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### Living at the Edges of the World: The Antipodeans and their Deadly Sins

#### Introduction

For the medieval man, the world as he knew it was a reflection of a divine plan. As one of the inscriptions on the Ebstorf map informs us, it was a world made of God's wisdom which "reaches powerfully from one end of the earth to the other, ordering all things well" (*Usque as finem fortiter, suaviter disponens omnia*). This accounts for the transcendent teleological meaning assigned to the created world and for the devout interest the faithful took in deciphering it. For the medieval man, observation of a world which revealed God was not mere curiosity, it was a religious, pious obligation and duty. To look into the marvels of Nature is a theophanic experience because the world in its entirety is holy and every object or creature is deeply Eucharistic. As the Psalmist said, God made everything to be remembered: *memoranda sunt ista*. There is nothing in the world that is not divinely bestowed, there is no emptiness or incidental occurrence, no randomness. Everything is meaningful as though the sensible world were saturated and soaked with divinity; each finite form is symbolic and memorable.

Moreover, the world was not only deemed revelatory of God's providential work but was also considered as anticipatory. In other words,

the geography of the known world (*oikoumene*) carried the epistemic relevance of God's presence and the promise of an eschatological encounter with Him. To this end, medieval *mappae mundi* were created to situate the world within the Christian framework of Creation, Judgement, and Redemption. This was outlined by the spatialization and integration of the otherworld into the physical/real world and by the explicit representations of God either as Supreme Judge, weighing the souls of the faithful (such as on the Hereford Map), or as Great High Priest and Salvator Mundi, ministering and giving His blessing to the world (such as on the Psalter Map) and, ultimately, as Jesus Incarnate, Crucified and Resurrected, bringing wholeness to His people (such as on the Ebstorf Map, with the twofold representations of Christ).<sup>1</sup>

As for the geography of the otherworld, this was intimately related to the physical world. An example is the Garden of Eden or Terrestrial Paradise, regularly depicted on *mappae mundi* at the very east of the world, enclosed, inaccessible, "barred to all mortals by a wall of flames"<sup>2</sup> but clearly recognizable, with Adam and Eve and the four rivers springing from it. Just as the Garden of Eden was the first place to be created, so too was it also decisively connected to the end of times. Consequently, it remained meaningful both in historical and eschatological time. The representation of Paradise as part of the terrestrial world offered a double sense of orientation: it gave one the understanding of 'where from' but also of 'where to,' that is, it reminded the faithful of the Fall and of the necessity for redemption but also of God's mercy and the grace that could restore one into bliss. The book of Revelation alludes to God's eschatological promise: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To

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<sup>1</sup> "In it, the earth forms Christ's body: on top, in the east, there is his head, on the left in the north and on the right in the south there is one hand each, one hand showing a stigma, and at the bottom in the west there are his feet. (...) This means that Jesus Christ keeps the world together, and is part of this world, like humankind whom he rules in eternity, and the world is part of Christ as his body. In a gold-framed area in the centre of the map the Resurrection is shown within the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem, a city towering above all the world." G. Pischke, "The Ebstorf Map: tradition and contents of a medieval picture of the world" *History of Geo and Space Science*. 5, no.2 (July 2014): 156. <https://doi.org/10.5194/hgss-5-155-2014> [access 20.10.2019].

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Simek, *Heaven and Earth in the Middle Ages: The Physical World Before Columbus*. trans. Angela Hall (München: The Boydell Press, 1996), 44. In his Etymologies, Isidore explains why people cannot travel there: "After the Fall of humanity, Paradise was blocked by a fence formed from a flaming sword encircled by a wall of fire reaching near the sky. Angels float above the flaming sword, preventing evil spirits from approaching, making Paradise inaccessible to flesh or spiritual beings who have transgressed." quoted in Alessandro Scafi, *Mapping Paradise: A History of Heaven on Earth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 35.

him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (2:29). So, God has a plan for those who overcome sin and resist or withdraw from temptation: to restore them to their original state of perfection and readmit them to the place they were expelled from. But the heavenly paradise is no longer the prelapsarian Eden that God had originally created and given Man to inhabit. It has become “the paradise of God,” God’s dwelling place, a heavenly city that can only be entered by those who have washed in the blood of Jesus Christ: “Blessed are those who wash their robes. They will be permitted to enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit from the tree of life” (Revelation 22:14). The tree of life may have been relocated to the heavenly city of God, but its seeds were planted in the Garden of Eden. Thus, the two places are consubstantial as they share in the same divine generative essence and the uncorrupted substance of immortality.

