The Body-Worls of Opicinus de Canistris, Artist and Visionary (1296-ca.1354)

by

Karl Peter Whittington

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Committee in charge:

Professor Whitney Davis, Chair
Professor Beate Fricke
Professor Elizabeth Honig
Professor Thomas Laqueur

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores the drawings of a fourteenth-century Italian priest, Opicinus de Canistris, who is emerging as a critical figure for medieval art history. His drawings contradict numerous assumptions of how scientific curiosity, space, allegory, gender and humor operated in medieval visual culture. Opicinus combined maps with human bodies to create complex allegories of the natural and spiritual world. These drawings defy traditional art-historical classification; they relate closely to contemporary maps and sea-charts, religious pictorial imagery, medical drawings, and cosmological diagrams, but belong to none of these categories. This study examines his drawings in relation to medieval epistemology, science, cartography, allegory, and gender, as well as modern theoretical approaches to mapping and the diagrammatic mode.

This study also explores Opicinus’s process of experimentation and making. To gain a greater understanding of what Opicinus was trying to convey through the creation of embodied maps, the maps, themselves, are explored first – their empirical basis, conditions of use, geometric techniques, and visual qualities – seeking what it was in them that so fascinated Opicinus. The next chapter explores vision and allegory in the drawings, probing the interactions between cartographic form and theological content that created his meanings. The third chapter questions the relationship between Opicinus’s body-world drawings and contemporary conceptions and pictures of cosmic relationships and their relation to the body, and the final section examines how Opicinus used gender binaries and graphic sexuality as structural devices and metaphors.
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On the 31st of March in 1334, an Italian priest named Opicinus de Canistris became ill. Opicinus was a minor functionary and scribe at the papal court, which had moved to Avignon some thirty years earlier, and luckily for us he kept a kind of day-book that still survives. In what sounds very much like a stroke, Opicinus described how his body slowly became paralyzed; he temporarily lost his ability to speak, and much of his memory. But during this illness, Opicinus relates that he had a divine vision. He wrote how “my interior eyes were opened to discern the images of the earth and the sea.”

The word “image,” or “ymago” seems to have meant something very specific to Opicinus – he used it here to describe an image of a person, a human likeness. Thus the “images” that he saw of the earth and the sea were actually visions of continents and oceans transformed into human figures – the figures that I call “body-worlds.”

As Opicinus slowly recovered from his illness, he regained the use of his right hand, and he took this healing to be a sign from God – he writes that his arm and hand would only move when he used them to make drawings of his vision. But like so many medieval visionaries, Opicinus had only been granted the image. Its interpretation was left up to him. The

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2 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own, and all transcriptions of the Latin text are from Laharie’s 2008 edition of the Vaticanus text. This passage is from Vatican Library Vat. Lat. 6435, f. 53r. The full passage reads, “…aliquantulum apertis oculus meis interioribus ad discernendas ymagines terre et maris et conferendas in conscientia mea secundum libellum declarationis predicte in peciis X papyri composui...” Opicinus describes this same revelation in several other passages, on folios 75 verso and 85 verso. See Morse (1996), 123, 136-9
representation of this divine image of the earth would occupy much of the rest of his life.\(^3\) In over eighty surviving drawings, he experimented with how to uncover the meaning that he was sure God had planted in the vision he saw, and he hoped that the drawings he produced would help to renew the faith of all Christians.\(^4\)

The elaborate, complex and beautiful drawings that Opicinus created in the years following his illness and vision are the subject of this study. Their unusual forms complicate our most basic assumptions about what and how medieval artists could represent. The drawings took many forms – there is no one “representative” example. But a look at just one drawing (figure 13), instantly reveals their uniqueness. We see before us a map of the Mediterranean world – Europe, North Africa, Anatolia and part of the Near East are left the white color of the paper, and the seas around them are tinted with a reddish-brown wash. Inside of, above, or coexistent with the continents, we begin to see the bodies. In this example, Europe is embodied as a man – his head occupies the Iberian Peninsula, his chest and stomach lie in France (where we see some kind of beast in the ocean that tries to bite off his shoulder), his arm arches up through the lowlands and Germany, and his legs occupy the Italian Peninsula and the Dalmatian Coast. Across the Mediterranean, we see the figure of Africa, in this case depicted as a woman. Her face is to the west, shown in profile as she seems to whisper into the ear of the European figure across the Straits of Gibraltar. Her pointing hand lies in modern-day Tunisia, and her legs and feet occupy Egypt.

What we see, then, is an embodied map – a picture of the earth’s surface drawn through the depiction of human bodies. Rather than looking at Opicinus’s whole corpus of drawings, this study looks specifically to the two-dozen drawings of these body-worlds, and at the question of what this one crucial decision meant: what did superimposing the body and the earth allow Opicinus to express? Answering this question is not easy; every one of Opicinus’s drawings is so different, so confusing, and so visually disorienting that generalizations are difficult and often misleading. But looking at them as a group, perhaps the first thing one notices is that the map itself is incredibly accurate. The coastlines of the Mediterranean and the relative scale and position of the landforms are almost exactly the same as we know them to be today. Opicinus’s maps were based on the most modern and technical cartography of his day – mariner’s sea-charts, which we call portolans. To explain what the body-worlds “mean,” one must explore how and why Opicinus harnessed these empirical maps toward a completely different purpose than that for which they were created. As we will see, Opicinus used this technical, practical, scientific cartography to probe deeper into the nature of God. This encounter between the scientific and the spiritual is best engaged by looking at the structures that Opicinus used to create the drawings; I want to explore and explain how Opicinus used the maps’ forms to activate the content he placed inside.

In this study, I demonstrate the ways that these drawings spark multiple lines of inquiry – into the interplay of religion and science, medieval concepts of creativity and experimentation, the practice of allegory in the fourteenth century, and the status of representation. The

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\(^3\) Throughout this study, I follow Whitney Davis’s terminological distinction between “images” and “pictures.” “Image” is a more abstract term, and can refer to mental or imaginative images, or to retinal views out on the world. “Picture” refers to created representations of images.

\(^4\) As Morse pointed out, on Palatinus folio 4v, Opicinus highlighted this point through his assertion that his work could be considered the “last gospel.” “Ecce evangelium novissimim sempiternum...” See Morse (1996), 106.
multiplication of meaning in these drawings, and its reflection in the structure of this dissertation, is a crucial aspect of my methodology. When I began to study Opicinus’s drawings, I suspected that they would express a specific new concept about the connection between people, the world, and God. But I have come to see that looking for one concrete argument or expression of what he was trying to do is misguided. Each of Opicinus’s drawings is a record of a different experiment. He wanted to understand what his vision of the body-worlds had meant, but it is unclear which of the drawings, if any, he viewed as successes – the drawings may never have led him to a true understanding of his vision. We have no record that any of these drawings ever had a viewership. Opicinus may have intended them for the Pope, who had read and commented on earlier theological treatises that Opicinus had sent him, but they have left no trace in the historical or artistic record, so we don’t know whether his work achieved its goals either in his mind or in the minds of others. All we are left with is the record of his experimentation and play with forms – of the way that he used visual media to work through potential ideas, frameworks and explanations for his vision.

