

Francigena

3 (2017)

*Peregrinatio animae: cartographic spaces
and epistemological debates
in the Franco-Italian *Huon d'Auvergne**

STEPHEN P. McCORMICK
(Washington and Lee University)



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Francigena is an International Peer-Reviewed Journal

ISSN 2420-9767

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari
Piazzetta Gianfranco Folena, 1
35137 PADOVA

info@francigena-unipd.com

INDICE

MARIA GRAZIA CAPUSSO	
<i>Aspetti dell'intertestualità franco-italiana (Geste Francor e Aquilon de Bavière)</i>	5
CESARE MASCITELLI	
<i>Canone epico e forme del riuso nella Geste Francor</i>	45
STEPHEN P. MCCORMICK	
<i>Peregrinatio animae: Cartographic Spaces and Epistemological Debates in the Franco-Italian Huon d'Auvergne</i>	79
LAURA MORREALE	
<i>The Columbia Western 24 and the Mort Artu in Italy</i>	111
ANDREA BERETTA	
<i>Sviluppi plurilingui dell'Atile en prose. Prolegomeni ad un'edizione</i>	137

Questo numero raccoglie, tra gli altri contributi, alcuni interventi presentati nell'ambito del *Seminario sul franco-italiano*, svoltosi a Padova il 24 e 25 ottobre 2016.

Peregrinatio animae: Cartographic Spaces and Epistemological
Debates in the Franco-Italian *Huon d’Auvergne*

Stephen P. McCormick
mccormicks@wlu.edu

(Washington and Lee University)

ABSTRACT

This essay proposes an interpretation of the mercantile and spiritual spaces in the Franco-Italian *Huon d’Auvergne* romance-epic while referencing fourteenth-century cartographic principles. Central to this reading is the scholastic refashioning of the Dantean Limbo model in the *Huon* epic. Here, Ptolemy oversees a congregation of Sorbonne professors, depicted as ancient authorities, who are condemned to futile debate and instructing unruly students. This discussion proposes an interpretation that links the epic’s criticism of Aristotelianism and scientific inquiry to the representations of mercantile (portulan charts) and symbolic (*mappae mundi*) cartographic contours.

KEYWORDS:

Franco-italian epic – Scholasticism – Aristotelianism – Dante – *Huon d’Auvergne* – Cartography

Characterizing the cultural fecundity of the fourteenth-century Venetian mainland, Gianfranco Folena takes to geologic metaphors «un grande delta culturale, luogo di sfocio, di deposito e anche d’impaludamento»¹. Among the cultural artifacts of the Venetian cultural delta, the *marche joioxa*, the Franco-Italian literary phenomenon is a dynamic witness to this *deposito* and *impaludamento*. Representing a stratification of sources, texts and languages, Franco-Italian epic unites the stories of Charlemagne and Roland with Arthurian threads in a colorful spectrum from Old French to Tuscan, with northern dialectical elements, as well as Latin. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the French language ran across the wide world, *cort parmi le monde*², encompassing an impressive geographic expanse of political and cultural spheres from Paris to the Holy Land. The linguistic and narrative sediment stirred up by war, trade, pilgrimage, and politics settled in the epic texts of the medieval Veneto, transforming them into a tradition that would lead to the global epics of Ariosto and Boiardo, whose protagonists roam the four corners of the globe.

Old French epic, the main source material for the Franco-Italian Carolingian corpus, was firmly anchored in Western European centers: Spain, Paris, Bordeaux, Provence or even Southern Italy in *Aspremont*. The *outrémer*

¹ Folena 1990: 299.

² Martin da Canal, *Les Estoires de Venise*: 1.

appeared in Old French Carolingian epic as references to silks and clothing, or as invading political and spiritual enemies, while the lands and inhabitants of the East were present as abstract, far-off notions. With Franco-Italian epic, and late epic in more general terms, the narrative territory of the Carolingian and Rolandian *matière* dilates. One might think of the blustery sea crossings to and from Libya in the *Aquilon de Bavière*, whose epic warfare plays out at water's edge and on the high sea. The *Entrée d'Espagne* develops a merchant thematic and a version of Roland who sets out incognito for the *outrémer*³.

Franco-Italian epic reads as a Mediterranean phenomenon with geographic and cartographic undercurrents. Responding in part to the reading appetites of a curious Italian merchant class, epic spaces of spiritual combat like those in the *Entrée d'Espagne* parallel mercantile ones in which the merchant becomes, as Francesco Sberlati notes, «quasi una *auctoritas* laica che ha visto empiricamente i luoghi e i paesi di cui parla»⁴. *Huon d'Auvergne* is no exception in this cartographic thematic: Huon count of Auvergne is sent on an impossible mission to find the entrance to Hell and along the way traverses the Red Sea, empty deserts, the realm of Prester John, and sails up the Tigris toward the Earthly Paradise in a boat guided by divine will. These meanderings are emblematic of newly visible mercantile threads in Northern Italian epic, and *Huon d'Auvergne* presents its reader overlapping cartographic spaces within which to interpret Huon's moral journey: one space, akin to the medieval portulan, plots the contours of a merchant space whose geographic references correspond clearly to real places; the second, akin to the tradition of medieval *mappae mundi*, presents the world whose biblical realms and *mirabilia*. In this epic, the two superimposed cartographic systems are moralized, and Huon's spiritual journey contrasts a merchant space in which vain curiosity – Augustine's *concupiscentia oculorum* – and monetary gain are sharply criticized.

In this discussion, I propose an interpretation of the mercantile and spiritual spaces in the *Huon d'Auvergne* romance-epic while referencing fourteenth-century cartographic ideas. I will anchor this interpretation to the text's scholastic refashioning of the Dantean Limbo model; in the *Huon* rewriting, Ptolemy oversees a congregation of Sorbonne professors, depicted as ancient authorities, who are condemned to an infelicitous fate: futile debate and unruly students. The analysis I undertake here will link the epic's criticism

³ See, for example, Merzaggi 1937: 86: «Si riflette dunque nel poema, più assai che un indeterminato periodo storico di disordine feudale, l'epoca dei viaggiatori, degli esploratori e dei missionari, di cui l'Italia del duecento e del trecento fu la caratteristica esponente. [...] L'*Ugo d'Alvernia*, accanto all'*Entrée d'Espagne*, alla *Prise de Pampelune*, e a quanti altri monumenti letterari sono andati perduti o smarriti, rappresenta quei primordi dell'epopea nazionale, al cui sviluppo dovevano ancora mancare la lingua, il metro e il genio di un vero poeta».

⁴ Sberlati 2003: 434; for an analysis of the cultural *milieu* of the *Entrée d'Espagne*'s anonymous paduan poet, cf. Limentani 1992.

of Aristotelianism and scientific knowledge to the representations of mercantile (portulan charts) and conceptual (*mappae mundi*) cartographic contours.

I repeat here Sharon Kinoshita's call for «an initial effort of defamiliarization with the texts we study»⁵; we would readily admit that spatial representation in fourteenth-century texts is fundamentally dissimilar from the crystalline borders of modern nations, yet recognizing our spatial assumptions and avoiding to read them backward onto pre-modern texts is a difficult task. *Huon d'Auvergne*, as well as any text from pre-national Europe, may or (most likely) may not explicitly reference the spatial systems operating deep below the narrative surface. My reading follows the idea that a lack of explicit reference to geography and cartography attests to a deeply engrained presence, and not absence, of medieval spatial paradigms. The textual witness I reference most frequently in this analysis is the late fourteenth-century Padua manuscript (Padua BSV 32), which is thematically divergent in significant ways from the three other extant witnesses⁶. However, I will cite these three variant texts when they offer clearer or notable readings.