And yet, what of those who could not purge themselves utterly clean of all sin so as to follow Him to the heavenly city and rejoice in His merciful love? To the unrepentant sinner, the jaws of Hell open to swallow him down to the devil’s furnace, away beneath the surface of the earth. To the sorrowful penitent, who confessed his guilt but did not expiate it during his lifetime, a second chance at salvation and eternal life is given: the cleansing fire of Purgatory. This leads to the main motivation for writing this paper: to explore the possible connections between the monstrous inhabitants of the ‘fourth’ continent, also known as Antipodean Land in medieval lore, and the tormented spirits of Purgatory.

### Where on Earth is Purgatory?

Starting with the late twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth, the topography of the afterlife changed to accommodate a new eschatological space. Identified by Jacques Le Goff as the Third Place, Purgatory has had a long history with much debate over its birth, existence, or canonicity. Over the centuries, it has ‘fired’ many theologians, starting with the Church Fathers. Saint Augustine, “the true father of Purgatory”<sup>3</sup> as Le Goff calls him, is the first to have “authorized” the existence of this place for the purification of venial sinners (a category of sinners he did not

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<sup>3</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 61.

clearly define). Not only did he admit to the existence of such a place of purification, but he also conceded to the possibility of enduring purgatorial punishments either on this earth (i.e. while living), or after death, or both: “As for temporal pains, some people suffer them in this life only, others after death, others both in this life and in the other.”<sup>4</sup> Augustine included earthly tribulations as part of the process of purgation, counting them as the first stages of purification to be completed on Judgement Day.

In the twelfth century, Hugh of Saint Victor expanded this theory and suggested that “pain is endured in this world, and probably in the places where the sin was committed,”<sup>5</sup> which anchors Purgatory to earth but makes it elusive and individually related. In the thirteenth century, William of Auvergne also announced that “purgatorial penalties are penalties that complete the penitential purgation begun in this life.”<sup>6</sup> This leads him to locate Purgatory in this world, but he admits that he cannot establish or demonstrate its location anywhere in the world, since “no law, no text states the answer (*nulla lex, vel alia scriptura determinat*).”<sup>7</sup>

So, as Jacques Le Goff openly admits, “whether the time of Purgatory was earthly time or eschatological time long remained a matter of controversy: Purgatory might begin here below in the form of penitence, only to be completed in the hereafter with a definitive purification at the time of the Last Judgement.”<sup>8</sup>

As for its location, before it could exist in its own right, before Dante mapped it as a mountain situated in the southern hemisphere, diametrically opposite Jerusalem, Purgatory had long been confused with either Paradise or Hell. To differentiate it and give to it spatial concreteness, we should consider its main features. At first, Purgatory was conceived as a kind of fire, more or less immaterial, whose nature was either punitive or purifying. Later, the overwhelming majority of writers (the philosophers and theologians of the doctrine of Purgatory) held that Purgatory consisted of some sort of fire which, however painful it might be, was an assurance of salvation for those who died with ‘light sins.’ It was a cleansing fire of venial/minor sins, or sins regretted and confessed but for which penance

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<sup>4</sup> Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. William Babcock (New York: New City Press, 2013), 521.

<sup>5</sup> Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, 144.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

had yet to be completed. The ordeal which one had to go through was limited in time and could even be abridged by means of dispensations or intercessory prayers.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, as Purgatory was considered a space of penitential suffering, a penal place, it was also a place of confinement. Its location was off limits, and, like any unit for incarceration, it was ‘constructed’ to assure inviolability (so that the premises could not be trespassed) and rehabilitation (the time spent in Purgatory would restore one to one’s original grace). Thus, to summarize, Purgatory was conceived as a transitory place of confinement, where those who died penitent would undergo expiatory punishment in *ignis purgatorius*. Over time, Purgatory has ceased to be just a ‘state of mind’ or a process and has become a concrete place in the topography of the afterlife.

Which brings me back to the initial question: Where on earth is Purgatory located?

