Reality, Space and Time in the Maps of Matthew Paris

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Abstract
Since Antiquity cartography has been the result of the strict relationship between cartographic science and artistic representation. Matthew Paris's maps are a clear example of the aforementioned concept. Paris lived in thirteenth-century England and was a Benedictine monk of St. Albans monastery, at the time a well-known cultural centre. Matthew Paris was a chronicler, a historian, an artist, a miniaturist and a cartographer and his name is mostly remembered for his historical work *Chronica Majora*. However, really interesting are also the maps that he collected in 7 pages which form his *Iter de Londinio in Terram Sanctam*, a group of itinerary maps that represent a travel route from London to Jerusalem crossing France, Italy (Rome) and Apulia. Matthew located this work before his historical masterpiece, but his maps are unique, original and effective. They are the only representation of the Latin world that has arrived to us integral. Thus their value is relevant and worth studying.

Keywords: cartography, map-makers, itinerary maps, strip maps, flaps.

1. Introduction

The graphic representation of space, which in other words is the true essence of a cartographic map, is undoubtedly the consequence of the culture and vision of reality which the cartographer who designs it has. The cartographer, in reality, consciously transmits in a map the whole of his knowledge, that is both the information taken from other scholars, philosophers,

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cartographers, travellers, and his personal direct experience (in case, for example he himself did the travel). This knowledge is scientifically valid and accepted by the entire world of the period when the cartographer lives.
Probably also remarkable is, even though the map-maker uses it unconsciously, a different kind of representation: the one the cartographer makes in the moment when he designs his map. In the project of his design, thus even before reporting all the different information he chooses to give, the cartographer is influenced by the cultural, historical, social, political ideologies of his Country in that specific historical moment when he is doing his work. For this reason cartography may be considered not only the real proof of the intellectual level of a nation, as in a map astronomic, mathematical, geographic, literary, ethnographic notions and all the other aspects which generally characterize a culture are present, but also and most of all a guide for the interpretation of the consideration that a people has of itself and its relationship with other peoples. In this sense the map is a fundamental key to the understanding of the history of a country, from which it is possible to derive the relevance and importance of the vision of reality which its inhabitants possess.
Today it is conventionally accepted by scholars that in Middle Ages and even in previous periods maps existed and where used either to represent the territories and continents and the seas then known either to make movements or better travels across these parts of the Eearth easier. Relevant to this point is what Giosuè Musca (1993: 16) writes:
"Si muovevano gli uomini nel Medioevo? La risposta affermativa è, oggi, ovvia. Nessuno crede più alla favola di un Medioevo (se pure soltanto quello occidentale) frammentato in società chiuse e quasi immobili, con scarsi contatti tra di loro, autosufficienti (cioè auto insufficienti), soggette a crisi di sottoproduzione e carestie. Che ci furono, certo, ma dovute non a immobilità ma ad altre cause"[1].
One of the most important and interesting English map-makers is Matthew Paris, who is "a landmark in the history of European cartography" (Vaughan 1958a: 7).

2. Matthew Paris, chronicler and cartographer

Suzanne Lewis (1987: 12) defines Matthew Paris as a *genius unicum* different from the other chroniclers as Bede and Holinshed, as he integrated his historical works with illustrations and decorations. Paris's manuscripts in fact always begin with a series of miniatures above or on the side of the page coloured in green or blue. Generally they are placed in the upper half of the page.

The thirteenth century is, emphatically, the golden age of the monastic historians. At their head, as already said, stands Matthew Paris, the greatest of all medieval chroniclers; but his works only represent the crowning literary achievement of an enthusiasm and an industry that inspired every considerable monastery in the land. The annals, most of them nameless, of Burton, of Winchester, of Waverley, of Dunstable, of Osney, of Worcester – all testify to the assiduity of monkish scribes in compiling, revising and adding to the stores of historical material accumulated in their respective houses.

At the powerful monastery of St. Albans, there arose a school of historians as brilliant as that which had, in the north, closed with Roger of Hoveden. This school produced in Matthew Paris a writer who both in the conception of the historian's art and in the force and picturesqueness of his style, surpasses all the chroniclers of the twelfth century. The historians of St. Albans possessed exceptional advantages. The wealth of the abbey, its accommodation and equipment as an ideal home of learning (it was endowed with a library and a scriptorium), its position and its proximity to the capital, marked it out as the chief centre of monastic culture in the thirteenth century; and its inmates kept up a constant intercourse with the great men of the day as they passed through it on their way to and from London and the provinces. Nowhere else, perhaps, in the kingdom could a historian of contemporary events pursue his task at that time under more favourable conditions. Moreover, in no other abbey does the writing of history appear to have been so carefully organized as at St. Albans. Abbot Simon, who died in 1183, established in the monastery a regular office of historiographer. The first occupant of this office whose complete work has come

down to us was Roger of Wendover; but his chronicle is based upon materials of which an ample wealth had already existed in the abbey. The actual nucleus of the early part of Roger's *Flowers of History*[2] is supposed to have been from the compilation of John de Celle, who was abbot of St. Albans from 1195 to 1214. John's work extended down to the year 1188, and was revised and continued by Roger down to 1235, the year before his death. Matthew Paris became historiographer of St. Albans upon the death of Roger of Wendover in 1236, and proceeded in his famous *Chronica Majora* to revise and continue the work of his predecessor becoming one of the most famous men of his period (Vaughan, 1958b)[3].

Yet we know surprisingly little about his own life history – nothing, in fact, other than the little he tells us himself. The name he used, 'Parisiensis', was not unknown as a patronymic in England, and everything about him, his style and his attitudes, not least his chauvinism, indicate that he was of English birth (Vaughan, 1958b: 1-20). He took the Benedictine habit at St. Albans in January 1217 and, save for a year's absence in Norway where he was sent to sort out the affairs of the abbey of St. Benet Holm, his entire life was spent in the cloister of St. Albans. An entry in *Chronica Majora* makes it apparent that he died in 1259. One of his brethren enlivened his obituary notice with a painting of him on his death-bed, with his chronicle propped up beside him, his inert hand holding the quill, which is still resting on the parchment.

