

*The diversity of mankind in
The Book of John Mandeville*



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IN A VOLUME devoted to travel literature, *The Book of John Mandeville* occupies a peculiar place: it is, first of all, doubtful that the writer actually travelled into the eastern regions he so memorably describes; moreover, the identity of the author is in doubt, in spite of the fact that he identifies himself as 'I, John Maundeville, knight . . . born in Englonde in the town of Seynt Albones'.¹ What justifies the inclusion of *The Book of John Mandeville* in the present volume is not the validity of the traveller's observations, but rather his readers' enthusiastic reception of this portrait of the world. The work first appeared in the mid-fourteenth century in an Old French version; almost immediately, however, translations into other European vernaculars and Latin began to appear, along with a variety of redactions and adaptations.² This extraordinary popularity, which persisted well into the seventeenth century, illustrates the power of the text to capture the imagination and to intersect with a range of cultural currents: exploration, nationalism and even affective piety.

In this chapter I will examine how the author of *The Book of John Mandeville* presents the people located at the fringes of the species of mankind, found particularly in Ethiopia and India – that is, the so-called 'monstrous races' – and the human populations living closest to them. While individual monstrous prodigies were thought to be unique departures from the norm, the monstrous races were seen as a naturally occurring extreme on the spectrum of human bodily diversity. The ideal body, engendered by a perfectly temperate climate, lay at one end of the spectrum, the monstrous races on the other. In between them lay the full span of human diversity, including the fair-skinned people formed by the extremely cold northern climates, and the dark-skinned people generated in the torrid south. The bodily diversity of mankind anatomised and celebrated in medieval texts is certainly different from modern theories of race, formulated in the wake of the Enlightenment; nonetheless,

as I will show, medieval systems of categorisation laid the foundations for modern distinctions between those who are 'naturally' slaves and those who are 'naturally' their masters. There is, moreover, a crucial distinction between medieval and modern discourses of bodily diversity: that is, the language of wonder found in medieval texts. The wondrous quality of the human beings located at the margins of the known world served not only to stimulate curiosity but also to create the image of a unified and harmonious world, shaped by the wisdom of its maker. This view of the significance of the wonders of nature had been expressed by Augustine in the early Middle Ages; late medieval accounts, however, such as *The Book of John Mandeville*, highlight the desirability and fascination of these wonders, taking the reader along with the narrator on a kind of virtual journey, in which the wonders of the frontier serve to reflect (and magnify) both the traveller's homeland and the traveller himself.

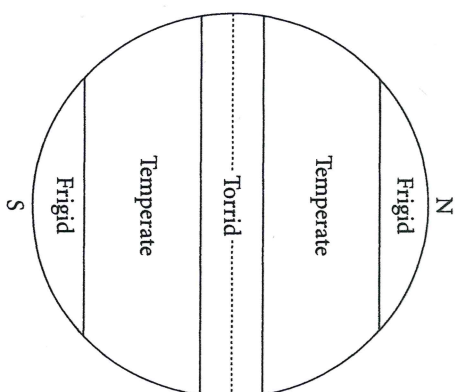
MEDIEVAL CATEGORIES AND THE DISCOURSE OF RACE

Well before the seventeenth century, when (according to Foucault) one might expect to find the systems of categories that make up a discourse, we find in Mandeville's *Book* an elaborate system of classification, one which integrates religious, geographical, linguistic and bodily difference into a carefully balanced and unified 'order of things'. This fact begs two questions. First, can the system of classification found in Mandeville's work and in related texts (such as medieval maps and encyclopaedias) be considered elements of a discourse, in the Foucauldian sense? Second, can the categories of bodily difference (a source of fascination for medieval as for modern readers) be considered equivalent to early modern and Enlightenment definitions of racial difference? Recent attempts to interpret the depiction of bodily difference – of 'race' – in medieval texts have tended to oversimplify a complicated matter. Some readers do not distinguish between difference constituted in terms of religion and difference constituted in terms of race, in part because these categories so frequently overlap in the medieval texts themselves. This has led Andrew Fleck, for example, to suggest that Christian and Muslim difference in Mandeville's *Book* may be read in terms of Abdul JanMohamed's theory of the 'Manichean allegory' of racial difference. (The same strategy is used by Lynn Ramey in her study of Muslims in medieval French literature.)³ Other readers homogenise the 'Saracen' body found in medieval texts, characterising it exclusively in terms of monstrosity and excess in spite of the fact that a countermodel of the desirable Saracen – the admirable pagan knight and his beautiful sister – is presented as an equally fascinating alternative.⁴ The category of bodily difference in medieval texts can be understood only in tandem with other categories of difference, for the construction of

these categories is dialectical: one cannot emerge without the presence of the other. Religion, nation and race are intricately intertwined yet distinct modes of categorising the differences between self and other.

As John Block Friedman and David Williams have shown, medieval texts explain the existence of the monstrous races in two different ways: monstrosity is either the consequence of the damnation of outcasts such as Cain or Canaan, or a manifestation of the diversity of nature.⁵ The former line of explanation draws upon biblical and theological sources; the latter upon Pliny's *Natural History*, known in a variety of adaptations throughout the Middle Ages. The former depicts racial difference as inborn, the product of genealogical descent; the latter depicts racial difference as the product of environmental descent; the latter depicts racial difference as the product of environmental conditions of how bodily difference is occasioned, drawing upon a wide range of sources, including the encyclopaedia of Bartholomaeus Anglicus. It is not this combination, however, that sets the *Book* apart from other medieval treatments of the monstrous races. Instead, *The Book of John Mandeville* stands out by virtue of the system of the world which governs the text, so that the monstrous races are incorporated into a finely balanced – although by no means homogeneous – world. Paradoxically, unity appears only within diversity. In order to provide a context for my reading of Mandeville, I will provide a brief account of how bodily diversity – what might be called race – was understood by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century writers.⁶

With the reintroduction of the Aristotelian corpus during the thirteenth century, accompanied by the rich commentaries of Muslim philosophers such as Avicenna and Averroës, the view of natural diversity inherited from Pliny (by way of Solinus and Isidore) was substantially altered. It was no longer sufficient to describe and label the heterogeneous range of monstrous races and fabulous animals; instead, it became necessary to categorise them, to account for how their unusual features had come to be, and to explain how bodily differences such as skin colour shaded off into monstrosity. The importance of climate in determining the natural diversity of mankind is emphasised in both the astronomical and the medical tradition. In the *De sphaera*, a popular treatise based on Ptolemy's cosmology, the astronomer Sacrobosco explains that Ethiopia must be located at the equator, that is, in the torrid zone, 'for [the inhabitants] would not be so black if they were born in the temperate habitable zone' (see Figure 11).⁷ His commentators, influenced by Aristotelian explanations of causation and change, elaborated on this passage with enthusiasm. One early thirteenth-century commentator launches into a digression on the physiology of the people of Ethiopia: 'An example of the blackening of Ethiopians is the cooking of golden honey. First it is golden, then reddish, and finally by long cooking it becomes black and bitter, and that which was at first sweet is now salty. And it is just this way all