Despite the visionary insights of the gifted and its many popular narrative representations, Purgatory had not acquired a definite location by the time of the High Middle Ages. It was variously described as being in Ireland, in Italy, in the middle of the earth, or as a place next to Hell or in close proximity to Heaven. There is still one place where no one had looked for it before Dante: the Antipodes.

The question of the Antipodes, that is, the question of whether a place and a people on the opposite side of the known world could be said to exist, was a rich subject for debate until the very time of their discovery. Even if classical thinkers posited the possibility of a southern hemisphere for reasons of cosmographic symmetry or hemispheric balance, early Christian thinkers rejected the idea completely. Saint Augustine considered the idea

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<sup>9</sup> One such example is given by a Benedictine monk Orderic Vitalis in his *Ecclesiastical History*. He describes how a parish priest from the diocese of Lisieux, Walchelin by name, while on his way to visit a sick man who lived at the furthest extremity of his local community, encountered a host of tormented spirits in ghastly gallop. To his utmost surprise, Walchelin recognizes among them his own brother Robert, who opens up about his torments, the efficacy of prayer for the dead, and the temporariness of purgatorial punishment:

“I have now been permitted to show myself to you, and to reveal my wretched condition ... After I last spoke to you in Normandy I left for England with your blessing; there I reached my life’s end ... and I have endured severe punishment for the great sins with which I am heavily burdened ... when you were ordained in England and sang your first Mass for the faithful departed your father Ralph escaped from his punishments and my shield, which caused me great pain, fell from me. As you see I still carry this sword, but I look in faith for release from this burden within the year.” quoted in C. S. Watkins, “Sin, Penance and Purgatory in the Anglo-Norman Realm: The Evidence of Visions and Ghost Stories.” *The Past and Present Society*. no. 175 (2002): 10. [purgatoriofantasmas.pdf\(ulpgc.es\)](http://purgatoriofantasmas.pdf(ulpgc.es))

too absurd to mention. His main arguments were that the earth was given to Noah's sons to inhabit, which would exclude the existence of a fourth continent ("These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole world overspread" Genesis 9:19.) and that, as there was no preaching of the gospel on the other side of the earth, there could be no humans there. So, if the Antipodes were populated, they wouldn't be populated by human beings, at least not living human beings, which leaves the fourth continent open to eschatology.

St. Augustine's objections did not prevent Isidore of Seville from introducing a fourth continent in addition to Europe, Asia, and Africa, inaccessible because of the great heat which made that part of the world uninhabitable. On the maps of the thirteenth century, this fabulous and unknown world, usually located on the right side in southern Africa, behind Ethiopia and near the equator, was graphically represented by galleries of monsters, humanlike creatures with numerous defects and deformities. These creatures had already been described in antique fables, but now, in the High Middle Ages, were presumed to inhabit specific, though little known, parts of the world. These were people without a face or a round hole in place of a mouth, without a nose or ears, with only one eye or with four eyes, with their eyes on their chest, with a dog's head or backward-facing feet, or a gigantic foot used as a sunshade, or gigantic ears and lips, and so forth.

How could any of these creatures adapt and survive under such adverse climatic conditions? How can anyone imagine that a gigantically grown foot can offer protection from the intense heat of the sun? Or how would an abnormal proliferation of body parts and organs cater for the survival of such an individual? As I will later argue, the concentration of exotic anthropomorphic beings in the space of the Antipodean lands serves a didactic and moralizing function, as these deformed creatures populating the edges of the world could typify or personify many of the sins which required cleansing in the purgatorial fire.

First, let us consider the arguments in favour of identifying the location of Purgatory in the Antipodean lands. To this end, I would rely mainly on the representations of the earth in the thirteenth century *mappae mundi*. The collective mentality of the Middle Ages was used to accessorize the punitive realms of the otherworld with a variety of torture instruments and

methods. An example of this comes in the form of the painting of Giovanni di Paolo *Madonna with Child and Saints* painted around the mid-fifteenth century and held in Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena, Tuscany. The multi-panel altarpiece has a predella which recounts the Last Judgement. Not only is the grotesque imagery eye-catching (I can only imagine how a Late Medieval viewer would interact with the visual narrative), but it is also very familiar: dark cavernous recesses in the underground where the souls of the sinners are tormented by clawed or hooved demons, the spectacle of depraved humanity, exposed and counteracted by the sheer bestiality of the tormentors. And, finally, the tongues of fire that engulf the wicked in a torturous blaze.