The richness and interest of Opicinus’s drawings is in this experimentation – in how they show him working toward answers, not representing fully-formed ideas or interpretations. Rather than pointing to “art as theological argument,” the phrase used by Herb Kessler and Jeffrey Hamburger to describe other works of the period, these drawings depict “art as experiment.” My dissertation explores this process of experimentation. To gain a greater understanding of what Opicinus was trying to convey through the creation of embodied maps, I first explore the maps, themselves – their empirical basis, conditions of use, geometric techniques, and visual qualities. What was it about them that so fascinated Opicinus? I then turn to an exploration of vision and allegory in Opicinus’s drawings, seeking the interactions between cartographic form and theological content that create meaning. The third chapter questions the relationship between Opicinus’s body-world drawings and contemporary conceptions and pictures of cosmic relationships and their relation to the body, and the final section examines, for the first time, how Opicinus used gender binaries and graphic sexuality as structural devices.

5 In her dissertation, Victoria Morse introduced a similar idea – that Opicinus’s works do not constitute a linear argument, but are rather a series of “probes” into different questions. See Morse (1996), 108.
6 This model is both similar and different from the most famous medieval visionaries. Hildegard of Bingen is an apt comparison. The drawings that she made of her visions were similarly inventive and shocking. A crucial difference, though, is that her visions of heavenly images came accompanied by divine interpretation. See, on Hildegard, Barbara Newman, ed., Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and her World (Berkeley, 1998), Richard Emmerson, “The Representation of Antichrist in Hildegard of Bingen’s Scivias,” Gesta 41 (2002), and Madeline Caviness, "Hildegard as Designer of the Illustrations to her Works," in Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of her Thought and Art, ed. Charles Burnett and Peter Dronke, (London, 1998), 29-63.
Biographical Sketch

Opicinus was born in Lomello, a small town just outside Pavia in Lombardy, on December 24, 1296. His large family, the Canisters, were prosperous Pavians, actively involved in the politics and religious life of the city. He was destined for a religious career from an early age, and underwent an extensive education. Morse characterizes his relationship to this education as highly ambivalent; it was clearly formative, yet he often wrote later of the ways in which it had led him further from God. His main interests in these early years seem to have been in drawing, language, wordplay and theology. In his teens and as a young man, he held a number of jobs, presumably to contribute to family finances, which were often in disarray; he was, at various points, a toll-collector at a bridge over the Po River, a tutor, and a book-illuminator. The latter job was undertaken while the family was in exile in Genoa, following their involvement in Pavia in the Guelf/Ghibelline struggles that were taking place all over Italy (the Canisters were Guelfs, supporters of the Pope rather than of the Holy Roman Emperor). Morse discusses in great depth the ways in which political turmoil in Lombardy and Pavia, particularly the Papal interdict that was placed over the city around 1315, deeply shaped Opicinus’s thought.

Opicinus became chaplain of the Cathedral in Pavia in 1318, and was ordained two years later in Parma in 1320, at the age of twenty-four. In 1323 he took over the Church of S. Maria Capella in Pavia, which came with only a small benefice, but greater status. In July 1328, Opicinus left Pavia and his parish, presumably, Morse argues, as a result of further political and theological turmoil in the city. After a period of transience, he settled in Avignon in 1329, where he describes meeting Pope John XXII, who he greatly admired; in December of 1330, he was appointed as a scribe in the papal penitentiary, where he would stay, one assumes, for the rest of his life. It was in Avignon, in 1334, that Opicinus fell ill, and underwent what has been variously characterized as a serious illness, a psychotic break followed by schizophrenic episodes, a series of visionary experiences, or a religious conversion. In the years following his illness, he continued to work at the papal court, in addition to making his drawings in his spare time. We know nothing about the circumstances of his death, sometime in between 1352 and 1355.

The Manuscripts

Opicinus’s drawings survive in two manuscripts, both kept in the Vatican Library in Rome. One is the day-book or diary mentioned above – Vat. Lat. 6435, called the “Vaticanus” in the literature. It is a medium-size book on paper, composed of 90 two-sided folios. The first 48 folios contain little visual material besides marginalia, while the second half of the book contains some textual pages, some full-page drawings, and some smaller drawings with

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8 Most of this biographical sketch is compiled using Morse’s first and second chapters; see Morse (1996), 36-168. Her reading of the local historical sources for Opicinus’s early life and family are impeccable, and she gleans much of the rest of her biographical information from Opicinus’s 1330 textual description of Pavia, the text of the Vaticanus, and the calendar on folio 11 recto of the Palatinus. A biographical sketch with a very different interpretation can be found in Muriel Laharie, *Le Journal Singulier d’Opicinus De Canistris*, (Vatican City, 2008), XLVII-LII.


10 Morse (1996), 69-82, 223.
extensive texts on or around them. In all, there are 36 significantly-sized drawings. The other surviving drawings are found in Pal. Lat. 1993, called the “Palatinus.” This “manuscript” is actually a collection of 27 unbound parchment sheets, averaging about two feet by three, although some are significantly larger. Each sheet has a single large drawing or diagram on each side.

We have no way of knowing how many other drawings Opicinus completed – there is certainly no reason to believe that all, or even a majority of the works have survived. Those that do survive are dated to the 1330s and 40s. Opicinus almost always dated the Vaticanus drawings, which were completed between June and November of 1337. He returned to these folios frequently in the years that followed – many include changes, graphic additions, or new captions, which he dated individually (we find dates from the 1338-1341, especially). The dating of the Palatinus is more complicated – the large autobiographical calendar on folio 11 recto, which provides the most complete biographical information, ends with June 1336, suggesting that this drawing was finished by that date. Other dates in the manuscript are scarce; most scholars agree that the bulk of the drawings were completed between February of 1335 and June of 1336, with later additions stretching all the way to 1350.11

Thus, one may notice some sequence to the Vaticanus drawings, although the later additions make it clear that Opicinus was at work on all of the drawings over a period of years. The evidence is less clear for the Palatinus drawings – since there are probably folios missing, and we don’t know if they were ever meant to be viewed in sequence, there has been little effort made by other scholars or myself to try to establish a meaningful order. Without knowing the intended function of these larger single-sheet drawings, it is impossible to know how they were meant to be viewed. Thus, the official numbering of the folios by the Vatican Library is entirely random. All the drawings, I think, were intended to stand on their own within the broader context of Opicinus’s work. As I argued above, each is a separate experiment or probe into the meaning of his vision or conscience and their relation to the Church and the cosmos.

Previous Literature

The questions which I explore in this research are fundamentally different than those posed by Opicinus’s other interpreters, though I do rely in many ways on their contributions. Opicinus’s works were rediscovered in the Vatican Library in the early twentieth century, and initially researched by the German art-historian Richard Salomon, who published a description and basic analysis of the manuscript in 1936 as the first volume of what would become the Journal of the Warburg Institute.12 Salomon was followed by Ernst Kris, who, in his famous 1952 book, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, was the first to label Opicinus as “a psychotic artist of the Middle Ages.” This biographical approach has shaped nearly all the scholarship on Opicinus since the 1950s. Two schools have developed in the last thirty years: a group of

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11 On the dating of the drawings, see Catherine Harding, "Opening to God: The Cosmographical Diagrams of Opicinus De Canistris," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 61 (1998), 22-24 and Morse (1996), 149-53, 153-61 (on the Vaticanus), and 161-67 (on the Palatinus). Morse underlines the point that Opicinus was at work on the Palatinus and Vaticanus at the same time at various periods, and that he saw them as being part of the same intellectual project.