St. Albans abbey, which was a day's journey on the great road to the North from London and the palace of Westminster, was well placed to be an emporium of news. It had a large guest-house, with stabling for three hundred horses, providing for a constant stream of visitors which included merchants, travellers, pilgrims, members of the royal family and even, on several occasions, the king himself. This brought Matthew a steady flow of information about events and ensured in turn that the history of the times received wide publicity.

With the years, royal patronage and the growth of public recognition had their impact upon Matthew. Men of note sought him out to provide information[4].

Although he was eager to get his facts right and was an enthusiast for collecting documents, Matthew was no merely pedestrian annalist. He was a rumbustious commentator on the events of his time; and when he came to write up his record of a year's happenings of his chronicle, he aired his personal convictions and prejudices with the freedom of a confidential diarist rather than the circumspection of an official historian. As a monk, he was intensely proud of his order and of his ancient abbey, whose aristocratic traditions he celebrated by writing a history of its abbots. He disparaged other and newer monastic orders, he was an unashamed hater of the friars and voiced the mistrust and jealousy felt by both monks and secular clergy over the immense social success enjoyed by these newcomers on the ecclesiastical scene. Where the interests of monks were involved, whether in conflict with their bishop or in the dispute with other landowners, he is fiercely partisan. The internationalism of the medieval Church and scholastic culture can present a misleading picture of European society. It may have mitigated, but certainly did not eliminate national consciousness. In this, as in much else, Matthew Paris voices the prejudices of the common man. He is intensely chauvinistic and insular in his sympathies. He bitterly laments the loss of the Angevin territories in France, so that the English kingdom was deprived and mutilated through the cowardice and falseness of the kings. King Henry II's failure to recover the lost continental empire of his father and grandfather was the primary reason for Paris's increasing contempt for Henry's person. He mistrusts and dislikes all foreigners, but his xenophobia is at its most intense when he writes of the king's Poitevin relatives and the Savoyard relatives of the queen, who were admitted to the king's council and, in some instances, promoted to English bishoprics[5].
Nevertheless, it must be underlined, as M.T. Clanchy (2006: 201) suggests, that much of the history of Henry III's reign would remain obscure, were Paris's Chronicle not supplemented by the monumental work of Henry of Bracton, or Bratton, on the laws of England. Bracton scarcely belongs to the chroniclers'; but his writings throw sufficient light upon the social conditions of his time to entitle him to stand side by side with Matthew Paris as a

contributor to the English history of the thirteenth century. Following in the footsteps of Ranulf de Glenville (or Hubert Walter), Henry II's greatest jurist, Henry of Bracton compiled, some time between 1250 and 1258, an elaborate treatise on the laws and customs of England. Bracton died in 1268, leaving his work unfinished, although he appears to have been adding to and annotating it to the very last.
The art of the historian proper, however, gradually began to decline after the death of Matthew Paris. Among the chroniclers who take us down to the fourteenth century there are few names worthy of being mentioned. Prominent among them are Paris's own followers at St. Albans, William Rishanger and John of Trokelowe.
Until now we have outlined the originality, peculiarity and the position of the work Matthew Paris as a chronicler has but we have not to forget that the monk of St. Albans was also a cartographer. Cartographic maps occupy a relevant position in the whole historical works of Matthew Paris. His major cartographic production are four maps of England, four itineraries from London to Jerusalem, three maps of Palestine and a *mappa mundi*. What is the target of analysis of this essay and of course of the following paragraphs is *Iter de Londinio in Terram Sanctam*, which is a collection of itineraries from London to Jerusalem. In any case they are not objective scientific maps, but when we consider them we must take in mind the wide visual culture in which these maps' meaning was generated. Doing so we can get a better understanding of how medieval monastic and monarchic cultures thought about, understood and manipulated space (i.e. travel) and time (history) for their own ends.

3. The itinerary maps of Matthew Paris: *Iter de Londinio in Terram Sanctam*

Iter de Londinio is a kind of preface to the *Chronica Majora*, it is set in fact before the historical work and it represents the first detailed maps of Medieval Europe in which Paris depicts the routes that a traveller/pilgrim had to take to arrive in the East to visit the Holy Land. Salvatore Sansone (2009: 83) writes that

"L'*Iter de Londinio in Terram Sanctam*, o meglio, il tratto caratterizzato da ideogrammi di città a scandire le tappe e i luoghi di sosta lungo il percorso è l'unico *itinerarium pictum* medievale giunto sino a noi".

There exist different copies of the *Iter de Londinio* that have arrived to us almost complete and integral. Actually at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, manuscript 16 and 26, two copies are kept, another one is at the British Library, London, and is indicated with the sign 14 C VII, and the last one is called Cotton Nero D. I, also at the British Library. The fact that more than one copy exist may be explained by the lending or the copying by Matthew Paris himself of his work in order to give an exemplar of his cartographies to aristocratic people such as the king or the Countess of Winchester or the Countess of Arundel, Isabel.

As far as the date of composition of the maps is concerned, critics generally agree that the work was accomplished in a period that goes from 1250 to 1255. There are many instances that give credit to this hypothesis. In order to better understand what has been said, it is worth remembering that in the work of Matthew Paris there are written texts, in Matthew Paris's handwriting, which highlight historical events happened previously to the above mentioned years; this clearly shows that the maps were drawn in the years following the events. For example in a passage Paris relates of a letter by Richard of Cornwall in which he narrates of the battle of al-Mansura and of the following imprisonment of King Louis IX of France. It was 1250 when King Louis IX fought against the Muslims to regain the Holy Land, but the king lost the final battle and was captured. In the map the town of al-Mansura has a relevant place to remember the tragic event; moreover, no other medieval map mentions al-Mansura (la Masceir) to symbolize the importance of the defeat for the English. Another instance is the representation of another town, Montmusard near Acre. The town is depicted as surrounded by fortified walls which were built by Louis IX to fortify the place between 1252 and 1254. In addition in another passage, always in *Iter de Londinio*, Matthew mentions the offer of the crown of the reign of Sicily to Richard of Cornwall, brother

of the king. Richard refused the crown, but the event is recorded by Matthew Paris, who used a red ink and wrote vertically in a space of the map destined to the writing; the long passage is interrupted at the centre by the *titulus* "Poille", and somewhat lower by the schematic representation of the town of Beneventum. The date of the offer of the crown to Richard of Cornwall was 1252.