11 Climatic zones (after Macrobius)

over Ethiopia.' Their blood is drawn to the surface of the skin by the great heat, where it becomes 'black and bitter, and in this way it can be clearly seen why the Ethiopian is black'. Several other commentators and glossators include comparable elaborations on this same passage in the *De sphaera*.⁸

Turning from the astronomical tradition to the medical, we find that writers such as Avicenna and Haly Abbas (known in the west through the *Pantegni*, a translation by Constantinus Africanus) similarly explain the blackness of the inhabitants of the southern regions in terms of natural process. In a passage frequently paraphrased by other writers, Constantinus explains that the northern regions near the pole are cold and dry, and therefore the water and air are especially clear, and the bodies of the inhabitants are healthy and of a pleasing colour, the women's bodies soft and the men's strong. The northern climate also has negative consequences, however: the women conceive only rarely (because they are 'frigid') and give birth with difficulty, because of the dryness of the climate, which is reflected in their bodily complexion. The northerners vomit easily, and have a good appetite. The southern regions are precisely the opposite: being hot and humid, the bodies of the inhabitants are black in colour and tend to be phlegmatic. This humour impairs their digestion, and because their natural bodily heat is dissipated through their pores, they are soft-bodied, become drunk easily, and are prone to dysentery and diarrhoea. Southern women conceive more easily, but also miscarry frequently.⁹ In the *Pantegni*, as throughout the medical tradition, the ideal body is the temperate body, in which the qualities of heat and cold, moisture and dryness, are in perfect balance.

In the thirteenth century, the encyclopaedist Bartholomaeus Anglicus took up the explanations of the effects of climate on bodies found in the medical tradition and, influenced by the astronomy of Sacrobosco, integrated these views into his geographical survey of the world; in other words, he took medical theories that distinguished between northern and southern bodies in general, and applied them to a range of specific countries. Like *The Book of John Mandeville*, Bartholomaeus's encyclopaedia was extremely popular both in its Latin original and vernacular translations; the late fourteenth-century English translation by John Trevisa (quoted here) was among the earliest titles printed by William Caxton. Bartholomaeus's description of world geography, found in book 15 of his *De proprietatibus rerum*, follows in rough outline the description of world geography included by Isidore of Seville in his seventh-century *Etymologies*. By integrating medical and astronomical theories with the standard geography, Bartholomaeus differs significantly from his contemporary encyclopaedist Vincent of Beauvais, who follows Isidore quite slavishly. Though Vincent is clearly familiar with the theories of Avicenna and Constantinus Africanus, and even quotes the pertinent passages elsewhere in his vast encyclopaedia,¹⁰ he does not draw out their implications for the geographical sections. In each section of his geography, however, Bartholomaeus takes pains to note the correspondence of climate to the bodily nature of the inhabitants of a given land. Those of the northern countries, such as Albania and Almania ('Germany'), for example, are large-bodied and fair-skinned, with blond, straight hair, while those of the southern countries, such as Ethiopia and Libya, have smaller bodies, with dark skin and 'crisp' hair.¹¹ Monstrosities – that is, bodies 'wonderful and horrible' yshape [formed]¹² – are found here, in the torrid regions, where excess of heat affects conception and gestation.

Yet Bartholomaeus goes still further, for in his geography he repeatedly emphasises not just the diversity of mankind, but its balance: each climatic extreme, each geographical location, has its opposite, or (one might say) its complement. Thus he writes of Gallia that 'by the dyuersite of heuene, face and colour of men and hertes and writte and quantite of bodies ben dyuers (different). Therefor Rome gendreth heuy men, Grece light men, Affrica gyfeul men, and Fraunce lyncheliche (naturally) fers men and sharpe of witte'.¹³ In his entry on Europe, we see the binary opposition that underlies this exuberant diversity:

Yif this partie of the worlde be lesse than Asia, yitte is it pere therto [equal to it] in nombre and noblete of men, for as Plius seithe, he [i.e. the sun] fedeth men that ben more huge in bodie, more stronge in myghte and vertue, more bolde of herte, more faire and semeliche of shappe, thanne men of the cuntres and londes of Asia other of Affrica. For the somme abideth longe ouer the Affers, men of Affrica, and brennen and wasten humours and maken ham [them] short of body, blacke of

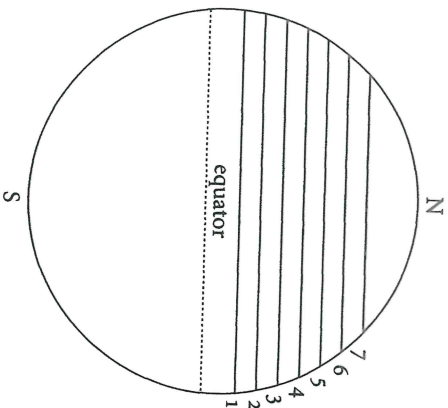
face, with crisper here. And for spirites passe outte attre pores that ben open, so they be more cowardes of herte.

An the cuntrarye is of men of the northe londe: for coldenes that is withoute stoppeth the pores and breedeth humours of the bodye maketh men more ful and huge; and coolede that is modir [mother] of whynesse maketh hem the more white in face and in skynne, and vapoures and spirites ben ysmynen [driven] inward and maken hatter withinne and so the more bolde and hardy.¹⁴

This binary opposition of northern and southern bodies is not particularly innovative: it appears in the *Partegni*, as well as in the writings of Avicenna and Albertus Magnus. What is unusual, however, is Bartholomaeus's praise of the 'semeliche' bodies of the 'bolde and hardy' northern men, and denigration of the southern men who are 'cowardes of herte'. Here, not the temperate mean but the northern extreme is presented as the beautiful and desirable ideal.

The balanced diversity, based on a series of binary oppositions, found in the encyclopaedia of Bartholomaeus Anglicus is echoed in the heterogeneous world of Mandeville.¹⁵ This world is balanced in every way: astronomically, climatically, in the marvellous symmetry of its wonders and in the variable physiology of its inhabitants. Mandeville remarks that the North Star, which sailors use to navigate, has its corresponding pole star in the southern hemisphere: their star, he says, 'appereth not to us. And this sterre that is toward the north (that we clepen [term] the lodesterre) ne appereth not to hem'.¹⁶ The climatic extremes, too, are balanced, as the author shows in considering those lands that lie at the periphery of the seven climates: that is, India, located in the far south-east, and England, located in the extreme north-west (see Figure 12). He explains that '[The superficialte of the erthe is departed [divided] in vii parties [sections] for the vii. planetes, and tho parties ben clept clymates. And oure parties be not of the vii. clymates, for thei ben descendynge toward the west betwene high toward the roundness of the world. And there ben the yles of Ynde, and thei ben ayenst [opposite to] vs that ben in the lowe contree, and the vii. clymates strechen hem envyrourynge the world'.¹⁷ The wonders of the world are balanced as well. Mandeville describes an amazing fruit found in farthest India. It looks like a melon, but when ripe, it opens to reveal a little lamb inside, so that people eat 'bothe the fruit and the best'. But this marvel, far from being an anomaly uniquely found in the exotic Orient, is simply an example of the balanced diversity of nature: Mandeville tells his eastern guides about the barnacle geese, animals that grow on trees in the British Isles. They respond with amazement: 'hereof had thei also gret meruayle [amazement], that summe of hem trowed it were an impossible thing to be' (Chapter 29).¹⁸ Wonders are found at each end of the climatic extremes, balanced in accord and harmony.

