University of Alberta

Distorted Boundaries: The Marginal Spaces of the Preternatural in *King Horn* and *Sir Orfeo*

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
English

English and Film Studies

Fall 2012
Edmonton, Alberta

Abstract

The preternatural, meaning that which is beyond the natural, is an essential component of medieval romance, but has seldom been discussed in spatial terms. European maps and manuscript marginalia from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries place the preternatural on the margins of the late medieval imagination, where its role is often determined by subhuman or superhuman attributes, and the literary romances *King Horn* and *Sir Orfeo* outline similar categorizations of the preternatural in the form of the monstrous Saracens and the faerie other. The tales also draw the protagonist into the marginal spaces of his world, so that the natural relationship between centre and periphery becomes distorted. An examination of the spatial designations of the preternatural within these texts thus contributes towards a further understanding of the marginalized status of this category within late medieval romance, and reflects the historical trends of the era in which these boundaries were constructed.

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Introduction

Monstrous and magical creatures abound in the literature of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, where the representation of beings which exist beyond the usual boundaries of nature can be collectively referred to as the preternatural.[1] Numerous academic studies have endeavoured to unravel the meanings behind the monstrous and supernatural beings which represent this category, but little consideration has been paid to the actual spaces in which they occur. In order to position the instances of the preternatural that occur within medieval romance one must collectively consider a number of spaces: the physical space of the manuscript page, the geographical space of the cartographical imagination, and the social marginalizations that are applied within a subjective reading of the text. Through this line of inquiry I wish to clarify the present understanding of the marginal spaces in which literary representations of the preternatural occur, and thus to shed some light on the role of the preternatural within medieval romance.

This study will attempt to place the physical and social spaces of the preternatural within two Middle English romances: *King Horn* and *Sir Orfeo*. This process will involve three parts: first of all, a comparative study of the marginal spaces within thirteenth- and fourteenth-century *mappaemundi* production,

[1] The "preternatural" is used here as the *OED* defines it: "Outside the ordinary course of nature; differing from or surpassing what is natural; unnatural." The term is comparable to its secondary definition, "supernatural," in the sense that it deals with creatures that are otherworldly and unnatural; however, instead of being explicitly "above nature" ("supernatural," *OED*), the "preternatural" refers to that which is beyond nature with no direct implication as to whether it applies specifically to positive or negative forms. In this study the "preternatural" therefore represents that which exists beyond the normative human form envisaged by western Christian Europeans, and which thus incorporates both subhuman and superhuman variants of this category.

followed by an examination of the two romance narratives, which contain similar representations of the marginalized preternatural in the portrayal of the subhuman non-Christian other and the superhuman faerie other. This method will therefore entail applying the physical and ideological spaces outlined in the maps and manuscript marginalia of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to comparable representations that occur within these two romances. The preternatural occupies a primarily marginal status in the texts discussed here, but the positive and negative implications of its function change depending on the type of preternatural that is represented. The instances of the preternatural within medieval romance are far too plentiful to be covered here in full, but a case study of the literary examples provided here will demonstrate how preternatural space might have been understood by their original readers.

Chapter One, "Maps and Margins," will begin with the crucial task of defining the preternatural as I intend to use it in the following chapters. In order to apply the concept of marginalized preternatural space to *King Horn* and *Sir Orfeo*, it is vital to understand how certain categories of the preternatural might have been perceived within the western social consciousness of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It would be futile to claim that any view proposed here would have been in any way all-encompassing in the late medieval period, and any historical perspective is bound to have both variants and counterpoints; however, from the available evidence we can piece together a rough idea of how the implied medieval reader might have responded to particular ideas expressed in

the art and literature of the era in question.[2] In light of this attitude, the marginalized spaces of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century *mappaemundi* production are a suitable point at which to begin our study. The first chapter begins by outlining the hierarchy of social categorization that is presented within the *mappaemundi*; this hierarchy functions on the basic precept that Christianity occupies the centre of the world and everything else occupies the peripheries. The placement of preternatural elements on the peripheral edges of the map can be explained partially by the fact that western Christendom had a limited knowledge of the world at the time these documents were produced. The theory that western medieval society thought the world was flat has been long discredited (Harvey, "Foreword" xviii), but even though the majority of western minds were aware of the earth's sphericity the nature of the far side of the globe was still largely unknown; artists and writers therefore filled the margins of the earth with mythical creatures that were often presented as mutations of the human form, which scholars such as John Block Friedman and Debra Higgs Strickland refer to as the "monstrous races." Furthermore, in both the *mappaemundi* and manuscript marginalia from the same period, these hybrids occupy the same space as distorted images of religious categorizations such as Jews and Saracens; as Strickland points out, the representation of any given culture more commonly says more about those responsible for the representation than those depicted

[2] The notion of the "implied reader" is used here in accordance with Wolfgang Iser's understanding of the term in *The Implied Reader*, where he posits that in any written text there is an imagined reader which reflects the ideas that are embodied in the text, and exists separately from the actual reader. Iser's argument, essentially, is that in the construction of a text the author incorporates patterns that reflect its cultural context; this theory is particularly useful in the study of medieval literature, as the ideas and assumptions expressed in the text reflect the concepts that would have been understood by the implied medieval reader for whom the text was created.

within it (96), and the non-Christian other was mythologized in the west to the point where representations of the cultures in question bore little resemblance to their real-life counterparts. The fictional Saracens therefore exist beyond the natural boundaries of normative Christian space in a degenerate form that might be best understood as sub-natural or subhuman. In addition, the non-Christian other is almost invariably presented as monstrous in late medieval visual and literary sources, whereas the mythical hybrids on the peripheries of the *mappaemundi* can be either subhuman or superhuman, depending on the spatial context in which they are represented. The spatial configuration of these categories of the preternatural, which are for the most part defined through either their distortion or enhancement of the human form, thus provide an ideal basis from which to contemplate the corresponding categories of the preternatural that occur within the romance narratives of *King Horn* and *Sir Orfeo*.

In Chapter Two we turn our attentions to the allocation of preternatural space within the thirteenth-century Matter of England romance *King Horn*. In the text a physical displacement occurs between the protagonist, Horn, and his Saracen adversaries, so that the central and peripheral spaces of the narrative are reversed. In order to understand the context of the Saracen invasion in *King Horn* some attention will first be given to the negative attitudes that developed towards the Saracens during the historical period of the Crusades, and the literary and artistic representations which resulted from those attitudes. The concept of the Saracen itself is one that deserves some clarification; the name "Saracen," a medieval term predominantly, although not exclusively, associated with Islamic

peoples, is used here to indicate the distorted and often erroneous construction of Muslim identity in the medieval west. Despite evidence which suggests that an amicable relationship existed between many Christians and Muslims during several stages of the Crusades, western artists and scribes more often portrayed the Muslims in a derogatory light that mythologized them into the monstrous Saracen that is represented in *King Horn*. The portrayal of the Saracens in the text as monstrous is therefore a direct response to western ideologies surrounding the Crusades, in which Christian soldiers were perceived to be the virtuous heroes of the holy wars, and their opposition were represented as a collective enemy on the peripheries of western Christian normativity. The chapter, then, is divided to reflect the spaces of Horn's exile and return, with particular attention to the ambiguous origins of the Saracens, the displacement between centre and periphery in Horn's exile, and the return of the natural order of the romance with Horn's reclamation of Suddene. Horn's fairness and the magical aspects in the narrative are also significant for their implication that Horn represents a virtuous contrast to the Saracens even whilst he occupies the peripheral spaces of his world. Rather than hinder Horn's progress, the magical elements in the text aid his return; the Saracens, however, are described throughout as giants and hounds, and therefore represent a distortion of the human form which contrasts Horn's central normativity. The preternatural aspects of the tale, then, are categorized entirely by their spatial relationship to the central protagonist, who represents the idealization of Christian virtue; the Saracens are represented as perverting the natural order in banishing Horn to the peripheral spaces outside of his kingdom and therefore exist

on the margins of Horn's world, but Horn, who enters the peripheries himself, uses a more positive form of the preternatural to resolve the narrative order of the tale. Marginal space is therefore subjective for the romance protagonist, and this perspective aligns him with the viewer of the *mappaemundi*; the role of the preternatural is defined in relation to Horn's centrality as he moves through the peripheral spaces of the narrative, so that the magical elements of the tale which assist him are positive, and his Saracen assailants are invariably monstrous.

Chapter Three moves us towards a different conception of the preternatural in the early fourteenth-century Breton Lai *Sir Orfeo*. Based on the classical myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, the tale again places its hero in the margins, this time as a result of the faerie king's capture of Orfeo's queen, Herodis. The faerie preternatural in the text exists in a simultaneously monstrous and marvellous state, and thus functions along the same lines as the peripheral hybrid creatures of the *mappaemundi* and the marginal manuscript grotesques that are discussed in Chapter One. As opposed to the representation of the Saracens in *King Horn* as monstrous and anti-Christian, the faerie other in *Sir Orfeo* is primarily defined by both its monstrosity and the ambiguities which are attached to it; the preternatural faerie figures are sinister at times, especially in their capture of Herodis, but there is also an emphasis on beauty within the faerie space that does not correspond to the portrayal of subhuman monstrosity that is presented in the Saracen depictions in *King Horn*. The chapter is divided into three parts in accordance with the spaces in the narrative in which preternatural events occur: the episode of the ympe-tree, Orfeo's self-exile in the wilderness, and his

encounter with the faerie king in the otherworld. Each instance implies the existence of a transitional space between Orfeo's world and the other space of the faerie world; the liminality of this gateway between the two worlds enhances the marginal status of the preternatural beings, but also that of the heroes when they, too, come to occupy this space. Both Orfeo and Herodis undergo a monstrous physical transformation in order to gain access to the faerie world, and the physical effects of marginal spaces are therefore crucial in the portrayal of the faerie other within *Sir Orfeo* as preternatural. In this text the preternatural is presented as less threatening than the Saracens of *King Horn*; there are numerous parallels in the invasion, exile and return structure of each tale, and the subhuman and superhuman are both presented as "other" and beyond the regular scope of the Christian norm, but on the whole one is represented as negative while the other is represented as benign. The ambiguous representation of the faerie otherworld in *Sir Orfeo* therefore indicates that spatial displacement and marginalization are key elements in the representation of the preternatural within the late medieval period, and provides an intriguing glimpse into medieval conceptions of the faerie other within the romance tradition of the early fourteenth century.

Lines and boundaries are crucial in distinguishing between the different types of the preternatural in the *mappaemundi* tradition and their corresponding portrayals in medieval romance. The spatial segregation of the preternatural within *King Horn* and *Sir Orfeo* therefore allows us to construct an idea of how a late medieval reader might have conceived the depictions of the non-Christian and faerie others that are present in these tales. Rather than focus on the preternatural

as a category which exists only above nature through supernatural powers or the practise of magic, this project instead examines the distortions of the natural form that occur in representations of both the subhuman and superhuman beings of the medieval imagination. The following chapters will thus outline an effective conception of the preternatural as a spatial construct that can be read both on the maps of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and within the romance literature of the same era. In the examples provided the preternatural embodies a number of forms, but exists perpetually on the margins.

I am indebted to a number of scholars for the conception and development of this study; these are too plentiful to be listed here in full, but Michael Camille's *Image on the Edge: the Margins of Medieval Art*, Debra Higgs Strickland's *Saracens, Monsters, & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*, and Corinne Saunders's *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval Romance* deserve particular mention. These texts provide an insightful examination into the conceptions of marginalization, otherness and the supernatural within western medieval history, all of which are vital foundations for the structure of my argument.

Chapter One: Maps and Margins

Introduction

The world maps that survive from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, though few in number, combine literary, geographical and pseudo-historical subject material in impressive size and detail to present documents that are essentially "veritable encyclopaedias in map form" (Harvey, "Foreword" xix). In a period of fervent interest in explorations, pilgrimages and crusades, these maps indicate an interest in the relationship between the Christian west and the outside world, and present an assortment of new and well-established ideas concerning spatial boundaries and the peoples situated within the peripheral spaces of the known world (Friedman 131).[3] The medieval *mappaemundi* thus provide a glimpse into late medieval conceptions of space and boundaries, especially in relation to the inhabitants of the world who were positioned on the margins of Christian normativity; the latter, in a number of diverse forms, are for the most part represented as either enhancements or degradations of the human form, and can therefore be classified as either marvellous or monstrous. A similar effect is also present in numerous biblical manuscripts from the same era, in which marginal grotesques are segregated from the spiritual material at the centre of the page, and also in the literary episodes that are represented on the

[3] Late medieval conceptions of geographical space and its inhabitants were largely informed by classical sources such as Pliny's *Natural History*, but the application of contemporary events and social hierarchies to medieval readings of classical cartography created a new conception of geographical space that was "safely installed within a Christian cosmology" (Fox-Friedman 139).

mappaemundi. The purpose of this chapter will be to ascertain whether the medieval attentions to spatial boundaries within both maps and manuscript marginalia can contribute to a further understanding of how the preternatural was perceived in the western conception of the non-Christian other and the magical or imaginary creatures that inhabit the margins of the *mappaemundi*. I also wish to establish the literary merits of the material discussed here; the relationship between spatial environment and the preternatural in the maps and margins of late medieval manuscripts is also present in contemporary literary texts, and each of these sources demonstrates the spatial segregation of two divisible categories of preternatural: the subhuman and the superhuman.