Another important instance about *Iter de Londinio* is the question of the sources from where Matthew drew his information. From the news we have about his life we know for certain that Paris never did the travel himself, so that many critics talk of his map as "an imaginary pilgrimage", as the work is intended for a traveller or pilgrim or a monk from his monastery who wanted to visit important and well-known sacred places such as Rome or Jerusalem. For sure, at the library of his monastery Matthew Paris had the possibility to read a lot of material useful for his maps; he certainly knew Roger of Howden's work *Gesta*, which narrated of the travel of the French King Philip Augustus II to Jerusalem; his work was enriched by a map of the travel of the king. Secondly, Matthew read the narration of King Philip of his travel, or at least had the possibility to speak with the same king. This aspect is particularly interesting because the king on his way back passed across Apulia to arrive to Rome. The Itinerary of the King is equal to the one depicted by Paris, who mentions and represents the same towns, such as Lecce, Bari (Sain Nicholas de Bar), Brindisi, Trani, Barletta, Otranto. For the Italian part of the Itinerary our monk used also all the news that Richard of Cornwall, who came back in 1242 from the Crusade, might give him (we have already pointed out the strict link between Matthew and the crown). Another traveller who surely helped Matthew was Simon of Montfort, who travelled through Italy to reach the Holy Land. Also the Crusaders might have given Paris a lot of information about the routes, the cities, the monuments and the lands and countries they encountered during their travel. Among the sources we have not to forget Sigeric's narration of his travel to Italy. The archbishop of Canterbury, however, gives only a detailed narration of his return itinerary from Rome to London as he never was in the Southern part of

Italy. Rome, in fact, in most cases was the favourite destination. However, it is also necessary to remember that the English preferred the route by sea, in other words they started from London-Dover, crossed France and took ship to Marseille to reach Sicily and then leave from Messina. Another thing worth remembering is the fact that the monastery of St. Albans was greatly visited by all sorts of people that narrated their adventures on the continent and that Matthew Paris was in contact through letters, documents, lending of books and materials with a lot of people. His life was not an isolate, contemplative one, but he was a social participant to the events of his time.

In order to learn what message a certain map conveys, we need to 'read' it. This reading, done by a comparative study of different maps, can refer to the type, or genre of the map, such as imaginary maps, teaching diagrams, itinerary maps, pilgrimage maps. A more detailed level of reading looks at the map's different features, the building blocks from which it is comprised, the cartographical and iconographical elements and motifs. The cartographical elements can convey 'pure' cartographical meaning, and can be imbued with historical-iconographical knowledge. Analyzing the map historically, iconographically and cartographically enables us to isolate these different elements and understand their meaning within the big picture.

Among the objective cartographic elements we find the orientation of the map, or point of arrival, which generally is to the East, as it was considered the centre of the world then known. In Matthew Paris's maps of *Iter de Londinio* the final destination, as we know, was Jerusalem, whose orientation was to the East from the way it was seen when approached from Europe (West).

The viewpoint is another cartographical element that carries iconographic value. It seems that the use of one or more viewpoints was used according to contemporary conventions with the intention of presenting as much information on the travel as possible. There are early maps that represent cities as a plan. This drawing technique appears, for example, in Arculf's

map of the Holy Places from the seventh century, where everything is depicted as a ground plan. In the Middle Ages towns were shown in the conventional way, known and used since Antiquity: polygon and circle shaped walls and towers, viewed obliquely from a height. Sometimes buildings were shown inside the walls.

Many of the early maps, as mentioned above, were drawn facing east, with the eastern places shown on top, as for example the Madaba mosaic map. It is interesting noting that the Semitic people orientation was principally to the East, the rising sun being founded in biblical language, with the East described as forward and the West as behind or towards the sea (referring to the Mediterranean). Thus the T-O maps, which we will discuss later on in these pages and are a possible influence on the Crusaders' round maps, could explain the round maps' orientation.

Ptolemy of Alexandria, in the second century A.D., was the first to point the maps to the north. During the Middle Ages his scientific cartography was forgotten and the maps of the world produced in Christian Europe were again oriented to the east. It seems then that apart from being a cartographic convention, orientation conveyed meaning, and the choice from which side to depict the world was also part of religious considerations.

Moreover, orientation turned into a flexible tool for emphasizing importance more than depicting geographical reality. For example most of the buildings on a map, predominantly public buildings, were rotated so as to be presented from the front, with the entrance toward the viewer. The intent was not the mimetic representation of places, but monuments are shown in elevation or in perspective. Towns are depicted horizontally and often the use of conventional signs was used to depict the places along the way.

The maps of the world can be divided into two main categories. The maps in the first category describe an imaginary historical-biblical unknown world and are based mainly on the Scriptures. Most of these maps are drawn by artists and scholars who had never visited the places represented in the maps. These imaginary maps are conceptual ideological documents which

reflect the Christian image rather than the realistic landscape of a city.

The second group of maps, defined as realistic, claimed to portray the contemporary world. Some were drawn by pilgrims and travellers and were based on their own impressions, while others are copies and imitations depicted in Europe by people who had never seen the places they describe, but who used eye-witness maps as a basis for their work.