1. *Scholastics in Limbo*

Although the *Huon d'Auvergne* poet was indeed familiar with the Dantean model, there are numerous and deliberate departures from this framework, including the presence of three guides: a demon, Eneas, and the Old French epic hero Guillaume d'Orange, or San Guillaume, whom Huon ultimately accepts as his true spiritual guide⁷. Another significant departure is a moralizing reorganization of Limbo. In Dante's Limbo, the great ancient intellects (Homer, Horace, Ovid, Lucan) are carefully distinguished as being free from sin and having many worthy attributes. This space is marked as morally neutral,

⁵ Kinoshita 2006: 3.

⁶ The four extant Franco-Italian manuscripts are: P (Padua BSV 32), B (Berlin K Hamilton 337, dated 1341), T (Turin BN N III 19, dated 1441) and Br (Bologna BA B.3489). P and Br are dated within the 100-year span between B and T. For a discussion of the surviving witnesses and rewritings of *Huon d'Auvergne*, cf. Allaire 2001; for a codicological study of P and Br, cf. McCormick 2016. The *Huon d'Auvergne* romance-epic has only been published in segments, which are listed in the bibliography below under the entry *Huon d'Auvergne*. A digital edition project for all four surviving witnesses has been funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (award #RQ5073513). This project is lead by Leslie Zarker Morgan and Stephen P. McCormick, who are preparing the editions of the four Franco-Italian witnesses, and Shira Schwam-Baird, who is translating into English the entirety of the Berlin text.

⁷ Several recent studies explore the relationship between *Huon d'Auvergne* and its Dantean model: cf. Morgan 2004, Morgan 2008, and Scattolini 2014; for a discussion of Guillaume's role as an infernal guide, cf. Bennett 1982.

even if this neutrality invites scrutiny and is subtly discounted⁸. Their confinement in Hell rests solely on chronological accident, not being born before the birth of Jesus, and Dante the poet expresses deep admiration for the works of the ancient intellects assembled in this infernal region:

Or vo' che sappi, innanzi che più andi,
ch'ei non peccaro; e s'elli hanno mercedi,
non basta, perché non ebber battesimo,
ch'è porta de la fede che tu credi;
e s'e' furon dinanzi al cristianesimo,
non adorar debitamente a Dio⁹.

Entering Limbo, «in lo primiero degré» of Hell,¹⁰ Huon's guide Eneas describes a space that initially parallels that of Dante. Found here are also the unbaptized («In questo Linbo sun de quela çent | Che fono vivi ançy lo batiçament») whose only punishment is their presence in Limbo («No àno altra pena quelì che son là inviè»)¹¹. The landscape evoked follows closely Dante's: in the fourth canto, Dante the poet and his guide Virgil approach the «nobile castello» through a «selva [...] di spiriti spessi»¹²; in the *Huon* epic, Huon d'Auvergne and his companions Eneas and Guillaume make their way through a forest of spirits («per mé la selva di spiriti se vunt») and approach a *chastel* with seven magnificent doors («avea VII meraverosse porte»)¹³. Midway through the *Huon* Limbo, the poet strays from the Dantean paradigm to criticize more sharply its inhabitants, wading into intellectual polemics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the span of time from which the *Huon* epic comes down to us.

Not only do the spirits of ancient authorities inhabit the *Huon* Limbo, but also those who have read, interpreted and promulgated their works within medieval university *milieu* of the Sorbonne, a center reputed since the thirteenth century for its Aristotelian associations¹⁴. Here, ancient intellects are not only damned for their ignorance of Christ, but also for their faith in vain curiosity and scientific knowledge. Eneas leads Huon through the castle's seven doors, all of which lead to spirits who are all in some way involved in with medieval

⁸ For Freccero, the enameled green grass of the noble castle of the intellects is a subtle dismissal of the enduring veneration of the ancient philosophers. I thank Leslie Zarker Morgan for this insight, who remembers it from a conversation with Freccero.

⁹ Dante, *Inferno*, IV, ll. 33-38. Absent of course from this admiration is Homer's Ulysses, an omission that will become clear in the discussion below.

¹⁰ *Huon P*, fol. 94r, l. 4590.

¹¹ Ivi, fol. 94v, ll. 4615-16 and 4602.

¹² Dante, *Inferno*, IV, ll. 106 and 66.

¹³ *Huon P*, fol. 95v, ll. 4669 and 4673.

¹⁴ Cf. Weber 1997: 26.

scholastic life. Huon encounters the ancient authorities of science and mathematics, whose disciplinary organization follows the medieval scholastic *quadrivium* of Paris and Oxford: arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. The ancient authorities found in the castle – Ptolemy, Nicomachus, Aristotle, Euclid, and Pythagoras – are the professors who preside over groups of rowdy students, and their associations with the empirical sciences sets them apart from the authorities found in Dante’s Limbo, a point that will prove important in this discussion. The vignettes that Huon witnesses are not without humor, and are certainly familiar to any modern university professor. Through the first door, the professor Nicomachus is trying desperately, and with a voice hoarse from yelling, to get his students to listen:

Padua BSV 32

Per mé la porta prima del soler
 Paseno li III cun lo cavalier.
 Dell muro segundo fin al primier,
 Non ave destro de l’un all’altro parlar,
 Per lo gran remor di cridi e del tençer
 Che·lli scoliar fano in lo sso desputer.
 Nicomachus li fo sovra un piler

 Tanto à veçudo per longo studier,
 Tuto è rocho e no val un dener.
 Lo conte d’Avernia se prexe tuto a estorer,
 Perch’elo non podeva older ni domander.
 Nicomachus començà a blastemer:
 «Taxé un puocho, diavoli aversser!»¹⁵.

Bologna BA B.3489

Parmi la porta primere des escoler
 Joste Eneas entra le mesajer.
 Dou mur segond de çì che li primer
 Ne n’on posança de l’un a l’autre parlar
 Por la gran noise dou cris e dou tençer
 Qe li scolere font in lor desputere.
 Nichomachus li fu sus un piler
 Che d’arimisache¹⁶ tient le livre a ensegnere
 E pur comanda les cris a soager;

 Tot est roches e non vaut un dinere.
 Le quens d’Avernie se prist tot a storer
 Por çil ch’il non puet oire ni domander.
 Nichomachus començà a blastemere:
 «Taisés un pou, diables maufer!»¹⁷.

The poet points out too that the students (*li scoller*) are dressed as those who attend the Sorbonne in Paris:

¹⁵ *Huon P*, fol. 96r, ll. 4689-4701. In B-T, there is no explicit mention of Nicomachus or the discipline that is taught in this section of Limbo, and only Br, as shown in this comparison, explicitly links the ancient Nicomachus to the mathematic discipline (with the awkward interpretation *arimisache*, in line 1053). As Michela Scattolini points out, this passage is highly unstable textually between the four versions, B, T, P, and Br. For the sake of brevity, I will not investigate these variations, but will suggest instead reading further in Scattolini 2012: 147-152. It is however noteworthy that the second part of the castle of the intellects scene in B-T returns to the classical figures portrayed in Dante’s Limbo. It may therefore be argued that P and Br stand apart ideologically from B-T when it comes to the conclusions drawn from the rest of this analysis.