12 Morse explains that the manuscripts were originally brought to the attention of Fritz Saxl in 1913, but were not connected with other extant textual works by Opicinus until the 1920s, at which point a more complete picture of his extant production emerged. See Morse (1996), 1-4.
European (primarily French) scholars who are interested in Opicinus as a case study of medieval psychosis, and a series of American, German and Italian scholars who have, for the most part, bracketed this diagnosis, focusing instead of Opicinus’s place within theological and political discourses in the fourteenth century. While the aims of both groups of scholars vary widely according to their interests (psychosis, politics, cartography, visions, preaching, etc.), they have all taken Opicinus, rather than his work, as the primary focus of their studies.\footnote{In the brief review of the literature that follows, I deal explicitly only with the works on Opicinus which have been most influential for my own study (those by Salomon, Kris, Camille, Roux, Laharie, Morse and Harding). In her dissertation, Morse includes an excellent and comprehensive review of all of the literature on Opicinus up to the mid-nineties; this includes a number of shorter essays and several books that have been less influential to my own thinking, but still form a significant body of work, particular in the period from the 1960s to the 1980s. See Morse (1996), 16-31.}

Richard Salomon still looms large in the study of Opicinus’s life and work; despite its age, his *Opicinus de Canistris: Weltbild und Bekenntnisse eines Avignonesischen Klerikers des 14. Jahrhunderts* remains the most comprehensive treatment of the Palatinus manuscript’s texts and images.\footnote{Richard Salomon, *Opicinus De Canistris: Weltbild Und Bekenntnisse Eines Avignonesichen Klerikers Des 14. Jahrhunderts*, (London, 1936).} Salomon was the first to work on this manuscript after it was found in the Vatican archives, and his work aimed to present Opicinus rather than interpret him. Working from the biographical calendar on folio 11 recto, Salomon wrote the first sketch of Opicinus’s life. He then described the physical characteristics of the manuscript (a series of large, unbound drawings on whole sheets of parchment), and addressed a number of topics before turning to his catalogue of the drawings; he includes sections on “Maps,” “Calendars,” “Style,” “Classifications/Correspondences,” and “Astrology and Pseudo-Astrology.” These sections are helpful explorations of the subject matter in Opicinus’s drawings; unlike many of Opicinus’s later interpreters, Salomon was an impeccably trained art historian who took the drawings’ iconography seriously. This attention to detail continued in his catalogue, where Salomon described the basic features of each drawing, transcribed many of the texts that cover them, and, perhaps most helpfully of all, identified in his footnotes hundreds of biblical allusions and citations from Opicinus’s writings.

Salomon’s work contains a wealth of information, but his ultimately negative opinion of Opicinus’s project had a lasting effect on all of the scholarship that followed. Morse described this most succinctly when she stated that Salomon viewed the Palatinus manuscript as “a fractured intellectual enterprise” – an approach that she quite rightly states was “a self-fulfilling prophecy – a fragmentary approach guarantees the fractured appearance of Opicinus’s thought.”\footnote{Morse (1996), 234.} Perhaps because he had not yet worked with the Vaticanus manuscript, and because of the likely fragmentary preservation of the Palatinus folios (there could very likely have been many more), Salomon characterized Opicinus’s work as hopelessly complicated, self-referential, and ultimately illogical. Salomon was also the originator of the picture of Opicinus as being obsessed with sin, an argument that is one of the primary targets of Morse’s analysis. Even though much of Salomon’s work dealt with the technicalities of individual drawings, his
approach as a whole could still be characterized as biographical – Opicinus the person always
looms large in his interpretation of the drawings.\textsuperscript{16}

Though Salomon indicated, in his discussion of the visual confusion of Opicinus’s work, the possibility that Opicinus was mentally ill, Ernst Kris was the first to forthrightly argue for his insanity, in a chapter entitled, “A Psychotic Artist of the Middle Ages,” in \textit{Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art}.\textsuperscript{17} In this brief chapter, just ten pages based entirely on Salomon’s analysis of the Palatinus manuscript (Salomon did not publish his announcement of the discovery of the Vaticanus until the following year), Kris diagnoses Opicinus with schizophrenia. Kris sees Opicinus’s illness of 1334 as being, causing or coinciding with a psychotic break with reality, and identifies the Palatinus drawings as the primary evidence and expression of his new pathology.\textsuperscript{18} His reading of the drawings insists above all on their strangeness – on the lack of any precedents for their formal arrangements and characteristic superimpositions; he wrote that, “medieval art has nothing similar to offer.”\textsuperscript{19} To him, the Palatinus manuscript as a whole did not “follow any definite or detectable plan,” and the folios have “no clear ideological tendency which could connect them.”\textsuperscript{20} Their closest visual relatives were not other medieval maps, drawings or diagrams, but later examples of the art of the insane; Kris wrote that Opicinus’s “play with shapes and play with words are characteristics of the break-through of the primary process and part of the typical symptomatology of schizophrenic production.”\textsuperscript{21} Though Kris does nod to some of the possible sources of individual elements of Opicinus’s imagery (maps and medical diagrams in particular), he ultimately finds little logical place for them in fourteenth-century visual culture.

Between 1960 and 1990 numerous scholars published brief studies on Opicinus, and although many contained new insights and deviations from Salomon and Kris’s analysis of the Palatinus manuscript, none were large-scale projects (and none treated the Vaticanus manuscript

\textsuperscript{16} Salomon wrote two other short articles on Opicinus in 1952 and 1963, after the discovery of the Vaticanus manuscript; these merely described its basic features, and argued for no substantial difference in subject matter or approach from the Palatinus manuscript. See Salomon, “A Newly Discovered Manuscript of Opicinus de Canistris: A Preliminary Report,” \textit{Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes} 16 (1953), 45-57, and “Aftermath to Opicinus de Canistris,” \textit{Journal of the Warburg and Courtault Institutes} 25 (1962), 137-46.

\textsuperscript{17} Ernst Kris, \textit{Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art}, (New York, 1952), 118-27.

\textsuperscript{18} Kris also identifies a number of Opicinus’s autobiographical comments that he thinks point toward an “overly close” relationship with his mother, and incestuous sexual play with one of his sisters; psychoanalytic early clues to his later breakdown. Morse disproves many of these claims as poor Latin translations; for example, she dismisses in a brief footnote, with characteristic directness, the claim of incest, arguing that the passage Kris refers to is a harmless comment made by Opicinus that as a youth he should have spent more time with his studies rather than spending time playing with his sister. Thus, many of Kris’s comments seem based on readings that are easily disproven with more accurate translation and a fuller picture of Opicinus’s life (particularly as fleshed out in the Vaticanus). See Kris (1952), 120, and Morse (1996), 63 (note 68).