1. Mappamundi

The *mappaemundi* are medieval world maps that focus on religious and cultural ideology rather than practical cartography. This form of map outlines a spatial relationship between centre and periphery, and uses constructed lines and boundaries to segregate its inhabitants into a hierarchy that places Christianity at its centre. The purpose of the *mappaemundi* is not dissimilar to that of most cartographical maps in providing the means to orientate oneself subjectively within the world, but it does not necessarily do so through the means of geographical precision. Instead, the maps rely on a form of cultural discourse that encourages an understanding of spatial awareness through both literary history and contemporary social perspectives: “It is no longer controversial to maintain

that maps are a form of discourse, that they represent viewpoints, opinions, aspirations and statements to their readers, who in turn interpret the data which maps present" (Wintle 137). Maps at this time, then, acted as an "instrument of communication" which provided a visual and literary aid for understanding both a subjective relationship with the world and a more general western conception of religious, political and social space: "As mediators between an inner mental world and an outer physical world, maps are fundamental tools helping the human mind make sense of its universe at various scales" (Harley 1).[4] The map provides a spiritual rather than physical centre for the individual observer, and in a number of *mappaemundi* Jerusalem occupies the central point on the map in accordance with Ezekiel 5.5, which in the Vulgate states that Jerusalem is "set down at earth's very midst, the nations all about her" (Knox). This type is not applicable to all *mappaemundi*, but is followed by the three most famous examples: the Hereford, Psalter and Ebstorf maps; these have gained the greatest renown for their intricacy and detail, and therefore represent a culmination of the artistic, literary and religious complexities that encompass this genre of map production.[5] The original contexts of the maps further demonstrate their religious import: the Psalter map (Fig. 1) is situated within a religious manuscript which primarily contains psalms

[4] This concept aligns closely with Dick Harrison's argument in *Medieval Space* that the medieval universe can be divided into the categories of microspace and macrospace: "microspatial attitudes refer to the empirically known world, while macrospatial attitudes refer to the geologically conceptualised cosmological framework of the mind" (2).

[5] The Psalter map, which was created around 1260, is slightly older than the Hereford and Ebstorf maps, which were both created around 1300; the earlier example is also miniscule in size, whereas the latter two are large and intended for display. However, the similar format of all three maps means that a common original source is likely to have existed. Peter Barber points out that the minute size of the Psalter map alone indicates that it was probably modelled after a larger, earlier source, and that Henry III's early thirteenth-century map at Westminster Palace, which was lost in a fire in 1263, is the most likely candidate (19).

for private devotion, the Hereford map is thought to have possibly been part of an altarpiece (Bailey), and the Ebstorf map was rediscovered in a convent in northern Germany in the nineteenth century.[6] In addition to the central location of Jerusalem, the Psalter map is also presided over by the figure of Christ, so that the world in its entirety is presented within the context of Christian worship; the presence of Christ above the map encourages the individual observer to place himself not only in the spiritual centre, but also under the watchful governance of the Christian deity (Harvey, "Medieval Maps" 284). The creator of the Ebstorf map later developed this concept by incorporating the figure of Christ into the map itself; his limbs protrude from the cardinal points of the globe and thus demonstrate that the world is synonymous with the body of Christ (Barber 25).The dominance of Christian spirituality within the maps therefore places religion at the centre of late medieval consciousness, so that all representations within the map are subsequently categorized in relation to it.

The *mappaemundi* exist in a number of forms, and one of the most popular of these was the T-O format, which divides Europe, Africa and Asia into three dominant sections of the globe.[7] Europe and England inhabit the lower left-hand corner of the map, so that the centre is not necessarily the location of the map's production: "England occupies a very small space on a *mappamundi*, squeezed

[6] The original circumstances of the Ebstorf map's production are unknown; the original map was destroyed in Germany in 1943, and it only exists now in a photographic reproduction. Little is known about its creator, Gervase of Ebstorf, although some have identified him as Gervase of Tilbury. However, the fact that the map was rediscovered in a convent means it is likely to have originally served an ecclesiastical purpose.

[7] The *mappaemundi* are orientated with north to the left side of the map, so that Africa, in the south, encompasses the lower right-hand segment of the globe, and Europe, in the north-west, sits in the lower left-hand portion.

with the rest of the British Isles into an inadequate space on the bottom left edge of an east-orientated map, a peripheral position remote from the foci of Christian affairs in Rome, Byzantium and the Holy Land" (Delano-Smith 40). A popular view in western medieval culture held that the British Isles resided at the very edges of the civilized world (Mittman, "Other" 97), but this liminal placement should not be mistaken as an equivalent to the peripheral space that was ascribed to the southernmost region of the map, which is more clearly segregated from the rest of the globe. The southern edge of the map (Fig. 2) is reserved for the monstrous other: hybrid creatures which combine man and beast into various distortions of the human form. These include cynocephali (dog-headed men), blemmyae (men with no heads at all) and figures with various anatomical mutations, such as a four-eyed man, a six-fingered man and a man with no nose. In the "zonal" format of the *mappaemundi* the area inhabited by these creatures is known as the antipodal zone, which signifies a space that is as far away from civilized Christian cultural as conceivably possible (Fox-Friedman 139).[8] Extreme climates were assumed to be inhabited by extreme forms of people, and the hybrid creatures were thus placed accordingly at the southernmost edge of the map: "By situating the Monstrous Races in areas believed to experience the most extreme climatic conditions possible within the temperate zones, the maps give visual

[8] The Antipodes in contemporary discourse refer to a point at the directly opposite side of the world. The meaning has not altered much from its late medieval etymology, which was to represent a more general other side of the world that was primarily significant for its distance from western Christendom. The concept of the Antipodes also refutes the popular misconception which claims that medieval society generally thought of the world as flat: "Sphericity . . . was a necessary concomitant of the idea of the Antipodes, which placed the monstrous races in a part of the globe opposite to and below the region of Western man" (Friedman 41). The hybrid creature named the Antipode, which walks upside-down, is thought to have evolved from a misconception regarding the geographical Antipodes (Friedman 11).

form to the textual descriptions which locate monsters in remote and hostile lands" (Strickland 41-2).[9] The area at the southern edge of the world is segregated from the rest of the map by lines that emphasize the marginal status of the creatures enclosed within them; in the Psalter map, for instance, the monstrous races are separated from the rest of the globe by an unspecified stretch of water, and the hybrids, which are presented as individual specimens, are also separated from one another by lines which enclose them within individual blocks of marginal territory. The creatures on the peripheries of the map are exiled from the rest of the world, and thereby also occupy a liminal place within the western imagination. The division of the globe in this manner thus demonstrates that its various parts are segregated in order to establish the difference between the cultural and geographical centres of Christendom and Europe and the "other" space of the peripheries.

Despite the rigid physical and ideological structure of the *mappaemundi*, the boundaries between the Christian norm at the centre and the hybrids on the peripheries are not as straightforward as they might at first seem. Debra Higgs Strickland points out that the religious hierarchical structure of the maps means that the space of the preternatural within them is defined collectively as that which is not enclosed within the western Christian community (8), and as a result the categories of the preternatural often converge and overlap in their representations; for instance, the monstrous hybrids and non-Christian other are often synonymous

[9] The medieval conception of extreme climatic regions relies heavily on classical texts on climatic and astrological theory, and their meanings for the "physical and psychological makeup" of racial groups and individuals (Strickland 30).

in western representations, and the origins of some hybrids are thought to derive from actual cultures that were distorted through literary and visual portrayals: "the Amyctyrae with protruding lower lips could well have been based on remote contact with the Ubangi tribe" (Woodward 330). The creation of the hybrid creatures was essentially a response to natural curiosities about the world, and an attempt to account for the parts of the globe that were still unknown, so that "[d]uring the Middle Ages the edges of the known world were at the same time the limits of representation" (Camille, *Image* 14). For the most part the creation of the hybrids therefore represents a response to natural curiosities in the late medieval period but, conversely, the religious or racial other was often presented in more negative terms. Although grossly misrepresented in medieval literature and art through an exaggeration of anatomical features and immoral conduct, the derogatory representation of Arab and Turkic peoples as Saracens and Tartars commonly signified a fear of invasion or colonization from armies in the east. The non-Christian other also represented a threat to religious and moral fortitude; Saracens, Jews and Tartars were human and could therefore be converted to Christianity, but this meant that the reverse was also possible, even within the spaces of western Christendom. John Block Friedman also explains that, through the influential writings of Saint Augustine and Saint Ambrose, the monstrous races were popularly thought to have been descended from Cain, and that this association served as a grim reminder to medieval audiences that a similarly monstrous fate might await them as the result of immoral actions (30-1).[10] The

[10] The Hereford map contains an inscription which labels the Anthropophagi (man-eaters) as

spaces occupied by non-Christian races on the *mappaemundi* were therefore monstrous for their familiarity as much as for their differences, so that the non-Christian other was often represented as more threatening than the more distant and mythical hybrid creatures on the map's peripheries. The maps create a hierarchy that functions loosely on a scale of Christian centrality, non-Christian races and the monstrous other, but this hierarchy in fact correlates monstrosity with the non-Christian other so that the two become intertwined in their existence on the margins of western Christian society.

One of the primary concerns of this study is to establish the difference between the subdivisions of the preternatural that occupy the magical or mythical spaces of the medieval imagination. The purpose of this differentiation is to demonstrate that medieval minds perceived the "other" in a number of contrasting ways, and that some of these types were considered more threatening than others. Although the monsters on the margins of the *mappaemundi* are the most apparently distorted examples of human form and behaviour, this imaginary other was in many respects more acceptable to medieval audiences than the non-Christian other, which was rendered monstrous in its non-adherence to Christianity and therefore fuelled with more animosity than the exotic blemmyae or cynocephali. The purpose of this study, then, is to treat both the non-Christian and mythical other as variant categories of the preternatural, but to ascertain

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"cursed sons of Cain" (95). The "curse" refers to the "mark of Cain," which indicates the moment in which God marks Cain in order to protect him from potential murderers; the physical nature of the mark is unspecified in Genesis 4:15: "And the Lord gave Cain such token of his protection as should warn the chance-comer not to kill him" (Knox), but in *The Mark of Cain* Ruth Mellinkoff comments that in medieval representations the mark could also act as a mark of shame for Cain's sin, which could be depicted with physical signs such as a horn (59) or blackness (76).

through a range of artistic and literary evidence whether these categories would be, for the most part, considered positive or negative in their representation within the medieval literary tradition, and thus the cultural mentality of the medieval west in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The categorization of the preternatural in the *mappaemundi* can therefore be most effectively divided into the monstrous and the marvellous, namely, those with subhuman attributes and those with enhanced human attributes, both of which can be located both within the map's socio-religious structure and upon its peripheries.

2. Manuscript Marginalia

The examples of marginalization that are found in the medieval *mappaemundi* are paralleled in the marginalia of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century religious manuscripts. These images were largely ignored prior to the attentions of scholars such as Lillian Randall, John Block Friedman and Michael Camille, who, across a number of decades, endeavoured to ascertain their function. One of the most notable aspects of the deviant marginalia is that it appears primarily in biblical manuscripts, and appears to have no relation to the textual content whatsoever; instead, sexually depraved hybrid creatures and derogatory racial representations abound in the margins of psalters that were intended primarily for private devotional use. In *Image on the Edge* Michael Camille suggests that the marginal and central material work together in their opposition, and that the temptations and warnings of the peripheral grotesques draw further attention to the spiritual

worth of the message at the centre. However, evidence suggests that the function of the marginal images might serve a further purpose. For example, the marginal material of the Luttrell Psalter, a fourteenth-century manuscript that is famous for its lavish and often monstrous marginalia, also includes a number of illustrations of biblical scenes as well as positive secular and religious images; amid the caricatures of Saracen figures, hybrids and babewyns, f.41v presents Christ in majesty with a simplified T-O orb in hand, while f.208r depicts the patron of the manuscript, Geoffrey Luttrell, in a feasting scene alongside members of his family. Although the pages overflow with a variety of grotesque figures in every corner the most prominent images are those at the bas-de-page, a space that is occupied by negative monstrous imagery in some folios and positive biblical and secular scenes in others; occasional examples, such as the depiction of Luttrell in arms on f.202v, are bordered and therefore segregated from the margins, but the majority of the images are not bordered and therefore occupy the open marginal space which also plays host to a number of monstrous and deviant images. The original purpose of these images is unknown, but a vital clue can be found in the response of Cistercian Adam of Dore, who states quite clearly that the images found in the marginal spaces of manuscripts and gothic cathedrals are an example of popular secular entertainment that was looked down upon by some members of the Church, but generally conceded to popular tastes:

> Struck with grief that in the sanctuary of God there should be foolish pictures, and what are rather misshapen monstrosities than ornaments, I wished if possible to occupy the minds and eyes of the faithful in a more

> comely and useful fashion. For since the eyes of our contemporaries are apt to be caught by a pleasure that is not only vain, but even profane, and since I did not think it would be easy to do away altogether with the meaningless paintings in churches, especially in cathedral and parish churches, where public stations take place, I think it an excusable concession that they should enjoy at least that class of pictures which, as being the books of the laity, can suggest divine things to the unlearned, and stir up the learned to the love of the scriptures. (qtd. in Randall 4)

It is therefore clear that the marginalia within manuscripts and gothic cathedrals was not universally accepted, and can feasibly be interpreted as a trend that was regretted by some members of the Church but accepted by others. The images, then, seem most likely to function as entertainment for their medieval audience; in accordance with Camille's assertion that "the centre is . . . dependent upon the margins for its continued existence" (*Image* 10), it is even possible that the marginalia's popular appeal might function as a reading aid to keep the reader's attention on the page long enough to absorb the biblical material in the text. Mary Carruthers refers to a similar effect in *The Book of Memory* with reference to the *imagines* as vivid imaginative conceptions: "It is the *imagines* that can be fixed by the mind's eyes and that arouse again one's emotional response ('intention') to the initial matter, so these are the key to holding any discourse in our memories" (149).[11] A certain degree of uncertainty persists in determining the function of

[11] An alternative explanation for the function of these images is that they could provide symbolic protection for the words at the centre of the page. The Sheelagh-na-gig, a grotesque female figure exposing its genitals, is found on many twelfth-century church exteriors, and its position above the

these images, and it would be futile to ascribe any one meaning to them, but it seems that their existence owes something to public curiosity and the increasing demand for secular entertainment in the textual media of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; just as the preternatural elements of medieval romance simultaneously occupy the edges of the narrative space and dominate the medieval imagination, so the marginal grotesques of late medieval manuscripts are liminal in comparison to the central material of the page yet also demonstrate an evident public demand for that which is out of the ordinary.

Manuscripts such as the Luttrell, Rutland and Macclesfield psalters, like the *mappaemundi*, divide the creatures on their margins from the normative text at the centre through a variety of visual signs which indicate their monstrosity.[12] Strickland explains that, in the classical pseudoscience of physiognomy that is commonly attributed to Hippocrates, "It was believed that physiognomical analysis enabled the observer to view the form of an individual's body as an outward 'mirror' of inner character" (37), and that the knowledge contained within classical texts on physiognomy was passed on to the medieval west through sources such as the *Secreta secretorum* (38). Alixe Bovey observes that

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doorways implies that it might have served a protective function. It is therefore possible that the manuscript marginalia of a slightly later period might have served a similar function, or might have at least excused the presence of grotesque images within a biblical setting.