This overarching structure of the world is common to both Bartholomaeus Anglicus's encyclopaedia and Mandeville's *Book*, and is most comprehensively



12 The seven climates of the northern temperate zone (after Ptolemy)

expressed with regard to the populations of the earth. An overall north-south dichotomy governs the human geography of the world both in Bartholomaeus's text and in Mandeville's. We have already seen this binary opposition in Bartholomaeus's encyclopaedia, in his comparison of the robust, fair men of the north with the weak, dark men of the south. A similar dichotomy governs Mandeville's *Book*. The first half of the text recounts the pilgrimage to Jerusalem; beginning with Chapter 16, however, the author promises to lead his reader in a wide-ranging tour of the lands lying to the east of Jerusalem, declaring, 'Now is tyme yif it lykē you for to telle you of the marches and illes and dyuerse bestes and of dyuerse folk beyond theise marches'.¹⁹ This chapter and the following one use the north-south binary, familiar from Bartholomaeus, to give an overall shape to the world: in Chapter 16, Mandeville contrasts the land of Albania, where 'the folk ben whiterē . . . than in other marches', with Libya, where there is 'gret hete of the sonne'. In the following chapter, Mandeville juxtaposes Amazonia, in the far north, with Ethiopia, where the people are 'blake' of skin, become 'lyghtly dronken and han [have] but litlle appetyt to mete. And thei han comounly the flux of the wombe [intestines]' (Chapters 16, 17).²⁰ Mandeville's description of the inhabitants of Libya and Ethiopia corresponds to medical accounts of typical southern physiology (as described in the works of Constantinus Africanus, Avicenna and Albertus Magnus), but is applied to specific countries, following the precedent set by Bartholomaeus Anglicus.

Climate governs not only the form and physiology of the body, but the behavioural predispositions of the nation. Mandeville makes this clear using

another binary opposition, this time contrasting the men of India, located in the first climate of the far south-east, with those of England, in the seventh climate of the far north-west:

Men of Ynde han this condicoun of kynde, that thei neuere gon [go] out of here owne contree, and therefore is ther gret multitude of peple. But thei ben not sterynge ne mevable [lit. movable] because that thei ben in the first clymat, that is of Saturne; and Saturne is slough and litlle mevyngē . . . And for because that Saturne is of so late sterynge [stiring], therefore the folk of that contree that ben vnder his clymat han of kynde no wille for to meve ne stere to seche strange places.

And in oure contree is alle the contrarie, for wee ben in the seventhē clymat that is of the mone, and the mone is of lyghtly mevyngē [very readily mobile] . . . And for that skylle it yeueth [gives] vs wille of kynde [by nature] for to meve lyghtly and for to go dyuerse weyes and to sechen [seek] strange things and other dyuersitees of the world, for the mone envynrouneth the erthe more hastyly [circles] . . . more rapidly] than any other planete (Chapter 18).²¹

Ordinarily, both extremes of behaviour – one sluggish, one errant – would be undesirable. This can be seen in Henry Daniel's presentation of the same climatic categories, where those in the climate governed by Saturn are 'dry and mallicious and unwys', while those in the climate governed by the 'unstedfast' moon 'nevermare wyl be rewled'.²² In Mandeville's text, however, the desire 'to go dyuerse weyes' is a virtue, at least in the eyes of the narrator, who leads his readers on a vicarious tour of the world, urging them to seek out and discover for themselves 'many mo dyuersitees of many wondrifulle things thanne I make mencoun of' (Chapter 34).²³

The binary oppositions that make up the marvellous diversity of the world are, paradoxically, evidence of its fundamental harmony, as illustrated by Bartholomaeus's description of unity in diversity as a kind of natural music:

The world is made of many things compowned and contrariouse, and yit in itself it is one. The worlde is one in nounbre and tale and nought many worldes. . . . The in substauce, though contrariounesse be founde in parties therof, touching contrariounesse of the qualitees. For the worlde hath most nedeful acord [harmonia] at itself, and as it were acorde of musik . . . Herof it folowith that the world is wondrifull bicause of chaunginge therof . . . Nothing in the schappe of the worlde is so vile nothir so lowe nothir partykel, in the whiche schinyth noht prayinge of God in mater and in vertu and in schap. For in the mater and schappe of the worlde is some difference, but that is with acorde and most pees.²⁴

Mandeville echoes this sentiment, applying it particularly to the diversity of mankind: describing how the inhabitants of the torrid climates in India find relief from the 'gret hete' by walking about stark naked, he remarks that this apparently 'foul' sight is actually 'beauteous'.

kyndely nature' (Chapter 20).²⁵ It is important, however, to stress that while this view of the harmonious diversity of mankind may seem ideal and even utopian, it contains within it the elements of an intellectual system, based on the relationship of climate to physiology, that could be used to justify the subjugation of peoples and would be used, eventually, as part of the justification for the institution of slavery. As early as the sixteenth century, the philosopher Jean Bodin suggested that the principles of political administration should be tailored to match the predisposition of different national groups. That is, forms of government must vary depending upon the tractability of each national group, whose behavioural characteristics were in turn determined by their climate; here, Bodin uses Aristotelian notions concerning the role of climate in human development and applies them pragmatically to the question of how to govern most effectively.²⁶ By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as Joyce Chaplin has shown, Aristotelian climatic theories were applied to the native populations of North America. These so-called 'Indians' were, supposedly, identical to the Indians in India: they tended by virtue of their climate to be prone to disease, easily drunk (like the Ethiopians) and generally debauched. Their extermination in the wake of European settlement was thus rationalised as biological destiny.²⁷ Finally, climatic theory was used to explain the suitability of Africans for slavery, until climate-based explanations of their 'natural' inferiority were supplanted, during the eighteenth century, by theories based primarily on the role of heredity.²⁸

In *The Book of John Mandeville*, bodily diversity is accounted for in terms of both heredity and climatic influence; the latter cause, however, is predominant. The rise of the 'monstrous races' is, on the one hand, explained as the consequence of the curse placed by Noah on the descendants of Ham following the Great Deluge; their monstrous features, on the other hand, are also explained as the natural consequence of the climatic extremes found in Ethiopia and India. In each land described, climate is adduced as the cause of the physiology of the inhabitants. This is especially well illustrated in Mandeville's account of the land of the Pygmies, where the people are all only a few spans in height; this is appropriate to their climate. Curiously, however, when men of normal stature come to live there, their offspring are also of diminutive stature, like the Pygmies. The reason for this, says Mandeville, is that 'the nature of the lond is such' (Chapter 22).²⁹ Here, climate governs the physiology not only of the native inhabitants, but of those who merely pass through. This would suggest that the effects of climate are mutable: in other words, that the bodily diversity of mankind is not essential, but rather subject to variation.