\textsuperscript{19} Kris (1952), 123.

\textsuperscript{20} Kris (1952), 122.

\textsuperscript{21} Kris (1952), 125.
in great detail). The greatest changes in the scholarship occurred in the 1990s, through the publication of short but significant essays by Michael Camille and Catherine Harding, and, finally, the full-length treatment of Opicinus’s visual production both by Victoria Morse in the United States and by Guy Roux and Muriel Laharie in France.

Camille’s essay offers an interesting comparison to Ernst Kris, especially. Like Kris, Camille focused on the strangeness of Opicinus’s visual production – he, too, sees it as an exception within its visual culture. But while Kris positioned this difference within the context of mental illness, Camille saw the drawings as self-consciously subversive – visual arguments that positioned themselves against dominant modes of thought and representation. Yet even as Camille argued against Kris’s methodology, the two writers’ conceptions of Opicinus’s sanity were similar in many ways; echoing Kris’s ideas about Opicinus’s confused self-location within the world and systems of knowledge, Camille writes that Opicinus was unable to distinguish “where he ends and the universe outside begins.”

Camille’s work, enmeshed within the beginning of the intense interest in “the body” in medieval studies throughout the nineties, positioned the drawings as evidence of medieval peoples’ deep intellectual engagement with their own bodies, arguing that Opicinus offered a case study of one person’s understanding of the entire world and cosmos through the context of his own embodied existence. Even if Camille swung the pendulum too far toward the body in his statement that, “it is clear that [the drawings] are all about body and not mind,” his work has been crucial (even as a foil) to my own thinking about the interplay between bodies and maps in the drawings, and I will have much to say about this short essay in the following chapters.

Beginning in 1997, with their joint publication of Art et Folie au Moyen Âge, Guy Roux and Muriel Laharie burst full-force into the debate over Opicinus’s life and work. Roux is a

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neuro-psychiatrist and Laharie holds a Ph.D. in medieval history; both came to Opicinus from the perspective of looking at historical case studies of the visual production of people with mental illnesses. This perspective is fundamental to all of their work on Opicinus; they did not set out to prove or disprove any mental illness, but rather took it for granted from the start that Opicinus was mentally ill. Their three books on Opicinus, though published over a period of eleven years, can be looked at in many ways as a single product; through extensive, rigorous, and often fascinating analyses of individual texts and images, the authors explore the limits and nature of what they characterize as Opicinus’s “delusions.” This position was first stated in *Art et Folie*, and then elaborated in Roux’s 2005 book, *Opicinus de Canistris: Prêtre, Pape et Christ Ressuscite*, and in Laharie’s extensive introduction to her 2008 edition of the Vaticanus manuscript, *Le Journal Singulier d’Opicinus De Canistris.*27 This last work has been by far the most helpful resource for scholars to appear; over hundreds of pages in two volumes, Laharie has expertly edited and translated (into French) the vast textual corpus of the Vaticanus. In addition, she includes a catalogue describing every drawing in the manuscript (along with high-quality color reproductions of each), transcriptions and translations of their captions and labels, and a thematic index. This new publication should revolutionize the scholarship on Opicinus, making his works available to non-Latin readers, and presenting for the first time high-quality images of all of the Vaticanus drawings.

Despite the usefulness of this edition and translation, the interpretive approach of Laharie’s new study is similar to the earlier works. The authors’ overall approach to Opicinus’s visual material can be characterized by a quote from the introductory essay in Laharie’s 2008 edition of the Vaticanus, where she writes that,

> Opicinus is affected by a frenzy that is almost cosmic: his megalomania is omnipresent not only in his comments, but also in his designs that represent more or less explicit self-portraits; all of his knowledge and all of his talents were placed in service of these grand delusions.28

In Laharie’s account, self-portraiture is described as something that flowed naturally into every drawing that Opicinus created – it was an automatic psychotic impulse rather than an imaginative projection. Elsewhere, Laharie states explicitly that she does not think that Opicinus’s insanity limits the possible interest and importance of his drawings for other historians; for her, this makes them more interesting and potentially even more revealing of cultural, political and theological trends in Opicinus’s time. But both Laharie’s and Roux’s interest in mental illness biases their approach from the first page of each study; although it does not make their studies any less interesting, it does greatly limit the usefulness of their interpretations for my own study, particularly through their tight focus on Opicinus’s life, writings and personality at the expense of his visual production.

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28 Laharie (2008), LIII. “Opicinus est atteint d’un délire à portée cosmique; sa mégalomanie est omniprésent non seulement dans ses propos, mais aussi dans ses dessins qui représentent autant d’autoportraits plus ou moins explicites; toute sa culture et tout son talent sont mis au service de ce délire grandoise.”
Victoria Morse’s 1996 dissertation on Opicinus, *A Complex Terrain: Church, Society and the Individual in the Works of Opicino de Canistris*, was a watershed moment in the scholarship; for the first time, a large-scale study was undertaken in order to demonstrate the logic of Opicinus’s works, both textual and visual. Morse did not set out to make a claim for Opicinus’s sanity; rather, she argued that the paradigm of mental illness is not a helpful framework for the contemporary scholar in understanding what Opicinus set out to achieve through his works. Describing her own conception of the manuscripts, she wrote that:

Opicinus had a very clear purpose in writing, and a relatively clear set of views and ideas to express. He did not, however, set out to produce a treatise devoted to the logical exposition of his topic; rather, as I hope to demonstrate, he used the manuscripts as a series of studies or probes into the nature of human perception, affection, and faith in order to gain insight into the mysterious process of salvation.

Opicinus’s logic was not linear, but rather an internal thread of ideas and positions. In addition to demonstrating the rational and intentional basis of Opicinus’s thought, Morse’s other crucial decision was to place the Vaticanus manuscript at the heart of her work. The Vaticanus was often mentioned by earlier authors, but had never been the object of extensive study, perhaps because its visual material is smaller and less elaborate than the large Palatinus folios. But as Morse demonstrated, the Vaticanus holds the keys to understanding Opicinus’s thought; its drawings are more intimate and revealing, and it contains over a hundred pages of text.

It was to these texts that Morse turned in her presentation of an entirely new Opicinus. Through the Vaticanus emerged a picture of Opicinus within his local and social contexts; following the historian Pierluigi Tozzi, Morse writes of Opicinus as a Pavian. Her first chapter presents Opicinus’s early life, education, intellectual formation, and ecclesiastical career. She found it crucial to unite the halves of Opicinus’s life which had until that point been kept separate: his early life in Pavia, where Opicinus had written learned but conventional theological treatises and literary descriptions, and his later life in Avignon where he completed both the textual and visual portions of the Vaticanus and Palatinus manuscripts. This allowed Morse, in her words, to restore to Opicinus’s life “a greater sense of wholeness and internal coherence.”