[12] The comparison between beauty and virtue, ugliness and sin is a subject that had long been established by Greek and Roman sources, and is the main premise behind Strickland's argument in *Saracens, Demons, & Jews*:

> The ideas that provided the complex infrastructure for the simple medieval dichotomy of beauty=virtue/ugliness=sin were in fact developed by the ancient Greeks and Romans long before the Church Fathers and later Christian writers routinely condemned their non-Christian neighbors on both aesthetic and moral grounds, and long before later medieval artists produced an arsenal of negative portraits founded on the basic principle that cultural and religious difference is externally signified by foul physical appearance. (29)

the marginal grotesques of late medieval psalters "belong to the world of the body and its basest functions" (44-5), and so the marginal images of gothic manuscripts call attention to their own physicality in a manner which is in contrast to the spiritual material at the centre of the page. The nakedness of the grotesque figures draws further attention to their abnormalities: Friedman explains that it serves to both display their "anatomical peculiarities" and act as "a sign of wildness and bestiality—of the animal nature thought to characterize those who lived beyond the limits of the Christian world" (31-2), whilst Strickland adds that the nakedness or scanty clothing of the figures can also be associated with sexuality (64), which is evident in the more lurid creatures in manuscripts such as the Luttrell Psalter which are often engaged in physical acts of violence or sexual depravity that signify their barbarity. The distortion of the human form therefore becomes monstrous in drawing attention to the physical aspects of the body rather than the pious pursuits of the mind, so that physical monstrosity becomes synonymous with a lack of faith in the understanding that "[t]o refuse the Word is to deny logic and so to lose humanity" (Friedman 69). The figures on the margins of religious manuscripts were therefore presented as monstrous for their exaggerated physicality, and were thus directly correlated with sin.

The monstrous marginalia of the Luttrell Psalter and its contemporaries encompasses a myriad of monstrous figures which are more often entertaining than frightening. We have already covered numerous negative attitudes towards the grotesques in the margins, which work primarily under the assumption that physical deformity and depraved behaviour correlate directly with monstrosity.

However, there is also evidence to suggest that some of the marginalia of these pages was treated as more of a marvel than a monstrosity. While most hybrid creatures were looked down upon for being distorted versions of the human form, "because they transformed human beings, created 'in God's image,' into animals" (Le Goff 41), the bestiaries of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries depict hybrids as curiosities. In these manuscripts hybrid creatures are found amongst real animals, and sometimes the two are combined: "The line between monsters and non-monsters is blurred in the Bestiary, as many 'real' creatures are credited with monstrous powers, and many of its monsters are clearly based on ordinary animals" (Bovey 21). Alixe Bovey explains that the integration of these forms could exist for a number of reasons, including the possibility that the real animals might have lent more credibility to the stranger hybrid creatures, or that some of the real animals might have been considered as marvellous in the west as the fictional ones (21-2). Bestiaries therefore present both real and imaginary forms as marvels; the inclusion of the hybrids amongst animals implies that they are subhuman, but many also possess superhuman powers. For instance, the "crypto-monster" is one that takes on human form and therefore "visually passes for an ordinary human being" (Strickland 251), and these, for all their normal appearances, would usually possess dangerous supernatural skills: "Monsters, on the whole, look hideous, their outward ugliness a cipher for inward moral corruption. There are, however some monsters that are dangerously beautiful" (Bovey 25). Mythical creatures such as sirens and centaurs are usually portrayed as malevolent, although they do not betray their monstrosity through physical

signs, which demonstrates that there are a number of variations among monsters that are not necessarily identified through their physical form. Marvels and their superhuman attributes are therefore not necessarily defined by their outward appearance, whereas the subhuman examples of the preternatural invariably are.

One of the more confusing aspects of the monstrous other tradition is the fact that, although certain beings are labelled monstrous through their subhuman physical signs, there are many divine examples which betray the same signs and are venerated for them (Strickland 255).[13] Saint Christopher, for instance, is often portrayed as both a giant and a cynocephalus, and is described in *The Golden Legend* as being both "of prodigious size" and "fearful of aspect" (377). In the legend Christopher becomes curious about Satan's power and follows him until he learns of the superior power of Christ; his hybridity is not described explicitly within the legend itself, but the dog-headed portraits of the late medieval period attest to the warning within the text concerning the fallibility of human faith: "The legend of Saint Christopher opens for its readers the disturbing possibility that we too could fail to distinguish properly between categories, that we too could become monstrous" (Lionarons 182). Christopher's monstrosity is therefore apt if it denotes his sinful choices prior to his Christian conversion; one of the characteristic aspects of the cynocephali is that they do not speak coherently, and so the tale emphasizes Christopher's transition from monster to saint in the acquisition of Christian speech, "for it is language that is the sign of the rational

[13] The term "divine" is applied here as Strickland uses it in her discussion of "monstrous divinities" in *Saracens, Demons, & Jews* to describe spiritual, saintly or biblical figures that occupy the central norm of Christianity, but are sometimes represented in a manner in which "the visual effect is undeniably monstrous" (243).

and the rational that constitutes the 'norm'" (295).[14] The cynocephalus Saint Christopher therefore becomes positive in its testament to the power of human discourse and Christian conversion. Another bridge between the monstrous and divine can be found in the depiction of animals with divine symbolism, such as the peacock or phoenix: "The phoenix, which according to classical legend was incinerated and reborn, was a common feature in texts of this sort [bestiaries], which interpret it as a symbol of Christ" (R. Mills 35). The representation of divine beings as animals does not manipulate the human form and is therefore less controversial than the portrayal of divine hybrids; one of the most common representations of the four evangelists was in animal form, and such figures were certainly not considered monstrous. The artistic depiction of the Trinity as a human figure with three heads, on the other hand, was sometimes contentious in the late medieval period because it manipulates the human form and emulates the signs of monstrosity that audiences were trained to recognize in the monstrous other. Archbishop St Antonius of Florence includes a condemnation of this kind of representation in his early fifteenth-century *Summa Theologica*: "Painters . . . are blameworthy . . . when they paint things which are against the faith, . . . when they make an image of the Trinity one person with three heads, which is monstrous in the nature of things" (Mills, R. 38). For instance, the representation of the Trinity as a triple-headed man, such as that within f.9 of a thirteenth-century English psalter in St. John's College, Cambridge, might have been compared unfavourably to monstrous examples such as the seven-headed beast in

[14] Friedman notes that in Pliny's *Natural History* five of the races described are described as monstrous for their lack of human speech (29).

f.131r of the Trinity Apocalypse.[15] However, the representation of the Trinity as one form in three different states had been considered acceptable since the Council of Nicaea in 325, and although it was a difficult image to reproduce without evoking monstrous comparisons, it was common, and therefore for the most part accepted, in the late medieval period (Mills, R. 39). Divine monsters within the context of late medieval manuscript production therefore create a paradoxical rule that the preternatural need not be monstrous as long as it enhances rather than mutates the human form, with what Saint Augustine refers to as "God-given qualities" (Saunders 64), so that subhuman qualities often become superhuman ones, depending on the religious affiliations of the space in which they occur.

The preternatural or monstrous "other" of late medieval manuscript production consistently defies concrete definition, and it is particularly difficult to locate the line between dangerous, benign and positive representations: "Medieval monstrosity, then, is neither positive nor negative: it is both. That the term can wholly accommodate the mutually exclusive theological concepts of wholly damned and wholly divine is what lies at its essence and what gives it power as a cultural idea" (Strickland 255). In the marginalia of late medieval religious manuscripts there is a subtle distinction between varying degrees of monstrosity which corresponds to that found within the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century *mappaemundi*, and the presence of grotesques in the margins of psalters is now understood to reveal a great deal about cultural ideas of monstrous creatures and

[15] The Trinity Apocalypse is named after Trinity College, Cambridge, where the manuscript is held, and does not refer to any connection between the Trinity and the manuscript itself.

their function within the religious context of western medieval society. The differentiation between function and form in these images is a testament to their diversity of meaning, so that the preternatural elements of the margins at once occupy the status of monstrous and marvellous through the presentation of subhuman and superhuman forms.

3. Literary Marginalia

The *mappaemundi* contain a wealth of literary material, including the biblical narrative that is written throughout the spaces of examples such as the Hereford, Psalter and Ebstorf maps, and which draws a parallel between the biblical content that is represented from the outset of Genesis to then-contemporary concepts of Christian identity (Mittman, "Maps" 32). In each of the maps Adam and Eve are depicted in the east, at the top of the map and the closest to Christ, as if to signify their position at the beginning of the biblical narrative; the four rivers of Paradise run out of the circle and towards the rest of the map and thereby also signify this space as a point of origins. Peter Barber suggests that the spatial placement of Christ above the map and the dragons below might signify heaven and hell (18), and the narrative progression from the biblical beginning at the top of the map to contemporary Europe thus recalls both social progress in the west and a warning against the contemporary sins of medieval Europe. Several other examples of biblical episodes are depicted on the maps, from Noah's Ark to the Tower of Babel, and many biblical locations are also represented by name. Barber notes

that, in the Psalter map, three of the four empires of the world, Babylon, Athens, and Rome, are represented but the fourth belonging to the Medes and Persians is missing, which is perhaps a sign of political tensions with the Persians at the time of the map's production (18). The maps each display an interest in place and travel, and the Hereford and Ebstorf maps contain detailed routes both within the biblical narrative and for the contemporary world: "both maps are to a certain extent constructed around itineraries. These include ancient examples, such as the third-century *Antonine Itinerary*; biblical examples, such as the travels of the people of Israel and of St Paul and the apostles; and more modern ones . . . such as the pilgrimage route to Compostella" (Barber 25). The emphasis on travel and place within the maps associates them with both their contemporary interests and their overall spiritual themes; Barber notes, for instance, that the primary motif of the Hereford map is the Last Judgement, and for the Ebstorf map, salvation (25), and the central placement of Jerusalem and the envelopment of the world by Christ also help to place the viewer within the religious narrative of the map. The *mappaemundi* thus combine past and present with the inclusion of didactic biblical episodes alongside the representation of contemporary cities such as Paris and London, or the city of Damietta which the crusaders seized in 1219 and 1249 (Barber 18). The contemporary locations upon the map provide an idea of the political climate in the west at this time but, most importantly, align the viewer of the map with the historical and religious import of the surrounding biblical material. The primary purpose of the *mappaemundi*, "to instruct the faithful about the significant events in Christian history rather than to record their precise

locations" (Woodward 286), means that the juxtaposition of biblical episodes and contemporary references places the realm of Christianity on a level with modern ecclesiastical and secular life. The maps are therefore instructive of a Christian literary past, but also indicate how that past might be applied in the present occupations of western self-awareness in order to relate how the world and its people work, and also, most importantly, how one ought to place oneself on the map as a Christian in the thirteenth century. The literary centres of the map therefore encompass both a historical and subjective view of the world and its spaces.

The maps also contain references to non-biblical literary subjects such as the classical texts of Homer and Apollonius (Edson 142), and the most popular mythical figure to depict was the pseudo-historical Alexander, who expanded his empire throughout the known world in the fourth century B.C.E. and generated a great literary tradition in the medieval era. The Alexandrian romances contain an abundance of monstrous material which would have appealed to the imagination of secular audiences, and which cast Alexander in a heroic light:

> Medieval authors, illuminators and readers were impressed not only by Alexander's military success against enemy armies, but also the strange and monstrous people and animals that he encountered, and killed, on his campaigns. In these tales, Alexander brings civilization to wild, untamed lands; his monstrous foes represent the uncivilised, alien worlds he seeks to liberate. (Bovey 15)

The Alexandrian romances therefore reinforce the boundaries between the civilized centre and the monstrous margins in the late medieval social consciousness. Alexander pushed the boundaries of his empire far into the peripheries and thus endeared himself with medieval audiences who were curious about the outside world and eager to expand their own influence within it. He is referred to on the Hereford map at least sixty-nine times (Kline 167), and the Ebstorf map also contains a number of references to him, including an inscription which details his defeat of the biblical Gog and Magog: "Here, Alexander has enclosed the two unclean people, Gog and Magog, who will accompany the Antichrist" (Bildhauer, "Blood" 80); this episode therefore connects Alexander to the Christian content of the map, and places him in opposition to the monstrous other. The mythologized Alexander, however, has been associated with a monstrous past; some sources claim that he was fathered by a hybrid Egyptian deity, and that as a child he resembled a deformed creature rather than a hero (Williams 232). David Williams explains, however, that the monstrous aspects of Alexander need not be considered in negative terms; for instance, he shares many comparable traits with Christ, so that as an ambassador for Christianity his monstrosities become close to divine: "The analogy between Alexander and Christ would seem to lie, on the one hand, in the recognition of Alexander as himself a monster of paradoxical unions and, on the other, in the recognition of monstrosity as the fullest manifestation of the divine" (248). Williams explains that the monstrosity that might be associated with Christ's powers actually heightens his divinity, so that the monstrous within a Christian context can be

considered to be a positive, enhanced form of the preternatural. Alexander is placed on the *mappaemundi* within a moralized Christian historical context, and is thus able to negate the negative aspects of his monstrosity with the more positive attributes of the divine preternatural. The adaptable image of a successful military hero such as Alexander was an asset in the west during a political campaign such as the Crusades, so that, "to the Church, Alexander was often viewed as an instrument of God" (Kline 174). Alexander's placement amongst the biblical content of the map means that he is adapted to a moralized Christian context to become, in effect, a virtuous Christian protagonist. The figure of Alexander thus embodies the political and ideological attitudes of the *mappaemundi*, and his depiction functions as a didactic tool for the map's audience.