In this, Mandeville resembles Albertus Magnus, who in his *De natura loci* suggests that if Ethiopians were removed from the first climate to the fourth

or fifth climate (that is, to more temperate climates: see Figure 12), within a few generations they would be altered: their offspring would have white skin and all the other attributes of the northern climates.³⁰ Yet Albertus is unusual in his strict application of Aristotelian theory to the description of human physiology; more common is a composite of climatic theory and genealogical descent. This can be seen, for example, in Bartholomaeus Anglicus, who generally adheres to a climate-based theory of human diversity; in his entry on 'Pictavia', however, he inserts heredity into his analysis of the inhabitants. Their qualities are a peculiar combination of what might be found in more northern and more southern climates; Bartholomaeus explains, however, that this is 'no wondir', for the men of Pictavia are of mixed descent, a combination of 'Pictes' and 'Frenshe men'. They have the qualities of each nation, qualities which were first formed by 'kynde of clymes' and subsequently combined through heredity.³¹ Here, two seemingly mutual exclusive theories of human diversity – environment and heredity – are yoked together.

The same is true of Mandeville's *Book*, where the diversity of mankind is accounted for not only through the natural operation of the climates, but also through genealogical descent. In keeping with a long tradition, Mandeville attributes the rise of the monstrous races to the descent from Ham, the accursed son of Noah:

The fendes of Helle carmen many tymes and leyen with the wommen of his [that is, Ham's] generacoun and engendred on hem dyurse folk, as monstres and folk disfigured, summe withouten hedes, summe with grete eres [ears], summe with on [one] eye, summe geauntes, sum with hors feet, and many other of dyurse schapp ayensyt kynde. And of that generacoun of Cham ben comen the paynemes and dyurse folk that ben in yles of the see be all Ynde (Chapter 24).³²

In this text, environment and heredity are yoked uneasily together to explain the genesis of the monstrous races, the 'dyurse folk' located at the margins of the world. They are deformed and darkened owing to their descent from Ham; but they are also deformed and darkened owing to their genesis in the torrid climates. This inconsistent rationalisation is similar to the incompletely theorised notion of race characteristic in pre-eighteenth-century accounts of racial difference.

It is now possible to return to the two questions with which we began. First, can the account of the bodily diversity of mankind found in texts such as Mandeville's *Book* and the encyclopaedia of Bartholomaeus Anglicus be considered constitutive elements in a pre-modern discourse of race? If by a discourse we mean a system of naming and categorisation, which specifies what is normal and beautiful in contradistinction to what is pathological and ugly, then we certainly have a discourse manifest in these medieval texts.³³ For Bartholomaeus, the harmonious diversity of nature includes both the

strong and 'semeliche' bodies of northerners and the weak bodies, prone to illness, of southerners. For Mandeville, the wanderlust of the English, born in the climate of the moon, is clearly superior to the inertia of the Indians, born in the climate of Saturn. But what about the second question? Can medieval categories of bodily difference be considered equivalent to early modern and Enlightenment definitions of race? The answer, again, is yes; for before the eighteenth century, when theories of race based on the role of heredity came to predominate, writers produced climate-based explanations of the causes of bodily diversity that bear a close resemblance to those found in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century texts.³⁴ From the thirteenth century to the late seventeenth century, we find heredity and environment variously and inconsistently identified as the causes of bodily diversity; by the eighteenth century, however, we find a conception of bodily diversity that sees physical and behavioural differences as essential, fixed and immutable – rooted in the very existence of the individual. Historians such as William Evans have therefore been wrong to claim that the integration of climate models with Noachid genealogy as the justification for enslaving black Africans emerges only in the fifteenth century, adapted by the Portuguese from Muslim attitudes toward non-Muslim African nations, the so-called 'Bannu Hami' or 'sons of Ham'.³⁵ On the contrary, well before the period of the European slave trade in Africa, a system of knowledge had been developed which would facilitate and rationalise the process to come. In this case at least, the discourse of race came to exist before the exercise of power in the colonial setting.

WONDERS OF NATURE AND THE WONDERFUL SELF

Until this point, we have been concerned with the similarities between modern and medieval discourses of race: it is now time to focus on a profound difference between the two, that is, the language of wonder central to medieval presentations of bodily diversity. As Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park have shown, the experience of wonder can be subdivided into several aspects, including not only the sense of amazement caused by an apparent violation of the laws of nature, but also the disturbing sense of stubborn frustration that accompanies the failure to resolve a conundrum. In general, wonder appears at the moment when the attempt to rationalise, to participate in and thus help to generate a unifying discourse fails: as Daston and Park put it, 'To register wonder was to register a breached boundary, a classification subverted'.³⁶ In *The Book of John Mandeville*, this experience takes place above all in India, where the marvellous diversity encountered there is progressively assimilated into an overarching system, only to overflow fully the boundaries of the discourse that seeks to contain it. The regenerative multiplicity of India produces, as its mirror image, the notion of an English homeland that

is at once unified and, like the traveller himself, dominant over the world extended before it.

There are, moreover, other distinctions to be made in the medieval experience of wonder. As Daston and Park point out, individual monstrous births (or 'prodigies') were clearly distinguished from the monstrous races: the former were a unique and destabilising violation of the laws of nature, while the latter were manifestations of the magnificent diversity of the created world.³⁷ This distinction can be compared to that made by the medieval encyclopaedist Gossouin, who distinguishes between eclipses of the sun which 'comen by nature' and those caused directly by God, who 'may all thinge change and defete at is playsir'.³⁸ Like the supernatural eclipse at the moment of the Crucifixion, the monstrous prodigy was a sign of divine intervention in the natural order. The medieval understanding of monstrosity is further illuminated by the distinction between 'mirabilia', things which cause wonder simply because they are not understood, and 'miracula', things which are actually contrary to or beyond nature. As Caroline Bynum points out, that which initially seems to be a 'miraculum' may, on closer inspection, prove to be rationally explicable, rather than a violation of the laws of nature.³⁹ Finally, a distinction must be drawn between what might be termed the 'naive' and the 'knowing' sense of wonder: that is, between the sense of amazement experienced upon encountering a phenomenon that, on first inspection, seems to defy the dictates of nature, and the subsequent amazement experienced when that phenomenon is revealed to be simply a manifestation of the orderly processes of nature, comprehended on a larger scale. This last distinction is crucial to *The Book of John Mandeville*, where the presence of a variety of monstrous races and marvellous phenomena generates in the narrator (and in the reader) a naive sense of wonder. That sense of naive wonder is widened by the discovery that a rule which should normally hold true appears to be violated in nature. Such discoveries extend beyond the experience of observing the monstrous races; they occur, for example, when the animal or plant life of a given location does not correspond to what that territory ought to produce, according to the predictions of the natural philosophers. Finally, an additional level of wonder – what might be termed 'knowing' wonder – is experienced when the naive sense of wonder is replaced as a result of the discovery that the apparent violation of nature's laws is, in fact, part of the orderly workings of nature. This experience is akin to the wonder engendered by 'mirabilia' as described by Bynum, with the difference that the experience is not a humbling one, as the traveller witnesses the power of God, but an exalting one, as the traveller inhabits an almost divine perspective, surveying the world spread out before him.