Perhaps Morse’s most enduring contribution was her radically different conceptualization of Opicinus’s illness and altered mental state. Her entire second chapter demonstrates that what Opicinus experienced in the years following his illness of 1334 should be understood as a religious conversion: not a conversion from one faith to another, but a conversion as an intensification of faith. Analyzing all of the written sources from the Vaticanus and Palatinus, Morse argues that Opicinus emerged from his illness with a “sense of complete intellectual

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29 Throughout her work, Morse uses the Italianate form of the artist’s name, “Opicino.” I follow the more conventional usage of “Opicinus,” and, in my quotations of Morse I have changed the name to “Opicinus” for the sake of clarity. In a different vein, it should be mentioned at this point that, with the publication of Morse’s dissertation in 1996 and *Art et Folie* the following year in 1997, Morse and Roux/Laharie were working independently of each other; though Roux and Laharie mention Morse’s study in their 2005 and 2008 publications, their projects and conceptions of Opicinus originated independently and at approximately the same time.

30 Morse (1996), 108. See also page 107 for her discussion of Kris’s diagnosis.

31 Morse (1996), 32.
transformation and rebirth,” and that the Vaticanus and Palatinus manuscripts “should be seen as the written results of Opicinus’s conversion and revelation.” Rather than viewing Opicinus’s experiences as delusions or fantasies, Morse rightly places them in the context of medieval religious visionary experiences, arguing that his “intellectual reorientation was centered around a visual revelation” – the revelation of what I call the body-worlds.

Morse’s third and fourth chapters deal more explicitly with the ideas that Opicinus worked through in the Vaticanus and Palatinus manuscripts, respectively. Here, Morse directly engages the visual material, introducing the themes of half a dozen drawings from each manuscript. But her treatment of the visual remains isolated from other traditions or discourses of fourteenth-century representation; they are brought in to offer evidence or elaboration of the themes that Morse identifies in Opicinus’s textual production, but rarely stand on their own as artifacts or arguments. This is not intended as a criticism; Morse is a historian, not an art-historian, and as will become apparent throughout my dissertation, I agree with nearly all of her readings of the drawings. But she approach them as visual demonstrations of Opicinus’s textual philosophies.

Morse’s individual arguments will reappear throughout my own study, but several broad claims should be included here. Morse states that Opicinus’s decision to use a visual mode of presentation for his ideas was intimately connected to his view that “the natural world, as God’s creation, spoke to mankind, not only collectively and generally about the Creator, but also specifically about the sins of each individual.” For Opicinus, the visual was less mediated than the textual. The drawings were a struggle to understand the meaning of the physical world – both the world that Opicinus saw around him and also the earth revealed to him in the portolan charts and in his visions. Morse aimed to show that, “Opicinus’s primary concerns were with understanding the relationships between the visible, external world and the invisible, internal world of spiritual truth and human intention.” With this new picture of Opicinus’s thought and mission, Morse sought in the drawings and texts a new understanding of (as her title indicates) the Church, society, and the individual in the early-fourteenth century.

One other work on Opicinus merits attention here – an article published in 1998 by Catherine Harding called “Opening to God: The Cosmographical Diagrams of Opicinus de Canistris.” This work was published on the heels of Morse’s dissertation, which, though cited, is not engaged in depth (presumably because of its too-recent publication). The comprehensiveness of Morse’s longer work somewhat overshadows Harding’s contribution, but Harding, too, arrived at the conclusion that Opicinus was operating with a concrete agenda, and she offers a similarly positive and constructive analysis of his drawings. Harding’s more art-historical study positions the drawings within the context of medieval visionary experience, and argues that they were a means for Opicinus to work through the meaning of his vision and

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32 Morse (1996), 32-33.
33 Morse (1996), 109.
34 Morse (1996), 34.
further “open himself up” to God. The article includes a helpful catalogue of the subject matter of the Vaticanus drawings, though she discusses few of them in depth. Most interesting is her discussion of Opicinus’s working methods and graphic technique; here, she is again interested in demonstrating the coherence and internal logic of Opicinus’s graphic presentation – the structure behind his overlapping, superimposition, and play with forms. Ultimately, however, the article is more a demonstration of what future research into these questions might uncover, rather than the final word on their meaning.37

Finally, readers will perhaps have noticed that my title phrase, “body-worlds,” is shared by the “Body-Worlds” exhibitions, staged in museums in over 50 cities in the past 15 years, which present real human bodies, preserved through a technique called “plastination.”38 These are dissected to varying degrees and displayed in wildly exaggerated, moralized, and playful poses; anyone familiar with traditions of anatomical illustration will notice their direct visual allusion to the prints illustrating Vesalius’s famous sixteenth-century anatomy text, De humani corporis fabrica. These shows, which now exist all over the country, from the original touring show, “Body-Worlds,” to knock-offs like “Bodies: The Exhibition” at the Mall of America in Minneapolis, present to their viewers the concept of a whole world inside the body – its interior pathways and systems as revealed by modern science. The bodies’ veins, arteries and nerves are displayed like pathways on a three-dimensional map, but the attraction that draws viewers to these shows is visceral, not cerebral, despite the promotional materials’ insistence on their primarily educational function. People remain eternally fascinated by the sight of real, exposed, dead human flesh.

My use of the term “body-worlds” was not inspired by the shows, but they are in many ways an interesting modern foil to Opicinus’s works. While the museum bodies display a whole world mapped inside the body, Opicinus presents bodies discovered inside the world. Both works create meaning out of a new means of visual presentation, meant to shock viewers and convert or initiate them to see the body and the world differently. But while the attraction of the Body-Worlds exhibition is the attraction to dead human remains, Opicinus’s drawings are about the superimposition of body and world within the mind and especially the imagination. My own inspiration for using this term came in the way that it perfectly balances the two concepts. Opicinus’s figures are not more body or more world – they are entirely both, and their connection is as elusive as the term suggests.

**Methodology**

This dissertation’s approach is constructed firmly upon the foundation built by Morse and Harding. My study similarly brackets the question of Opicinus’s supposed mental illness,

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37 A final scholar not mentioned above is Katrin Kärcher, who was a graduate student at Karlsruhe in Germany. She completed a dissertation on Opicinus de Canistris and Convenevole da Prato, and the relation between late-medieval epistemology and the image. She has published one article that discusses Opicinus extensively. See Kärcher, “Der ‘dunkle Zwilling’ im Stundenbuch des Duc de Berry. Überlegungen zu einer Körperdoppelung,” in Bild und Körper im Mittelalter, ed. K. Marek, R. Preisinger, M. Rimmele and K. Kärcher, (Stuttgart, 2006).

38 The plastination technique was invented by the German anatomist Gunther von Hagens at the University of Heidelberg in the late 1970s; the show was first presented in Tokyo in 1995. The shows have been very controversial, accused of using bodies without consent and exacerbating gender stereotypes, among other criticisms.
offering a constructive rather than deconstructive reading of his work. I also follow Morse in her presentation of Opicinus’s primary interests: concepts about nature, reality, the visible and the invisible, human intention, and the salvation of the soul. But this study offers a perspective that until now has been unavailable in the scholarship – a comprehensive treatment of Opicinus as a visual artist. Rather than focusing on social, political or ecclesiastical history, my research positions Opicinus within broad traditions of intellectual history, and within a number of art-historical discourses: on fourteenth-century visual culture, the status of the image, practices of medieval cartography, and the rise of allegorical representation. Putting Opicinus’s works into dialogue with those of his visual culture leads to a more nuanced view of both: of Opicinus as an artist who was very much engaged with the images and trends of his time (while still maintaining a strident individuality), and of fourteenth-century visual production as perhaps more daring, experimental, scientific, and diagrammatic than other scholars have argued.