The literary spaces of the monstrous other discussed within this chapter are crucial in considering the preternatural within the context of late medieval map production. It is important to consider the maps and marginalia discussed here in literary terms for a number of reasons; first of all, as we shall see, similar instances of preternatural marginalizations recur in the literature of this era, and the combination of subhuman and superhuman elements contributes towards a better idea of how certain medieval minds might have understood the ideas of monstrosity and the preternatural that are reflected and differentiated between within these documents. In the *mappaemundi* biblical or divine normativity rests at the ideological centre of the map, and the monstrous or non-Christian other occupies the peripheral spaces; the textual or literary aspects of the preternatural other are therefore significant in the *mappaemundi* for the fact that they reinforce

the hierarchy that exists there between the centre and the margins, although within this genre the visual examples are perhaps more renowned. For instance, the image of the Psalter map is famous, but the verso of the folio is less well-known; it contains another map, but with written words instead of visual imagery (Edson 136); this demonstrates that the principles of the *mappaemundi* can be presented in both visual and textual form. The visual and textual aspects of mapping, then, overlap quite closely, and persist within the construction of the subhuman or superhuman other in the literary romance genre of this period.

Conclusion

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the concept of the preternatural other comprised a number of categories, from the monstrous other to marvels and the divine preternatural. The spatial boundaries of the *mappaemundi* and manuscript marginalia from this era indicate that the implied medieval reader segregated the socially acceptable centre from the more frightening or entertaining material on the outskirts of Christian normativity, and in doing so created a hierarchy of monstrosity in which the role of the marginal beings is ambiguous and thus able to defy concrete definition. One of the most apparent divisions within this process is between the creation of imaginary hybrid creatures and the mythologization of historical or cultural groups; the positive and negative aspects of these categories overlap, so that the space they occupy becomes marginal in its ambiguity instead of solely for its monstrosity. Monstrosity was most frequently determined by

physicality and the religious affiliations outlined in the *mappaemundi* and the marginal spaces of late medieval manuscripts, but the category of monster often overlaps with the central norm and is therefore able to at once occupy the central and peripheral spaces of the medieval imagination, in which the reader, or viewer, is invited to place himself in relation to both the divine, Christian centre and the liminal spaces that are ascribed to the preternatural. The marginal spaces of the preternatural thus define the reception of the "other" in late medieval manuscripts, and in comparable depictions in the literature of the same era.

Chapter Two: *King Horn* and the Saracens

Introduction

As we have seen in the previous chapter, preternatural beings were conceived in a number of forms in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that ranged from hybrid monsters and divine supremacy to the non-Christian other. Western constructions of the Saracens, a derogatory medieval term for Muslims, thrived within the visual and literary sources of this era, and permeate the text of the anonymous mid-thirteenth-century Matter of England romance *King Horn*. The Saracens occupy the liminal spaces of Horn's world until their capture of Suddene, at which point the relative positions of the protagonist and his enemies are reversed so that the Saracens occupy the previously central space of the tale and Horn occupies the peripheries. The marginal displacements that occur in the process of invasion, exile and return will be examined here in relation to the Saracen invasion of Suddene, Horn's inhabitation of the geographical peripheries of the tale, and the relationship between virtue and monstrosity in Horn's return, with particular attention to the physical and moral repercussions of the spatial displacement that occurs between Horn and the Saracens. The aim of the present chapter is to examine the marginal status of the non-Christian other in *King Horn* and determine how far this portrayal might inform our knowledge of the association that was constructed in this era between non-Christian groups and the categories of the preternatural that were outlined in the previous chapter. The

western portrayal of the Saracens is constructed from an array of physical and behavioural monstrosities that invariably place them within the peripheries of narrative and social space, so that they become characterized by subhuman traits that reveal the influence of crusader ideologies.

1. Invasion and Occupation

The narrative of *King Horn* constructs a variety of spatial boundaries between Horn and the Saracens, and the negative attitudes towards the Saracens in the romance can be attributed largely to the historical context in which the text was constructed. For the duration of the Crusades, which spanned a number of centuries from Pope Urban II's call to arms in 1095 to the loss of Acre in 1291, the Islamic occupation of Jerusalem was depicted in the west as a travesty that denied the Christians their rightful property:[16] "As far as the popes were concerned, the Muslims in the East and in Spain had occupied Christian territory, including land sanctified and made his very own by the presence of Christ himself, and they had imposed infidel tyranny on the Christians who lived there" (Riley-Smith xxxi). The reasoning behind the war was therefore religious rather than political, and because the initial stages of military action in the eleventh century had not been prompted by any specific incident or threat of invasion Pope Urban II instead condemned the Muslim occupation of the city, citing religious doctrine rather than immediate political necessity: "With no appalling atrocity or

[16] Jerusalem first came under Arab rule in 638, but the Muslim occupation of Jerusalem only really gained attention from the west upon the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1009.

immediate threat to draw upon, Urban chose to cultivate a sense of immediacy and incite a wrathful hunger for retribution by demonizing the enemy of his proposed 'crusade'" (Asbridge 36). In order to condemn the Saracens, then, they were portrayed as both physically repulsive and morally depraved, so that for the benefit of the western imagination they became "subhuman savages, bent upon the barbaric abuse of Christendom" (Asbridge 36). However, penitential reward was another driving force behind the holy wars; the cause of the Crusades, then, looked both outwardly towards its enemies and inwardly to its own failings, so that the desire to wreak revenge on the Saracens was equalled by a personal desire to repent for one's sins (Riley-Smith 25). In the history of the Crusades it is perhaps most surprising that, during numerous efforts to capture Jerusalem, the city itself provided a space for peace and a certain degree of equality. Christians and Muslims were permitted to make pilgrimage into the city regardless of military tensions, and the city's hospitals would treat anyone regardless of race (Riley-Smith 77). Jonathan Riley-Smith reports that in one account a Muslim refers to the city's Templars as "friends" who defended his right to pray when he was set upon by a visiting Frank, who was unfamiliar with social practises within the interior of the city (71). This episode reveals that Muslim-Christian relations within the city were quite different from how they were perceived outside of it. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries also witnessed a significant increase in intellectual trade between the western and Arab worlds, and the influx of Greek learning through Arabic texts in the Christian west is indicative of the fact that Muslim-Christian relations were not solely confined to the Crusades: "Until the

twelfth century the intellectual contacts between Christian Europe and the Arab world were few and unimportant. They belong almost entirely to the age of the Crusades, but they owe very little to the Crusades themselves" (Haskins 282). The construction of the Saracens as marginal beings in western thought was therefore largely a result of the religious and political motives behind the Crusades rather than the relationship that existed between the two sides outside of combat, so that in the following centuries the Muslim people were portrayed in the west, for the most part, as a race of unnatural heathens, regardless of any peaceful relationship that might have existed within Jerusalem itself.

Medieval imagery relied heavily on iconography to construct the identity of the Saracens so that they would be instantly recognizable on the manuscript page.[17] Debra Strickland notes that in the medieval period the most effective method to portray the moral depravity of a culture was through physical caricature (8), and so the Saracens were depicted with recognizable features such as hooked noses, curved swords, turbans, idols, and dark skin.[18] Many of these attributes were used to portray other non-Christians such as Jews and Ethiopians (Strickland

[17] The term "Iconography" was used by Erwin Panofsky in *Studies in Iconology* to refer to the recognition of visual signs belonging to a specific representation, and this process was the primary means of identification in medieval manuscript illumination. In early medieval gospel books, for instance, the evangelist portraits are identified by animal symbols that would have been instantly familiar to medieval audiences: a man or angel for Matthew, a lion for Mark, a calf or ox for Luke, and an eagle for John. One notable exception to the rule is the late-seventh-century Book of Durrow, in which the symbols for Mark and John are reversed.

[18] In the Luttrell Psalter the Saracens and other racial groups are most commonly portrayed with blue skin. Michael Camille claims in *Mirror in Parchment* that this might have something to do with the contemporary war in England against the Scots, whose Pictish ancestors were said to have used blue pigments to dye their skin (286), and Michelle Brown supports this claim with the suggestion that the blue figures in the Luttrell Psalter signify hostile feelings towards the Scots, but also a fear of invasion from the north: "Anti-Scottish feeling was particularly high in England following the latter's defeat at Bannockburn in 1314; the Dominicans were instructed to preach against the Scots and raids from across the border were greatly feared" (5).

180), so that the non-Christian races were collectively classified as monsters despite the disparities between their actual appearances and practises. In one marginal image in the early fourteenth-century Luttrell Psalter (Fig. 3) the twelfth-century Muslim leader Saladin is represented through a blue, hook-nosed figure who threatens Richard Coeur de Lion with a spear, "an excellent example of a dark-skinned Saracen rendered pejoratively with distorted physiognomical features" (Strickland 179). The portrayal is possibly based on the Middle English text *Richard Coer de Lion*, in which Richard is victorious over Saladin in a duel (Strickland 179); the miniature of Saladin in the Luttrell Psalter clearly endeavours to ridicule the Muslim leader, but one of the most unusual features of the image is Saladin's shield, which sports the likeness of an Ethiopian head. The double portrayal casts the two racial groups together as "social and religious outsiders," but, given the tendency in the Chansons de Geste to depict Saracen armies with images of Muhammad on their banners, the representation might even be a derogatory image of the prophet (Strickland 179). The association between Saracens and monstrosity also led to their assimilation with the hybrid cynocephali in the Chansons de Geste and the Matter of England romances, including *King Horn*, so that they are often referred to within these texts as dogs: "We shulle the hundes teche / To speken ure speche" (1379-80). Sexuality was also common to derogatory Saracen portrayals; the Hereford map features a hermaphrodite at the outer edges of the earth wearing a turban, and thus associates the Saracens with overt sexuality, which was a common sign of barbaric behaviour in this era: "Given the popular Christian accusation of Muslim sexual

perversity, it is not so surprising that the dual-sexed Hermaphrodite wears a beard and the turban, the instantly recognizable pictorial attributes of Saracens" (Strickland 188). The primary portrayals of Saracen monstrosity were therefore both physical and behavioural, including the lack of coherent discourse that was ascribed to the Saracens through their assimilation with the cynocephali and the signs of open sexuality that were used to denote uncivilized conduct. However, Saracen portrayals fluctuated between hideous monstrosity and more positive forms of representation: "numerous artists portrayed Saracens as more or less ordinary Western knights, usually with armor or heralds to distinguish them from the Christian forces" (Strickland 188). Saladin, despite negative portrayals such as that within the Luttrell Psalter, was also widely respected on both sides of the battle line; in the *Divine Comedy*, for instance, Dante places Mohammed in hell but Saladin in limbo along with other "virtuous pagans" such as Socrates and Plato (Asbridge 670). The degree of racial or religious monstrosity within any late medieval manuscript depended in part on the preferences of its patron, and Geoffrey Luttrell's family was heavily involved with the Crusades; his great-uncle Alexander had served overseas with Edward I in his 1270 crusade and his son Robert later served as a knight hospitaller (Camille, *Mirror* 277-8), and it is therefore perhaps not surprising that his psalter would contain negative Saracen imagery. In visual and literary examples from this era, then, the Saracens were given a largely, although not exclusively, negative portrayal which relied on iconographical signs that were used to distinguish them from the normative ideal.

In the text of *King Horn* the invading forces are immediately introduced as the enemies of the tale:

He fond by the stronde
Arived on his londe
Ships fifteen
With Sarazins kene.
He axede what hi soghte
Other to londe broghte.
A payn hit ofherde
And him well sone answarede:
"Thy londe folk we shulle slon
And alle that Christ luveth upon
And thee selve right anon.
Ne shaltu today henne gon!" (39-50)

The Saracens do not lay a claim on the land or its people, but instantly threaten death and destruction in the name of religion, which in this case is not Islamic so much as anti-Christian. The space the Saracens arrive from is not specified, and the otherness that is established in the portrayal of the Saracens as non-Christians is enhanced by the fact that they arrive from an anonymous space outside of the boundaries of western Christendom: "From the outset, the land in *King Horn* is associated with the native Christian inhabitants of Suddene and the sea becomes the no-place from which the Saracens materialise" (Sobecki, "Littoral" 2). It is therefore outlined from the beginning of the tale that Suddene under the rule of

Horn's father represents the central norm of the romance and the Saracens arrive from the anonymous peripheries to disrupt the natural order. Few details are provided on the Saracens and their origins, although some details in the text hint at their menace. Sebastian Sobecki argues, for instance, that the fact that the Saracens arrive in galleys signifies that there must therefore be a great number of them ("200 Saracens" 444-5); the villains appear as a multitude so that, although individuals are occasionally named, the Saracens are treated as a collective enemy. For instance, Horn declares at a later point in the text that "[u]s hi dude lede / Into a galeye / With the see to pleye" (188-90); rather than refer to the Saracen leader, he chooses to allude to the invaders as "they," and therefore as a collective evil.

Avner Falk tells us that the term "Saracen," originally from the Latin *saraceni*, "gradually referred not only to Arabs or Muslims, but also to all non-Christian or non-European 'foreigners'" (65), so that "[b]y the early Middle Ages, European Christians equated 'Saracen' with Arab, Muslim, Turk, Persian, and all their other enemies" (68). In light of this knowledge some scholars have argued that the Saracens of *King Horn* are, in fact, Norsemen. Kathy Cawsey notes, for instance, that many key Saracen attributes are missing from the tale, such as the turban and curved sword (5), and Diane Speed reminds us that "[t]he only non-Christian invaders who came after the English themselves had arrived were the Scandinavians" (564-5). Norse invasion is the subject of a number of other Matter of England romances, from *Havelok the Dane* to the early fourteenth-century *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild*: "Out of Denmark com an here / Opon Inglond

forto were" (49-50). However, in the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn* the invaders are Islamic (Speed 567), and Strickland notes that the term "Saracen," "while sometimes applied to other non-Christian or 'pagan' groups, was used very consistently in literary, legal, and theological contexts to refer to followers of Islam" (165), and even though turbans and curved swords are conspicuously absent the invaders are also referred to frequently as "hounds" or "giants" (602; 808) a terminology that was most frequently reserved for the Islamic Saracens. It seems feasible, then, that the tale's purpose might have been to instill the fear of a potential Islamic invasion rather than refer to an actual historical event; in accordance with the hierarchical structure of the late medieval *mappaemundi* races were commonly grouped into Christian and non-Christian categories, so that it did not particularly matter to late medieval audiences whether the Saracens were Danish or Islamic as long as they were clearly designated as the enemy of the tale. The portrayal of the Saracens in *King Horn* therefore draws upon both historical experience with the Norsemen and the contemporary idealization, or demonization, of the Saracens, allowing them to be grouped under the general category of the non-Christian other. The space the Saracens emerge from is a blank slate, and thus allows the medieval reader to project his ideologies onto the mythologized figures within the text.