¹⁶ The lexeme *Arimisache* can be understood as arithmetic.

¹⁷ *Huon Br*, f. 12v, ll. 1046-1059.

Là trovano bella çente de memuoria straine
 Vestidi de verde, de blanco, e de graine,
 A longo taio como la çente lutaine
 Che vien a inparar a Paris sovra Sayne¹⁸.

In this hectic university *tableau* are present even the notaries who record the bustle of intellectual debate, «queli noderi che scrittura noteson»¹⁹. As academics, these spirits in Limbo are eternally engrossed in shouting and arguing: «Dell muro segundo fin al primier, non ave destro de l'un all'altro parler, | per lo gran remor di cridi e del tençer | Che lli scolier fano in lo sso desputer»²⁰. Absorbed in study and poring over their treatises, the scholastics are little concerned with the finality of the Christian world and the looming day of judgment, an event of which the poet is mindful throughout the text.²¹ The harsh fate of medieval scholastics in Limbo is surprising to the reader; Huon too seems perplexed at the conclusion of his tour: «Que deverò io dir quando eserò in France? | Che li scoleri che plui àno sapiençe | Vano tuti in la scura habitança?»²². How can such an excruciating punishment – academic squabbling and rowdy students – be reserved for such illustrious, wise figures? In the remaining discussion, I will examine textual and cartographic clues that may help answer this question. My analysis points first to the organization of the castle of the intellects and the succession of scholastics inhabiting it. Secondly, I link the castle organization and the nature of its spirits to a cartographic reading of Huon's journey from Western Europe, through the lands of the East, and to the entrance of Hell.

Approaching the castle, Eneas points out Ptolemy, who is prominently placed in a high tower, no doubt because of his preeminent position in the hierarchy of ancient scientists («Vé là el maistro Tolomeo al cavo blont | in strologia fo el primo homo al mont»):

Padua BSV 32

«Questo castelo o' tante intrade sont»,
 Dixe Eneas, «de ssete muri i unt:

 Se tu ben guardi, e niente te'll ascont,
 Sovra quel muro primo oltra quel pont,
 Sulla sala del chapitel redont

Berlin K Hamilton 337

 Dit Eneas, «Enci VIII mur i ont
 Ou dois entrer; or non doter tu pont.
 Riens que tu vois ja pas no te nosiront.
 Se tu bien garde et vois outre cil pont,

 Sor la charere del capitel reont,

¹⁸ *Huon P*, f. 97v, ll. 4755-4758.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, f. 100v, l. 4877.

²⁰ *Ivi*, f. 96r, ll. 4691-4694.

²¹ For example, see *ivi*, f. 42r, l. 2041 & l. 2055; f. 83v, l. 4121; f. 86r, l. 4193-4198; f. 93v, 4555-4563; f. 96r, 4688; f. 97r-v, ll. 4739-4744.

²² *Ivi*, ff. 98v-99r, ll. 4807-4809.

Vé là el maistro Tolomeo al cavo blont
 Che in strologia fo el primo homo al mont.
 Sicomo ell fo al studiar inpront,
 Elo e quelì che tal arte inpront,
 E vol saver se de Dio amixi sont.
 In quel pensier, bel fradelo, sont,
 Tronano le carte e non trovano li pont;
 Questa uxança manterunt
 Fin a quel di che li agnoli veront»²³.

Vois là mastre Tholome al chief blont,
 Que en strologie fu le primer dou mont.
 Le nigromans aveque luy si stont—
 Veeç cum il fu a studier empront!
 De tot les autres que scoler anchor sont,
 Il veut savoir se d'iluech insiront.
 Voltent le cartes, més non trovent le pont.
 Cestuy usage, biaux amis, manteront
 Jusque a cil jors que les angles venront
 Soner le tubes don't le mort revivront»²⁴.

In close association with the passage introducing the castle of the intellects, the Berlin manuscript features a large illumination of Ptolemy in the highest tower with a book in hand, visually confirming the eminence of this figure.



Fig. 1. Berlin K Hamilton 337, f. 69r
 [reproduced with permission from the Kupferstichkabinett]

The prominent position of Ptolemy in *Huon d'Auvergne* is remarkable considering not only that Dante mentions this ancient figure only in passing in his pantheon of intellectuals, but also because Ptolemy's presence in Limbo

²³ *Huon P*, f. 96r, ll. 4675-4688.

²⁴ *Huon B*, f. 71ra.

indicates that the astronomer's reputation in learned circles was not without controversy. Furthermore, the presence in Hell of Ptolemy and other scientists underscores the hermeneutic dimensions of movement and space in the *Huon d'Auvergne*, especially in relation to the dilated geographic program of the text.

Many scholars point to the early fifteenth century – 1410 specifically, when Jacopo d'Angelo finished translating the *Geographia* from a Greek codex – as the moment when Ptolemy comes back into focus for western geographic and cartographic sciences. To be sure, the reintroduction of the *Geographia* through Jacopo d'Angelo was a momentous event, as testified by the sizeable collection of geographic material of Ptolemaic nature in the libraries of Florence, and in particular the Laurenziana²⁵. However, Ptolemy's reputation as a geographer and astrologer never completely faded in the Middle Ages; the *Huon d'Auvergne* epic tells us this since the earliest extant manuscript of the text, the Berlin K Hamilton 337 (=78 D 8) is dated 1341, well before the 1410 *Geographia* translation²⁶. Scholastics before this date would have had access to Ptolemy through Gerard of Cremona's late twelfth-century (c. 1175) translation of the *Almagest*, and geographic knowledge was additionally supplemented by Plato's *Timaeus*, the dialogue on the nature of the physical world²⁷. As in Dante, the presence of Ptolemy in *Huon d'Auvergne*, who is identified as «in strologia [...] el primo homo al mont», would logically stem from the widespread influence of the *Almagest* and from *florilegia* of ancient authors circulating in scholastic communities²⁸.

The polemical position of Ptolemy in *Huon d'Auvergne*, then, arises from his influence and veneration in intellectual circles such as Paris. Modern scholars have routinely dismissed medieval geographic thought as largely symbolic and wholly incapable of or concerned with spatial realism, even if the diffusion of the *Almagest*, a mathematical treatise concerned with empirical and quantitative accounts of space, contradicts this opinion²⁹. The Limbo passage in *Huon d'Auvergne* also runs aground of the idea that medieval geographers

²⁵ For a catalogue of geographic holdings at the Laurenziana, cf. Gentile 1992.

²⁶ Cf. Dalché 2009.

²⁷ Murray 2004 has suggested that the juxtaposition of a translation of Plato's *Timaeus* and the *Chanson de Roland* in Oxford BL Digby 23 suggests that ancient cosmological thought was associated with Old French epic from an early stage. Careri – Ruby – Short 2011 however doubt this conclusion, arguing that the *Timaeus* and the *Chanson de Roland* were bound together only after the sixteenth-century.

