



Liber chronicarum, *Carta marina* and other mappae mundi

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Abstract:

Published in 1493, *Liber chronicarum* by Hartmann Schedel contains one of the most unique maps of that period. It shows a pantheon of monsters who were believed to inhabit the lands at the edge of the world known to people back then. Olaus Magnus, author of *Carta marina*, which was printed in 1539, adorned the water areas on his map with a variety of sea creatures, from those posing as islands to mythical creatures, such as the unicorn or Charybdis. Both these maps originate in the medieval mappae mundi tradition – illustrated compendia of the regions they present. A curious reader would perceive that they are heavily influenced by the works of antique and medieval cartographers: Pomponius Mela, Ptolemy the Elder, Bede the Venerable and Vincent of Beauvais. The phantasmagorical quality of the creatures on these maps is an interesting starting point from which to reflect on the following question: why, on a cognitive level, do these old maps – just as in fairy tales about the unknown, the mysterious and the dangerous – give their warnings in the metaphorical form of monsters? The similarity between mappae mundi and fairy tales is no accident. According to Marina Warner's *Once upon a Time*, nannies told children fairy tales to familiarise them with everyday problems and dilemmas, to shed light on the complexities of interpersonal relations, and to explain the workings of the world.