We must not forget that a third group exists, it is the group of medieval maps that are not intended as a geographical description of a known place, but as a type of teaching diagram. They occur in the form of a plan, a map of sites and their relationship to each other. As such, the plan does not seek to give information of the buildings' appearance, which would help pilgrims to know what they might see on their visit or remind them of it when they had returned home, but it would enable pilgrims to fix in their minds a sequence of stations, places where they could stop and re-imagine in their minds events told in the Gospel, or the Holy Scriptures.

Matthew Paris's maps are not of these kinds because they are a graphic presentation of a pilgrim/traveller itinerary, a kind of pilgrim/traveller road map, including the major sites and the main walking routes. They are meant to be realistic and serve any practical use. As the title of this paragraph points out, *Iter de Londinio* is an itinerary map, that is a long and detailed list of places in the order they are met with on the ground. In these seven maps, which are the pages of his work, cities are shown by conventional signs such as walls, monuments, churches, abbeys, which may suggest their importance but give no idea of their geographical features nor of their appearance. The same thing happens with mountains or rivers, which when they are drawn on the map, are presented by signs or symbols[6]. Actually the itinerary maps try to relate to actual elements, such as recording measured distances only. In such representations the emphasis is on a place to be reached with effort after a long journey. It is not merely a matter of practical application of where to go, but also the maps indicate the spiritual value of the effort of the travel in term of miles walked and danger encountered. The figures and

animals in the landscape, when they appear, or for example people dressed in foreign and unusual clothing, are there to emphasize that this is an alien territory.
Another consideration to be made is that from the order in which the sites are described in the maps, it is quite obvious that the traveller/pilgrim proceeded along set routes.

3. T-O world maps, climatic zones, Arabic influence

Before examining *Iter de Londinio* in detail, it is better to take into consideration how the Ancients represented the œcumene (the world then known) on a map. Medieval world maps or *mappae mundi*, as they are frequently called, form a well-defined genre of maps. Some 1,100 maps, mostly in manuscript codices of the eighth to the fifteenth centuries, still survive. They are usually schematic in form, and fall into several subcategories depending on their historical origin and their graphic structure. Rooted both in the Hellenistic and Roman traditions they were adapted by the early leaders and scholars of the Christian Church. The most common of these *mappae mundi* were the T-O maps, that were tripartite maps of a disk representing the inhabited world (O) within which a tripartite scheme (T) oriented to the east at the top was depicted. The three continents of the ancient world were symbolized by the T placed within an O. Asia took the upper part of the circle, Europe the lower left quarter, and Africa the lower right quarter. The parts of the T represented the three major hydrographic features known to divide the three parts of the earth: the Don river dividing Europe and Asia, the Nile dividing Africa and Asia, and the Mediterranean sea dividing Europe and Africa. Though pagan in origin, these maps conveniently fitted in with Church teaching, the Earth divided among the three sons of Noah, and some of these maps are lettered Shem, Ham and Japhet respectively. With the course of time these maps became more elaborated, though their own basic principle remained the same.
Another popular representation, more mathematical as conception, accepted the sphericity of the world, and portrayed a single hemisphere divided into five zones or seven climates of

the habitable world, with an encircling ocean, frequently intersected by two oceans at right angles, a double oceanic theory, one equatorial, the other passing through the Poles. These are called the hemisphere or zone maps, and they were extensively used to illustrate the works of Macrobius and Marianus Capella. The zonal category is characterized by orientation to the north or south and by the representation of the Greek climate in five climatic zones that follow parallels of latitude.

Intermediate between the tripartite and the zonal categories of *mappae mundi* is a third category, the quadripartite, which contains maps bearing the characteristics of each. Though these are not numerous, they are sufficiently distinctive and influential to warrant separate treatment. Within their circular, oval or rectangular shapes oriented to the east, there is an ocean river that divides the known tripartite world from the fourth part, unknown on account of the sun's heat but inhabited by the Antipodeans. The maps are believed to stem from one lost eighth-century prototype of Beatus of Liébana's work in which he stressed the mandate of the Apostles to travel in all parts of the earth to preach the Gospel.

From the late-nineteenth century on, several authors have viewed the *mappae mundi* primarily as bearers of locational information, a function no different from other classes of maps in the Middle Ages or any other period. The surviving corpus of medieval world maps has been seen therefore as a marked retrogression from an expected gradual improvement in the representation of the earth's features on maps. Using the Hereford maps as an example might be useful in this case. Lists of place names from written itineraries were incorporated into the map. Though its size (163 x 135 cm) clearly precluded its use as a vademecum for actual journeys (for which written itineraries, pilgrim guides and verbal directions might well have served), it is perhaps likely that the Hereford map and other large thirteenth-century wall maps could have fulfilled a practical didactic purpose in developing the confidence or stimulating the imagination of intended travellers, for which recognizable content was desirable. For this purpose of spiritual education,

however, more was required of the *mappae mundi* than a modicum of current geography. The maps needed also to be imbued with richness of the Christian historical tradition. The *mappae mundi* are the cartographic equivalent of narrative medieval pictures. The thirteenth-century author of the Hereford map even refers to his graphic work as a 'history'. This usage is still supported by one definition of history as a 'historical representation of an event or series of incidents, supported by the use of the word historiated to mean decorated with figures (Oxford English Dictionary, 1986). Another interesting example is the Ebstorf map – a huge thirteenth-century *mappa mundi* (c.1290) unfortunately destroyed in World War II. The body of Christ is literally superimposed on the map of the world. His head is at the east, feet in the west, and arms outspread to gather in the north and the south in a powerful gesture symbolizing the salvation of the world.