Having outlined the space the Saracens emerge from, let us now consider the space they come to occupy. The location of Suddene is, like the identity of the Saracens, an unsolved ambiguity of the text, but as the only conclusively traceable name in the text is Yrlonde the kingdom can be roughly located on the west coast

of the British Isles.[19] The location of Westernesse is also unknown but the Isle of Man and Mull of Galloway have been suggested as possible locations (Oliver 111; Schofield 11). The ambiguities surrounding Suddene and Westernesse place them within the anonymous world of medieval romance, in which geographical accuracy is superseded by the necessity to create a space in which the narrative centrality of the protagonist is contrasted by the marginal anonymity of the peripheral spaces that surround him:

> The [romance] writer may refer to specific kingdoms in particular sites, but his references seldom depict actual representations of the world. The author's purpose is to establish a setting that is distant, and in doing so he may extend beyond his own sketchy knowledge of geography. . . . A knight embarking upon a specific quest simply wanders with little concern for direction, although he always eventually reaches his destination. (Jamison 48-9)

Although the specific locations of the text are not crucial to its narrative progression, the ideological associations of the tale's geography might shed some light on the Saracen portrayal in *King Horn*. For instance, there are some striking parallels between the figurative Jerusalem at the centre of the *mappaemundi* and the imaginary space of Suddene in the text. The Saracen occupation of Suddene is depicted as a violation in a similar vein to the Muslim occupation of Jerusalem, and throughout the tale it is expected that Horn will reclaim his rightful kingdom just as Jerusalem was expected in the west to fall into Christian hands. Suddene

[19] One theory claims that Suddene is situated in the Scottish lowlands (Oliver 102), while another argues that it is situated in the southern regions of the British Isles (Schofield 7).

and Jerusalem should not be directly equated with one another, and Carol Jamison supplements this assertion with the argument that "[r]omances are not considered to be historical accounts centred around actual events" (48-9), but it is possible that the parallels drawn between the two regions allowed medieval audiences to consider the possibilities of Saracen invasion within their own lands. Thomas Asbridge explains that the distance between western Europe and Jerusalem meant that western civilians often did not consider the holy war to be directly applicable to themselves (663), which meant that maintaining a consistent level of support for the war was problematic in its later years; the association between the east and the British Isles in *King Horn* might therefore have served to promote the Crusades during periods of declining support or attention towards them.

Suddene becomes an alien space once it is captured by the Saracens, so that during Horn's absence Christianity becomes marginalized in the kingdom under Saracen rule; for instance, Horn's mother chooses to seclude herself within a private space in which she is able to follow her own religion:

> Ther heo servede Gode
>
> Agenes the paynes forbode.
>
> Ther heo servede Christ
>
> That no payn hit ne wiste. (79-82)

In separating herself from the new central order of the kingdom she becomes the "other" of that space, and therefore finds herself in the margins. The space in which Horn's mother pursues her own form of religious worship therefore exemplifies the reversal of central and peripheral space in the tale; Suddene

becomes peripheral for its Saracen occupation, but, like Jerusalem in western ideologies, maintains a consistently central status as Horn's rightful kingdom. Its status under Saracen rule is therefore chaotic as the invaders draw the ambiguities of their origins into the central space of the tale: "The Saracens . . . can bring the sea's uncertainty and changeability to the land" (Sobecki, "Littoral" 85). The Saracen occupation of Suddene therefore creates a spatial paradox in which the marginal Saracens occupy the centre of the tale and Horn occupies the peripheries, and the spaces of the narrative remain chaotic until Horn is able to right the natural order in his return to Suddene and defeat of the Saracens.

2. Exile

A displacement occurs between Horn and the Saracens when he is cast into exile, so that the hero of the tale comes to occupy the peripheral spaces of the narrative instead of the Saracens, who in turn occupy a central space that is not their own. Horn's exile occurs twice: once by the Saracens's hands and once by Rimenhild's father, and in each of these Horn faces a loss of identity: "An aristocratic exile is punished two-fold since banishment from land (in the sense of 'realm' or 'country') carries with it the loss of one's land (i.e. possessions) which diminishes the value of certain derivative concepts such as title, reputation, and identity" (Sobecki, "Littoral" 81). Horn loses his property in the first exile and therefore also loses his identity as the heir to Suddene, and with his loss of Rimenhild in the second exile he delves further into the peripheral spaces of the tale's geography:

In to uncuthe londe

Well more for to fonde;

I shall wune there

Fulle seve yere. (733-6)[20]

This declaration signals Horn's movement into the ambiguous other space of the romance. The other space, like its occupants, is defined in this case by either its monstrosity or ambiguity; the lands Horn travels to are western and Christian, but the sea remains an ambiguous space from which the Saracens can appear at any moment, and thus signals the presence of the distant and anonymous land the Saracens emerge from (Sobecki, "Littoral" 2). Frequent reference to Christ allows the reader to distinguish Horn's allies from his enemies in his exile; the king of Westernesse, for instance, is introduced with a blessing from the narrator: "Christ yeve him His blessing!" (160), and virtue and friendship thereby become entangled with religious affiliation. Conversely, the Saracens that Horn encounters in the peripheries are equated with giants and hounds (602; 808) in order to emphasize to the reader that they are inferior to him in both virtue and physical anatomy. Horn encounters the Saracens in each land he arrives in, so that they still occupy the peripheral spaces of the tale as monsters lurking on the margins of Christian land. *King Horn* presents the exile motif that is familiar to medieval romance, but with the additional effect of the marginal displacement that occurs between Horn and the Saracens following the Saracen occupation of

[20] Jamison argues that "seve" might be a general term for "many" rather than specifically seven (49), in which case the time spent in the peripheral spaces of the tale might be as ambiguous as the nature of the space itself.

Suddene; the ambiguities of the land Horn travels through enhance its marginal status, but also transfers its uncertainties onto Horn so that he, on one level, also becomes marginal within the peripheries of the tale.

There is a particular emphasis on Horn's physical appearance throughout the narrative of *King Horn*, which affects his movement through the peripheral spaces of the tale. Horn is consistently referred to as fair throughout the text; it is noted on his arrival to Ireland that "he is the faireste man / That evre yut on thy londe cam" (791-4), and maintained from the very beginning of the romance that "[f]airer ne mighte non beo born, / Ne no rain upon birine, / Ne sunne upon bishine" (10-2). The latter comment echoes Strickland's argument that monstrous beings are associated with extreme climes (41-2), so that Horn's fairness becomes a mark of his own normativity. Not only does his fairness indicate his supremacy, but it also signals his Christian virtue:

> Muchel was his fairhede,
> For Jesu Christ him makede.
> Payns him wolde slen
> Other all quik flen.
> Yef his fairnesse nere,
> The children alle aslawe were. (87-92)

Horn's fairness signifies his virtue so that he is cast as the symbolic opposite of his Saracen foes; even the Saracen emir's speech implies that Horn is the better man of the two (95-9), so that the reader has no doubt as to Horn's physical and moral supremacy. One of the more curious aspects of Horn's fairness, however, is

that it does not alter in his exile, even though the occupation of peripheral space traditionally correlates with some form of physical distortion or monstrosity. Examples of this effect can be found in the exile motifs of *Sir Orfeo*, the *Morte d'Arthur* and the "Knight's Tale," as well as in the *mappaemundi* and manuscript marginalia of the period in question. It is perhaps significant that, for the most part, the lands Horn travels through are Christian and therefore civilized and local, so that the monstrosities that occur within peripheral space do not apply to the lands where the Saracens are not present. The only instance of the tale in which Horn acquires any form of monstrous physical disfigurement is in the disguise motif of his first return to Westernesse:

> He makede him a ful chere
> And all bicolmede his swere.
> He makede him unbicomelich
> Hes he nas nevremore y-like. (1071-4)

Horn's monstrosity is artificial in this case and therefore signifies his trickery rather than a descent into wildness or barbarity. Westernesse represents a space of safety and virtue for Horn, a role implicit in the western connotations of the location's name, and it is within this space that he receives his knighthood; Horn even indicates when he reports his first victory over the Saracens to the king that he requires this knighthood in order to defeat his enemy: "Nu is thy wile y-yolde, / King, that thu me knighty woldest" (647-8), so that his virtues are enhanced rather than depleted within this space. Horn's ability to defy the usual markers of monstrosity that accompany the occupation of marginal space results from both

his virtue as the central protagonist of the tale and the fact that he travels within Christian lands, so that in the local spaces of the narrative the normal rules of physical monstrosity within the peripheries do not apply to him.

In the peripheral spaces of *King Horn* the portrayal of the Saracens as subhuman monsters is contrasted by several references to magical practises which endow the protagonists with superhuman qualities. One example of this effect is the protective ring that Rimenhild presents to Horn in words that suggest magical connotations:

> The stones beoth of suche grace
> That thu ne shalt in none place
> Of none duntes beon ofdrad
> Ne on bataille beon amad
> Ef thu loke theran
> And thenke upon thy lemman. (567-80)

The implication here is that the stone's "grace," which in this instance can be interpreted as "power" (Sands 31), is magical. However, when it is used in action there are no spells or magical metamorphoses; Horn simply looks upon the ring and thinks of his lover, an act which gives him the strength to fight: "To him his swerd he drow. / He lokede on his ringe / And thoghte on Rimenhilde" (880-2). Magical rings are a common occurrence among the tale's contemporaries and have appeared in a range of literary texts, from the Norse *Völsungasaga* and the Germanic *Nibelungenlied* to Norman examples such as Chrétien de Troyes's *Le Chevalier au Lion*, but the magical properties of Rimenhild's ring are not

explicitly revealed at any point in the tale. Rimenhild introduces the idea that the ring's power can be equated with the act of looking at the object and picturing herself, but the source of that strength is left entirely ambiguous (Hynes-Berry 560). A similar instance of magical ambiguity within the text is the disguise that Athelbrus formulates for Athulf to enable him to visit Rimenhild in Horn's likeness: "In Hornes y-like / Thu shalt hure biswike" (293-4). The magical disguise motif also has a number of counterparts in medieval romance, the most famous version perhaps being those of Malory's fifteenth-century *Morte d'Arthur*. Again, no magic "craeft" is explicitly referred to in this instance, but the term "biswike" suggests deception of a similar sort to that found in magical analogues to the tale, and Athelbrus's unspoken ability to disguise Athulf in Horn's likeness leaves the source of the deception entirely ambiguous. The magical presence in the tale is possibly diminished in order to distance Horn from the monstrous Saracens, given that the "nebulous aura" of magical devices "allowed the romance author to suggest or hint at the darker sides which might exist in a character" (Sweeney 19). However, Rimenhild's ring is used only in moments in which Horn must overcome his enemies, in which case the magical elements of the ring are used for positive ends. The Saracen giants and hounds are defeated by the natural magic of Rimenhild's ring, and their monstrosity is thus reinforced against Horn's use of white magic to enhance his natural fairness and virtue, which places him in the idealized centre of the tale that is occupied by the romance protagonist.

3. Return

Horn's return to Suddene is the triumphant climax of the romance in which the peripheral and central spaces of the narrative are reset, but the justification of his actions there occurs in the episode of the idle knight. On their final return journey Horn and Athulf encounter the knight, who claims that his allegiances lie with the Christians rather than the Saracens who have taken over his home:

> Ich serve agenes my wille
>
> Payns full ille.
>
> Ich was Christene a while;
>
> Tho y-come to this ile
>
> Sarazins blake
>
> That dude me forsake—
>
> On Christ ich wolde bileve. (1327-33)

The soldier's idleness ridicules the Saracens by suggesting that there is a lack of order or duty implicated under their rule, but his hostility towards his present rulers and his willing attitude towards Horn and his companion also endorse the crusader mentality of "liberating" Jerusalem and its Christian inhabitants (Riley-Smith 7).[21] The indication here is that Suddene is a displaced space in which the people are reluctantly ruled by their Saracen lords, and that Horn's return is therefore both welcome and morally justified. The episode therefore draws attention to the supposed idleness of the Saracens and undermines their claim to

[21] The Christian status of the knight is initially recognizable through the cross on his shield: "I think, by your shining cross / that you belong to our Lord" (1321-2), which is evidence that iconography permeates the literary texts of the late medieval era as well as visual examples.

Suddene so that the scene is again reminiscent of crusader ideologies in its marginalization of the Saracen invaders.

There are some paradoxical ideas of virtue that ought to be addressed regarding Horn's return. In the first instance of invasion the Saracens tell King Murray that they will destroy the lands and his people for their religious differences, and when Horn reclaims his land he makes a similar threat:

> Y-blessed beo the time
> I com to Suddene
> With mine Irisse menne,
> We shulle the hundes teche
> To speken ure speche.
> Alle we hem shulle slee
> And all quik hem flee. (1376-82)

Horn's address to the Saracens presents an ironic mirror of the prior events of the narrative; the Saracen's barbaric words and actions upon their original invasion exemplify their monstrosity, but Horn emulates their language and sentiments and, in doing so, briefly reverts to monstrosity himself. During the course of the Crusades "the war for the Holy Land was perpetuated by cycles of violence, vengeance and reconquest, in which Christians and Muslims alike perpetrated acts of savage brutality" (Asbridge 658), but Christian violence was often justified in the west, and within medieval romance, for its assumed superiority over any similar acts of violence from the adversaries of the Christian knights. However, the monstrous side of Christian symbolism during the Crusades could also be

contentious from a western perspective. For instance, the image of the cross enabled the medieval reader to distinguish between the Christian knights and their enemies and united the crusaders under a sign that represented their common cause: "The process of identification through a visible symbol must have served to separate and define the crusaders as a group" (Asbridge 46), but some Templars would integrate the symbol with their own person by "branding their flesh with the sign of the cross, or inscribing their bodies or clothing with blood" (Asbridge 46) in a paradoxical act of self-mutilation that contradicts the western use of physical deformity to signify its enemies.[22] One recurrent aspect of western portrayals, then, is that a number of monstrosities were tolerated, and sometimes even encouraged, when undertaken in the name of Christianity. Horn's accumulation of Saracen qualities upon his return to Suddene could possibly be attributed to the figurative space of the kingdom at the point of his return; whilst under Saracen rule Suddene becomes liminal, and it is therefore perhaps only within this distorted version of Suddene that Horn undergoes a brief transition into monstrosity. However, Horn's return to Suddene resets the natural religious order of the tale, and following his victory he immediately restores the chapels and churches to his kingdom, an act which demonstrates his own return to normativity as well as the return of order to Suddene. The final lines of the romance declare, "Her endeth the tale of Horn / That fair was and noght unorn"

[22] In some cases the association between barbarity and physical appearance was a serious issue for the western crusaders. Baldwin IV, the "leper king," was one example of this paradox: "his leprosy developed into the most grievous lepromatous form, and soon the telltale signs of the disease were unmistakeable, as his 'extremities and face were especially attacked, so that his faithful followers were moved with compassion when they looked at him'" (Asbridge 302). In this instance Baldwin is venerated rather than despised, despite his physical deformities.

