or Noah's Sons."[6] Augustine employs Pliny's catalog of the monstrous races, but he adds the Christian concern that would become the focus of increasing anxiety concerning these races in the medieval period: how do the monstrous races fit into God's plans for mankind? Augustine finds that any being that can be considered a man is capable of salvation. He reasons that since monstrous births (deformities) occur even in his own society, there can be no question but that the monstrous races are also descended from Adam. We see their appearances as a fear-provoking deviation from humankind, but for God they are a part of his plan and not monstrous at all. From Augustine's treatment of the topic, we see that the question was already under discussion in certain circles before the medieval period—and that his answer is noncommittal:

> It is asked whether we are to believe that certain monstrous races of men, spoken of in secular history, have sprung from Noah's sons, or rather, I should say, from that one man from whom they themselves were descended. . . . But whoever is anywhere born a man, that is, a rational, mortal animal, no matter what unusual appearance he presents in color, movement, sound, nor how peculiar he is in some power, part, or quality of his nature, no Christian can doubt that he springs from that one protoplast. . . . All the races which are reported to have diverged in bodily appearance from the usual course which nature generally or almost universally preserves, if they are embraced in that definition of man as rational and mortal animals, unquestionably trace their pedigree to that one first father of all. . . . It ought not to seem absurd to us that as in individual races there are monstrous births, so in the whole race there are monstrous races. Wherefore, to conclude this question cautiously and guardedly, either these things which have been told of some races have no existence at all; or if they do exist, they are not human races; or if they are human, they are descended from Adam.[7]

If they even exist, which is in doubt, and if they are men (defined as rational and mortal), the monstrous races must be descended from Adam. Rationality is a defining characteristic of humanness, but Augustine does not attempt to determine whether monstrous peoples are capable of reason; rational thinking is a test that will become central to later discussions of other races and their humanness.

Bridging the gap between the ancient and the medieval worlds, the encyclopedic *Etymologiae* (*Etymologies*) of Isidore of Seville (560–636) was perhaps the most often used source for general knowledge in the medieval West. Isidore believed that groups of people are constituted by the language they speak, following the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel.[8] According to Isidore, the grouping of peoples is based not on religion but rather on whether they are descendants of Japheth, Ham, or Shem; a complicated interrelationship of language and genealogy determines the *gens* to which one belongs.[9] From these three main branches begun by Noah's sons, the various subcategories of people are grouped based on their language. Physically, mankind differs according to the climate: "The physical aspect of men, their color, their bodies, and the diversity of their temperaments is dependent on the various climates. Thus we see truly that Romans are serious, Greeks are shallow, Africans are 'versatile' [versipelles], the Gauls are of a proud and vicious spirit, according to the nature of the climates."[10] Later in the chapter Isidore underlined the fact that "Moors" (Maurus) are so named because they are black, and their blackness comes from the heat of the sun.[11] Despite the varieties of mankind descended from Noah's three sons, Isidore had no doubt that all of mankind is related through Noah.[12]

Of all the Plinian races, the pygmies attract more interest than their variation from any norm might suggest. Pliny simply noted that they are quite small and that they hunt crane eggs so that the adult cranes will not attack them.[13] The thirteenth-century theologian Albertus Magnus took up the question of pygmies in his *De animalibus*, writing:

> The Pygmy is the most perfect of animals. Among all the others, he makes most use of memory and most understands by audible signs. On this account he imitates reason even though he truly lacks it. Reason is the power of the soul to learn through experience out of past memories and through syllogistic reasoning, to elicit universals and apply them to similar cases in matters of art and learning. This, however, the Pygmy cannot do; the sounds he takes in by his ear, he cannot divide into sound and meaning. Though the Pygmy seems to speak, he does not dispute from universals, but rather his words are directed to the particulars of which he speaks. Thus, the cause of his speech is as a shadow resulting from the sunset of reason. Reason is twofold. One part is its reflection of the particulars of sense experience and memory, the other the universals derived

from the particulars of the first part, which is the principle of all art and learning. The Pygmy does not have even the first of these two parts of reason, and so does not have even the shadow of reason. Accordingly, he perceives nothing of the quiddities of things, nor can he comprehend and use the figures of logical argumentation.[14]

Albert laid out one of the essential problems for determining whether a being is a man or not: does he speak with reason, or does his speech simply relate to everyday activities? The higher-level capacity for reasoning is given only to those God has determined to be "human," so when Western travelers encounter beings who appear to be human and may even possess language, if that language is not sufficiently rational, then those beings cannot be men.

In 1301 a Parisian canon named Peter of Auvergne weighed in on the ongoing debate "Are pygmies men?"[15] Though he made a case for the humanness of pygmies, Peter's writing on this topic fortunately includes a point-by-point refutation of the arguments used for claiming nonhuman status for pygmies, thus giving insight into the reasons medieval philosophers may have offered for claiming superiority to these short-statured people. The arguments countered by Peter of Auvergne include the claim that while pygmies may look the same as men, they do not have the same quantity of matter and thus cannot be men. More telling, Peter's quodlibet indicates that there is already a question of whether the pygmies are actually descended from Adam.[16]

By focusing attention on pygmies, and describing them in ways that generally focus on the superficial characteristic of height, Isidore and Peter force their readers to think of themselves in smaller versions. As opposed to arguing the humanity of a cynocephalus, which would require the reader to identify with something very foreign and perhaps distasteful, thinking of oneself in miniature does not or should not bring about any sort of revulsion. It is in the writings of Albertus Magnus that we see an argument that truly questions the worth of the pygmy: if the pygmy cannot reason, then the pygmy is no longer human.