These different senses of wonder can be illustrated in Mandeville's *Book*. To begin with, the wonder generated by the 'mirabilia', which testifies to the

power of God, is encountered early in the narrative, when the narrator relates how, during his peregrinations in Egypt, he heard tell of a great marvel. A hermit encountered a 'monstre' having the body of a man above the navel, and the body of a goat below. The translator of the Middle English version found in the Cotton manuscript glosses the passage as follows: 'that is to seyne [say], a monstre is a thing disformed ayen kynde [contrary to the nature] bothe of man or of best or of any thing elles and that is cleped a monstre'. Because it is 'ayen kynde', that is, unnatural, a monster offers a glimpse into the enigmatic workings of nature; it is, as it were, a tear in the fabric of creation. This definition of monstrosity is fundamentally Augustinian, as can be seen in the subsequent fate of the monster: as the redactor of the Cotton manuscript goes on to relate, 'the monster . . . besoughte [begged] the heremyte that he wolde preyre God for him, the whiche that [he who] cam from Heuene for to sauē [save] alle mankynde, and was born of a mayden, and suffred passiou and death, as wee wel knowen, be [by] whom we lyuen and ben [exist]. And yit [still] is the hede with the ii. hornes of that monstre at Alisandre [Alexandria] for a merueyle' (Chapter 7).⁴⁰ The body of the beast becomes a devotional object, its deformity a testament to the omnipotence of the divine maker, who can violate the laws of nature at will.

The monstrous races described in the later parts of Mandeville's *Book*, remarkable for the sheer number of their kinds as well as in strangeness of their features, similarly testify to the omnipotence of the God who made them; they differ, however, from the goat-man encountered by the hermit in Egypt in that they are not singular departures from normal human development. On the contrary, their monstrosity is the natural consequence of their location, for their bodies (like those of the white-skinned inhabitants of northern Europe, and the dark-skinned bodies of the Ethiopians) are shaped by their environment, where the overabundance of heat causes predictable defects in conception and gestation. Climate produces bodily diversity, ranging from the monstrous races at the fringes of the known world to those races found at the extreme ranges of the habitable zone, whose bodies are less dramatically altered by the effects of heat and cold. As Bartholomaeus Anglicus puts it, in keeping with medieval medical theory, 'in the north lond ben men hiye of stature and faire of shappe; by coldenesse of the owtwarde ayer the pores ben stopped and the kynde hete is holde [retained] withynne, and by vertue thereof the stature is hoge [huge] and the shappe of body faire and semely. And . . . men of the south lond ben contrarie to men of the north lond in stature and in shappe'.⁴¹ Not just men, but animals of the north are naturally large in size and white in colour: in northern countries like Albania and Almanya, therefore, the land is populated with 'huge' dogs and 'huge' fair-skinned men,⁴² while southern countries like Ethiopia and Libya have

dark inhabitants, small in stature, with both men and beasts 'wonderful and horribleche yshape [formed]'.⁴³

India, however, is even more wonderful than these torrid regions of Libya and Ethiopia, for it contains not only those monstrous races whose bodies are 'wonderliche yshape', along with 'beestes wondirliche yshape', but also another kind of wonderful sight: it contains men of 'grete stature', men whose appearance would be perfectly normal in the colder climes of the north, but which is dramatically out of place in the deep south. 'Huge beestes' and 'grete houndes' are found not in the far north, as climatic theory would dictate, but 'in longe space toward Ethiopia'.⁴⁴ It is natural to find 'gret houndes' in chilly Albania;⁴⁵ the 'grete houndes' found in steamy India, however, are dramatically out of place. In *The Book of John Mandeville*, this marvellous phenomenon is amplified still more, for the author describes India as a land that contains men and beasts extraordinary owing not only to their unnatural stature, but to their white colour: in spite of the extreme heat, the narrator finds in India 'huge' snails, 'gret white wormes', and 'youns alle white and als grete as oxen' (Chapter 21).⁴⁶ In Bartholomaeus's account of India and, still more, in Mandeville's account, the experience of wonder is occasioned precisely by the fact that the climatic model is violated; this is quite different from the experience of wonder occasioned by the sight of the monstrous races, for there the initial sense of wonder (generated by the apparent violation of natural order) is replaced by an intellectual understanding of how climatic extremes naturally give rise to monstrosity. The wonder occasioned by the normal-seeming inhabitants of the extreme climate of India is, conversely, not followed by rational resolution; it is an open-ended response to a marvel which remains inexplicable.

Mandeville's depiction of the fair-skinned inhabitants of India has yet another purpose: that is, to characterise India as at once an extreme aspect of the world and a microcosm of it. This can be seen in his lengthy description of the inhabitants of India, who are 'alle pale. And the men han thynne berdes and fewe heres, but thei ben longe'. The straight hair of the inhabitants, like their fair skin, violates the climatic norm according to which those dwelling under the greatest heat of the sun have dark skin and 'crisp' hair. Mandeville goes on, following the account in the *Relatio* by the Franciscan friar Odoric of Pordenone, completed in 1330, to write that 'In that lond ben many fairere women than in any other contree beyonde the see'; he departs from Odoric to add, 'therefore men clepen that lond Albanye because that the folk ben white' (Chapter 22).⁴⁷ This is extraordinary: Mandeville has taken the convention, found in the encyclopaedic tradition, of naming northern lands 'Albania' owing to 'the [white] colour of men',⁴⁸ and applied it to its direct opposite, the torrid south-eastern region.⁴⁹ In so doing, he constructs an image of India which is not only diverse and multiple, but also self-sufficient, a little world unto itself.