²⁸ *Huon P*, fol. 96r, l. 4681. It is interesting to note that in the *Ugone d'Alvernia*, Andrea da Barberino's Tuscan *rifacimento* of the Franco-Italian epic, Ptolemy is once again only mentioned in passing, as in Dante's Limbo. Although the *Ugone d'Alvernia* predates Jacopo d'Angelo's 1410 translation, Andrea's work after this date, and particularly in his *Guerrin Meschino*, draws heavily from Ptolemy's recently translated *Geographia*, sometimes following this text's coordinate system point by point: cf. McCormick 2014.

²⁹ For a discussion of medieval geographic coordinate systems, cf. Dalché 2013a: 351-353.

were solely preoccupied with metaphorical readings of space, since the intellects that follow Ptolemy in Huon's tour of Limbo, Nicomachus, Euclid, and Pythagoras, are all mathematicians. It would appear in fact that the ancient authors of Huon's Limbo are condemned for the very reason that they seek rational explanations of divine creation.

2. Cartographic Paradigms

The refashioning of Limbo, with its critical stance toward Ptolemy and other ancient authorities who understand space and geography through rational methods, offers an interpretative key to accessing a reading of peregrination in the *Huon* epic as a whole. Using as a lens the medieval cartographic systems characteristic of medieval *mappae mundi* and portolan charts – the first theological in scope and the second grounded in empirical observation – the critique of Ptolemy and the nature of Huon's displacements come into focus³⁰. Portolan charts portray the Mediterranean basin in vivid detail and offer the sailor crucial information to avoid reefs, measure distances, and understand sea depths³¹. The cartographic framework of the portolan draws from ocular testimony and empirical evidence and can be represented visually as maps or textually in bound codices³². Large maps like the *Carta pisana* (c. 1295) that track coastlines and ports present obvious practical challenges: not only were they bulky for onboard travel, they were prohibitively expensive and difficult to prepare³³. Documents for accessing mercantile centers via sea travel would exist more practically not as visual renderings of land and water, but as narrative accounts of ports, islands, coastlines, and sea hazards, as is the case with the oldest surviving portolan, the *Compasso de navigare* (dated 1296), which meticulously describes littoral topography³⁴. Evidence that maps were used on sea-faring vessels is scarce, and, if they were, difficult conditions have surely

³⁰ For an extended discussion on different cartographic modes and their users, cf. Dalché 2013b.

³¹ Cf. *ivi*: 229.

³² Patrick Dalché differentiates maritime charts from portolans, explaining that portolans were almost exclusively textual: «The common understanding of the term 'portulan', is 'maritime chart'. This definition is incorrect. In the Middle Ages and long after, 'portulan', always designated books with nautical instructions today called 'pilot books', but never maps» (*ivi*: 227). Dalché calls these imageless portolans 'text-portolans'. The present discussion considers the cartographic basis of portolans – empirically derived observations of ports and coastlines – and it is not necessarily important that these be visual or text-based representations.

³³ *Carta Pisana*, Paris BNF esp. 30; for the dating of the *Carta Pisana*, see Campbell 1987: 404.

³⁴ *Lo compasso de navigare*, Berlin SPK Hamilton 396. For a summary and description of the *Compasso*, see Dalché 2013b: 228-230; for an edition of the *Compasso*, cf. *Compasso de navigare*.

vexed preservation. As Dalché observes, land-based use seems to be true also of textual portolan manuscripts, since it is true that «the vast majority of surviving manuscripts are, if not deluxe books, at least very large books with decorated letters, which seem to lack the necessary simplicity of books intended for daily use»³⁵. Even if portulans and maritime charts were not used for onboard navigation, these documents are nevertheless firmly embedded within mercantile functionality, compiled according to a system of empirically derived information, and most likely played a role in preparing profitable commercial ventures overseas³⁶.

If the medieval portolan, as Tony Campbell writes, «is the clearest statement of the geographic and cartographic knowledge available in the Mediterranean», then the *mappae mundi* represent theological interpretations of the terrestrial sphere, «the cosmographies of thinking landmen»³⁷. The cartographic system of *mappae mundi* facilitates a theological and chronological understanding of the Earth, its creation history, and its destruction³⁸. Naomi Reed Kline, writing on the Hereford *mappa mundi*, notes that «the lack of measured distances between sites suggests that [*mappae mundi*] were abstract representations of the world not meant to help the viewer gauge distances in terms of actual travel. Distortions exist because the conceptual overrides the practical in most instances»³⁹. While the overwhelming majority of extant medieval maps fall into the category of T-O maps, which present only a basic sketch of the terrestrial orb as three continents (Europe, Africa, Asia), the complex imagery of surviving *mappae mundi* like the Hereford map (c. 1290) or Fra Mauro's world map (1459) reflect varying degrees of a theological conception of the known world, the *oikoumene*⁴⁰. *Mappae mundi* exist as large-

³⁵ Dalché 2013b: 236.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Campbell 1987: 372.

³⁸ Edson 1997 interprets medieval *mappae mundi* as visual systems to record human spiritual development, from creation to the Last Judgment.

³⁹ Kline 2001: 3.

⁴⁰ The Hereford map is housed at the Hereford Cathedral, and Fra Mauro's *mappa mundi* is housed at the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice. Fra Mauro's map limits its engagement with traditional medieval cartographic praxis, opting more for a more empirically confirmed representation of the world: «ho sollicitado verificar la scriptura cum la experientia [...] praticando cum persone degne de fede, le qual hano veduto ad ochio quello che qui suso fedelmente demostro» (Fra Mauro, *World Map*: 699). Despite these attempts at geographic empiricism, the Venetian cartographer still employs elements from medieval *mappae mundi* to fill in knowledge gaps, including an analysis of the legend of Gog and Magog, and still privileges faith over scientific inquiry: «perhò quelli che vol intender prima creda azò le intenda» (ivi: 575). Unlike medieval *mappae mundi*, Fra Mauro's map locates the Earthly Paradise outside the sphere of the Earth, which suggests a more abstract interpretation of this cartographic feature, distancing it from medieval precedents. Next to the depiction of the Earthly Paradise,

scale wall maps (as Fra Mauro's *mappa mundi* and the Hereford map), or can be expressed textually in the form of encyclopedic compendia; Gervase of Tilbury's *Le Livre des merveilles*, one example among many, describes the regions of the *oikoumene* in a manner similar to how these are traced cartographically on the Hereford map⁴¹.

Although portolans and *mappae mundi* interpret the world in very different ways, one conceptual the other pragmatic, this is not to say they are necessarily conflictual or binary. The work of Venetian cartographer Andrea Bianco underscores the idea that medieval interpretations of space according to theological and mercantile concerns were equally valid through at least the fourteenth century⁴². The manuscript containing Andrea's cartographic work, dated 1436, binds together three maps, each of which offers a different modality for reading space: the first is a sea chart, the second is a Ptolemy-styled world map, and the last is a medieval *mappa mundi*⁴³. The third, the *mappa mundi*, presents the Mediterranean world in recognizable detail, with western Europe clearly delineated by navigational experience. Beyond the edges of the Mediterranean basin, however, the contours of land and sea defer to ancient and biblical sources. In step with many medieval *mappae mundi*, whether pictorial or textual, Andrea Bianco maps the celestial spheres, Adam and Eve in the Earthly Paradise, the four biblical rivers, the Red Sea, Noah's Ark, and includes the requisite description of dragons and the monstrous races, here the cynocephalus, or dog-faced men. Displaying the maps side-by-side, the manuscript offers its reading audience three valid, contemporaneous frameworks for spatial thinking.