This survey would not be complete if we made no reference to the Arabic tradition. We have already underlined the importance of Ptolemy as a cartographer on medieval map-makers, but we have also to say that he was appreciated more as astronomer than as cartographer. However, in Islam Ptolemy's thought was only the basis on which Islamic scientists constructed their own theories, calculations, observations, thanks to the invention of new instruments among which the astrolabe stands. Al-Battani, who lived in Mesopotamia at the beginning of the tenth century, was very famous, but the greatest of all was al-Edrisi (or al-Idrisi), who was asked by the Norman King Roger II to collect and unite in a single work all the information existing in the world to write or better depict an accurate geographical description of the earth then inhabited. Edrisi was born in 1100 in Ceuta, in Morocco, but he moved to Cordova, where he had the possibility to learn and study. He completed his studies in Palermo, a centre of culture, which was governed by Roger II. The work of Edrisi lasted for fifteen years and was finished in 1154, its title was *Book of King Roger* and was accompanied by a map, Tabula Rogeriana, which was carved on a 3.5 x 1.5 metres silver plate. Unfortunately this plate was destroyed few years later and we have lost it. The relevance of Edrisi's cartographic

work was such as to influence all the Islamic scholars of the following centuries. An important element in Edrisi's cartography is that, as all Arab cartographers, he set the south in the upper part of his maps; a relevant point in Matthew Paris's maps is, in fact, the position of the south in the top of the folio he used, while the north is at the bottom of the page. We will examine this point in the following paragraph concerning the *Iter de Londinio* maps.

4. The Itinerary from London to Apulia (Otranto)

However *Iter de Londinio* presents a journey from London to Jerusalem, our analysis will end with Apulia, precisely at Otranto, where the traveller took a ship for the Holy Land.

The itinerary's unique seven pages constitute, with their description of roads and travel time, a kind of medieval road map linking London with the great centres of pilgrimage, Rome and Jerusalem. *Iter* is carried out in a pen drawing painted in watercolours and organized in sectors which follow a vertical line. The pages, which in Paris's hands may be called, as Farinelli (2003: 3) says, "spazio logico", are divided into two parts, two columns, which have different colours: blue, ocher and green, according to the typology which English critics have defined strip maps, on which the main stops of the travel are signed. The map, with the bottom located in the bottom of the page and the south in the upper part, has a very peculiar outlook and must be read following the same direction, from low toward the top for both columns. Each city is represented in a stylized form and sometimes, as simple indication, a text in Anglo-Norman language with some words or parts in Latin is added. Matthew Paris's maps are free of the general medieval tendency toward symmetry and stereotype. In the maps stops on the route from England to South Italy are lead down in vertical line separated by bands lightly tinted in blue, pink, pale rose and green and each segment is read from the lower left corner from bottom to top. Each town is captioned and marked by an architectural vignette comprising crenellated walls, towers and churches. The distance from one place to another is usually indicated as a day's journey

(jurnée) on a connecting vertical line. When seas and oceans are drawn they are tinted in green, while rivers are blue and mountains are yellow or ocher. Rivers are not signed out for their importance but for their nearness to the city and very often a bridge is indicated to mark where to cross it. As far as mountains are present, such as the central mountains of Italy, they are tinted in yellow or ocher. Generally mountains are shown through signs, symbols as for example short, concentric circles. London and Rome are established as the major terminal points and are provided with city plans giving important gates, buildings, churches and other landmarks. It is easy to understand the relevance of Rome, if we think to the strict relationship between the King and the Pope and the Anglican and Catholic Churches and interests.

There are two views of London, one from the side, the other from above, at bird's eye view. The first would be the one the traveller had arriving from the north, probably, in Paris's imagination, from St. Albans monastery, the latter seems to be taken from a point in height, it is impossible to say which one Matthew had in mind, but which gave a panoramic sight of the city. London is surrounded by a circular crenellated wall and of the six gates which in Medieval time allowed the entrance in the city only three are shown: Ludgate, Newgate and Cripplegate. The Thames divides horizontally the town into two parts, and Saint Paul's Cathedral is drawn in the north beyond the river. On the west Westminster Abbey appears and in the east the Tower of London. Coming out of London Paris may suggest two routes, one directly to Dover, the other toward Rochester, on the river Medway, then the crossing of Kent to arrive at Canterbury: chef des iglises d'Engleterre, as the written text says, and finally Dover. Two ships on the upper margin of the column mark the crossing of the Channel, while the arrival in France is represented on the lower margin of the second column of the page. Cities and roads occupy an ambiguous space, at once charged with the concreteness of their labels and limited topography, and yet also abstracted from the surrounding geography by their ambivalent relationship to their frames. These frames, alternately coloured in pink and blue, lend focus and

tension to their regions, creating a space of suspended animation, a space that floats behind and beyond Paris's drawn boundaries and the physical boundaries of the book. The frames obscure buildings and towns behind them, so that the area shown is understood to continue past the frames, but at the same time, the frames lift those regions out of their extension in the landscape and force the attention of the onlooker upon the object so enframed. Towns at the base of the passages are never totally obscured, they fully assert themselves as starting points for the passages' movements. By constricting the landscape to such a tight path, Paris effectively compresses vision towards the upper edge of the page. The upper edge also becomes the horizon beyond which the onlooker/reader understands the journey to continue, either at the bottom of the right-hand strip or on the next page. Each turning of the page implies its own crossing of space, because that space is not depicted but merely understood.

The entrance in France is characterized by three entrances: Wissant, Boulogne, Calais. From the French coast two different alternatives start: the first one, the main, begins with Wissant to reach Montreuil, then San Riquier and Poix, and finally Beauvais. The latter from Calais arrives at San Bertin, then Arras and San Quentin, to end at Cité de Reims. The towns that Paris includes in his maps, while often simply convenient staging posts, were also those of pilgrimage, places where relics of saints were kept or where well renowned monasteries existed. So he gives an alternative to his traveller in order that he might, if he wanted, visit these famous localities. If we consider this peculiarity from a political perspective, we have to underline that Matthew Paris was able to overcome his personal criteria of selection due to his attachment to the English country, crown and religious order. He suggests that Christianity and Catholic belief reined all over the world and prevents any particular distinction or preference of one location over all the others. This highlights his cleverness and openness.