(1537-8), and so the hero's virtue remains intact to the end. Horn's return creates an odd paradox of virtue in which he mimics the barbaric behaviour of the Saracens, but as the normative centre of the tale his actions are justified, as opposed to the Saracen invaders who are vilified for their violence. The spatial displacement that occurs in *King Horn* therefore reverses the central and peripheral order of the tale, but the normative and marginal status of Horn and the Saracens is determined entirely from their origins rather than the space they come to occupy, so that the narrative order of the tale is only set right once Horn returns to the normative space of the Christian west.

Conclusion

The marginal spaces of *King Horn* are most apparent in the displacement which occurs between Horn and the Saracen invaders. A number of ambiguities, such as the anonymity of the geographical spaces of the narrative and the origin of the Saracens, enhance the monstrosity of the tale's adversaries, whilst Horn's normative fairness outlines his role from the beginning as the central protagonist of the text. The monstrous ambiguities that surround the Saracens are also transferred to the space they come to occupy, so that whilst under Saracen rule Suddene undergoes a chaotic transition between its marginal and central roles. The instances of white magic that appear in the tale also indicate that the preternatural is either positive or negative depending on the space in which it occurs; the Saracens are outlined at various points as hounds, giants and, worst of

all, non-Christians, so that their contrast to Horn immediately places them in the negative spaces of the tale, whereas the magic used by Horn and his companions is fair for the fact that it is used by the central protagonists on Christian land. The Saracen portrayal in *King Horn* is therefore entirely negative, and the crusader connotations within their occupation of Suddene outline the possibilities of foreign invasion so that the implied medieval reader might place the boundaries of the tale within his own cultural context. The distinction between the western ideologies of marginal non-Christians and the Christian norm thus informs the Saracens' role in medieval literature and thought, where they were monstrous and therefore subhuman rather than superhuman. The Saracens of *King Horn* are therefore perpetually banished to the margins, and the spaces which surround Horn, the normative centre of the tale, remain peripheral.

Chapter Three: *Sir Orfeo* and the Faerie Otherworld

Introduction

The action of the anonymous early fourteenth-century Breton Lai *Sir Orfeo* relies explicitly on the presence of the faerie other, which represents a superhuman rather than subhuman variant of the preternatural. The text combines the classical tale of Orpheus with the chivalric ideals of romances such as the *Lais of Marie de France,* but is also one of the earliest English chivalric romances that does not focus predominantly on the politics of combat and land ownership; instead, it focuses on the more courtly subjects of romantic love, noble quests and magical encounters. Chivalric romance covers a diverse range of imaginative topics which are embodied within the text of *Sir Orfeo* in preternatural objects, locations, and figures. This chapter will address the three episodes in the text which deal most directly with preternatural spaces—the ympe-tree, the wilderness of Orfeo's exile, and the faerie otherworld—and assess the marginalization of Orfeo, his queen and the faerie preternatural itself. This section will seek primarily to ascertain the status of the faerie preternatural as a positive or negative force in comparison to the marginalized status we have already established in contemporary portrayals of the non-Christian other. This line of inquiry will compare the attitude towards the local faerie preternatural in *Sir Orfeo* with those towards the monstrous other that are outlined in the maps and margins of late medieval manuscripts, and thus

establish whether the marginal spaces of the faerie other in the text should be considered in terms of a positive or negative conception of the preternatural.

1. The Ympe-Tree

The first appearance of the preternatural in *Sir Orfeo* is the ympe-tree which Herodis falls asleep under before she is claimed by the faerie king.[23] The representation of the tree as a preternatural object stems from a long tradition of arboreal lore in classical and medieval texts: "Several classical sources attest to the potency of tree shadows and their effects; . . . for example, certain trees were popularly believed to cast a harmful or deadly shadow" (Jirsa 143-4). Certain classical sources, such as Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* and Lucan's *De Bello Civili*, demonstrate that trees can serve a malevolent purpose, and these texts were later translated and adapted to medieval use (Jirsa 144-5). The concept of faerie lore, for instance, combines a mixture of classical and contemporary medieval resources: "the otherworld of faery . . . found its origins partly in depictions of the classical underworld but also in legends of Celtic and Germanic gods and in folk traditions of supernatural beings" (Saunders 3) and, like the otherworld, powerful trees were also an effective meld of classical and folkloric tradition. For instance, Jeanne d'Arc is reported to have said in her 1431 trial that a "Fairies' tree" was located near her village: "She was asked about a certain tree located near her

[23] Orfeo's queen is named "Herodis" in the original Middle English poem; however, a number of scholars choose to refer to her as "Heurodis," possibly because of her identification with Eurydice in the classical legend of Orpheus.

village . . . next to which there is a spring; and she had heard it said that people sick with fevers drink from the spring and go there seeking its water to be healed; . . . the lady fairies dwell around this tree" (Shinners 64). Faerie lore, then, was familiar in certain circles of medieval life, albeit in diverse forms, and is present in both the literary texts and secular reports of the late medieval period. In earlier centuries trees were sometimes associated with pagan ritual and therefore could be identified as "unauthorised spaces" and "'loathsome locations' where prayers and gifts were offered, help sought and banquets celebrated in defiance of the Church" (Filotas 193); in *Sir Orfeo* the same effect is present in the ympe-tree's role as a marginal object within Orfeo's world. The narrative of *Sir Orfeo* therefore combines the classical understanding of trees as potentially malevolent objects with their function in pagan ritual to represent the potential dangers of the preternatural faerie tradition within the text.

Magic was portrayed in a number of ways in the late medieval period, and a distinction was primarily drawn between natural and demonic forms of magic, the definition of which largely depended on whether any given instance of magic claimed to draw its power from a natural or demonic source (Kieckhefer 9; 14). In earlier centuries the practise of unnatural magic had been "vilified as a practise that destroyed communities and undermined the very fabric of a society," and was therefore "identified with heretics, marginalized groups, and difficult individuals" (Sweeney 38). The ambiguities of magic could be linked to possible demonic influences, so that, whilst the immorality of demonic magic was apparent in the west, "the difficulty was in telling whether a particular practise did or did not

appeal to demons" (Kieckhefer 181-2). However, as long as such practises were not used in opposition to Christian beliefs they were not threatening, and the fact that magic was not necessarily monstrous meant that the magical elements of the preternatural were embraced by romance authors and audiences in the recognition that "[m]agic does not require rational explanation and thereby provides the author with a great deal of freedom" (Sweeney 23). Fictional magic and the faerie supernatural were common components in medieval romance, often constructing a morally viable position between entertainment and didactic purpose, and introducing "a moral but socially-influenced system of evaluation into the romances" (Sweeney 169). The faerie other was consequently represented as more natural than the non-Christian other, despite its more mythical or fictive origins. The romance, then, invites us to consider a combination of classical and medieval contexts for the ympe-tree, and the status of the tree as positive or evil can be gleaned from the episode of Herodis's abduction.

The ympe-tree of *Sir Orfeo* occupies an unspecified liminal space between the grounds of Orfeo's kingdom and the anonymous faerie otherworld. The exact location of the faerie world is unclear, and it is therefore not known whether it exists as a separate world entirely or as a layered world that parallels Orfeo's own: "King Orfeo and the Fairy King move within the same natural landscape, often simultaneously, but they experience it and use it differently" (Battles 196); however, it is telling that the ympe-tree is found in both worlds.[24] The tree acts as a liminal gatepost between the natural and preternatural worlds, and draws its

[24] Orfeo later finds his wife asleep under an ympe-tree in the faerie otherworld (381-3), and this tree is likely to be the same or a correlative to the one she falls asleep under in this earlier episode.

unsuspecting victims into the margins between these two spaces. The function of preternatural space in this instance resides in the substance of the tree; Curtis Jirsa mentions, for instance, the significance of the fact that an ympe-tree is by definition a grafted tree,[25] although he also adds that the grafted nature of the tree is not necessarily responsible for its magical properties (142). There is, however, merit in examining the magical and grafted elements of the tree together. There is enough evidence for the association between trees and demonic or faerie encounters among *Sir Orfeo*'s contemporaries to assume that the ympe-tree is magical,[26] especially as in this instance its purpose is to summon the faerie king and his host; however, the fact that the tree is grafted also implies that it has been altered by hand, and the craft involved in the manipulation of the tree's original structure possibly contributes to its preternatural function: "'Ympe' trees or grafted trees like that under which Heurodis sleeps are repeatedly loci of enchantment, perhaps because of their hybrid character, which reflects the combination of artifice and nature typical of the faery world" (Saunders 201). The process of tree grafting involves a natural or man-made hybridization of two different species of tree, often combining the trunk of one tree with the branches, leaves and fruit of another; it is possible, therefore, that in *Sir Orfeo* the tree acts as a catalyst between the regular world and the otherworld, with the appearance of a tree that might belong in Orfeo's world, but roots that belong in the world of the

[25] A grafted tree is one which combines the trunk and branches of two different species of tree. It can occur naturally but is often man-made.

[26] In *Sir Gowther* the protagonist is conceived when his mother is visited in an orchard by an incubus, and in *Sir Launfal* the protagonist first sees two faerie maidens while he rests in the shadow of a tree in the forest; this latter incident also takes place in the "underntide" (220), or mid-morning, which is the same time of day that Herodis rests under the ympe-tree in *Sir Orfeo*: "Dame Herodis . . . / went in an undrentide / To play by an orchardside" (39-42).

faerie king. The ympe-tree is therefore a liminal object that traverses the natural and preternatural worlds, and the grafted elements of the tree provide a possible key to its origins and its function as a gateway between the spaces that lie on either side of it.

The episode of the ympe-tree in *Sir Orfeo* is wrought with a number of monstrosities which place the preternatural aspects of the tale in a less than positive light. The role of the faerie other in Herodis's capture is instantly problematic; she reports that the faerie folk she encounters are beautiful in appearance: "I no seighe never yete bifore / So fair creatours y-core" (108-9), but the faerie king's address to her is less than amicable:

> Loke, dame, to morwe thatou be
> Right here under this ympe-tree
> And than thou shalt with us go
> And live with us ever-mo.
> And yif thou makest us y-let,
> Whaur thou be, thou worst y-fet,
> And to-tore thine limes all
> That nothing help thee no shall;
> And they thou best so to-torn,
> Yete thou worst with us y-born. (141-50)

The faerie king threatens Herodis, and abducts her in a violent manner which echoes the seizure of Suddene by the Saracens of *King Horn*. Dominique Battles notes that "[t]he invasion of Orfeo's realm, the failure of his forces, and the

subsequent exile of the king himself clearly mirror the storyline of political conquest" (180), so that the abduction of Herodis reveals a political anxiety of invasion that reflects similar concerns in *King Horn* and the historical context of the tale's production, and also represents a personal attack on Orfeo: "The threatened rape is of Orfeo's kingdom, a message written upon the body of his wife" (Caldwell 298). Vengeance does not appear to be Orfeo's first consideration, however; instead, he grieves for the loss of his wife. Preternatural misfortunes such as Herodis's capture lie beyond the power of mortal armies, so that, rather than vilify the faerie king, the narrative instead indicates that this component of the preternatural is simply a part of the natural landscape, instead of an invasive presence without any place in the natural world. Herodis's abduction introduces the potentially negative connotations of the faerie other in the text with the violation of Orfeo's wife and kingdom; however, the acceptance of Herodis's fate within the tale also demonstrates that faerie abduction within this genre was not considered altogether unnatural, despite its sinister qualities.

Herodis is not immediately taken to the otherworld, and therefore has time to relate her first encounter with the faerie king to Orfeo before she is recaptured. She undergoes a physical transformation when she mutilates her own body in grief, suggesting that her mind and body already occupy the peripheries between one world and the other, even though at this point she is still physically within her own kingdom:

Ac as sone as she gan awake,

She crid and lothly bere gan make;

She froted hir honden and hir feet

And crached hir visage—it bled wete.

Hir riche robe hie all to-rett

And was reveysed out of hir wit. (53-8)

This episode suggests an interesting overlap between the spatial and physical implications of Herodis's abduction, as if she already belongs in part to the other space by undergoing a physical transformation and thus submitting herself to the monstrosity of physical distortion that is generally reserved for marginal beings. Lucy Paton notes that the victim of the faerie other rarely manages to resist their will: "In the fairy mythology of romance the law is invariable, that for the mortal who once has experienced the fairy control there is no true release" (5), and Herodis's behaviour is perhaps indicative of this effect. Most scholars have attributed the incident entirely to grief, and Ellen Caldwell points out that "Heurodis's self-mutilation, which she performs after she awakens from the dream that foretells her abduction by the fairy king, connects her to a tradition of holy and chaste women in the early Middle Ages who disfigured themselves in order to appear unappealing to would-be attackers" (291). However, it is also possible that Herodis, who has occupied the preternatural peripheries once but whose transition is not yet complete, now occupies a liminal space which requires physical mutilation in order to enter fully into the other world. Bernadette Filotas notes that in one eighth-century penitential, the *Sangallense Simplex*, the act of self-mutilation is categorized as a sacrifice, but that in another, the *Sangallense Tripartitum*, it is within a category labelled "About sorcery" (107), and it is

possible that in later centuries self-mutilation could still be considered in terms of either sacrifice or something more magical. Herodis's act of self-mutilation could therefore result from her grief or her assimilation to a transitional state between her normal world and the marginal world of faerie, in which she occupies a new and liminal state of being. The act of self-harm was also linked to demonic possession in the late medieval period; Michael Goodich explains that in many cases "the victims had scratched themselves so hard that they appeared to have been attacked by dogs" (153-4), and that further symptoms of possession included disorientation, convulsions, memory loss and "screaming fits accompanied by grinding of the teeth, and uncontrolled weeping" (154). It is not unlikely, then, that Herodis's grief might in fact have been considered similar to demonic possession, a further demonstration of the faerie world's influence on her. Orfeo observes that his wife "[i]s all wan as thou were ded!" (84), and that her eyes "[l]oketh so man doth on his fo!" (87-8), and both observations imply that in her distress Herodis now occupies a marginal status between each world and thus becomes distanced from her husband. The episode of the ympe-tree combines arboreal craft, invasion, and the monstrous physical side effects of faerie abduction, and thus suggests that the preternatural elements of the tale are identifiable more for their ambiguities than for their monstrosities.