In contrast to the everlasting, excruciating fire of hell, Purgatorial fire was deemed temporary, disciplinary, redemptive, and restorative. And yet, as Matthew Scott Hendzel has highlighted. “[A]lthough purgatorial fire was not eternal, it was every bit as hot”<sup>10</sup> and, we may add, generated great heat. Moreover, as Origen, who was notable for his unique and controversial opinions on the afterlife, stated: “Every sinner kindles for himself the flame of his own fire, and is not plunged into some fire which has already been kindled by another or existed before himself.”<sup>11</sup> Unlike Hugh of Saint Victor, Origen would allot each repentant sinner his own purgatorial fire, instead of an individually located place of expiation. Thus, the multiplicity of purgatorial fires and their diverse intensities, corresponding to the different amount of minor or major sin to be expiated or cleansed would create a ‘climate’ of great heat similar to the one experienced at the Antipodes.

In addition, the representations of the monstrous creatures in both the Psalter and Ebstorf Maps, neatly contained within their boxes at the southern edge of the world (while a handful have broken out and are straying toward Europe), remind one of the prison-like topography of the purgatorial realm. Each individual creature is allotted a small cubicle for their confinement and some, as in the Ebstorf Map, are represented in close proximity to the horned, cloven-hoofed satyrs who act as wardens for the confined souls. One individual is directly exposed to the purgatorial fires

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew Scott Hendzel, “An Exploration of the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory in Light of Current Issues in Theodicy” (PhD thesis, University of St. Michael’s College 2019), 29, <https://aut.ac.nz.libguides.com/> [access 20.11.2021]

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

that surround him and which make him gesture in anguish, his right arm outstretched and pointing toward the flames. Another detail shows an angel about to strike with his sword one of the creatures who has found a way to escape the purgatorial prison. Which returns us to Giovanni di Paolo's predella; here, another angel warrior prevents a lost soul from leaving Hell's furnace, while a group of fiendish creatures stretch their clawed arms to grasp him. Purgatory, just like Hell, cannot be trespassed or escaped.

So, the Antipodes could be believed to accommodate an eschatological realm whose 'inhabitants' were considered redeemable at the end of time. As for the Antipodeans, they were not people walking with their feet up and heads pointing down or, as Isidore imagined them, opposite-footed creatures; as the thirteenth century world maps depict them, they make up a heterogeneous group whose presence can be explained as a deviation that resulted from sin in need of expiation.

### The Antipodeans and their Deadly Sins

The genealogy of the monstrous races can be traced back to the ancient Greek writers Ctesias/Ktesias and Megasthenes, whose depictions reached the Middle Ages through the compilations of Pliny and Solinus. The pseudo-epistolary texts of Alexander to Aristotle, detailing fictitious encounters with wondrous beings and monstrous races, added to the already rich lore of marvellous yet dangerously savage beings. The first major Christian writer to discuss the monstrous races was Augustine, who thought of a way to reconcile the heritage of ancient antiquity with Christian doctrine. Augustine argued that, if such monstrous races exist, they may not be human but are sure nonetheless to be part of God's great plan. In his encyclopaedic work, *Etymologiae*, Isidore of Seville "simply stated that monstrosities are part of the creation and not *contra naturam*."<sup>12</sup> Later, we find them in all the great encyclopaedias of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, culminating in Thomas Cantimpré's *Liber de monstruosis hominibus Orientis (De natura rerum)* and a group of thirteenth century bestiaries of English provenance, such as the Douce bestiary (Bodleian Library).

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<sup>12</sup> Rudolf Wittkower. "Marvels of the East. A Study in the History of Monsters" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5, (1942): 168. <https://doi.org/10.2307/750452> [access 11.11.2021]



As these polymorphic creatures are the products of God's will, they are capable of redemption. Until then, they should be safely confined to the periphery of the known world far away from the centre, far away from Jerusalem and the other holy places, probably for fear of contagion or aberrant hybridization. But the etymological roots of the word 'monster' could also prove helpful to a Christian moralist. Its double etymological derivation from *monere* ('to warn' / Isidore) and *monstrare* ('to demonstrate' / Augustine) integrated the medieval *monstra* within the frame of a moralizing discourse on the consequences of sin. In the Christian interpretation, imperfections, or abnormalities of the body, introduced with the fall of Adam, were unequivocally associated with sin. These grotesquely deformed bodies could serve to 'demonstrate' a sinful nature within and 'warn' of the punitive correction it incurred.