The Beauvais route goes, or better, leads the traveller to St. Denis, the best way to enter Paris after a sort travel. The map, rather than being a perfect reliable guide to France and later to

Italy, is imprecise, actually imperfections abound, so that it gives only an approximate example of the routes a traveller or pilgrim had to take to reach the places he/she wanted to visit. As soon as the itinerary moves south of the city of Paris, inaccuracy abounds. Moreover a lot of alternatives to the main route are given. On the one hand this enriches the map and the possibility of movement along the space of the itinerary, on the other the alternatives create confusion. At the city of Paris the route bifurcates and one could travel along a more southern route through Sens (Sanz), Auxerre (Aucerre), Vëzelay (Verzelay) and on to Lyons. There it splits again and one could continue along the river Rhône (La Roone) to St. Giles (Seint Gile) either as a point of embarkation for the Holy Land or to enter Italy along the coast. If one wanted to continue by land he/she had to arrive at La Tour-du-Pin and from there to Mount Cenis: le Munt Senis Kem passe ki va en Lumbardie.

The Italian itinerary starts in this way and the first town it encounters is Susa (Suse). The left column of the page is characterized by the depiction of the river Po which crosses it in the middle. Then the route goes on to reach Torino (Turins la premere ville de Lombardie), Avigliana (Avellance), Chivasso (Claveus), Mortara (Morteus) and finally Vercelli (Verzeus). The city of Milano (Melane) is represented on the left, at the end of the river Po, probably to highlight a change of direction in order to reach it. The second column starts with Pavia (Pavie), then continues with Lodi (Lodes) and Cremona (Cremune). At Pavia an alternative is given which goes to Piacenza (Plesence a mar) and Parma (Parme). From Parma the traveler can take two routes: the first (vers orient [...] a dextre) seems to lead toward the coast to Lucca (la vile de Lukes) and then Pisa (Pise sur mer), which is wrongly positioned in the north when in reality it is located south of Lucca. Going on along this route from Modena (Modene) the traveller arrives to Bologna (Bolomne la grosse) and finally to Imola (Ymole), from there the route goes to Faenza (Faence), Forlì (Furlins) and the town of Riet (Rieta). In this way the traveller reaches Roma (Rome). On the map many other secondary itineraries are depicted, so as to give the guide to visit other important Italian locations. It is worth noting that

almost in all the maps a red segment unites all the places of the itinerary.

The map of Rome is depicted as an appended flag folded into the space of Southern Italy, probably not to damage the design and mostly to give relevance to the Italian capital. The city has a rectangular shape and is surrounded by crenellated walls, moreover it is divided into two parts by the Tiber (Tiberis). The inscription "Roma" is written in Gothic characters which are alternately red and blue. Inside the walls the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul are depicted, in the middle there is the picture of the Church of San Giovanni in Laterano (St John de Laterane). Many important monuments and buildings are present. The most interesting aspect of the description of Rome which Paris does is not the map itself but the long text which accompanies the design; in this text our monk defines Rome as the capital of Christianity: chef de la crestiente. Paris writes also the legend of the foundation of Rome due to Romulus and Remus, sons of the god Mars.

Coming out from Rome there are two alternatives, the one which goes to Capua (Capes), Aversa (Averse) and Napoli (Naples), then Salerno (Salerne), Melfi (Melfe) to arrive at Reggio Calabria (Rise) and so take ship for Sicily. The other one, which crosses the mountains of central Italy (the Appennines) reaches Monte Cassino (le munt Cassin et seint Germain la goille per le Suz), Benevento (Benevent), and Foggia (Foges) in order to follow the coastal route which touches Lientee (which is difficult to identify), Otranto (Otrante, port de mer), Trani (Trane), Barletta (Barlette), Bari (Seint Nicholas de Bar), Brindisi (Brandiz). These cities are given in a wrong geographical order but they lead to the way for Jerusalem. All the coastal towns and cities of Apulia were well-known sea ports where merchants, soldiers and pilgrims left for the Holy Land. At the entrance of Apulia it is written Apulia and somewhat at the top of the titulus: la forte de vers poille in order to emphasize the Apulian land. If the information of Apulia which the reader may derive from the view of Paris's map is rather imprecise and confused, it is not for lack of knowledge of Southern Italy, but mostly to prejudices that Matthew had on this part of Italy. We know, for example,

that Bari was a famous and well-known city for the English, for the fame that St. Nicholas and his relics and abbey had. Moreover in Bari a church dedicated to Thomas Becket had been erected in 1180, after Thomas's canonization by Pope Alexander III in 1173. This means that probably Englishmen visited the Apulian city. However, at least three historical events justified the relationship between the English and the Apulian citizens. The conflict caused by the death of Thomas Becket had intensified diplomatic contacts between the English Kingdom and the other European countries, then the marriage of Joan, daughter of King Henry II, to William II of Sicily in 1177 provoked exchanges and connections, lastly the stop during winter 1190 in Sicily of Richard I on his way to the Holy Land for the Crusade. Nevertheless, the view of South Italy was not a favourable one. Loud (1999: 192) writes:

"Quando gli autori inglesi menzionavano il regno meridionale, tendevano infatti a porre l'accento sugli aspetti che a loro apparivano strani: il clima, i popoli diversi, i musulmani che vivevano sotto la dominazione cristiana."[7]

Apart from Matthew Paris, the most negative example of this attitude towards South Italy is Peter of Blois, one who was first archbishop of Bath, then of London until his death in 1212. Peter of Blois had sustained the leadership of Stephen of Perche in Sicily, but when a terrible revolution overthrew Stephen's supremacy, Peter felt a profound dislike for the country and its inhabitants.

From the entrance in Apulia another inland alternative route is given; this touched all the inland towns existing in Medieval time, but the end of the route, its final destination, was again a seaport where to embark for Jerusalem.