2. The Wilderness

The forest is a liminal space in medieval romance, the location in which magical encounters most often occur and "the space in which human and supernatural most often intersect" (Saunders 199). The forest acts as a space of transition or reconciliation between the "real" and "unreal" of the romance tradition, and is the space in which one is able to cross over from one realm to the other. It is only in the forest that Orfeo is able to see the faerie figures and follow them to the faerie otherworld; there is no specific gateway or path, but a rock which Orfeo travels either through or under: "In at a roche the levedis rideth / And he after and nought abideth" (323-4). As with the magical elements of *King Horn*, the magical properties of the rock are left somewhat ambiguous. Neil Cartlidge argues that the instances of faerie in medieval romance can be read as "a symbol of moral or social disorder" embodied within the idea of "chaotic signification" (200), so that the magical properties of the rock are not strictly defined outside of its signification as an object which twists the regular laws of nature. The faerie world, then, might be construed to embody both a threat towards the natural landscape and a manipulation of its properties that is natural in itself; the preternatural creatures in this instance invade and take as they please from the human world, and thereby project chaos into nature, but also assimilate themselves to the landscape in their manipulation of the earth's natural resources. However, another possible explanation for the role of faerie within the tale is that, in the "ever-present threat of disturbance from the Otherworld[,] . . . the fairies are the catalyst for a process that suspends the absoluteness of the distinction between

life and death" (Cartlidge 220). The faerie world, then, acts as a threat, but a necessary one that occupies a marginal status between the living and the dead, and manifests itself within the transitional space of the forest. The forest, then, acts as a wilderness on a number of levels, including the bridge between known and unknown, and the space in which worlds interconnect.

Orfeo undergoes an exile-and-return process which is similar in form to that of *King Horn*, except that in this case the protagonist is self-exiled rather than banished by invading forces: "Into wilderness ichill te / And live ther ever-more / With wilde bestes in holtes hore" (188). A number of scholars have considered it strange that Orfeo wanders aimlessly through the wilderness rather than undertaking a quest to seek out his wife (Battles 196; Gros 245-6), but his actions are not as contrary as such critics suggest. It is possible, for instance, that Orfeo senses that the forest represents a liminal space, and that it is the space in which he has the best chance of retrieving his wife. Dominique Battles notes that, "in Old English literature, exile can also express a state of mind, not necessarily a physical condition, and both types of exile, mental and physical, come into play in *Sir Orfeo*" (Battles 197). Orfeo is not only physically separated from his kingdom, but also aware of the mental alienation from his wife and his own previous identity. Time therefore becomes suspended for him, and many years pass as he waits in the marginal spaces between his world and the faerie world; whilst Orfeo remains in the forest he becomes part of the marginal landscape, and his integration into that transitional space draws him closer to the faerie otherworld.

Living on the margins, Orfeo takes on monstrous features. At the beginning of the tale he is considered the ideal king, "[a] stalworth man and hardy bo" (3), but when he enters the peripheral space of the wilderness he goes through a transition similar to that which Herodis undertakes in her self-mutilation. He becomes physically unkempt and wild, an image most often associated with madness or barbarity in medieval romance and the monstrous other tradition: "All his body was oway dwine / For missais, and all to-chine" (237).[27] In this accumulation of monstrous attributes Orfeo gradually becomes a part of the natural landscape as he "progressively strips away the veneer of civilized life" (Lerer 98); to the civilized world he appears to lose all signs of normal courtly conduct, and thus begins to lose his own identity: "Orfeo's time in the wilderness ruins his important (royal) identity, just as the visitation of the faerie court destroyed Heurodys'; in each case the destruction is effected poetically in terms of the courtly ideal which represents their former lives" (Nicholson 177). The comparison with Herodis is particularly significant, however, if we wish to consider Orfeo's monstrosity in line with her own. If Herodis's self-mutilation is a sign of her transference between the natural and preternatural worlds, then Orfeo's progression into wildness might be considered along similar lines. Orfeo sees faerie figures in the forest, but only once he has been there for some time; it is possible, therefore, that Orfeo's descent into wildness and assimilation with the landscape around him is what enables him to see, and eventually follow, the faerie

[27] A similar example can be found in the *Morte d'Arthur*, in which Lancelot "[runs] wild wood from place to place" (293) for two years and thus becomes "feeble both of body and of his wit" (296).

figures. Orfeo's monstrosity, the very thing which alienates him from regular society and courtly life, thus becomes the method by which he is able to seek out Herodis.

Whilst in the peripheral space of his self-exile, Orfeo encounters a number of preternatural beings, as well as the natural creatures of the forest which he entertains with his harp. Orfeo's harping has close connections to the classical tale of Orpheus recounted by Ovid, Virgil and Boethius, and also with the biblical King David; Orpheus was associated with David in classical antiquity and in the late medieval period, and David is identified in a number of English illuminated manuscripts through his harp, such as in the full-page miniature on f.30v of the Vespasian psalter: "David as musician/king is an exceptionally common image in England by the fourteenth century. . . . An English poet could scarcely have failed to know well such imagery" (Nicholson 163). It would therefore have been natural for a Christian writer to portray David's equivalent in a fortuitous light; Orfeo returns with Herodis instead of losing her as Orpheus lost Eurydice, and so his virtue is heightened in the tale's alteration from the original. However, Orfeo also becomes more assimilated to nature in his transformation, and his musical relationship with the animals increases this connection; musical talent and magic could be closely aligned at the time of the text's composition (Saunders 1), and Orfeo's skill in one craft therefore allows him access to the other. The episode, although not specifically magical, thus becomes both a further indication of Orfeo's virtue and a signal of his transition into an otherworldly state of being.

The primary source of preternatural activity within the forest is the faerie folk themselves, whom Orfeo at first sees only in fragments, and then more fully once he is assimilated into a transitional state and can follow them through to the faerie world (257-90). Filotas notes that "[m]edieval authors were very familiar with folktales of calvacades of the dead" (338) and the crowd potentially represents Hellequin's rabble, "a company of spirits that forced souls to accompany them on their hunts" (Shinners 249), which suggests a sinister angle to the faerie host in *Sir Orfeo*.[28] Similar occurrences of preternatural lures can be found throughout medieval folk tradition; in Scottish folklore, for instance, the kelpie draws its victims by taking the shape of a beautiful horse: "water kelpies . . . are cruel and malicious spirits, who love nothing better than to lure mortals to destruction" (Grierson 27). It is unclear in this case, then, whether Orfeo is led purposefully by the procession, or whether he follows them of his own accord, and whether the figures guide him in order to help him or to do him harm. However, the ladies of the ghostly procession Orfeo witnesses are hawking, a courtly activity that does not correspond with any conception of the faerie folk as preternatural monsters. Cartlidge suggests, however, that the faerie figures are beyond signification: "The fairies in *Sir Orfeo* are part of a brilliant imaginative creation, fascinating and disturbing, and we do the poem no service at all by attempting to reduce them to some more familiar and manageable concept" (195). The prospect of the faerie world's "unknowableness" highlights its ambiguity, but this ambiguity further exaggerates the marginal status of the faerie other between

[28] A similar host appears on f.90v of the *Très Riches Heures* of Jean de Berry, in accompaniment to the Office of the Dead.

the known actions of the "real" world, such as hawking and other courtly behaviours, and the more sinister or dangerous aspects of the unknown.

3. The Faerie Otherworld

The faerie otherworld is segregated from Orfeo's own, and in the tale is only known to be accessible from a passage through the transitional space of the ympe-tree or the wilderness. However, one of the most noticeable aspects of the otherworld into which Orfeo arrives is that it is not all that different from his own: "physically and in its operations it does not differ substantially from the medieval, human courtly world, but rather exists as a more beautiful, parallel world which can disturb the human without the reverse being true" (Finlayson 391). In the tale it is quite apparent that, although the inhabitants of the faerie world are capable of both invasive and monstrous behaviour, there is also an emphasis on courtly culture and beauty that places the faerie world on a more localized plane than the non-Christian other of *King Horn*:

> When he was in the roche y-go,
> Wele three mile other mo,
> He com into a fair cuntray,
> As bright so sonne on somers day,
> Smothe and plain and all grene,
> Hille no dale was ther non y-sene.
> Amidde the long a castel he sighe,

Riche and real and wonder heighe. (325-32)

It is significant, for instance, that the preternatural world is fair in appearance: "Beautiful dwellings, feasting, music, and chess are accepted commonplaces of fairyland" (Paton 85); the otherworld is therefore not inferior to Orfeo's kingdom, but in many ways superior to it. There are, however, a number of ways in which the faerie world can be read. A number of scholars have attempted to prove the otherworld's defiance of, or reliance upon, Christian doctrine (Finlayson 393; Lerer 92), but rather than concede that the otherworld represents either the world of revelation or a world in which Christianity is entirely absent, it would be more practical to consider the otherworld in terms of the historical and literary context in which it appears. For instance, although the portrayal of Herodis's capture is not likely to derive directly from historical episodes such as the loss of Jerusalem to Saladin's forces in 1187, it is the sort of comparison that medieval audiences might have drawn from inherently recognizable patterns within the text, so that the loss of Jerusalem might have been conceptualized, in this case, as the abduction of Orfeo's queen. Another key consideration for the otherworld is its narrative purpose within the context of medieval romance, which above all seeks to promote the hero's virtue: "The valley itself does not serve merely as an enchanted prison; it has an additional quality which we shall see is found in countless enchanted objects,—it serves as a fidelity test. Only the loyal lover can overcome its difficulties" (Paton 89-90). The faerie otherworld therefore aids Orfeo's progression through the narrative within the context of chivalric court culture. The otherworld can serve a number of purposes within the narrative, and

is essentially ambiguous: “Romance writers play on the shifting manifestations of the otherworld, which seems most of all to be defined by enigma and ambiguity” (Saunders 207); the real and other worlds collide here so that the preternatural space is both positive in its beauty and negative in its association with the violent actions that have been undertaken by its inhabitants in the capture of Herodis.

The castle in which Orfeo finds his wife and the faerie king is as full of mystery as the landscape in which it is situated. One aspect of the castle which has puzzled scholars is its Norman design (Battles 193); the equation of the castle with the Normans means that it can be interpreted both as a form of architecture that would have been familiar to English readers and as a signification of foreign craft that establishes the otherness of the faerie kingdom in comparison to Horn’s own: “Given that this beautiful castle of foreign design belongs to the intruder in the poem, and given the absence of those architectural features in the hero’s residence in Winchester, the old Anglo-Saxon capital, it would seem that the poet uses architectural detail to indicate cultural difference” (Battles 196). This division contributes to the uncanny status of the preternatural in *Sir Orfeo* that draws it simultaneously closer to and further from the normative ideal represented by Orfeo’s world. Lerer notes that “[t]he enamel work of the fairy castle would have signaled to a contemporary audience the latest in decorative technique,” and so the crafted nature of the castle both enhances its familiarity and its otherness as “an attempted ordering of the world through human artifice,” using “the vocabulary of craft” (98). In contrast to the natural landscape, then, the castle is another example of crafted material used for preternatural means, but with

contemporary details which the reader might recognize and relate to his own world. The crafted status of the castle, like the ympe-tree, denotes that its form is not entirely natural; however, the fact that the otherworld outshines Orfeo's own kingdom means that the preternatural elements of the tale should be considered as an amplified version of the natural form. Orfeo even compares the castle to heaven: "By all thing, him think that it is / The proude court of paradis" (351-2); his journey is comparable to a journey to the afterlife (Putter 239), and the emphasis that the narrative places on light in the faerie landscape and the architecture of the castle is significant for its implication that the faerie world is heavenly and beautiful rather than dark or demonic:

> All that lond was ever light,
> For when it shuld be therk and night,
> The riche stones light gonne
> As bright as doth at none the sonne.
> No man may telle no thence in thought
> The riche werk that ther was wrought. (345)

The emphasis on light instead of dark uses positive imagery to place the faerie castle's beauty on a level above that of Orfeo's own world, and thus implies that the faerie world is not demonic. The castle represents an ambiguous space which embodies the beautiful aspects of the faerie world, and reflects the more positive and uncanny aspects of the faerie preternatural in the romance.