Medieval Verbal and Pictorial Accounts of the World

While Pliny the Elder described his encounters with the wonders of new worlds and peoples he discovered on his voyages, most medieval accounts of the world were not firsthand. On the basis of the stories they read and

facts gathered from various sources, medieval people wrote about worlds they had not seen and made maps of imagined lands. Unlike later maps, which depict the relative physical location of geographical places, the standard medieval map depicts a Christian vision of the world. Many of them also illustrate how monstrous races fit into medieval concepts of grace and salvation.

Medieval maps were often T-O maps, in which the O shape of the world is divided by T-shaped bodies of water into sectors—Asia, Europa, and Africa—with the East oriented to the top of the map. In general, the monstrous races were placed at the edge of the Earth, in the unknown and unvisited regions of Africa and Asia. In one variation, on the wonderfully detailed fourteenth-century Hereford *mappamundi*, the largest extant medieval map, the monstrous races can be found along the far right side, south of the Christian West, in the margins of the known world. Mapmakers seemed unsure of what to do with the monstrous races on this physical and yet also spiritual map.

Part of the reason for their lack of confidence relates back to the unsettled place that these races held for the Christian faith. As Augustine had noted, if they were men, then they should, or could, be Christianized. For medieval thinkers, the physical space of the world held spiritual significance, so the placement of peoples on the map would indicate their relationship to the Gospel: whether or not they had yet had the opportunity to hear God's word. The implicit relationship between geography and spiritual qualities that underlies medieval T-O maps is made explicit in Hugh of Saint-Victor's *De arca Noe mistica* (On the mystical interpretation of Noah's Ark), written around 1130. Professor at the illustrious school of Saint-Victor in Paris, Hugh created a mental image of the basic medieval map of the world, and he assigned spiritual qualities to the various parts and peoples of the globe. His verbal map is a record of salvation history, showing how divine grace moved from the East to the West:

> The first man was placed in the East from his creation and from this original point his descendants must cover the Earth. . . . Then the center moved toward Greece, before supreme power then descended near the end of time to the West, to the Romans, who live in a way at the end of the world.[17]

The link to salvation is repeated in the framework of the entire *mappamundi*. Hugh has located the earthly paradise, the Garden of Eden, at

the top (eastern extreme) of the map, and he places the Last Judgment at the bottom, in the westernmost sector. At the Last Judgment an avenging angel separates the two groups of the righteous and the damned. This sense that God's grace has moved from east to west, combined with the onus of enlightening the ignorant that is placed on those who have been exposed to the Truth,[18] would have important ramifications for New World explorers.

Medieval Accounts of Exotic Lands

Theologians debated the humanity of the Plinian races, but few questioned their existence. They were treated as factual in the encyclopedic compilations of knowledge that were popular at the time, most notably in Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum* (*On the Properties of Things*), an encyclopedia of medieval knowledge treating everything from God and the angels to gemstones and geography and the human body, written around 1240.

Very little is known about Bartholomew. He is mentioned in a chronicle by 1230, and his writings on elephants are referred to by Salimbene of Parma in 1284.[19] His sources are the usual panoply of medieval authorities, including Albertus Magnus, Isidore of Seville, Augustine of Hippo, Pliny, and Aristotle. Bartholomew also included Greek and Arabic sources that had recently become available in new translations. Because of his wide-ranging sources, Bartholomew's encyclopedia was one of the most popular reference books of the Middle Ages. More than a hundred manuscripts still survive. The Sorbonne made a chained copy available for general use, a sure sign that the book was popular enough that it risked being stolen. The encyclopedia remained popular after the advent of printing, with eighteen editions and translations into French, English, Provençal, Dutch, Spanish, and Italian in the early years of printing.[20]

Following Pliny for the most part, Bartholomew notes several types of monstrous men, including cave-dwelling troglodytes, couples that live together without marriage, naked men, and the headless blemmye, who have eyes in their chests. Tellingly, Bartholomew includes the monstrous men twice in his encyclopedia, once under the categories of men and again under the rubric of animals.[21] He seems to have trouble deciding whether these almost-men count as men.

While Bartholomew did not claim to travel himself, even those who actually did travel tended to follow the descriptions of the encyclopedists, embellishing their firsthand accounts with stories of the monstrous races. Odoric of Pordenone, a Franciscan monk born not far from Venice, apparently undertook travels between 1317 and 1330 for the purpose of converting those he encountered, following in the footsteps of four Franciscan friars who had been martyred in the East. Odoric's route took him from Italy through Turkey, Iraq, and Iran and onward to the coast of India. From there he sailed east, stopping in at the island lands of Sri Lanka, Sumatra, and Borneo on his way up the coast of China.