Another interesting element of the map of South Italy by Paris is the depiction of Sicily. The map, actually, shows a folded smaller triangular flag attached at the top of the page which represents the island of Sicily. Once the flag is opened the reader is confronted by Mount Etna, at the centre of the island, said by the text to be the gaping Mouth of Hell: Etna. This is the mountain which is always barren and they say this is the mouth of hell since the fire stinks. As it blows out sulphur, Etna Cest le

munt ki tuz iur sart, et dist honk e iluce est une gale de enfer kar le feu put. Si envent sufre. Only other few cities, among which Trapani (Trapens), Messina (Messinas), Siracusa (Syracuse) are signed.
In addition to what underlined, we may only say that Paris's maps show a good competence for the parts relative to Northern Italy, but a more scanty and approximate knowledge of the South. Nonetheless his work is a landmark in the history of cartography.

5. Strip-maps, volvelle, flaps

Matthew Paris used topographic illustration of the places touched in his itinerary in two columns in an unbroken sequence, this had the added advantage of revealing only one section at a time to the reader. This technique is generally called by critics strip-map, which works as a dynamic tool engaging the viewer in practices that helped him/her to familiarize with the working places of the map as a means to join their spaces. In other words the strip-map required participation and rendered the reader more attentive and active. So not only the sight but also the mind/intellect was involved in the understanding and guide-line of the map.
Matthew's volvelle is another of the *Chronica Majora* preparatory materials the practices of which helped the onlooker of the maps to acquire a strong sense of place. A volvelle is a separate disk of vellum attached to the base folio by a pin which forms a pivot about which the disk can be freely rotated (Connolly, 2009: 65). In the thirteenth century the volvelle was used as a tool, in the manner of a computus, to help determine Easter, other moveable feasts, Sunday letters and so on. This computus was a table of dates that allowed to coordinate the lunar year with the solar year and determine the proper dates for liturgical celebrations. These tables were often presented as *rotae* or wheels.
Matthew Paris's is the first one to survive, although the volvelle was very commonly used also in previous times. The volvelle may have given Matthew the idea of adding moving and turning

parts to his maps so that his iconographic works were not static but required the reader's participation to acquire a better understanding of what is depicted on the page.
As mentioned in the map of South Italy, the Apulian itinerary, two flaps appear, the one representing Rome, the other Sicily. The flaps work as a system that cooperates with its users to produce movements and different meanings. A flap is a piece of parchment able to bend and change position easily without breaking, so it can be closed, that is folded, on the map or opened to look at the pictorial illustration it contains. Even in his case the participation of the onlooker is active and of primary relevance. The folding flap has the effect of bending geographic space, in other words it is a workable tool for the understanding of the pictorial pattern created by the map-maker.

6. Final remarks

Maps, like works of art, are a powerful means of conveying geographical information, they contain many layers of iconographical meaning of the culture in which they were created. They are a powerful means of communication that allows for the expression of messages of a religious, political or economic nature. In this sense, they are geographical-historical documents with strong didactic aims and purposes. Maps are defined as graphic representations that facilitate a special understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes or events in the human world. They are also defined as spatial configurations of places of human meaning and content in which the central factor of the organization of space is not the morphology or geometric structures of the forms in the described area, but the story behind them. Another way of looking at maps is a social construction of the world expressed through the medium of cartography. Maps are a construction of reality, images laden with intentions and consequences that can be studied in their socio-temporal context. Like books, they are also the product of both individual minds and the wider cultural values in a particular society.

The linearized format of Matthew Paris's itinerary maps is unique in medieval cartographic production. No other maps of the period divide the space of Latin West in the same or even similar ways – as parallel strips moving in one direction – nor do other medieval maps place so much emphasis on their material support as a performative setting for their viewing. But this uniqueness or inventiveness, so characteristic of Matthew Paris, becomes problematic for precisely those disciplinary practices that seek to draw straight lines from an original or source of an image or style, to its later adaptations in the works of art under investigation. Since Matthew Paris was, it seems, largely self-taught, that very inventiveness upon which he relied in the creation of his illustrations and artworks is itself a moment of diachronic level explaining, in part, why art history has virtually ignored much of his work. It also means that another kind of interpretive strategy must be used in order to get at what sorts of meanings and uses his material had for his contemporaries. In the itinerary maps Matthew Paris has provided a general scheme to follow, leaving the specifics of which routes and how to turn the flaps up to the user/reader. Matthew's system thus created greater understanding of the ideas and associations contained in his representational space, and he did so without enumerating those meanings. In other words, the system created the possibilities of different interpretations without setting those interpretations forth. Like all other texts, maps use signs to represent the world. Maps do not process a grammar in the mode of written language, but they are nonetheless deliberately designed as texts, created by the application of principles and techniques, and developed as formal systems of communication by map-makers. While literary documents use words and phrases in order to promote ideas, or to influence beliefs, maps are designed to do just the same, but using graphic figures instead of words. Thus maps are sources of decorative elements which are discrete motifs, to be valued separately and as a whole.

Fig. 1 – London, British Library, Ms. *Royal* 14 C. VII. Strip map of the route from London to Beauvais.