To accomplish these goals, it has been necessary for me to bracket, as much as possible, Opicinus the man in my search for Opicinus the artist. This is in some senses a rhetorical move – of course it is impossible to remove Opicinus’s life from the discussion (after all, he is sometimes the subject of his drawings). But a biographical approach has been the one constant in every work published to date on this artist, and it is part of what has marginalized him as a historical footnote and oddity. If we look to the drawings first and the man second, a different picture of Opicinus’s historical significance will emerge.

In moving away from a biographical approach, I have turned to a number of different bodies of literature, each of which provides a fresh frame and context for understanding Opicinus’s visual production. Perhaps most influential for this study have been works on medieval cartography. In particular, David Woodward, Tony Campbell, Jonathan Lanman, Marcia Kupfer and Evelyn Edson have brought mapping to the mainstream of medieval studies, raising questions of people’s conceptualization and representation of the earth, and the ideological, religious and practical functions of maps in thirteenth and fourteenth-century culture.39 Their works have been crucial in my examination of what the cartographic mode of representation allowed Opicinus to express in his body-world drawings. In addition to cartography, studies on the structural aspects of diagrammatic and programmatic image-making have pointed me toward new ideas about how form and structure create symbols and communicate information; most influential for this study have been Madeline Caviness’s, Michael Evans’ and Steffen Bogen’s work on medieval diagrams, Wolfgang Kemp’s study of the role of structure and position in medieval stained glass programs, and Erwin Panofsky’s studies on perspective and on the symbolic meanings of form and structure in Gothic buildings.40


Also vital is the ever-expanding body of literature on medieval vision and optics, and its connection to visionary experience, image theory, and allegorical representation. Studies on vision and optics by Katherine Tachau, Martin Kemp, David Summers, Marvin Trachtenberg and Hans Belting have illuminated the importance of looking to medieval scientific theory to understand the conditions and philosophical implications of representation.\(^{41}\) In turn, Dallas Denery, Suzanne Akbari, and Umberto Eco have detailed the importance of vision and optics for the study of fourteenth-century allegory.\(^{42}\) This emphasis on scientific concepts of vision has been lacking in almost all of the scholarship on Opicinus, but I think it is crucial if we are to understand the literal “perspective” that is suggested by both the portolan charts and Opicinus’s drawings (as well as the place of these maps and drawings within medieval technologies of spatialization). Similarly, the term “allegory” has not been used extensively to discuss Opicinus’s visual production, though I think it is one of the most useful contexts for understanding the strange subject matter and forms of his figures.

All of these discourses have opened up new interpretive avenues that will be examined in the chapters that follow. Before moving on, and as a way of saying a few more words about this study’s methodology, I want to state my initial position on several practical issues surrounding the Opicinus’s work. These include the actual subject matter of the drawings, the relationship between the Vaticanus and Palatinus manuscripts, the interaction between textual and pictorial notations on the pages, the question of audience, and the issue of Opicinus’s uniqueness and difference from all other surviving examples of medieval representation. All of these issues will come up again in the following chapters, but I want to begin by stating my starting positions and assumptions about each.

Firstly, I think that a number of scholars have mischaracterized the subject matter of Opicinus’s drawings. Numerous scholars (Camille, Kris, Salomon) point to Opicinus’s “frequent” self-representation in the drawings. Others make claims about his treatment of gender binaries that turn out to be false. Salomon and others characterize the themes of the Vaticanus manuscript as just an extension of those in the Palatinus. These and other claims can be refuted with a basic statistical analysis of the manuscripts’ subject matter. There are 88 extant drawings:

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36 in the Vaticanus and 52 in the Palatinus. Table 1 shows a basic tabulation of which themes, strategies and subjects are included in each manuscript.\footnote{These numbers are approximate. Every drawing is complicated, and it is certainly possible that I have missed an example here and there. But the trends that these numbers reflect are accurate and persistent.}

**TABLE 1**

**VATICANUS: 36 DRAWINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>include Body-Worlds (of varying genders): 53v, 54r, 58r, 61r, 61v, 68v, 69r, 69v, 71r, 71v, 73v, 74v, 76v, 77r, 78r, 79v, 82r, 84r, 84v, 85r, 85v, 87r, 87v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>include the negative space devil in the Sea (so-called Mediterranean-Man): 53v, 61r, 68v, 69v, 71r, 77r, 84r, 87v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>include graphic sexual anatomy: 53v, 61r, 68v, 69v, 77r, 78r, 84r, 84v, 87v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>include the cardinal points: 58r, 61r, 71r, 75r, 76v, 83r, 84r, 84v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>include sponsus/sponsa imagery: 71r, 71v, 79v, 83r, 85v, 87r, 87v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>includes an over-arching containing structure: 49r, 75r, 79r, 83r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>include an overlaid local map of Pavia: 84r, 84v, 85r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>include a calendar: 49r, 75r, 83r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>include explicit self-portraits of Opicino: 69r, 79v. Others have explicit references to Opicinus within the drawings: 53v, 68v, 74r, 78r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>include tiny versions of the body-worlds within the “womb” of Europe: 87r, 53v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>include sponsus/sponsa imagery 5 include Body-Worlds (of varying genders): 2v, 18r, 20r, 22r, 22v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>are formatted as “zone” maps: 9r, 9v, 13r, 17v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>include local grid of Pavia: 12r, 27v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>includes an explicit self-portrait of Opicinus (others allude to him): 22v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>include the negative space devil in the Sea (so-called Mediterranean Man)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>include graphic sexual anatomy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PALATINUS: 52 DRAWINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>include an overarching containing structure: all except 2r, 3r, 4r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>include the cardinal points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>include at least one calendar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>include a visible map: 2r, 3r, 3v, 4v, 5r, 5v, 6r, 6v, 7r, 8v, 9v, 10v, 11r, 11v, 13r, 13v, 15v, 17v, 18r, 18v, 20r, 21r, 22r, 22v, 23v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>include sponsus/sponsa imagery 5 include Body-Worlds (of varying genders): 2v, 18r, 20r, 22r, 22v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>are formatted as “zone” maps: 9r, 9v, 13r, 17v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>include local grid of Pavia: 12r, 27v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>includes an explicit self-portrait of Opicinus (others allude to him): 22v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>include the negative space devil in the Sea (so-called Mediterranean Man)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>include graphic sexual anatomy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this numerical analysis, we may make a number of statements about the overall subject matter of Opicinus’s visual production, as well as about the differences in subject matter between the Vaticanus and Palatinus manuscripts.