The figures within the castle grounds provide a conflicting representation of the preternatural within the tale, and the description of their gruesome,

mutilated forms breaks the otherwise beautiful and well-ordered space of the faerie otherworld. The narrator declares the figures to be "thought dede and nare nought" (366), and also observes that "[e]che was thus in this warld y-nome, / With fairy thider y-come" (379-80). The evidence suggests that each figure is a victim that has been snatched by the faerie king to the otherworld either on the verge of death or soon after it, and that within this world they exist in a state somewhere between life and death. The wounded figures can therefore be read through common understandings of faerie lore within this period: "many of the fatal injuries described in the poem conform to the sudden and unnatural causes of death believed in medieval folklore traditions to cause people not simply to die, but to be stolen away or taken into some realm beyond the mortal one, from which these victims could often be reclaimed" (Jirsa 148). The idea that anyone could be snatched away to the faerie world with little warning was therefore not uncommon in the late medieval period, and represents an attempt to understand the concept of death: "death haunted medieval people. Vexed by plague and war, as the death-dealing centuries of the later Middle Ages wore on, death became an even greater fixation for popular devotion" (Shinners 513). The manner of the ghostly figures and their deaths might also have some bearing on their marginal state within the faerie world; a church dedication from around 1400 states that "the devil has no power to do anything to a body buried in a Christian grave" (Shinners 36), and it is therefore possible that the figures are monstrous in the faerie world because they have died unburied or buried in unconsecrated ground. In Herodis's case the narrative implies that she disappears entirely once she is

abducted: "The Quen was oway y-twight, / With fairy forth y-nome. / Men wist never wher she was bicome" (167-70), so that there can be no ceremony to consecrate her body. It is also possible that the monstrous figures are in a form of purgatory: "medieval people usually understood ghosts to be the pitiful souls of the dead begging earthly prayers to allay their suffering in purgatory" (Shinners 252). The faerie otherworld accommodates the concept of purgatory in a number of ways; the wounded figures suffer, and yet the setting for their suffering is beautiful rather than hellish. It is possible, therefore, that the otherworld represents the space in which these souls must complete their penance in order to progress to heaven:

> The notion of purgatory as a way station for Christian souls who still had penance left to do for their sins before they reached heaven emerged by the twelfth century, driven largely by lay people's enthusiasm for it. Mediating, as it did, the soul's earlier stark fate of either heaven or hell, purgatory offered hope to ordinary, fallible Christians; for while the pains of purgatory were unspeakable by earthly comparison, eventually the soul was purged and entered heaven. (Shinners 517)

Beautiful purgatories appear in a number of medieval literary texts, such as the tale of Owein, which was hugely popular and is thought to have been a source for Dante's *Inferno* (Shinners 517). Like most aspects of the faerie preternatural, the monstrous figures occupy the margins of existence, in a transitional state that could signify either the liminal status of the faerie world or the Christian concept

of purgatory. It is difficult to say, in such a case, whether the figures really are supposed to be considered monstrous or simply victims of circumstance.

It is also important to note that, unlike her otherworldly companions, Herodis is not monstrous in appearance when Orfeo finds her in the faerie otherworld; she appears as she did in her first encounter with the faerie king: "By her clothes he knewe that it was he" (384), and not as she did following the scene of self-mutilation which preceded her abduction (Nicholson 177). The recognition, initially, can be considered at the artificial or exterior level of perception: "he only recognises her by the outward trappings of her former life" (D'Arcy 12). However, as D'Arcy points out, "the text remains tantalizingly opaque as to whether this Heurodis has been compositionally altered from flesh and blood," so that Herodis becomes caught "between the corporeal and the marmoreal" (12). As Orfeo recognises Herodis on the surface level of perception, it is unclear to the reader at this point whether she is alive or dead, corporeal or non-corporeal. The Herodis that Orfeo sees, then, is an imprint of her previous self, which implies that she is almost fully bound to the otherworld at this point, and no longer part of her own; when Orfeo leads her from the otherworld he takes her hand, and this physical gesture signifies her return to a state in which she will be able to re-enter the corporeal world.

The faerie king's objection to Orfeo's request to retrieve Herodis is evidence for an appreciation of beauty in the otherworld which renders it less monstrous than the previous actions of the faerie king would imply:

"Nay," quath the King, "that nought nere!

A sorry couple of you it were,

For thou art lene, rowe, and black

And she is lovesum withouten lack.

A lothlich thing it were forthy

To seen hir in thy compayny." (433-8)

It is telling that the faerie king, an occupant of the otherworld, promotes beauty and virtue more than Orfeo, who has sacrificed his beauty for the sake of Herodis. The faerie king's hall is a "seemly sight" (387) and his queen is "fair and swete" (390), which means that the king's monstrosity is overshadowed by the fair appearances of his immediate surroundings. However, the king and his company are also described as fair in the lines immediately preceding Herodis's initial abduction (111; 124); it is possible, then, that the beauty of the faerie king is comparable to that of the crypto-monster, and is only a façade for monstrous intentions such as his earlier attack on Herodis. The portrayal of the faerie king also draws upon his original counterpart, Pluto, but this presents further confusion in the faerie king's relationship with Orfeo, as the latter's father is earlier described as having "comen of King Pluto" (5), thereby potentially placing Orfeo in the same league as his supernatural host in the association between Pluto and the king of the underworld. The faerie king is not treated as particularly dangerous in the text, either because the faerie world is not considered to be an enemy of Orfeo's world, or because Orfeo trusts in his own skill and virtue to outwit the king: "fearsome though they were, spirits were often easily fooled. Popular stories of tricks played on the devil and the stage buffoonery of demons in pageant plays

helped reassure people that the forces of evil were not invincible" (Shinners 252). The faerie king's occupation with beauty would imply that he is not demonic or "other" in the usual sense, not least of all because he does not behave in the manner that would usually signify demonic attributes (Jirsa 148), but instead represents a popular figure within secular culture. The threat from the otherworld in *Sir Orfeo* is diminished by the faerie king's more admirable qualities, such as the fact that he immediately concedes Herodis's return to Orfeo once he has been reminded of his promise (440-6); the faerie king therefore represents a near-equal adversary more than a monstrous other, and an ambiguous form of preternatural that is more acceptable within the context of medieval romance than the politically real threat of the non-Christian other. The otherworld, then, is an ambiguous space which defies concrete definition, but which is at once positive and negative and therefore physically rather than socially liminal.

Conclusion

The interplay between preternatural items, places and beings in *Sir Orfeo* indicates that there are a number of factors to consider in medieval literary representations of the faerie other. Particular attention to the episodes of the ympe-tree, the forest and the faerie otherworld reveals that the magical elements of the tale are ambiguous in their positive or negative implications, but also that this ambiguity determines the marginal or transitional spaces of the text. Though there are malevolent aspects of the faerie other in the lai, these are portrayed in a

manner that is entirely different from that of the Saracen invaders in *King Horn*. The faerie other, instead of being presented as fully monstrous, is therefore a more natural facet of the medieval preternatural in late medieval literary romance. The incursions of the faerie world upon Orfeo's world are uncanny and often threatening, but the threat is reversible through the actions of the tale's protagonist and, perhaps most importantly, does not attack Orfeo's religion as the Saracens attack Horn's. Though there is an invasive and often sinister quality to the faerie other's involvement in the tale, the effects are presented as reversible and the faeries themselves as pale, ghostly comparisons to the living, and it is perhaps because of this that the faerie world represents less of a threat to Christendom than the more political and religious threat of the Saracen invaders in *King Horn*.

Conclusion

The primary object that this project set out to achieve was to map the marginal spaces of the preternatural within two literary romance narratives of the late medieval period. In the previous three chapters we have observed a number of methods in the portrayal of the preternatural, but the most apparent is its segregation from the human norm in both of the medieval romances discussed here, as well as in the late medieval *mappaemundi* tradition outlined in Chapter One. In the latter, this segregation is both physical on the page in which the map appears and ideological in the subjective placement of the viewer within the Christian centre of the map. Physical signs of deformity identify that which is preternatural, and these usually, though not always, indicate monstrosity; however, in illuminated manuscripts from this era marginal grotesques also reveal the public enjoyment of liminal imagery, and within this space the usual signs of monstrosity could be understood to be marvellous or divine. The categorization of the preternatural within the context of the *mappaemundi* and illuminated manuscripts can be usefully applied to both *King Horn* and *Sir Orfeo,* where centres and peripheries are aligned in a similar vein to those in the world maps, and where chaos occurs whenever those boundaries are violated. In each text the romance hero finds himself within the peripheries that are normally occupied by the preternatural, whether at sea or in the forest and the faerie otherworld, and demonstrates the shift between centre and periphery by taking on monstrous qualities; in Horn's case the effect is more subtle for the fact that he does not become physically deformed or wild while he occupies peripheral space, but both

Orfeo and Herodis experience a transition into the otherworld in their accumulation of physical mutations. Preternatural subcategories within the romances therefore rely heavily on the narrative designation of spatial and physical boundaries in order to determine their status as a negative or benign narrative force; for instance, the emergence of the Saracens from an anonymous eastern location overseas means that the non-Christian other in *King Horn* is represented in a monstrous light that reflects crusader ideologies and a fear of invasion, whereas the supernatural faerie other in *Sir Orfeo* is more ambiguous in its monstrosity for the fact that, although the tale follows a similar format of invasion, exile, and return, the faerie creatures emerge from another world entirely rather than from the peripheral spaces of Orfeo's world. However, the liminal spaces in which these categories are placed by western romance authors and artists of the same era indicates that, whether positive or negative, they are recognizable primarily for their otherness and their segregation from the western norm. In mapping the preternatural within these two literary examples, then, the transitional space between the natural centres and peripheries of the tales informs a greater understanding of the role of preternatural spaces within the visual and literary sources of the late medieval period that have been discussed in this study.

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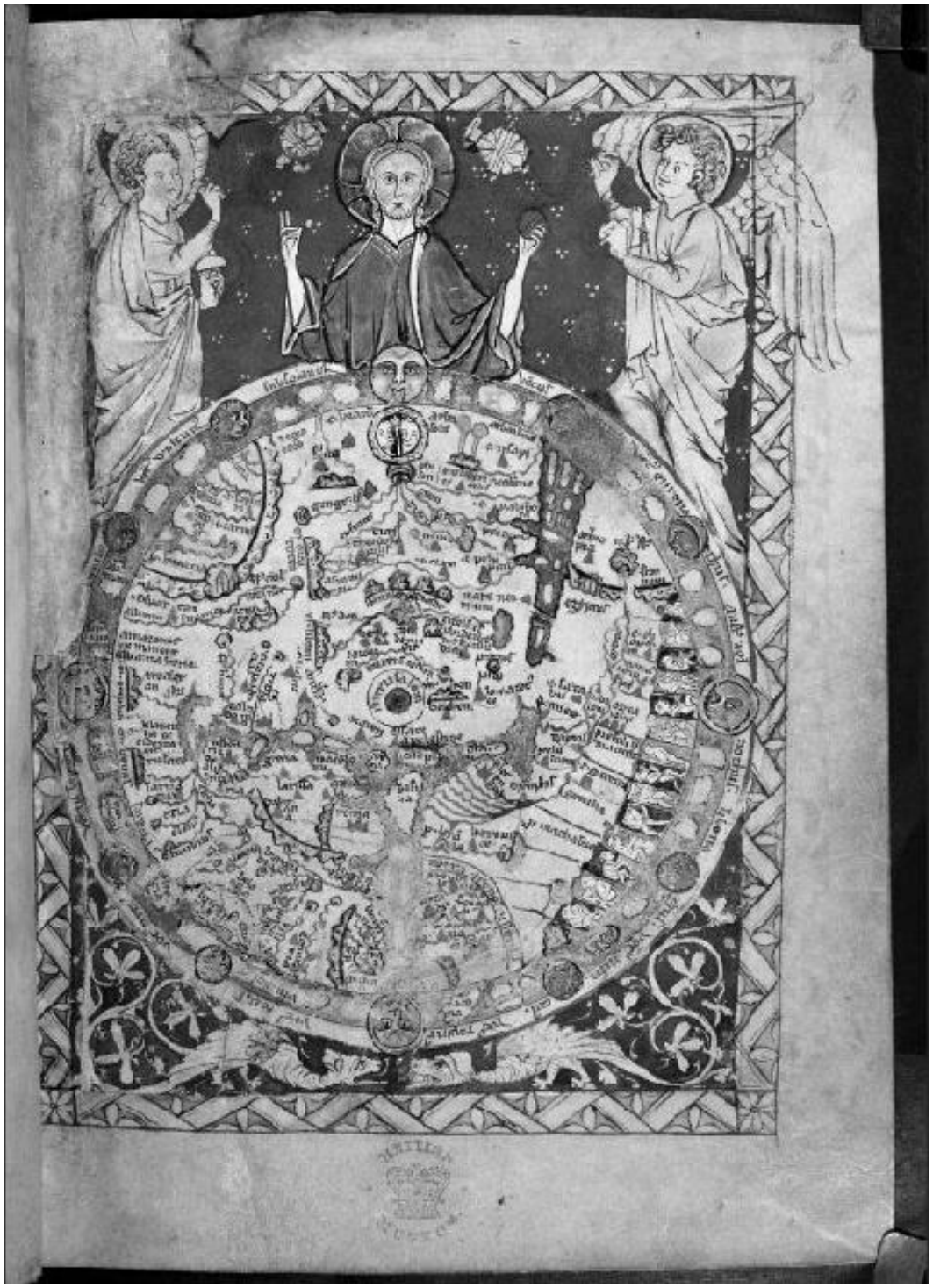

Fig. 1. Psalter Map. *Map Psalter*. c.1260. British Library. (C) British Library Board. Add. MS 28681, f.9r. Used by permission.

Fig. 2. Detail. Psalter Map. *Map Psalter*. c.1260. British Library. (C) British Library Board. Add. MS 28681, f.9r. Used by permission.

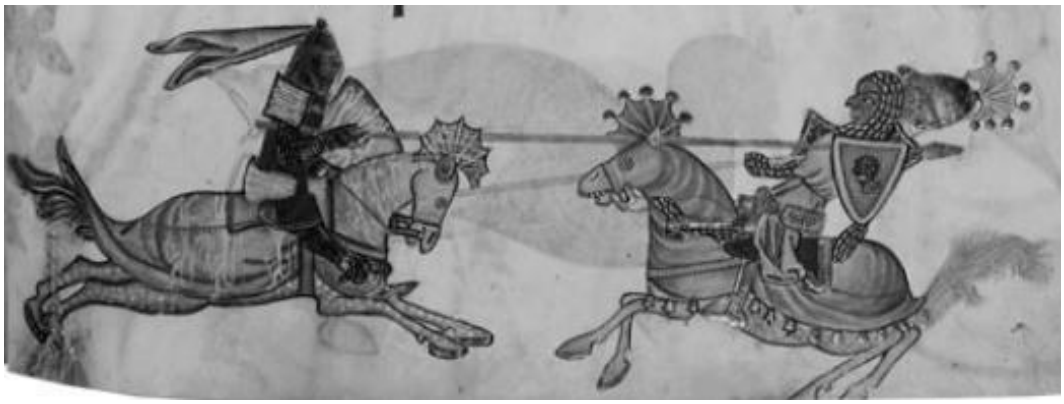

Fig. 3. Saladin and Richard Coeur de Lion. *Luttrell Psalter*. Fourteenth century. British Library. (C) British Library Board. Add. MS 42130, f.82r. Used by permission.

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