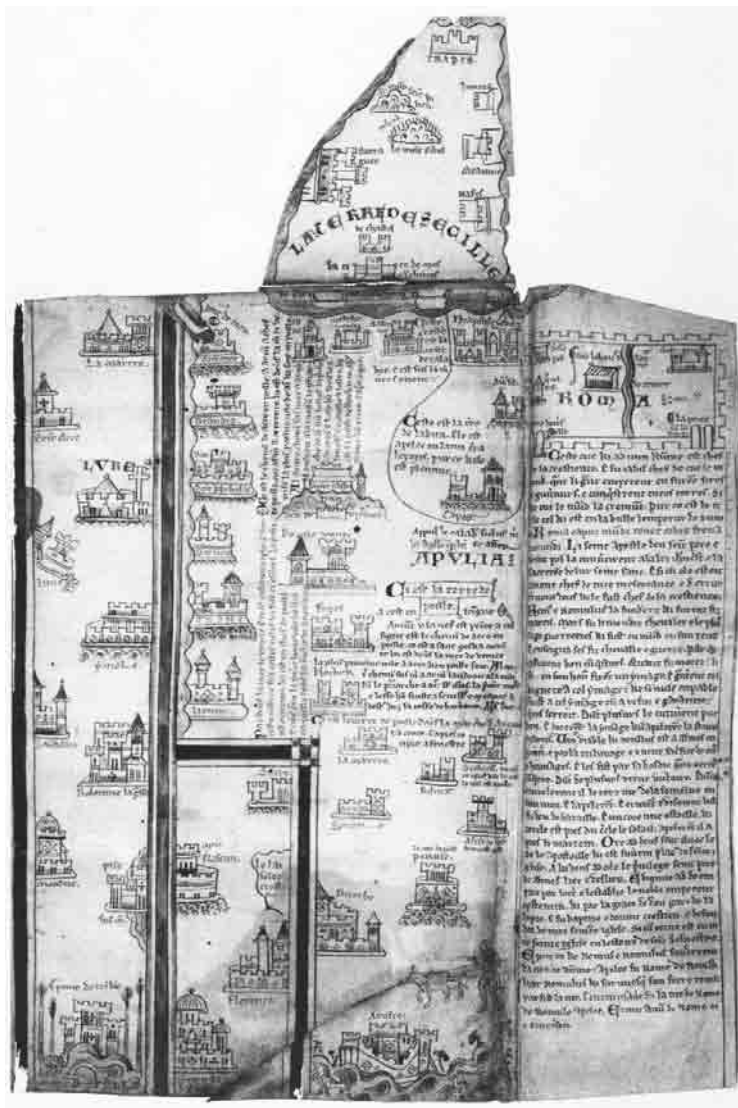

Fig. 2 – Cambridge, Corpus Christy College, Ms 26, Map of South Italy with Rome and Sicily.

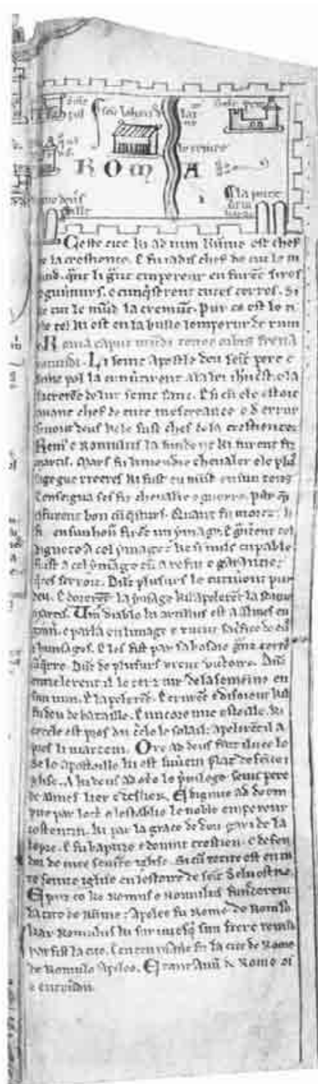

Fig. 3 – The written text to the view of Rome.

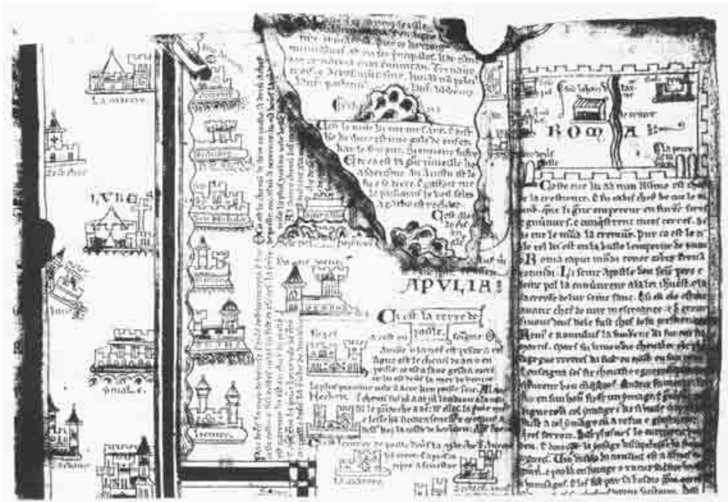

Fig. 4 – Map of South Italy with flap of Sicily folded down.

Notes

[1] In this passage Musca underlines how Medieval men and women did not live isolated from the rest of the world but they had contacts, moved, and travelled through all the Western world of the earth then known. See Giosuè Musca (1993: 16).

[2] Roger claims in his preface to have selected "from the books of Catholic writers worthy of credit, just as flowers of various colours are gathered from various fields". Hence he called his work *Flores Historiarium*, a title appropriated in the twelfth century to a long compilation by various hands.

[3] Matthew fancied his own talents as a stylist, his language is vivid, racy and always readable, and felt he could improve on Wendover's more sober prose and comments. So, before continuing his predecessor's work, he revised it and added many personal considerations.

[4] On one of king Henry III's visits, in March 1257, Matthew was invited to the king's table; Henry asked about the progress of his chronicle, suggested matters that deserved to be inserted, including the election of his brother, Richard of Cornwall, to the Empire, and for Matthew's benefit he listed the imperial electors. Ten years before, when the king was seated in Westminster Abbey during the solemn reception of a relic of the Precious Blood, he had Matthew sit on the step beside the throne and told him to record every detail of the event in his history. All this information is taken from Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*.

[5] Though Matthew Paris is opposed to all forms of taxation and constantly decries royal demands for subsidies, he heartily approves of expenditure on the court and upkeep of royal pump.

[6] Susan Lewis and many other critics interpret the many signs and symbols (the Θ, for example) as elaborations of Ralph de Diceto's system of *sygna* (see Lewis 1987: 44-5).

[7] Loud underlines the unsympathetic attitude of the English for South Italy.

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