Even if *mappae mundi* examine the terrestrial sphere through an abstracted, conceptual lens, the realms depicted on these maps, in particular the East, were not necessarily considered fictitious, and the worlds of the *mappa mundi* and portolan frequently overlap. Gervase of Tilbury, in his *Otia imperialia*, writes that the marvels represented on the fringes of the *oikoumene* are all possible within the laws of the natural world, even if rare: «we call marvels those phenomena that escape our understanding though they be natural»⁴⁴. On Fra Mauro's map, portolan charts clearly inform the detailed and realistic forms of the Mediterranean basin, and, on the Hereford map, pilgrimage and crusade routes are visible. Similar to the interpretation I draw from *Huon d'Auvergne*,

Fra Mauro includes a summary of the theological and geographical debate. For a discussion of Fra Mauro's placement of the Earthly Paradise, see Scafi 2006: 235-240.

⁴¹ For a discussion of the cartographic dimension of medieval encyclopedia, cf. Hoogvliet 2007.

⁴² Cf. Edson 2007.

⁴³ Ivi: 1-6. For a reading of these principles in Andrea da Barberino's *Guerrin Meschino* and in his rewriting of the *Huon* epic, *Ugone d'Alvernia*, cf. McCormick 2014.

⁴⁴ Tilbury, *Le Livre des merveilles*: 20.

Kline interprets the pilgrimage and crusade routes traced in the upper half of the Hereford map as standing in opposition to the spiritual quest the work invites its viewers to undertake, admonishing onlookers to avoid the perils of curiosity, or vain knowledge; these routes are circuitous and trace a wandering, aimless path⁴⁵. Unlike the literal, Earth-bound voyages represented by the pilgrimage and crusade routes, the Hereford map proposes imaginary travel, reflecting the definition of pilgrimage as advocated by the Church: «an entirely spiritual journey during which the pilgrim was to concentrate on the real world only as a shadow of the invisible spiritual world»⁴⁶. *Perigrinatio in stabilitate*, as Jean Leclercq first called it, allowed those who contemplated the cartography of the terrestrial orb to undertake pilgrimage without undergoing treacherous roads and costly travel. *Perigrinatio in stabilitate* also allowed monks, who were bound by their vows to remain in monastic seclusion, to nonetheless engage in a kind of virtual, imaginary pilgrimage⁴⁷.

As a system for conveying theological interpretations of space and geography and as a means to read, recall, and contemplate divine creation through spatial mechanisms, the cartographic paradigm of medieval *mappae mundi* is especially useful in understanding Huon's peregrination across the terrestrial sphere⁴⁸. Kline writes that the Hereford map «makes two powerful conflicting claims on the human spirit – *curiositas* and faith»⁴⁹; the same could be said of the spatial dimensions navigated by Huon count of Auvergne. The spatial systems of *mappae mundi* and *Huon d'Auvergne* both privilege introspection and contemplation of divine creation and judgment: to the right of Jesus on the Hereford map, outside the sphere of the Earth, are the souls who ascend to Heaven, while on the left are those who are drug into the depths of Hell. The rational measurement of geography, as practiced in portolan charts and taught by the *Huon* Limbo inhabitants, conceives of space as a means to arrive at mercantile opportunities or to understand the world from a scientific point of view, both Earthly distractions that stray from understanding the divine.

⁴⁵ Kline 2001: 194.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Cf. Leclercq 1960; for a discussion of this concept as it applies to Matthew Paris's itinerary maps, cf. Connolly 1999.

⁴⁸ For studies on medieval *mappae mundi* as visual representations of medieval philosophy, cf. Kline 2001 and Edson 1997.

⁴⁹ Kline 2001: 194.

3. *Huon's Peregrinations*

Like Andrea Bianco's three maps, representations of space in *Huon d'Auvergne* are layered and in dialogue. A learned medieval audience familiar with cartographic works like those drawn by Bianco and acquainted with the Parisian university *milieu* would have also recognized the spatial cues implicit within *Huon d'Auvergne*⁵⁰. As Huon starts his travels, he visits the main pilgrimage sites and capitals of Western Europe, following travel routes that trace the contours of Spain, France, and Italy. Through the initial journey, it becomes clear that his destination, Hell, *la scura maxon*, does not belong to any geographic system known to the other travelers he encounters – merchants and even pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land. Huon's destination belongs rather to a cartographic paradigm elaborated in medieval *mappae mundi*, which accounts for space and movement as spiritually significant. This information signals to the epic audience that, although Huon's trajectory initially parallels that of merchants and pilgrims, his ultimate destination belongs to a separate cartographic modality:

El cerchà França, Provença e l'Ongrin
E l'Alamagna, fin al Po marin;
El no truovà marineri ni algun pelegrin
Che li sapia insigner la via e lo camiin,
Como el possa andar al regno inferin⁵¹.

When Huon encounters empirically-minded merchants, the entrance to Hell translates for them into a literal equivalent, the mouth of Mount Etna:

A un osterò o' ell'era dessendue
Da marçadant ell'à intendue
Che a Moncibel è una bocha vehue
Che de inferno vien e li cridi sono oldue
Che fa le aneme quando le'sson ferue
E cruciade da la cente perdue⁵².

At every stop, when asking directions to Hell's entrance, Huon meets puzzled interlocutors who remind him that what he looks for does not exist, and they consistently take him for insane (*mato*): «Nessun no trovà, ni çovene ne antis, |

⁵⁰ Manuscript B appears in the 1407 Gonzaga library catalogue: «21. Item. Ugo de Alvernia. Incipit: *Altens de mais quant furent li preel*. Et finit: *En sont sant regne*. Continet cart. 83» (Braghirolli – Meyer – Paris 1880: 508). Thematic, bibliographic, codicological, and linguistic evidence suggests that *Huon d'Auvergne* was read by a courtly and educated audience.

⁵¹ *Huon P*, fol. 39v, ll. 1921-1925.

⁵² *Ivi*, fol. 40r, ll. 1933-1938.

Che no·l tengà per mato e per berbis | Quando el va cercando la leçe malvai»⁵³. The travelers Huon encounters have earthly, pragmatic destinations in mind, and Huon's itinerary is dismissed as impossible. Even other pilgrims Huon meets have a literal destination in mind, Jerusalem, and lack divine authority to access a theological, contemplative cartography, as is the case with Huon («Dio lo condugà per la so bonté»⁵⁴). Huon does not make any progress toward his destination until he ventures out of Western Europe via Jerusalem, enters Egypt, and crosses a desolate sea of sand. At this narrative juncture, the poet indicates that in the lands beyond any traveler would certainly encounter marvelous things: «Chi quele tere ben cercar vorà | Molte stranie cosse trovar li porà»⁵⁵.

Here marks the point beyond which Huon encounters geographically abstracted locations that belong not to the realm of the medieval portulan chart, but rather to the cartographic paradigm of medieval *mappae mundi*. In her analysis of representations of good and bad government in *Huon d'Auvergne*, Leslie Zarker Morgan identifies this transition from the real to the *merveilleux* as the moment when Huon encounters good government for the first time: «le bon gouvernement reste un idéal projeté dans le merveilleux»⁵⁶. As with Andrea Bianco's *mappa mundi*, the world's *mirabilia* in *Huon d'Auvergne* lay beyond the eastern fringes of the Mediterranean world where the geographic contours are not drawn empirically through coordinates and observation, but rather from textual sources, both ancient and biblical. The medieval *mappae mundi* are oriented Eastward, the site of the Earthly Paradise and the direction Huon travels as he makes his way up the Tigris river:

Sovra lo flume fo Ugo aresté,
Grando e profondo como lo mar sale,
E core più forte cha·ssagita enpené
E vien de paradixo che Dio à establé
O' el messe Adamo e Eva so moieré⁵⁷.