In the thirteenth century, the connection to Purgatory of these unfortunate beings was facilitated by their dysmorphic anatomy. Sin was made manifest, visible, and legible under diverse body abnormalities. Take, for instance, the *Panotii* (Gk. *pan* = 'all' + *ota* = 'ear' = 'all ear people') which are represented in the Douce bestiary but are also to be found at the edges of the world on the Hereford and Ebstorf maps. They have oversized ears, which sometimes can be so huge that their owners can wrap them around themselves. This presented the medieval moralist with the opportunity to associate them with eavesdroppers and malicious gossipers whose "ears fit them well for the hearing of evil" (Douce bestiary)<sup>13</sup>. Likewise, the creature without ears (*Ambari*) depicted in the Antipodean lands on the Ebstorf and Hereford map could demonstrate the consequences of this sinful behaviour. His loss of hearing, suggested by the absence of auricular lobes, could be interpreted as a consequence of the mischievous habit he had while living. Confined to Purgatory, he must do penance for his venial sin.

Moreover, eavesdroppers could use the information they gained to sow discord. Eavesdropping and taletelling were considered equally harmful. This leads me to the second example: *Cynocephali* (dog-headed creatures): "detractors and fermenters of discord,"<sup>14</sup> as the Douce moralist qualifies them. Such an animal-human hybrid appears in the southern margin of

<sup>13</sup> MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 88. quoted in John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 124.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

the world on the Ebstorf Map. The zoocephalic figure may be seen as an illustration of the punishment incurred for stirring up division through slander and the spreading of malicious words. Forced to wear the head of a dog, the sinner will have to do penance in the afterlife and await resurrection in the ‘proper’ human form.

On the Hereford map, two dog-headed creatures sit facing each other, heads tilted slightly back, mouths open, and fingers pointing to signify animated speech which can easily turn into heated argument. Their barking, inarticulate voices would make dialogue impossible and only increase the ‘temperature’ of debate. Additionally, the axe they each wield further emphasizes the quarrelsome nature of the *Cynocephali* and their basic impulse to resort to violence. Interestingly, unlike Pliny who arms them with claws “to eat game and birds,”<sup>15</sup> the Hereford mapmaker clearly hints at their humanoid nature (*genus humanum*), by replacing claws with fingers and by arming them with man-made weaponry. Curiously, a similar pair of dog-headed creatures appears near the Expulsion scene, situated immediately outside the barred gates of Eden, in the eastern part of the world. A winged angel, armed with a sword, banishes Adam and Eve from the Garden and the ostracized couple find themselves in close proximity to another nude dog-headed couple, shown in an upright position, which the mapmaker labels *Gigantes*. Despite the current state of the drawing, one can easily infer a gender differentiation and possible reference to lusty intercourse. The juxtaposition of the two couples, disturbing as it may seem, hints at the consequences of the original sin: the corruption of the species and degradation, uncontrolled drives and impulses, and dissonant or incongruous communication. And they all stem from pride. For, as the thirteenth-century Bestiary in the Westminster Chapel Library holds, the pygmies stand for humility and the giants for pride.

This additional feature the *Cynocephali* are attributed with can also be traced back to the Psalms, in the words of David, who asks God to deliver him from his enemies who have packed like wild dogs and snarl viciously at him:

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<sup>15</sup> Plinius Secundus quoted in John H. Chandler. “The Strange Races on the Hereford *Mappa Mundi*: An Investigation of Sources” (Master’s Thesis, Western Michigan University, August 2001), 24, [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters\\_theses/3934](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/3934)

Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. [...] They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog and go round about the city. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips [...] For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips *let them even be taken in their pride*: and for cursing and lying which they speak (Psalm 59:1–12; my emphasis).

For this reason, they are probably relocated to the north of Europe, on a promontory which juts out into the encompassing ocean. Their proud nature has made them incapable of redemption.