By creating an image of India as microcosm, Mandeville also creates a counter-image of England, a land which he depicts as the reciprocal or 'contrarie' of India in several different places in his *Book*. We have earlier noted the opposition of India, where the inert inhabitants of the first climate stay put (in imitation of Saturn), to its 'contrarie', England, where the lively inhabitants of the seventh climate love to wander and explore (in imitation of the moon). Mandeville reinforces this opposition in his discussion of the geographical position of England relative to Prester John's Land, the most plentiful and lush location in all of India. Following a common tradition found in the encyclopaedias and on many *mappaemundi*, Mandeville states that Jerusalem is the centre of the world, while England and Prester John's Land are equidistant from it: 'For our lond is in the lowe partie of the erthe toward the west, and the lond of Prestre John is the lowe partie of the erthe toward the est and han [have] there the day whan wee haue the nyght, and also high to the contrarie thei han the nyght whan wee han the day' (Chapter 20).⁵⁰ Like two weights placed on either side of a fulcrum, the 'contraries' of England and Prester John's Land balance one another, and contribute to the perfect symmetry of nature. This is the final sense of wonder experienced in the *Book*, a 'knowing' wonder which exalts the traveller who can see the whole world at once, and whose place in the world is correspondingly magnified.

By characterising India as a microcosm of the whole world, Mandeville is necessarily making a statement about the nature of England: it too is a 'little world', sufficient unto itself. As the 'contrarie' of India, however, it is not a territory to be explored and claimed by others, but a seed-bed for generations of explorers who will set out to wander the world, to explore and exercise dominion. This view of the special role of England, while developed to a new level by Mandeville, is not without precedent in the writings of the encyclopaedists and astronomers. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, for example, uses his entry on 'Anglia' as an opportunity to propagandise on behalf of his homeland. England's name is 'ab angulo dictam', that is, 'a lond sette in the ende or a cornere [angulo] of the worlde'; but then Bartholomaeus goes on to praise England as the most fertile and fruitful corner of the world ('angulus orbis').⁵¹ In one of his rare interventions while translating Bartholomaeus, John of Trevisa expands upon his original by explaining that, if England is a corner, it is 'the plenteuouseste corner of the world, ful ryche a lond that unne the it nedeth helpe of any lond, and everyche lond nedeth helpe of Inglonde'.⁵² A similarly gratuitous encomium of England appears in Robertus Anglicus's thirteenth-century commentary on the *De sphaera* of Sacrobosco: after noting Sacrobosco's observation that England lies at the margin of the seventh climate, Robertus writes a lengthy and poetic passage asserting that England is a land of 'unfailing fertility . . . fecund in every kind of metal',

where 'varied crops spring in their season from the rich glebe'. There, 'grass grows for the animals and flowers of varied colours distribute honey to the roving bees' ('indeficienti fertillitate . . . omni enim genere metalli fecunda'; 'animalium pascebis gramina convenient et advolantibus apibus flores diversorum colorum mella distribuunt').⁵³ *The Book of John Mandeville* is thus one in a sequence of writings which claim to offer a scientific, empirical view of the natural world, but which include at the heart of this supposedly objective picture a loving portrait of the writer's own nation.

These texts participate in a dramatic paradigm shift which took place during the later Middle Ages. In the categorising of peoples, monstrosity and normality had long been defined as opposite terms on a continuous spectrum: monstrous races were at one end, 'normal' people at the other end, with the weak, darkened southerners and the savage, pale northerners located along the continuum. Here, the region of normality, as it were, was located in the central temperate climates. By the thirteenth century, however, when Bartholomaeus Anglicus wrote his encyclopaedia, a new value was assigned to the northerly climates, especially to that north-west 'corner' ['angulo'] inhabited by the English. During the fourteenth century, this paradigm shift was completed, as a series of texts, including *The Book of John Mandeville*, redefined the region of normality, moving it from the temperate fourth climate to the north-western extreme of the seventh climate. Instead of a binary opposition of north and south, a new opposition of north-west and south-east was created, with this new 'Orient' conveying many of the properties formerly associated with the south (dry, hot terrain, with cowardly and morally lax inhabitants). Thus in Gower's *Confessio amantis*, for example, we find a description of how desert lands are located 'in occident as for the chele [cold], / in orient as for the hete'.⁵⁴ This new paradigm is Anglo-centric: though it appears in texts not written in English (Anglo-Norman French in Robertus Anglicus), all of these include explicit accounts of the 'natural' superiority of the territory of England and the people who inhabit it.⁵⁵

Finally, the balanced cosmography essential to *The Book of John Mandeville* places the narrator himself at a peculiar vantage point: when he describes the overall shape of the world, in which 'alle the parties of see and of lond han here appositees habitables or trepassables [traversable] and yles of this half and beyond half' (Chapter 20),⁵⁶ he inhabits a position outside the world itself, seeing (as it were) from a God's-eye view. At other moments in *The Book*, however, he is clearly immersed in the world he experiences, side-by-side those he meets and with whom he converses. This traveller is at once intimately involved in the foreign lands he passes through and starkly outside them, at a vantage point far away. His claim to tell the truth is based both on objective, intellectual authority and personal observation.

of *John Mandeville* thus illustrates the double perspective of the traveller, who is both just beside the people, places and things he encounters, and also far away from them, surveying the world at arm's length.

NOTES

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1 John Mandeville [Jean de Mandeville], *Le livre des merveilles du monde*, ed. Christiane Deluz, Sources d'histoire médiévale, 31 (Paris: CNRS, 2000), p. 92 (prologue); *idem*, *Mandeville's Travels*, ed. Michael C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 3 (edited from London, British Library, MS Cotton Titus C. xvi). In the interest of concision, quotations in this chapter are from the Middle English text. For the reader's convenience, however, references to text quoted in the chapter are supplied both from Deluz's edition of the Anglo-Norman text (*Livre des merveilles*), and from Seymour's edition of the Middle English text: the page number in Deluz's edition is cited first, followed by the page number in Seymour's edition. For a useful assessment of the ongoing debate regarding the identity of the author and the extent of his travels, see Deluz's introduction to *Livre des merveilles*, pp. 7–14.

2 For a survey of the versions, see Deluz's introduction to *Livre des merveilles*, pp. 28–36; Ian Macleod Higgins, *Writing East: The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 20–5; Michael C. Seymour, *Sir John Mandeville*, Authors of the Middle Ages, 1 (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), pp. 37–49.

3 Andrew Fleck, 'Here, there, and in between: Representing difference in the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*', *Studies in Philology*, 97 (2000), 390, 398; Lynn Tarte Ranney, *Christian, Saracen, and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 11–12.

4 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'On Saracen enjoyment: Some fantasies of race in late medieval France and England', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31 (2001), 119–21.

5 John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

6 On the merits of understanding the presentation of bodily diversity in medieval texts in terms of 'race', see Thomas Hahn's introductory essay 'The difference the Middle Ages makes: Color and race before the modern world' in the special issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31 (2001), ed. Thomas Hahn, 1–37.