The textual cartography of *Huon d'Auvergne* elaborates the three-continent framework of T-O maps and *mappae mundi* and, in his travels beyond Western Europe into Africa and Asia, Huon encounters other frequent features of this cartographic paradigm, including Pliny's monstrous races, the Red Sea, the Realm of Prester John, and the mountain of the Earthly Paradise from which

⁵³ Ivi, fol. 41v, ll. 2011-2013.

⁵⁴ Ivi, fol. 44v, l. 2161.

⁵⁵ *Huon P*, fol. 23r, ll. 1096-1097.

⁵⁶ Morgan forthcoming.

⁵⁷ *Huon P*, fol. 55v, ll. 2137-2141.

flow the four biblical rivers⁵⁸. Additionally, Tadio, the nephew of Prester John (another common protagonist of medieval *mappae mundi*) welcomes Huon to his kingdom⁵⁹. In a boat guided by divine will toward the source of the Tigris, Huon no longer encounters merchants or sailors, further emphasizing that his voyage is beyond the plotted coordinates of mercantile spaces:

Lu e la nave per la granda aqua antie
 Che s'apela Tigris per li nostri ancesori,
 La qual vien del luogo o' è Enoche e Elie.
 No trovà borgo ni albergarie,
 Homo ni femena se no erbe florie,
 Li gran boscaci, la tera, e li rami⁶⁰.

The spiritual nature of Huon's quest is highlighted through depictions of his isolation in a land without habitation and by his divine access to biblical realms. This isolation stands in contrast to the bustling merchant world of Europe that Huon left behind and, along with the clues from medieval cartography, the reader is clear that Huon has entered an alternate cartographic paradigm. Unlike the merchants and pilgrims Huon encountered in Western Europe, Prester John is the first to not insist that finding the entrance to Hell is an impossible task. He gives Huon the first information on how to arrive there:

Çamai no li potè andar algun homo vivant.
 Quelli che muore sença vera peniteant
 Là son portadi oltra ell so maltalant;
 [...]
 A lor no val castel ni teremant,
 Tere ni villa ni oro ni arçant⁶¹.

Prester John's words facilitate travel to Hell, and they clearly separate a spiritual and contemplative realm from a mercantile and political world of castles, lands, gold, and silver.

4. *Epistemological Debates*

The superimposed cartographic spaces in *Huon d'Auvergne*, the pragmatic and the conceptual, help us arrive at an explanation of why the Limbo castle of

⁵⁸ Cf. Meregazzi 1937: 26-29.

⁵⁹ Cf. Meregazzi 1935. The Berlin and Turin versions include Prester John as a prominent figure.

⁶⁰ *Huon P*, fol. 71r, ll. 3455-3460. Here and elsewhere there are clear references to Arthurian source material: see for example Martina 2014 and Morgan 2005.

⁶¹ *Huon P*, fol. 53r, ll. 2579-2585.

the intellects is dramatically refashioned in this text. The opposition between the empirical and the contemplative echoes thirteenth-century Aristotelian polemics and evokes the opposition between the medieval philosophic principles of *ratio* and *intellectus*, where the first is an epistemological system based in calculation and observation, and the second a system to access knowledge through contemplation, vision, and prayer. In his *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas explains: «Sed intellectus et ratio differunt quantum ad modum cognoscendi quia scilicet intellectus cognoscit simplici intuitu, ratio vero discurrendo de uno in aliud»⁶². Through the thirteenth and into the fourteenth centuries, Neoplatonist ideas aligned more readily with mystic traditions, which problematized the heuristic value of empirical facts, whereas Aristotelian teachings, mostly scholastic, put emphasis on rational arguments based on observable phenomena. This was for Petrarch a driving principle in his famous invective against four aristotelian friends: «In diuinis altius ascendit Plato ac platonici»⁶³. For Petrarch, Aristotle «Diuinia non satis Aristotilem uidisse, neque eterna, quod a puro ingenio semota sint»⁶⁴. Indeed, for proponents of Aristotelianism, the human mind, known as the intellective soul, is unable to experience knowledge independently from sensory experience and relies on interpretation of natural phenomenon to arrive at divine truth⁶⁵. In the scholastic centers of Paris and Oxford, Aristotelian texts became the foundation for a method to uncover truth in the natural world, and the emphasis given to Aristotle in the scholastic milieu provoked Petrarch to ask: «Et quis non tribuit, nisi insamun et clamosum scolasticorum uulgus?»⁶⁶. It is worth noting here that Petrarch's attack of the scholastics matches the characterization of rowdy, debating students in the *Huon Limbo*.

From Paris and Oxford, where it flourished in the university context, Aristotelianism soon arrived in the intellectual circles of Italy, especially in Bologna, Pavia, and Padua, where the ancient philosopher's texts circulated widely in university *curricula*⁶⁷. Paduan Aristotelian teaching found its first voice in the medical doctor Pietro da Abano's works on natural philosophy. Pietro, who is «la prima figura precisa con cui si presenti il sapere scientifico nella

⁶² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 59, a. 1, ad 1: «But intellect and reason differ as regards the way of knowing: because intellect knows by a simple gaze, but reason by inferring one thing from another» (translated by and cited in Naus 1959: 28).

⁶³ Petrarch, *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*: 326-327: «Plato and the Platonists ascended higher in divine matters».

⁶⁴ Ivi: 310-311: «[Aristotle] did not adequately see what is divine and eternal, since such things are far removed from pure intellect».

⁶⁵ Cf. Grendler 2002: 281.

⁶⁶ Petrarch, *De sui ipsius*: 322-323: «Whoever denied his supremacy, except for the mad and brawling mob of Scholastics?».

⁶⁷ Cf. Grendler 2002: 269.

cultura veneta fra Duecento e Trecento»⁶⁸, embraced his Parisian training, but was later branded a heretic in Padua specifically for his faith in natural philosophy. If, as Bruno Nardi points out, religious and ascetic works sought to explain strange and unexplained events as workings of the devil, Pietro instead turned to the natural effects of the stars and planets, or in natural forces that were as of yet unknown to men: «egli perciò ritiene antiscientifico il vezzo dei teologizzanti, d'introdurre ad ogni momento il miracoloso e il soprannaturale nello spiegare i fenomeni della natura»⁶⁹. This early thirteenth-century example from Padua underscores how Aristotelianism in Italian academic circles drew criticism for its reliance on rational interpretations of the natural world.