Odoric does not always comment on the physical appearance of the peoples he encounters, but if they are very unusual, he mentions it. At the island of Nicoveran, he reports on people who are dog-faced, the cynocephali.[22] He notes that they worship oxen and wear a gold or silver ox on their forehead in honor of their god. Odoric clearly considers these to be people capable of religious belief, albeit odd. Indeed, Odoric claims that the king "attends to justice and maintains it, and throughout his realm all men may fare safely."[23]

Odoric find the cynocephali undeniably human, but he is less certain about the humanity of other races that he meets on his voyages. The nakedness that Odoric finds among certain peoples raises questions about their humanity, for clothing is one of the hallmarks of humanness, according to Augustine and Hugh of Saint-Victor.[24] Likewise, the cross between animal and human poses problems for Odoric, with one example being his visit to the "monastery of idolators" in Manzi. Wanting to show Odoric a memorable sight, a Christian convert takes Odoric to a secluded area and bangs a gong. Odoric describes a "multitude of animals" that descend from a hill in order to be fed table scraps by the convert. They are "apes, monkeys, and many other animals having faces like men, to the number of some three thousand," who "took up their places round him in regular ranks."[25] When they were fed and had left, the convert explains that they are the souls of gentlemen, charitably fed in honor of God's love. Odoric denies this, saying, "No souls be these, but brute beasts of sundry kinds."[26] The convert insists, but Odoric is not swayed.

Odoric's interpretation of the cultures of the cynocephali and the animals with faces like men is picked up by the fifteenth-century illuminations of Odoric's text found in the manuscript BnF fr. 2810. Trappings of Western culture appear in the image of the cynocephali (fig. 5.2), including elements that point to the cynocephali's ability to reason. They wear

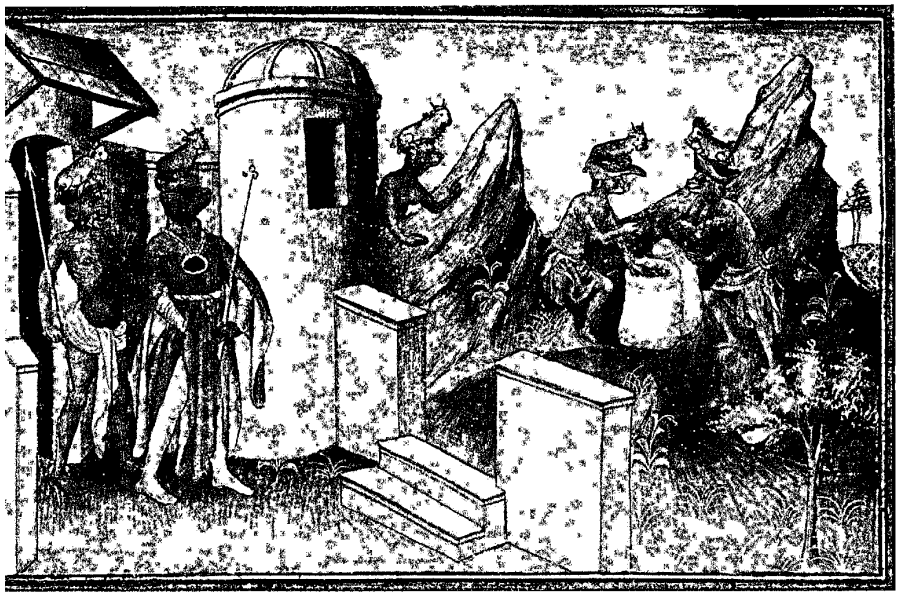

Figure 5.2. The cynocephali of Odoric of Pordenone. *Livre des merveilles*, 1:92.

clothing, an indication that they are postlapsarian and possess the ability to be ashamed of their own naked bodies. They presumably have built the town in which they dwell, and one of the cynocephali, apparently a guard, carries a spear. Outside the walls, the cynocephali are performing some sort of work, and their gestures indicate that they are communicating with each other. The elaborate headdresses that they wear are interpretations of Odoric's mention of a religious belief involving bovine veneration, and the king is clearly discernable by his authoritative posture, scepter, and dress.

In stark contrast, the human-faced sheep that appear in the same manuscript (fig. 5.3) clearly do not possess reason. While the text describes many different types of animals at the monastery of idolators in Manzi, the illumination of this scene is filled with human-faced sheep, perhaps because man-faced apes would be too much like the humans depicted. Enclosed in a penlike area within the walls of a city clearly built by the men in the image, the sheep show no signs of communicating either among themselves or with their keepers. Elsewhere in Odoric's text, the difficulty of distinguishing between animal and human

Figure 5.3. The human-faced sheep of Odoric of Pordenone. *Livre des merveilles*, 1:97.

Figure 5.4. The hybrid melon-lamb of Jean de Mandeville. *Livre des merveilles*, 2:179.

spills over into the problem of separating animal and vegetable. Odoric (echoed by John Mandeville) tells of a certain melon that, when open, contains a small lamb and is thus both fruit and meat in one.[27]

Though these hybrids pose a problem, Odoric is unequivocal when he visits the pygmies: "These Pygmies, both male and female, are famous for their small size. But they have rational souls like ourselves."[28] Had Odoric seen a superficial physical characteristic such as size (or skin color) as an impediment to salvation, that would constitute racism, but at least in this case, counter to Albertus Magnus's assertion, we see that the rational soul is not denied to the pygmy.