Certainly the drawings are not as self-referential as Salomon and Kris claimed; according to my count there are only three explicit self-portraits, debunking the idea that the drawings are self-obsessed. There are also many themes familiar in fourteenth century art; for example, the drawings frequently contain imagery of the sponsus/sponsa pair, familiar from devotional
manuscripts. The body-worlds are a frequent subject of representation in Opicinus’s work, but certainly not the only subject; they are present in only 27 drawings. Though I have not elaborated gender statistics in the table (they are analyzed in Table 2, in Chapter Four), the claim made by Michael Camille that the female figure of Africa “appears again and again as a sign of sexual sin,” is easily refuted when the drawings are looked at as a whole. In reality, every possible gender combination is represented in the drawings; both Europe and Africa can be male or female, and can in turn be paired with a male or female counterpart, and both male and female figures of Africa and Europe can have overall positive or negative significance.

Secondly, a number of statements can be made based on these statistics regarding the differences in subject matter between the Vaticanus and Palatinus manuscripts. Far more drawings in the Vaticanus portray the body-worlds (23), while few in the Palatinus do so (5). Nearly all of the drawings in the Palatins contain what I call an “overarching containing structure” – a geometrical framework that contains all of the drawing’s content. Almost none in the Vaticanus contain such a structure. This observation prompts the next – that the Palatinus drawings almost always include calendars (usually as part of the overarching containing structure), while few of the Vaticanus drawings do. A sizeable number (though still a minority) of the Vaticanus drawings contain depictions of the devil in the negative space of the Mediterranean, while none of the Palatinus drawings portray him. Similarly, graphic sexual anatomy appears regularly in the Vaticanus, but not in the Palatinus.

From these observations, we can generalize some of the basic differences between the two manuscripts. The Vaticanus seems to be more of a personal manuscript, perhaps not intended for a wider audience. Its drawing are less structured, contain more sexual imagery, and include more personal themes, all of which we might associate with a private, rather than public function (although such distinctions were more fluid in fourteenth-century Italy than they are today). Secondly, the drawings in the Vaticanus and Palatins have very different structures; the Vaticanus uses the form of the portolan chart to structure meaning and bodies inside of it, while the Palatinus drawings use larger geometric, ecclesiastical and temporal frames, which in turn often contain representations of the earth. Finally, the Palatinus drawings contain a temporal, cyclical element (numerous calendars and representations of the zodiac) that the Vaticanus drawings usually lack.

Moving away from statistical questions, the third subject to raise is the question of the relationship on the page between texts, diagrams and pictures throughout Opicinus’s work. I raise this issue as more of a methodological and practical question (i.e., how I have dealt with the texts), rather than as a historiographical or conceptual one. I think it is possible, and productive, to partially separate Opicinus’s texts from his diagrams and pictures, especially those that represent his body-worlds vision. Victoria Morse convincingly proves that the idea for the embodied continents came to Opicinus in a vision during his illness in 1334. Much of his work, she argues, shows him working out the meaning of this vision. The problem with many other studies, however, is that they take a few lines of text, from folios of the Palatinus, or from distant pages of text in the Vaticanus, and use them to “explain” the content of Opicinus’s strangest drawings. I want to move away from the idea that the captions have the power to explain the drawings. Most of the Vaticanus pages are not connected to specific drawings, and Opicinus

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44 Camille (1994), 90.
himself stated that he believed visual material to have a different, more direct appeal to the reader/beholder than texts.  

Given my own analysis of the sources, I believe that the captions on most of the drawings interact in the following way: Opicinus created the visual material first, usually to address a particular theological question, theme or concern. The drawings were supposed to be available to any person for their spiritual self-analysis. The captions (and some of the texts), then, are the evidence of Opicinus’s self-analysis – he uses himself as a case study, personalizing the drawings through the text. He often kept adding to the drawings over many years, including new details or textual explanations, and dating them to a specific day. Still, crucially, this doesn’t make the drawings, in their inception, “about” Opicinus. Interpreting the vision with relation to his own body and life was only one of the tactics that he used. Most of the drawings suggest other interpretive avenues, through personifications, allegorical confrontations, or superimposition; one does not have to turn to Opicinus’s biography to explain them. Thus, in my own study, the texts on Opicinus’s drawings constitute one tool for decoding their complex forms, but not the most significant one. Here, the texts and captions cede primacy to the form and structure of the drawings.

Fourthly, a word must be said on the issue of audience. Opicinus’s works present a conundrum when it comes to audience and reception, since there is no evidence, either textual or visual, that anyone ever actually saw the drawings. Simply put, we don’t know if they were ever viewed as more than a curiosity by those who encountered them. It seems possible that the Vaticanus was never meant to be viewed by others; much of it was arranged chronologically (like a diary), rather than thematically, and the subject matter of both the texts and images suggests a private function. The large size of the Palatinus folios suggests a more public function; Morse convincingly relates the function of these large parchment sheets to medieval traditions of wall-maps and to the portolan charts. It is also possible that these works were intended, like several of Opicinus’s earlier treatises, for the pope. But in the end, we know little about the audience they were intended for, and, as a result, my study is not focused on questions of audience and reception. I view this lack of information on audience as a chance to focus on production, creation and creativity. These concepts seem to have become less interesting to scholars of medieval imagery in the last fifteen years, as interest in reception has grown, but I think they are of great interest for a work like this one, where we have so much evidence for Opicinus’s thought process, working methods, and play with forms.

Finally, one must address the issue of these drawings’ strangeness. The danger of any study like Morse’s, Harding’s, or my own, is that in seeking out the contexts in which one may understand Opicinus’s work as logical, constructive and coherent, one risks losing sight of what makes them so exceptional. Looking at the drawings as a whole, there can be no doubt that there are threads running through them – themes, problems and possibilities that Opicinus set out to explore. But even as one works to demonstrate these threads of inquiry, the drawings’ forms remain enigmatic. Searching for visual sources and analogs for the drawings does much to

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45 See Morse (1996), 192-3.
46 Morse (1996), 153-61, discusses this chronological production of the manuscripts. Morse argues for a more public function for the Vaticanus, based on Opicinus’s rhetorical efforts in it to establish himself as a divine authority on his subjects – to “establish his credentials as a divinely-inspired writer by providing the necessary accurate and authoritative account of his ideas and experiences.”
render them more interpretable, but the way in which these visual sources are combined and played with is unique. The strange interplay of spaces and scales, the graphic sexual imagery, the tangents and diversions, and most of all the basic superimposition of bodies over lands and seas – these all maintain the power to shock and delight modern viewers, as they probably did any medieval viewers that they might have had. My own approach to this issue mirrors Opicinus’s; because his drawings never culminated in a single argument, what I seek is his method, not his solution. In seeking out his methodology, we can appreciate the logic of his approach while allowing the final forms of the drawings to maintain their stubborn individuality and otherness.

Outline

This investigation of Opicinus’s body-world drawings consists of four chapters. The first chapter looks at thirteenth and fourteenth-century portolan charts, which were the primary frame and inspiration for Opicinus’s body-world vision and drawings. The conditions of their creation and use raise a number of critical issues that Opicinus later exploits in his drawings. The portolans’ geometry and viewpoint raise imply a “reality,” that is both earthly and divine; it was this sense of the real that I think Opicinus was drawn to as he explored the potential of the portolan charts to create meaning when embodied, carefully positioned, and superimposed. The portolan charts remain under-theorized in the otherwise extensive current scholarship on medieval mapping; in this chapter I propose a new set of terms for understanding the semantic and philosophical differences between portolan charts, medieval world maps, and spatial representations. Seeing what kinds of meaning were implied in the portolans’ form and structure leads to the later investigations of how Opicinus plays with these values.