The Franciscan theologian Guglielmo Centueri of Cremona provides contrasting example of Aristotelian exchange between Paris and northern Italy, attesting again to the polemical place this ancient philosopher held in northern intellectual spheres. Centueri, appointed bishop of Piacenza in 1383, earned a theology degree in Paris in around 1373. Returning to Italy, he would teach theology in Bologna and Pavia, advocating a staunch position against Aristotelianism, going against the dominant position held in the university *milieu* in which he was trained. Centueri «rejected any attempt to argue that the truths of the faith could be known *per evidentias naturales* or that we can attain heaven *ex puris naturalibus*»⁷⁰. For Centueri, Plato was the true philosopher since his texts describe a moment of creation of the material world and imply finality in its future destruction, ideas that undoubtedly stem from the *Timaeus* and that support the biblical account for creation. Aristotle's work suggests the opposite, that the world is eternal with no beginning or end⁷¹. As Weber suggests, this is perhaps one of the factors behind Plato's success with Italian humanists⁷², and it may also give context to understand the numerous references in *Huon d'Avvergne* to the end of the world and the looming day of judgment.

The examples of Pietro da Abano and Guglielmo Centueri help frame epistemological debates in *Huon d'Avvergne*, which echo those against Aristotelianism and scientific empiricism. The *Huon* epic, by placing ancient authorities in Limbo, takes a firm position in the Aristotelian debates of northern Italy, refusing to align itself with the notion that empirical facts can lead to a true knowledge of god. The merchant whom Huon encounters,

⁶⁸ Alessio 1976: 171.

⁶⁹ Cf. Nardi 1958: 24-25: the scholar interprets Pietro's accusations of heresy as a response to his investigations into natural philosophy.

⁷⁰ Monfasani 1993: 262.

⁷¹ Cf. *ivi*: 261-262.

⁷² Cf. Weber 1997: 29.

Sberlati's «*auctoritas laica*»,⁷³ who possesses an empirical knowledge of places and lands, is therefore at odds with the spiritual quest of Huon. The merchants, in fact, call him insane, or *mato*, for his inability or unwillingness to read the world empirically. The two classes of travelers, represented by Huon and the merchant, operate according to two different cartographic systems built upon opposing epistemological foundations.

In *Huon d'Auvergne*, peregrination may be read tropologically and linked to the Augustinian notion that curiosity, or *curiositas*, constitutes a restless, self-serving pursuit of knowledge that distracts the human mind from sincere contemplation of God⁷⁴. As Joseph Torchia characterizes it,

[o]n the one hand, the soul's curious interest in worldly matters carries with it a certain self-absorption consistent with pride; on the other hand, *curiositas* assumes a distinct experiential focus not only encompassing what is sensually appealing (the mark of carnal concupiscence) but the whole panoply of temporal and corporeal involvement⁷⁵.

As an element of *curiositas*, Augustine identifies *concupiscentia oculorum*, an overt and excessive attraction to the physical world as interpreted through the senses, specifically through sight. In light of this Augustinian principle, a stark contrast between the merchants and Huon takes shape: unlike Huon, who, like a gazer of the Hereford map is reminded by knowledge of the afterlife and of the nature of the divine, merchant peregrination is linked closely to wealth and personal gain, the attainment of which requires ocular navigation. Huon's destination is non-literal, driven by spiritual and contemplative navigation that recalls significant tenants of Plato's philosophy as interpreted through the Christian lens. We see this in Petrarch, who indicates that he prefers Plato's philosophy since, as an epistemology grounded in the intangible, it more closely approaches Christian thought:

[...] in primis philosophiam amo, non illam loquacem, scholasticam, ventosam, qua ridiculum in modum letteratores nostri superbiunt; sed veram, et non in libris tantum, sed in animis habitantem, atque in rebus positam, non in verbis, cuius illud præcipuum munus reor, Tusculanis disputationibus insertum, quod

⁷³ Sberlati 2003: 434.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of Augustine, *curiositas*, and the philosophical tradition of this idea, cf. Torchia 2013. See also Bouloux 2002: 115-34. Cf. 2 *Corinthians* 11:3: «But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ». Leslie Zarker Morgan identifies other Augustinian influences present in *Huon d'Auvergne*: cf. Morgan forthcoming.

⁷⁵ Torchia 2013: 120.

scilicet medetur animis, inanes sollicitudines detrahit, cupiditatibus liberat, petit timores⁷⁶.

As his ascent of Mount Ventoux reveals, humanists like Petrarch were certainly not opposed to reading the experience of space as disassociated from empirical observation.⁷⁷ If scholastics aligned themselves with Aristotle, then humanists were eager, at least initially, to follow Platonic and Neo-platonic principles. In *Huon d'Auvergne*, travel as a heuristic pursuit is problematized along these lines, and the dual cartographies presented by portolans and *mappae mundi* represent two systems for navigating truth in the world: the first seeks trade and riches through an epistemology of the senses; the second facilitates the pilgrimage of the soul, Augustine's *peregrinatio animae*, through an epistemology of prayer and meditation⁷⁸.

Returning to the *Huon* Limbo passage with these ideas in mind, we might say that Ptolemy and his companions Nicomachus, Aristotle, Euclid, and Pythagoras are damned to Limbo not only because of the unfortunate chronology of their birth, but because of their faith in empirical knowledge derived from mathematics and calculation. This condemnation first appears in the Limbo passage at the entrance to the castle of intellects, where Huon sees Ptolemy prominently positioned high in a tower: «Il veut savoir se d'iluech insiront. | Voltent le cartes, més non trovent le pont»⁷⁹. Ptolemy and the scholars surrounding him are preoccupied with empirically-based information, recorded either on maps or in treatises (*le cartes*), as a system to find the way out of Limbo. Eneas reminds Huon that he is in a unique position, having visited Hell and the castle of the intellects, to warn living scholastics that their intellectual pursuits are vain and fraught with peril:

Quando tu seré in ll'aier teraine,
A li geometri cun parolla certaine
Poré lli dir che assé pene vilaine
Ài trovado lo sso dotor primeraine,

⁷⁶ Petrarch, *Epistole de rebus familiaribus et Variarum*: II, 175 (XII, 3): «I [...] consequently love philosophy above all else; not that loquacious, scholastic kind with which our men of letters ridiculously pride themselves, but the pure one which dwells more in the minds than in books and deals with facts and not with words. Its main office, I believe, is revealed in the *Tusculan Disputations* where it is stated that "it heals minds, it removes empty cares, it delivers from the passions and banishes fears"» (translated in Bernardo 2005: 142).

⁷⁷ For more on geography in humanism, see Bouloux 2002: 107-14.

⁷⁸ Dante's *Commedia* presents a complicated, nuanced relationship between mysticism and aristotelian scholasticism. For the sake of brevity, I will refer to Botterill 1994. The topic of travel and curiosity is most famously debated in canto XVI of the *Inferno*. For a brief survey of this debate, cf. Kay 1980: 108.

⁷⁹ *Huon* B, fol. 71ra.

Eulide a quella blonda laine⁸⁰.

The poet repeatedly contrasts Huon's quest, which is not grounded in a quest for mercantile wealth, riches, or power, with the ambitions of Alexander the Great and Carlo Martello. The poet additionally associates Huon's quest with contemplation and ascetic practices. Huon interrupts his voyage only to eat bread, bitter roots, and drink water («pan mançava e sse no aqua bevoit»⁸¹), and to pray directly to God to find the way to his destination («“Avanti”, diss'elo, “a nome de Jexhu Crist, che ne cunduga sicomo el cuor me dist”»⁸²). As Jean-Claude Vallecalle points out, Huon, just before entering Hell, «reprend fidèlement le modèle, traditionnel dans les chansons de geste, de la ‘prière du plus grand péril’»⁸³. Also, for Luisa Meregazzi, Huon's «assidue preghiere ed il frequente recitare dei salmi, trasformano di volta in volta il cavaliere in un pellegrino o in un eremita»⁸⁴. A third scholar, Michela Scattolini, points out that the P witness in particular departs from the other three manuscripts to develop a spiritual thematic: «si noti che la versione di P [...] è certamente la più rimaneggiata, giacché inserisce parecchi motivi desunti dalla tradizione di *exempla* e *visione*»⁸⁵. Unlike the scholastics, whose knowledge of God stems from an analogical interpretation of the natural world, Huon seeks an intimate and unmediated communion with God through prayer and asceticism and through guidance from figures such as Prester John.