There are many other allegorical references to the dog-headed men in which both the Bible and medieval exegesis abound. Such creatures are identified as the Jews who “rejected the new doctrines of Jesus and barked against them,”<sup>16</sup> heretics who have willingly and knowingly rejected the teachings of the Church, doubters who have alienated themselves from the truth, and all the ‘other’ (i.e. ‘different’) doctrinal and religious misfits. No matter how consistent and intriguing this discussion might be, these interpretations fall outside the scope of the present paper.

Another striking example that the Ebstorf Map offers is a creature with a huge protruding lip that can be used as a sunshade. Such people are called *Amyctyrae*: *Gens que habet ora concreta labioque promoventi, ut contra solis radios se tegat* (“Men with closed mouths and lips so protruding that they can protect themselves from the sun’s rays”). In the thirteenth-century Bestiary in the Westminster Chapel Library, we read that such people who cover themselves with the lower lip are the mischievous, according to the word of the Psalm: “Let the mischief of their own lips cover them” (140:9). The mapmaker placed these rogues among the Antipodean *monstra*, making them candidates for Purgatorial expiation. They can also be identified among the gallery of fourteen monstrous people on the Psalter Map, which strengthens the belief that gossipers and conspirators would undergo lenient punishment in the afterlife.

Neatly contained within its box at the southern edge of the world is a creature with a little hole for a mouth who eats his food through a reed.

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<sup>16</sup> Friedman, *Monstruous Races*, 61. On the Hereford map, a *Himantopod* (a humanoid moving on both legs and arms, creeping rather than walking) is derogatorily represented wearing a Jewish hat. A similar head covering is attributed to a *Sciopod* (a one-legged giant-footed man wearing his lower limb as a parasol) and to a three-faced giant, both featuring in a late 13<sup>th</sup> century Westminster Abbey bestiary.

In his case, confinement and restriction of intake are both suggestive of Purgatorial suffering. To the Christian moralist, over-indulgence in eating and drinking in this world, which is dangerously close to gluttony, can only be atoned for by abstinence and restraint in the hereafter. This issue is also addressed by St. Paul who reminds the faithful of what is truly important to a Christian: “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17). Straw-drinkers are also represented on the Hereford map as *Gens ore concreto calamo cibatur* (“A people with solid/rigid mouth who are fed through a reed/straw”). Borrowing from Solinus and Isidore, the Hereford mapmaker clearly individuates these bizarre figures and includes them among the monstrous races populating the edges of the world. The thirteenth-century Sion College Bestiary also describes a noseless creature with a small aperture for a mouth, eating and drinking through a straw, which testifies to the widespread occurrence of these gruesomely malformed creatures in medieval iconography.

Likewise, many other physical malformations or anomalies were interpreted as mistakes of the soul and most of them related to the human face. For physiognomy was believed to reflect the quality of one’s soul: “Just as the face reflects the heart, so the moral deformity of the peoples in the torrid region is reflected in their physical appearance.”<sup>17</sup> Consequently, the Antipodes are filled with a plethora of eyeless, noseless, mouthless, or earless figures, disproportionate or misplaced facial features and an uncanny proliferation of sensory organs. Each can be interpreted either as an exposure of one’s sinful condition or as a form of Purgatorial punishment for diverse transgressions, “for transgression is that which deforms and makes ugly.”<sup>18</sup> Even if God has created Man to enjoy life to the full, overindulging in sensorial pleasures and satiating the flesh to repletion means neglecting and perverting the soul. In his letter to Timothy, St. Paul warns against the depreciation of moral condition of those who depart from God by falling prey to promiscuous hedonism:

For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural

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<sup>17</sup> Friedman, *Monstruous Races*, 54.

<sup>18</sup> Virginia Jewiss. “Monstruous Movements and Metaphors in Dante’s Divine Comedy” *Forum Italicum: A Journal of Italian Studies* 32, no.2 (1998): 334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001458589803200202> [access 19.05.2021]

affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, *lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God* (Timothy 3:2; my emphasis).