Mandeville's Travels and the Curse of Ham

In the mid-fourteenth century, one of the most enduringly popular and charming travel accounts of the European Middle Ages began to circulate throughout the West. By the end of the century it had been translated into every major European language. Jean de Mandeville—or Sir John Mandeville, for he describes himself as an English knight in his French or Anglo-Norman text—wrote an account indebted to previous travelers such as Pliny and Odoric of Pordenone. While critical debate over whether his account was pure plagiarism or embroidered from fact has surrounded his text since the late sixteenth century, Mandeville's *Travels* exercised a huge influence over both medieval and early modern travelers. Part compilation of current knowledge and part description of places most Europeans would never visit, the three-hundred-odd extant manuscripts of the *Travels* provide us with a window into the way Europeans conceived of themselves and others.

Much like Odoric and Marco Polo, Mandeville finds marvelous people-animal hybrids in the East, in addition to the usual assortment of cynocephali, sciopods (one-legged men), pygmies, and mythical animals. He even repeats Odoric's claim that in Cathay there are trees that bring forth melons with lambs; the illuminator of BnF fr. 2810 illustrated this marvel with a drawing (fig. 5.4) that could have been used equally well in Odoric's account, which precedes Mandeville's in the compilation.

Tellingly, Mandeville makes an explicit connection between travel to exotic lands and race, thus connecting the voyage to/through the East and its monstrous races with the notion of "race," here seen as physical characteristics linked with moral inferiority and shared within a group of

people. Mandeville explains the Great Khan's name by linking it etymologically to Ham, Noah's cursed son. Retelling the biblical story of Noah's nakedness, Mandeville then locates Ham in Africa, attributing Asia to Shem and Europe to Japheth. He claims that most of the evils and deformations of mankind can be found in the lands ruled by Ham's son Cush, including the Tower of Babel. Mandeville writes that

> many devils came in the likeness of men and lay with the women of his race and begat on them giants and other monsters of horrible shape—some without heads, some with dog's heads, and many other misshapen and disfigured men.[29]

The pagan kings of India and the East are descended from Ham, and so the Great Khan took his name from Ham. Mandeville also notes,

> And of Shem, so they say, come the Saracens; and of Japhet the people of Israel and we who live in Europe. This is the opinion of the Saracens and the Samaritans; thus they made me believe until I got to India; when I got there, I well know it was otherwise. Nevertheless it is true that the people of Tartary and all those who live in Greater Asia come from the race of Ham.[30]

Mandeville's geographic confusion, first locating Ham in Africa and then attributing to him large parts of the East, comes from his main reason for classifying the world's races: he wishes to separate the world into Christians (and Jews), Muslims, and all the rest, but he makes this division genealogically. Ham's descendants are part demon, and thus not fully human, resulting in the monstrous races but also in the peoples of Africa and (as he later "realizes") Tartary and Greater Asia. A large section of the world thus has a precarious claim to humanity.

Early Modern Encounters with the Monstrous

The debate about the humanness of unusual peoples did not stop suddenly at the end of what we term the Middle Ages. It continued to appear in Renaissance maps and travel accounts. While medieval mapmakers located the monstrous races in the unexplored areas of the known world, early modern mapmakers relocated these races to the New World, superimposing the physical and metaphorical senses of monstrous margins onto the newly discovered hemisphere.

Juan de la Cosa, an explorer and cartographer who sailed with Christopher Columbus, unknowingly created the oldest extant map of the New World around the year 1500. Still under the impression that they reached Asia, Cosa continues to envision the world in typical medieval fashion, putting two of the monstrous races, the blemmye and the cynocephali, at the very edges of the East, beyond the lands of the "ydolatras" or idol worshippers and the Amazons and not far from the troglodytes, separated from the rest of mankind by a vast river. These monstrous peoples are at the eastern edge of the flat Earth that Cosa depicts; there is no sense that the land wraps around or that there is continuity between Far East and Far West. He has clearly marked, however, the island of the cannibals on the western edge of the map off the coast of Brazil.[31] Since Cosa believed he had reached Asia, the Brazilian cannibals join up spatially with the Far Eastern blemmye and cynocephali, even though they appear on opposite edges of the map.

A few years later in 1513, in the first example of an explicitly New World map, the Ottoman admiral and cartographer Piri Reis shows dog-headed people and blemmye in South America. According to the story written in Turkish on the map, Piri Reis worked from a map obtained from a prisoner who had sailed with Columbus to the Americas on three voyages.[32] His map depicts three dog-men and a blemmye. Like the dog-headed people in Odoric's medieval account, these dog-men appear to possess some degree of culture, often linked to the ability to reason. The couple at the upper left seem to be dancing, while the canine homunculus at the bottom right gestures like a courtier to the blemmye ruler. These animal-man hybrids are located predictably at the very edges of the map, at the extremes of the New World, as if to say that while everyone knows that the monstrous races are not located in India (an area well explored by 1513), they must be found in this new, uncharted land. The Turkish writing on the map does not mention the depicted monstrous races, but the inscription describes the people of the region as animal-like:

> it is reported thus, that a Genoese infidel, his name was Colombo . . . discovered these places. . . . not knowing the language of these people, [the Genoese] traded by signs, and after this trip the Bey of Spain sent priests and barley, taught the natives how to sow and reap and converted them to his own religion. They had no religion of any sort. They walked naked and lay there like animals. Now these regions have been opened to all and have become famous.[33]

On this map, the civilizing mission of European explorers connects the indigenous peoples of the Americas with the medieval monstrous races. First, these races occupy the geographical place of the indigenous in the New World. Then, the inscription indicates that the indigenous peoples were animals without culture before the Spanish bestowed on them religion, crop cultivation, and clothing—all markers of the ability to reason.