7 Lynn Thornrdyke, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and its Commentators* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), pp. 107, 137. For a survey of classical and medieval schemas dividing the earth into climates, see Ernst Honigsmann, *Die sieben Klimata und die *Poleis epistemoi*: Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte der Geographie und Astrologie im Altertum und Mittelalter* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1929).

8 The commentary quoted is possibly by Michael Scot; see Thornrdyke, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco*, p. 334 (Latin text; trans. mine). Commentaries with comparable elaborations on the Ethiopians include the thirteenth-century anonymous commentary in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius MS 137, fol. 46b (Thornrdyke, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco*,

p. 461); another anonymous commentary preserved in two thirteenth-century manuscripts, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canon Misc. MS 161 and Princeton University Library, Garrett MS 99 (Thornrdyke, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco*, p. 439); and the fifteenth-century commentary by John de Fundis (Thornrdyke, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco*, p. 50).
9 Constantinus Africanus, *Pantegni*, lib. 5, cap. 9 ('De mutatione aeris propter regiones'); in *Omnia opera Ysaac* (Lyons: s.n., 1515), fols 19^v–20^r (second foliation). It should be noted that medical tradition varies with regard to whether the northern climate is essentially dry (as in the *Pantegni*) or moist (as in Avicenna's *Liber canonis*).

10 Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum naturale*, 4, 110, quoting Constantinus Africanus; *Speculum naturale*, 6, 18, quoting Avicenna, *Liber canonis*, lib. 1, doct. 2, summa 1, cap. 11; published edn (Venice: per Paganum de Paganis, 1507; repr. Luca: Antonio Giunta, 1562, fol. 32^v). The *Speculum naturale* appears in Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum quadruplex sive Speculum maius* (Duaci: Baltazaris Belleri, 1624; repr. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964); see cols 303, 380–1.

11 See the Latin text in Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* (Frankfurt: apud Wolfgangum Richterum, 1601; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1964), Chap. 15, 7, p. 627; Chap. 15, 15, p. 630; Chap. 15, 52, p. 649; Chap. 15, 91, p. 671; also the late fourteenth-century Middle English of John Trevisa, in *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' De proprietatibus rerum*, ed. Michael C. Seymour et al., 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975–78), ii, pp. 728, 732, 754–779. In the interest of concision, only the Middle English text is quoted in this chapter. For the reader's convenience, however, references in the notes are to the chapter and page numbers in the Latin text (Frankfurt, 1601), and to the page numbers in Seymour's edition of the Middle English text.

12 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 15, 52, p. 649; *On the Properties*, p. 754.

13 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 15, 66, p. 657; *On the Properties*, p. 763. This is an elaboration of Isidore, *Etymologies*, 9, 2, 105: 'Inde Romanos graves, Graecos leves, Afros versipelles, Gallos natura feroces atque actores ingenio pervidemus, quod natura climatum facit': in *Etymologiarum sive Originum libri XX*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911). The passage appears not in Isidore's geography, but in his book on languages and cities.

14 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 15, 50, p. 648; *On the Properties*, pp. 752–3. The balanced contraries of mankind are central to Bartholomaeus's overall presentation of the natural world: see, for example, the balanced 'oppositions of beast against beast' noted by D. C. Gretham, 'The concept of nature in Bartholomaeus Anglicus', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 41 (1980), 665–77, at 670. My thanks to Richard Raiswell for this reference.

15 On the use of Bartholomaeus's encyclopaedia in *The Book of John Mandeville*, see D. C. Gretham, 'The fabulous geography of John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum*, unpublished PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 1974, pp. 190, 316, 325 n. 46.

16 *Livre des merveilles*, p. 333; *Mandeville's Travels*, p. 132.

17 *Livre des merveilles*, pp. 340–1; *Mandeville's Travels*, p. 137.

18 *Livre des merveilles*, pp. 427–8; *Mandeville's Travels*, p. 191.

19 *Livre des merveilles*, p. 286; *Mandeville's Travels*, p. 101.

20 *Livre des merveilles*, pp. 287–8, 304; *Mandeville's Travels*, pp. 106, 114–15. Other encyclopaedic works are sometimes adduced as sources for these passages, including Pliny, Honorius of Autun, Gossoin and Brunetto Latini; the account of southern physiology found in Mandeville, however, appears in none of them.