Despite the many examples of anthropomorphic ill-shapen or obnoxious beings standing in as candidates for expiation, there are *monstra* who fall outside the Purgatorial limits and resist categorization. Take, for instance, the *Anthropophagi* who are a regular feature in most of the sources discussed and are commonly shown “chewing on various human parts.”<sup>19</sup> Finding a corresponding venial sin to attribute to them is extremely difficult because eating human flesh is explicitly given in Deuteronomy as one of the terrible curses befalling those who do not keep God’s commandments: “You’ll eat your own children, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God gave you — on account of the siege and the distress with which your enemy will oppress you” (28:53). Moreover, there have been countless references to Cain in medieval apocrypha, which evidence him as the primal source of monsters, *Anthropophagi* included. Citing a Middle English text which describes a dream that Eve had before Abel’s murder (“I saw in my dream Cain gather Abel’s blood in his hands and devour it with his mouth”), John Friedman concludes that Cain’s descendants “retain his cannibal tendency.”<sup>20</sup> This opens a direct and blatantly shameful lineage which branches into the hereafter. Toward the end of the fourteenth century, when Purgatory ceased to be a liminal gathering of re-accommodated classical oddities, Heinrich von Hesler in his Apocalypse concludes: “Whether they shall be saved or whether they shall be lost and fare with the devil, that will have to be left to God’s mercy.”<sup>21</sup> By extension, this can be said to apply to all the ‘undisciplined’ bodies and coarsely wild beings which have populated the edges of the world ever since its Creation.

## Conclusions

The birth of Purgatory in the thirteenth century opened up the eschatological world and its imagery. Though none of the world maps examined (the Hereford Map, the Ebstorf Map, and the Psalter Map)

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<sup>19</sup> Friedman, *Monstruous Races*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy Husband and Gloria Gilmore-House, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), 12

identified an earthly location to accommodate the ‘third place,’ I have argued that the southern hemisphere, deemed at the time of the maps’ creation uninhabitable and inaccessible to man, could offer the necessary prerequisites to house the souls of the penitent in need of expiation. The conditions of living, labelled as inappropriate for human beings because of excessive heat, were perfect for housing repentant sinners on their path toward final absolution. In the thirteenth century, the fires of Purgatory started to ‘heat’ the Antipodes, even if unwittingly.

As for the Antipodeans, they did not make up a single race. Ready to use pagan rationality in service of their own agenda, medieval mapmakers gathered most of the disquietingly monstrous races of classical antiquity in the ‘claustrophobic’ space of the Antipodes. Carefully separated and confined, these *monstra* became objects of moral reflection and representations of the tormented spirits of Purgatory. Each deformed or dysmorphic body was considered instrumental in revealing both the nature of the sin committed in one’s lifetime and the consequential penance carried into the afterlife.

A century later, in 1389, Johannes Witte of Hese, who set out on an imaginary journey around the world, “claimed to have visited both Purgatory and Paradise and ‘found’ many of the monstrous races along his way.”<sup>22</sup> Even if this clarifies that the exotic ‘other’ was indeed qualified for redemption, it blurs the margins of the otherworld and leaves the question of the true location of Purgatory open for debate.

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<sup>22</sup> Johannes Witte of Hese. *Itineraries*. quoted in Seymour Phillips, ‘The outer world of the European Middle Ages’, in *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on Encounters Between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 48.

Dana Vasiliu

### Living at the Edges of the World: The Antipodeans and their Deadly Sins

This paper explores the possible connections between the monstrous inhabitants of the ‘fourth’ continent or Antipodean Land and the tormented spirits of Purgatory, as they are represented in three of the most famous thirteenth century *mappae mundi*: the Hereford Map, the Ebstorf Map, and the Psalter Map. Addressing all the peculiar species resulting from diverse body hybridization, this ‘continent’ situated at the age of the *oikoumene* could accommodate all the exotic peoples or polymorphic creatures of the classical imagination and infuse them with a Christian spirit. As a land with an excessively hot climate that was incongruous with human survival, this land was also perfect for housing repentant sinners on their path toward final absolution. Hence, as I will argue, the liminality of the Antipodean Land and the ambiguous anthropomorphism of those who inhabited it may demonstrate an early Purgatorial localization in the southern hemisphere, opaque to human inspection, and identify the *monstra* populating it as the impure souls who hoped the cleansing fires would burn off their sins and restore their likeness to God.

**Keywords:** Antipodes, monstra, mappae mundi, Purgatory, venial sins.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Antpody, monstra, mappae mundi, Czyściec, grzechy lekkie.