Renaissance explorers also inherited the notion expounded by Hugh of Saint-Victor that God's grace was moving from East to West. This led some New World explorers to see indigenous Americans as innocents who would eventually be converted, unlike the already corrupted Easterners of India and China. Sixteenth-century French explorer Jacques Cartier recycles the idea of God's salvation moving from East to West in the account of his travels to Canada in the 1530s and 1540s:

> For our first most holy faith was sown and planted in the Holy Land, which is in Asia to the east of our Europe; and afterwards by succession of time it has been carried and proclaimed to us, and at length to the west of our Europe, just like the sun, carrying its light and its heat from east to west, as already set forth.[34]

For Cartier, the village of Hochelaga becomes a prelapsarian earthly paradise, where innocent villagers live a naive but pure existence. The residents are said not to value worldly goods because of their nomadic existence. In the end Hochelaga disappoints Cartier, and he turns his attention to a land described to him by a local chief. This mythical land, called Saguenay, is remote and made in the image of the West. Cartier reports that the chief "let us know that these men are dressed like us and that there are many towns and a large population and good folks, and that they have much gold and copper," and later, "there are white men there as in France and they are outfitted in wool clothing." Cartier's informant also attests to other marvelous races, including a people who "do not eat or have an anus at all and they digest nothing excepting water expelled through the penis. Furthermore it is told that there are pygmies and other lands where the people have only one leg. And other marvels that would take a long time to tell about." Because these are

precisely the sorts of places and peoples that the French expect to find in unexplored lands, Cartier insists on capturing his informant to bring him back to France to tell the king firsthand of all that he has seen in his travels. According to a Portuguese visitor to the French court, the elderly chief informs the king of France that he has also seen men who can fly.[35]

Pierre Desceliers, cartographer for Cartier's Canadian voyages, exemplifies the tendency of early modern explorers to apply the ancient and medieval descriptions of monstrous races to New World inhabitants. In his portolan chart of 1546, Desceliers draws a series of mounds near the land of Florida that recall the troglodyte caves of medieval maps.[36] In South America, he notes the lands of giants and of cannibals. In his 1550 map of the world (detail, fig. 5.5), produced following Cartier's second voyage to Canada, he places the pygmies in North America and pictures them shooting cranes, just as described by Pliny and his medieval intellectual descendants. Unicorns also grace the Canadian landscape, pointing to Canada as a land that could embody both the real and the mythical at the same time.

In Cartier's 1541 commission for a third voyage, the people that he has previously encountered are described as "savage peoples living without knowledge of God and without the use of reason," but he also found "peoples of those countries well formed of body and limb and well endowed in mind and understanding."[37] This assessment is found verbatim in another royal commission of 1540, which establishes colonies among the peoples "well formed of body and limb and well endowed in mind and understanding."[38] Following the medieval debate about what constitutes humanness, Cartier describes the inhabitants of Canada as people living like animals, but with a rational soul, giving the French both a right and an obligation to convert these people and move them from animal to human status. The map of Hochelaga in figure 5.6 modifies the basic pattern of the medieval T-O map, making Hochelaga a circular microcosm of the world. At the bottom of the map, the judging angel is replaced by Cartier himself, a telling representation of how Cartier viewed his mission to the New World. He stands at the center, between the people of Hochelaga and the French. Like the angel in Hugh of Saint-Victor's verbal map of the world, it is Cartier who will decide which of these New World "innocents" will be afforded entry to paradise.