- 21 *Libre des merveilles*, pp. 312–13; *Mandeville's Travels*, pp. 119–20. Cf. the commentary on Sacrobosco written (in 1271) by Robertus Anglicus: in his thirteenth lecture Robertus explains that, just as part of India is outside the range of the seven climates, so too part of England lies outside the range; he does not, however, discuss the influence of Saturn and the moon on the climates, as does Mandeville. See Thornrdike, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco*, pp. 187, 191 (Latin text); pp. 236, 240 (trans.). A closer parallel to Mandeville's formulation can be found in the *Summa judicialis de accidentibus mundi*, written in 1347–48 by John of Ashenden; Johannes Eschuid, *Summa astrologiae judicialis* (Venice: Franciscus Bolanus, J. Sanctier, 1489), fol. 42^r (tr. 1, dist. 8, cap. 1). On the influence and wide dissemination of John's work, see Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 4 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923–34), iii, pp. 325–46.
- 22 Henry Daniel, *Liber uricisarium*, London, Wellcome Library, Sloane MS 1101, fol. 60^v; this passage corresponds closely to the schema used by John of Ashenden, cited in n. 21 above. I am very grateful to E. Ruth Harvey for showing me this passage in her transcription of Daniel's treatise.
- 23 *Libre des merveilles*, p. 478; *Mandeville's Travels*, p. 228.
- 24 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 8, 1, pp. 369–70; *On the Properties*, pp. 443–4.
- 25 *Libre des merveilles*, p. 331; *Mandeville's Travels*, p. 131.
- 26 Marian J. Tooley, Bodin and the medieval theory of climate, *Speculum*, 28 (1953), 64–83, at 80–1.
- 27 Joyce E. Chaplin, 'Natural philosophy and an early racial idiom in North America: Comparing English and Indian bodies', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54 (1997), 229–52, at 236–8.
- 28 Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History, and Culture in Western Society* (Houndmills and London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 79–84.
- 29 *Libre des merveilles*, p. 365; *Mandeville's Travels*, p. 152. The source for the passage is Odoric of Pordenone, but the explanation of the cause (that is, the nature of the land) is original to Mandeville. Cf. Odoric, 'Relatio', 24, 2, in *Sinica Franciscana*, 6 vols, i: Anastasius van den Wyngaert (ed.), *Itinera et relationes fratrum minorum saeculi XIII et XIV* (Florence: Quaracchi, 1929), pp. 468–9.
- 30 'Licet autem huiusmodi nigri aliquando nascantur etiam in aliis climatibus, sicut in quarto vel in quinto, tamen nigredinem accipiunt a primis generantibus, quae complexionata sunt in climatibus primo et secundo, et paulatim alterantur ad albedinem, quando ad alia climata transferuntur': Albertus Magnus, *De natura loci*, 2, 3; in *Opera omnia*, 37 vols, v, part 2, ed. Paul Hosfeld (Monasterii Westfalorum: Aschendorff, 1980), p. 27.
- 31 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 15, 122, p. 689; *On the Properties*, p. 768.
- 32 *Libre des merveilles*, p. 379; *Mandeville's Travels*, pp. 160–1. Cf. Isidore, *Eymologiae*, 9, 2, 127: 'Aethiopes dicti a filio Cham, qui vocatus est Chus, ex quo originum trahunt. Chus enim Hebraica lingua Aethiops interpretatur'. On the association of Ham with the southern climates, see Suzanne Conklin Akbari, 'From due east to true north: Orientalism and orientation', in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (ed.), *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 19–34, at pp. 22–3.
- 33 On whether the term 'discourse' (in the Foucauldian sense) can be used to describe medieval culture, see Suzanne Conklin Akbari, 'Orientation and nation in the *Canterbury Tales*', in Kathryn L. Lynch (ed.), *Chaucer's Cultural Geography* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 102–34, at pp. 102–3, 112, 124. As Malik points out, there is no 'simple "definition" of "race"'. The concept of race is too complex and multi-faceted to be reduced to single, straightforward definitions. Different social groups and different historical periods have understood race in radically different ways... [Race] is not an expression of a single phenomenon or relationship. Rather it is a medium through which the changing relationship between humanity, society, and nature has been understood' (*The Meaning of Race*, p. 71).
- 34 See the survey of pre-modern theories of race in part one of Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1996).
- 35 William McKee Evans, 'From the land of Canaan to the land of Guinea: The strange odyssey of the "Sons of Ham"', *American Historical Review*, 85 (1980), 15–43, at 39. Part of Evans's argument that medieval Muslim societies 'lived in a racially stratified society' in spite of their 'seeming lack of color prejudice' is built on the shaky ground of an anachronistic analogy with nineteenth-century Latin American culture (*ibid.*, p. 31 and n. 51). See also David Brion Davis, who argues that the "Hamitic myth" played a relatively minor role in justifying black slavery until the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries' (*Slavery and Human Progress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 337 n. 144), and the rejoinder to Davis in Robin Blackburn, 'The Old World background to European colonial slavery', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54 (1997), 65–102, at 94–5.
- 36 Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York: Zone, 1998), pp. 109–33, at p. 14.
- 37 Daston and Park, *Wonders*, pp. 48–57.
- 38 Quoted in the Middle English translation of Caxton; see *Caxton's Mirror of the World*, 3, 7; ed. Oliver H. Prior, Early English Text Society, e.s., 110 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913), pp. 141–3.
- 39 Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Miracles and marvels: The limits of alterity', in Franz J. Felten and Niklas Jaspert (eds), *Vita religiosa in Mittelalter. Festschrift für Kasper Elm zum 70. Geburtstag* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1999), pp. 801–17, at pp. 803–7.
- 40 *Libre des merveilles*, p. 150; *Mandeville's Travels*, pp. 33–4. On the significance of monstrosity according to Augustine, see Daston and Park, *Wonders*, pp. 39–41; Jean Céard, *La nature et les prodiges: L'insolite au XVIIe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1977), pp. 21–9.
- 41 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 14, 1, p. 593; *On the Properties*, p. 694.
- 42 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 15, 7, 15, pp. 627, 630; *On the Properties*, pp. 728, 732.
- 43 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 15, 52, p. 649; *On the Properties*, p. 754; cf. 'wondirliche yshape', *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 15, 91, p. 671; *On the Properties*, p. 779.
- 44 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 15, 73, pp. 661–2; *On the Properties*, pp. 770–1.
- 45 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 15, 7, p. 627; *On the Properties*, p. 728.
- 46 *Libre des merveilles*, pp. 349, 353; *Mandeville's Travels*, pp. 142, 145.
- 47 *Libre des merveilles*, pp. 359–60; *Mandeville's Travels*, p. 149. Cf. Odoric of Pordenone, *Relatio*, 19, 2, p. 458.
- 48 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 15, 7, p. 626; *On the Properties*, p. 728.
- 49 Cf. Isidore, *Eymologiae*, 14, 3, 34.
- 50 *Libre des merveilles*, p. 336; *Mandeville's Travels*, p. 134.

- 51 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Chap. 15. 14, pp. 631–2; *On the Properties*, p. 734.
- 52 On the fidelity of Trevisa's translation, see Traugott Lawler, 'On the properties of John Trevisa's major translations', *Viator*, 14 (1983), 267–88.
- 53 Robertus Anglicus, thirteenth lecture, in Thorndyke, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco*, p. 187 (Latin text), p. 236 (trans.).
- 54 John Gower, *Confessio amantis*, book 7, lines 582–3, in *The Complete Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macaulay, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), ii. On the development of the East–West binary during the late fourteenth century, see Akbari, 'From due east', pp. 28–31.
- 55 This point renders the question of the nationality of the author of *The Book of John Mandeville* all the more perplexing: see Deluz's intelligent survey of the debate in *Livre des merveilles*, pp. 7–16.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p. 336; *Mandeville's Travels*, p. 134.

9

*Travels with Margery:
pilgrimage in context*



Rosalynn Voaden

... & euer it cam a-geyn so fast pat sche myth not rest ne qwiēt han in hir mende but euyr was labowred & comawnded to gon ouyr be see.¹

(... and it always came again so quickly that she could not rest, or have quiet in her mind, but was always laboured and commanded to go over the sea).

From a single point at Lynn, one can still observe key reference points of Margery's life: the Guildhall, the church of St Margaret, and the lane leading down to a river which suggests – through the peculiar bowing of its horizon – the allure of the beyond.²

MARGERY Kempe was a laywoman and visionary, born at the close of the fourteenth century, who lived in Lynn, on the east coast of England. Though married and the mother of fourteen children, pilgrimage was a continuous and vital part of her religious praxis. Her restless nature resisted both spiritual and geographical boundaries, and she was prepared to face risk and hardship to respond to 'the allure of the beyond' in both senses. This chapter will argue that pilgrimage and travel undertaken for spiritual ends were predominant forces in shaping Margery's spiritual expression, and that ultimately they provided the lens through which she understood and articulated the story of herself and her divinely ordained purpose. I will first offer some background on Margery Kempe and her *Book*, describing both her spiritual and secular life, and arguing for Lynn, one of the principal ports on the east coast of England, as a major influence in her life. I will then consider pilgrimage in late medieval England, both how it was organised practically and how it functioned as a spiritual exercise. Against this backdrop I will discuss the nature of Margery's two major pilgrimages – both eastward bound, though the first was metaphorically east to the more traditional destinations of Rome and the Holy Land, while the second was geographically due east