5. *The Castle of Ratio*

A prominent episode during Huon's travel toward Hell is his encounter with a mysterious queen who reigns over lands and a castle near the Tigris. The poet does not name this woman, but I interpret her here as an allegorical representation of science, or *ratio*, because she mirrors the Ptolemy figure in Limbo: like Ptolemy, she is associated with rational thought and excels all others in knowledge («In questo mondo ella no à so per | De gran sciencia per un prod'omo aider»⁸⁶). In her entourage are three maidens who, like *curiositas* distracting the wandering pilgrim from contemplation of the divine, tempt Huon from his path and lure him off course by appealing to his senses of sight

⁸⁰ *Huon P*, fol. 98r, ll. 4769-4773.

⁸¹ Ivi, fol. 71r, l. 3470.

⁸² Ivi, fol. 57v, ll. 2790-2791. Cf. *Huon B*, ll. 8628-8629: «Un petit de rais d'erbe de la selvaine | Avoit mangié le cont por soutenir soe laine».

⁸³ Vallecalle forthcoming.

⁸⁴ Meregazzi 1937: 41.

⁸⁵ Scattolini 2012: 156.

⁸⁶ *Huon P*, fol. 63v, ll. 3093-3094.

and sound; they are beautiful and are singing and playing the vielle. By the end of the episode, Huon and the reader take away a lesson regarding empirical reasoning: *ratio* may seem beautiful and attractive from the outside, but is empty of meaning and use. If followed, one would presumably avoid condemnation to Limbo:

Sovra un banco in lo plu seço altaine
 Sedeva la raina che quela çente demaine,
 Vestida de negro como vedovaine,
 Lo cavo vellado, si tein la ciera plaine.
 La carne à blanca e llo color de graine,
 Li ochi à vairi e grossi e riant de sotaine;
 [...]
 Ma questo sapié per certaine
 Che sso belleça era falssa e vaine⁸⁷.

Reading this passage as an allegorical representation of *ratio*, or scientific knowledge, we see a mirroring of the condemned intellects of Limbo, who were perilously distracted from contemplation in God, bound up instead in vain intellectual pursuits and an overconfidence in *disputatio*, the academic process by which the world and its creation is explained through reason. The demons in this passage attempt to convince Huon that they are real and worthy of his consideration:

Respoxe elle: «Vassal, dito ve l'avon,
 E guardé chi nu ssemo e de che façon!
 Corpo e spirito tuto inssempre tegnon,
 E sse de çò avé nulla dotaxon,
 Apalpené al fianco e al menton
 Alora saveri ben se semo carne o non»⁸⁸.

The deception however is soon revealed and the entire castle, its queen, and all the inhabitants are unmasked as demons and go up in flames. Huon breaks this spell by ascetic practice, whipping and beating himself, and then immediately turning from the illusion of *ratio* to a more reliable *intellectus* with fervent prayers to God to save him from the deceit that had ensnared him. What was initially a beautiful sensory experience to see and hear is now ugly and silent: «Li chiari vissi son torbe divegnu | E lo cantar tornado como mu»⁸⁹.

This episode clearly references to the Gospel of John (20:27-29), in which Thomas doubts the resurrection of Jesus until he feels the wounds with

⁸⁷ Ivi, fol. 63v, ll. 3107-3118.

⁸⁸ Ivi, fol. 61r, ll. 2983-2988.

⁸⁹ Ivi, fol. 67r, ll. 3260-3261; cf. *Ecclesiastes* 1:8: «All things are wearisome; | more than one can express; | the eye is not satisfied with seeing, | or the ear filled with hearing».

his own hands. Christ responds «blessed are they that have not seen and yet have come to believe»⁹⁰. Within the context of *Huon d'Auvergne*, which critiques openly and fervently medieval scholasticism and Aristotelianism, the deformation of this biblical parable illuminates our interpretation of both the mysterious queen, *ratio*, and Ptolemy in Limbo, both of which present the reader with a confrontation between faith and scientific knowledge. Empirical, scientific inquiry according to Aristotelianism (as Centueri puts it, finding truth *per evidentias naturales*) is problematized explicitly in the Limbo scene and in a more obtuse way in the *ratio* episode, both of which advance a lesson that urges skepticism toward an epistemology of the senses (*concupiscentia oculorum*): «Apalpené al fianco e al menton | Alora saveri ben se semo carne o non»⁹¹. The fundamental epistemological system of the scholastics – marvel, observation and ocular testimony of the physical world – is fraught with illusion and misconception. The *Huon* poet sets the protagonist on an alternative voyage toward a knowledge of God grounded in spiritual contemplation and ascetic practice. Scholastics find themselves in Limbo because they, unlike Huon, were distracted in life by the allure and beauty of the physical world and the vain hope that *disputatio* will reveal the truth of the natural world, just the text's merchant protagonists remind readers that, through the pursuit of trade, wealth, gold, and silver, they are oblivious to and distracted from God. The scholastic's punishment, their *contrapasso*, is an unbridled *curiositas* and an inability to disengage from *disputatio* mired in empiricism.

As a mystic traveler, Huon accesses a narrative cartography beyond the reach of merchants, sailors, or even pilgrims headed to Earthly sites like Rome, Santiago de Compostela, or the Holy Land. The rationalist epistemologies evoked by merchant and shipping cartographies are wholly inadequate when it comes to accessing the spiritual realm. Carlo Martello's request for tribute, a symbol of wealth and power, continually contrasts Huon's peregrinations and reminds the reader at every turn that an earth-bound cartography opposes a spiritual one. The blend of knight errant and ascetic traveler reaffirms the heuristic potential of movement and cartographic spaces implicit within *Huon d'Auvergne*, uncovering layers an intellectual *deposito* and *impaludamento* that have settled into the narrative substrates of this Franco-Italian epic. Petrarch's words appropriately conclude our discussion of Huon's peregrinations, whose

⁹⁰ Cf. John 20:27-29: «Then he said to Thomas: "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe". Thomas answered him: "My Lord and my God!". Jesus said to him: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe"; this passage also clearly references the *Queste del Saint Graal*, in which Perceval undergoes similar temptations.

⁹¹ *Huon P*, fol. 57v, ll. 2987-2988.

travels access knowledge beyond what we can merely sense with our eyes and hands: «Nam quid, oro, naturas beluarum et volucrum et piscium et serpentum nosse profuerit, et naturam hominum, ad quod nati sumus, unde et quo pergitur, vel nescire vel spernere»⁹².

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⁹² Petrarch, *De sui ipsius*: 238-239: «What use is it, I ask, to know the nature of beasts and birds and fish and snakes, and to ignore or neglect our human nature, the purpose of our birth, or whence we come and whither we are bound?».

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