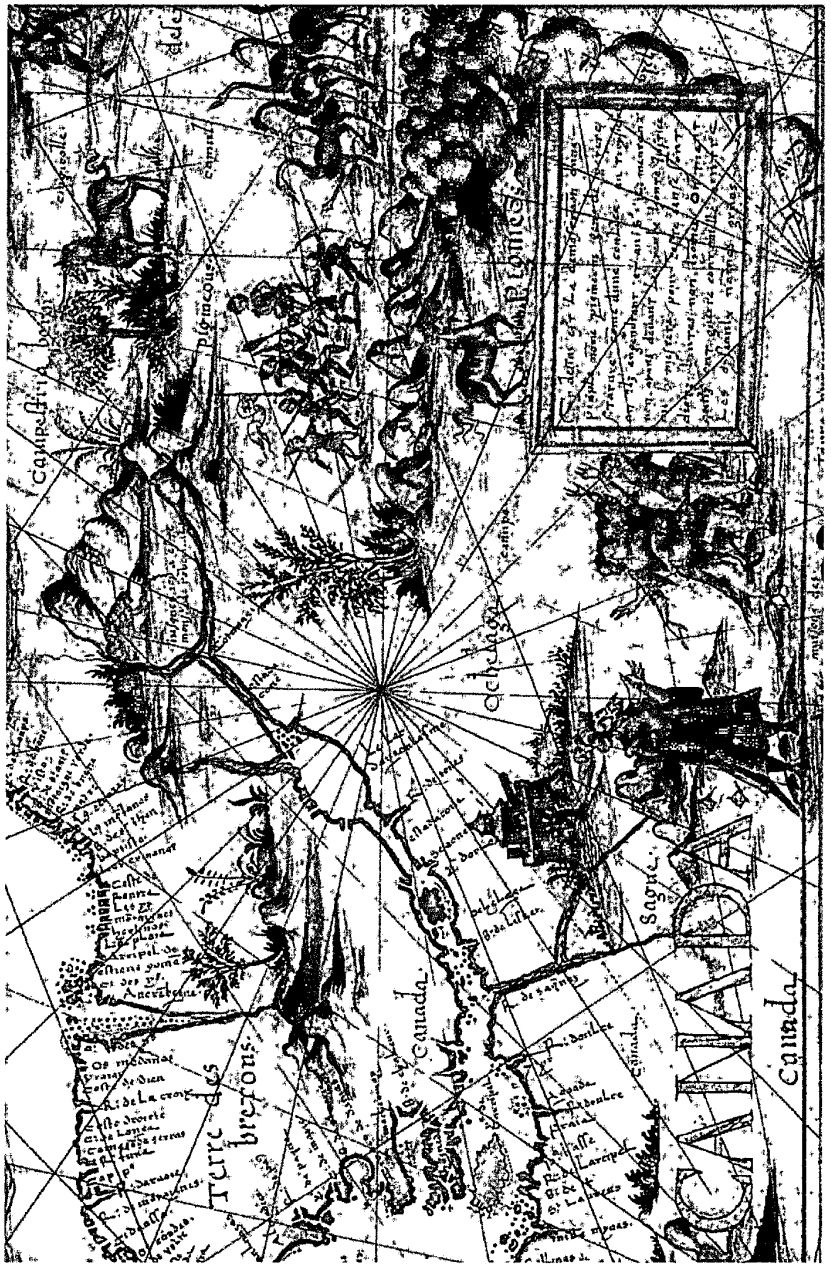

Figure 5.5. Detail of Desceliers's 1550 map of Cartier's second voyage to Canada, showing pygmies and unicorns in the New World. BL Add. MS 24065. © British Library Board. All rights reserved.

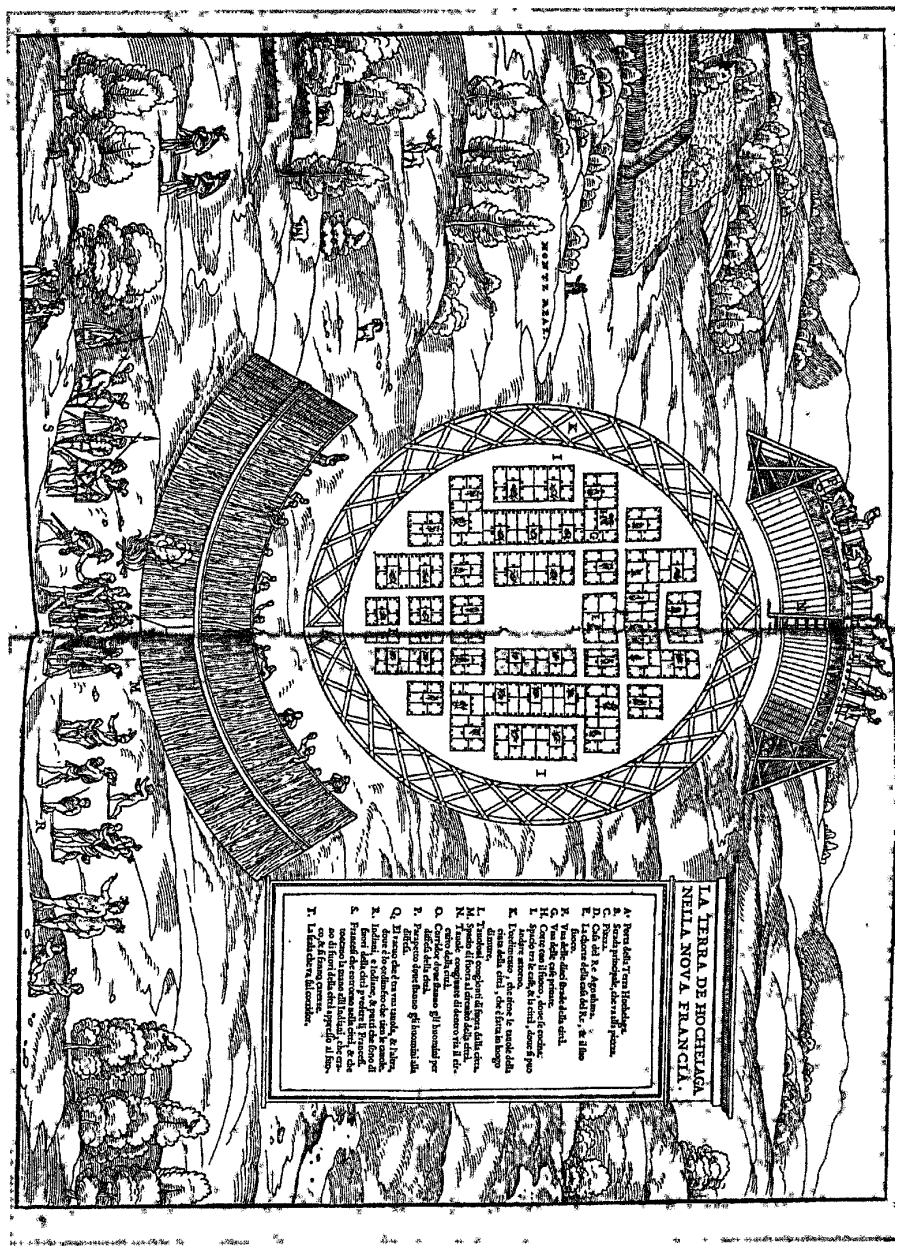

Figure 5.6. Cartier's Hochelaga in the shape of a T-O map. Desceliers, *Mariner's Guide*.

The result of connecting New World inhabitants with the medieval monstrous races, whether used to justify conversion or oppression, was devastating. In his 1547 treatise justifying war against the New World Indians, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda invokes the idea that the Indians are less than fully human. He addresses a fictional German interlocutor, the antiwar Leopold, who is "somewhat corrupted by Lutheran errors":

> You can well understand, Leopold, if you know the customs and manners of different peoples, that the Spanish have a perfect right to rule these barbarians of the New World and the adjacent islands, who in prudence, skill, virtues, and humanity are as inferior to the Spanish as children to adults, or women to men, for there exists between the two as great a difference as between savage and cruel races and the most merciful, between the most intemperate and the moderate and temperate and, I might even say, between apes and men.[39]

Sepúlveda separates the Indians into different types, claiming that some have no civilization, writing, or rule and thus have no reason and are candidates for natural slavery. For those whom he views as more advanced, he has the following condemnation:

> And as for the way of life of the inhabitants of New Spain and the province of Mexico, I have already said that these people are considered the most civilized of all, and they themselves take pride in their public institutions, because they have cities created in a rational manner and kings who are not hereditary but elected by popular vote, and among themselves they carry on commercial activities in the manner of civilized peoples. But see how they deceived themselves, and how much I dissent from such an opinion, seeing, on the contrary, in these very institutions a proof of the crudity, the barbarity, and natural Slavery of these people; for having houses and some rational way of life and some sort of commerce is a thing which the necessities of nature itself induce, and only serves to prove that they are not bears or monkeys and are not totally lacking in reason.[40]

Sepúlveda argues that these people are born to natural servitude because they own no land individually, but rather all are subject to their king. Thus

both rational and irrational humans become ripe for slavery, a conclusion justified on the basis of cultural differences. Like the medieval philosopher Albertus Magnus, Sepúlveda finds that Westerners can encounter people who might seem to be human in form and may even have some amount of "humanness" but still fall short in some critical aspect and are thus discounted as animals.

Eventually and inevitably, Augustine's ambiguous conclusion that the monstrous races either were men and should be saved or were not men became untenable. Augustine might well suggest that blemmye and sciopods are of questionable humanness based on their physical bodies, but the inhabitants of the Americas resembled very much their conquerors. Apologists for Christian colonialists came to the conclusion that these were in fact men without souls, born from spontaneous generation and not descended from Adam.[41]

Equating some ethnic groups with soulless animals lifted the onus of conversion from the colonists and easily justified oppression and exploitation, a line of thought that unfortunately proved extremely difficult to eradicate. In an eerie replay of the medieval debate on the humanness of pygmies, the BBC reported that organizers of a 2007 music festival in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, chose to house a group of pygmy musicians in a tent at the city zoo, while all other performers were provided with hotel rooms. A spokesman from the Congolese Observatory of Human Rights pointed out, "It's clear that it's a situation like we saw in earlier centuries, where people put pygmies in zoos to dance or create a spectacle. They were treated the same as zoo animals and I think that we have a similar situation today."[42]

Renaissance appropriation of the medieval discourse on descriptions of Pliny's monstrous races proved to be not a rupture with the medieval past but rather its extension. Medieval travelers continually relocated the monstrous races to unexplored areas; early modern explorers simply reenvisioned their placement in the newest of unexplored lands. These verbal and pictorial images of new peoples were not entertainment. They continued fundamental medieval questions about what makes a being human and what responsibilities Christians have toward these races. As it became clear that New World peoples did not have dog heads or animal bodies, these previously theoretical debates about humanness were transposed onto real peoples, with dire consequences. While medieval debates about humanness were not systematically and institutionally

coupled with oppression, they paved the way for intellectual arguments in favor of New World conquest and subjugation. Contrary to the assertion that Renaissance explorers turned away from medieval paradigms, medieval models were integral to early modern conceptions of race and superiority.

sorcelled him nightly, turning him into a golden apple. She gave him fantastic sex dreams, and she slept peacefully, preserving her virginity for Guillaume, whom she already loved.

70. Not possible, of course; if Orable did not consummate her marriage with Thibaut, but these Medea-like images surround her, much like the Medea-like bride that Apponius imagined in his commentary on the Song of Songs.

71. At the same time that he notes the importance of the sociopolitical themes of romance epic, William Calin claims that the love of "la belle Sarrasine" functions as a parody of *la fin'amor* ("Textes médiévaux et tradition," 15). This reading is echoed by others, not only in the case of *Prise d'Orange*, but also for the twelfth-century chantefable *Aucassin et Nicolette* and other texts that present cultural miscegenation. Tony Hunt suggests that Aucassin et Nicolette is a parody as well, in "La parodie médiévale." Rather than seeing these romance epics as "epic lite," I suggest that they do important cultural work imagining a multicultural, multiracial society.

72. One is reminded here of the 2012 comments of Missouri congressman Todd Akin, who suggested that in cases of "legitimate rape" a woman's body had ways of shutting down the reproductive process.

73. See note 46.

Chapter 5. Mapping the Monstrous

1. Lestringant, *Mapping the Renaissance World*, 12.

2. Susan K. Kevra (private communication) pointed out that the crosses could equally well indicate, not the limit of knowledge, but the beginning of knowledge about the New World. Indeed, the crosses seem to challenge the next explorer to go yet farther, while the monstrous races on a medieval map may have served to warn travelers not to visit certain areas. I find it likely that historical medieval travelers were drawn to the margins of the known world, seeking out these races from sheer curiosity.

3. Lestringant, *Mapping the Renaissance World*, 12.

4. Edmund S. Morgan in *American Heroes*, 20–23, discusses Columbus's inability to "see" the New World clearly because of undue influence from books, namely those of Pliny, Marco Polo, and Mandeville.

5. This idea is so prevalent in Western thought that one science writer suggests that it has unduly influenced current research on human evolution; see Nee, "Great Chain," 429. For a detailed analysis of the history and importance of the chain of being, see Lovejoy, *Great Chain*.

6. Augustine, *City of God*, chap. 16.

7. Ibid., 16.8.

8. "The diversity of languages arose with the building of the Tower after the Flood, for before the pride of that Tower divided human society . . ." (9.i.1) and "We have treated languages first, and then nations, because nations arose from languages, and not languages from nations" (9.i.14). All citations of Isidore, *Etymologies*, are from the 2006 translation by Barney et al.

9. Ibid., 9.ii.2–4.

10. Ibid., 9.ii.104–7.

11. Ibid., 9.ii.120–22.

12. Ibid., 7.vi.13–16.

13. Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, 7.26.

14. Cited in Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, 192, emphasis mine. For a full treatment of the work, see Albert the Great, *Questions*.

15. For details on this discussion, see Koch, "Sind die Pygmäen Menschen?" An excellent overview of Peter of Auvergne's disputations or debates is found in Schabel, "Quodlibeta."

16. Schabel, "Quodlibeta," 210.

17. Translated with reference to Lecoq, "La 'Mappemonde,'" 20. The original is found in the Patrologia Latina 176, col. 677D–678AB. See also the introduction and commentary to Hugh, *Descriptio*, by Patrick Gautier Dalché.

18. The command to go forth, convert, and baptize all the nations of the world is taken from Matthew 28:19–20.

19. Long, introduction, 2.

20. For a concise overview of the importance of Bartholomew's work, see Long, introduction; Seymour et al., *Bartholomaeus*; Steele, *Mediaeval Lore*.

21. The pygmies are described in book 15, chapter 120 ("De Pigmea"), where the inhabitants of the regions of the world are described, as well as in book 18, chapter 86 ("De pigmeis"), on animals. For an accessible edition, see Bartholomaeus, *Properties of Things*, 797, 1236–37.

22. Odoric, *Travels*, 113.

23. Ibid., 114.

24. Augustine, *City of God*, chaps. 14, 17. Also see Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, 255n29.

25. Odoric, *Travels*, 129.
26. Ibid., 130.
27. Ibid., 149.
28. Ibid., 131–32.
29. Mandeville, *Travels*, 145.
30. Ibid., 145–46.
31. Cosa, *Mappamundi*.
32. McIntosh, *Piri Reis Map*, 72.
33. Inan, *Life and Works of Pirî Reis*, 30–31.
34. Cartier, *Voyages*, 37.
35. Ibid., 131.
36. Desceliers, *Mariner's Guide*. See also Burden, *Mapping of North America*.
37. Cartier, *Voyages*, 135.
38. Ibid., 144.
39. Sepúlveda, "Democrates Alter."
40. Ibid., 495–96.
41. Gliozzi, *Adam et le Nouveau Monde*, 243–58.
42. BBC, "Pygmy Artists."

Chapter 6. Conclusions

1. On this topic, see Ramey and Pugh, *Race, Class, and Gender in "Medieval" Cinema*, and Kelly and Pugh, *Queer Movie Medievalisms*. For a more general study of cinematic medievalism, including modern anxieties that find their way into these films, see Finke and Shichtman, *Cinematic Illuminations*.
2. Pao, "Recasting Race," 1–2.
3. Ibid., 3.
4. Ibid., 10. Pao goes on to show that the ability to mount color-blind productions as well as the desirability of such productions has been seriously called into question.
5. Ibid., 17.
6. I use this anachronism intentionally, as Pugh and I did in *Race, Class, and Gender in "Medieval" Cinema*. We maintain that medieval cinema refers to a specific genre of anachronistic films.
7. Azeem's sensitivity to women is in ironic contrast to the prevalent post-9/11 American attitudes about Islam and the position of women.