The second chapter demonstrates my structural-formal method for analyzing the Vaticanus body-world drawings. This method highlights the ways that Opicinus used form to activate content. I seek meaning in the strangest foundations of the drawings – their unusual arrangements, doublings and overlappings. Patterns emerge in the ways in which Opicinus combines and plays with forms, and I discuss four distinct categories into which we can place each drawing. Examining each type of structure through one representative example (Vaticanus folios 74 verso, 84 verso, 61 recto, and 82 recto), I uncover the moral, allegorical, spiritual and epistemological implications of these structural systems. These case studies lead to in-depth discussions of the practice of allegory in the fourteenth-century visual arts and the interplay between representation of scientific theories of vision and optics, which I will show were harnessed by Opicinus in order to create these different formats.

Moving away from the Vaticanus, the third chapter turns to the Palatinus manuscript, examining how maps and bodies are used differently within its cosmic and universalizing structures. I look at the examples in the Palatinus where we find the body-worlds, as well as to other pictorial manifestations of “the world” as Opicinus conceived it. As the dominant picture of the earth was changing, from more symbolic world maps to the scientific portolan charts, Opicinus used many of the Palatinus drawings to try to situate the new picture of the earth within existing epistemological systems – temporal, ecclesiastical and natural-philosophical. He sought to find a place for “the world” within contemporary “theories of everything.” In this chapter, I also work through several case studies (Palatinus folios 5 recto, 10 recto, 20 recto and 24 recto), tracing the visual sources for the drawings in medieval astrological, scientific and religious imagery, and analyzing their recombination in Opicinus’s giant, totalizing diagrams of cosmic and personal relationships.
The final chapter takes a single thematic issue (gender), and tracks its use through both of Opicinus’s manuscripts. Though Morse includes a fascinating discussion of imagery of reproduction and birth in several of Opicinus’s texts and images, the issue of gender has not been raised comprehensively across all of the drawings. As I mentioned before, gender is not a stable category in the depiction of the body-worlds; each continent takes on different gender and moral identities in each drawing. Gender emerges as another structural category for Opicinus to play with – another binary to be presented and then broken down. Through a discussion of several examples, particularly Vaticanus folio 78 recto, I look to the depiction of gender and sexual difference as both a concrete form of representation and also as a metaphor for spiritual and physical states. Graphically sexual bodies and play with gender binaries create another level of instability and visual interest in the drawings, and constitute another critical frame for analyzing their forms.

The research that I present in the following pages is not intended to be the final word on Opicinus’s strange and beautiful drawings, either by myself or others. His textual and visual oeuvre are larger than almost any other fourteenth-century artist, and will require further study from other angles – political, theological, and literary, at the very least. My contribution is meant to be that of an art-historian; I look to the forms of the drawings as the first source, and to the textual sources second. Rather than close the book on the issues I raise, I want to introduce a new set of terms into the expanding discussion on Opicinus: terms like “empiricism,” “allegory,” “diagrammatic,” “perspective,” and “creativity.” I hope that the terms, ideas and arguments presented here will spark new examinations of Opicinus, who must be viewed as a vital figure for anyone interested in issues of representation, science, and creativity in medieval art history.
Chapter One

Geometric Perspectives on Early Portolan Charts

In an entry in his Vaticanus manuscript, Opicinus de Canistris wrote that, “my interior eyes were opened to recognize the images of the earth and the sea and to integrate them into my conscience…and I composed them on ten pieces of paper.” This short passage conveys the initial inspiration for the geographical forms that Opicinus constructed, in a dizzying array of combinations, arrangements, and superimpositions, in dozens of his drawings in both the Palatinus and Vaticanus manuscripts. The passage describes a visionary experience: through his “oculus interioribus,” Opicinus is granted a new view of the earth, one in which the land and the sea take on human attributes. The shapes of Europe, Africa, and the Mediterranean Sea each contain (or form) a human figure; these are the forms that I call “body-worlds,” and they constitute Opicinus’s most original and perplexing contribution to fourteenth-century visual culture. Their enigmatic forms, expressions, and arrangements have the power to arrest the attention of modern viewers, reversing expectations about what sorts of imagery were possible in the early-fourteenth century.

It was not unusual during the later Middle Ages to bring together the body and the earth in pictorial representations. Medieval mappaemundi often organized the landforms of the earth around the shape of a crucifix (sometimes even a cruciform body); medieval astrological drawings commonly showed human figures at the center of cosmic and planetary networks; and the concepts of macrocosm and microcosm had been fully developed for a millennia. Most examples, however, lie in the realm of the theoretical, the academic, or the theological.

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47 Vaticanus fol. 53r: “…aliquantulum apertis oculus meis interioribus ad discernendas ymagines terre et maris et conferendas in conscienta mea…in peciis X papyri composui…”

48 The nature and content of Opicinus’s visionary experience, and subsequent “conversion” to a higher state of spiritual enlightenment, are the subjects of Morse (1996), Chapter 2. Analytically, little hinges on whether or not we accept the “authenticity” of Opicinus’s vision. It is enough to note that the passage refers to his inspiration or idea for representing these forms.

49 One could certainly argue that some of these images function “practically,” such as the use of zodiacal diagrams in everyday medical practice (a subject further discussed in Chapter 3), but my point here is that even when such discourses gained wider distribution, and entered the realm
the things that makes Opicinus’s body-worlds so unusual is that they also incorporate a visual tradition that was practical, empirical, and scientific – medieval sea charts, or portolans. The “world,” in Opicinus’s drawings, is always represented using these sea charts; they are the driving force behind the drawings’ form and structure, and also a primary contributor to their meaning. Portolan charts were modern, cutting-edge drawings of the Mediterranean region, and Opicinus’s use of them transforms what would otherwise have been old-fashioned, theoretical, and primarily textual diagrams into a completely new type of picture. Opicinus was working during a crucial moment in the history of cartography, in a time when numerous artists and mapmakers sought to combine old and new forms. Yet I think he, and many other artists, viewed such combinations not as compromises or conflicts, but as opportunities for meaning to multiply. As we will see in the chapters that follow, Opicinus’s engagement with empirical cartography led him to deeper levels of religious meaning, contradicting longstanding assumptions of the “conflict” between science and the Church in the Middle Ages.

This chapter sets the stage for those that follow, by probing what kind of representations portolan charts really were. However one regards Opicinus’s visions of the human figures inside the earth, either as an authentic religious experience or as a medieval rhetorical strategy for framing an “idea” (a point on which I remain agnostic during this discussion), the portolan charts clearly fascinated him. To seek out what exactly he saw in portolans that was so meaningful, it is necessary to examine them at length, probing both their representational strategies and the conditions of their origin, production and function, questions that remain open in the current scholarship on medieval mapping. In the absence of extensive historical sources on the use of the earliest portolans, this investigation of their forms will help to clarify which aspects or meanings of the portolans Opicinus intended to emphasize when he incorporated them into his drawings. Investigating issues such as measure, distance, projection, gridding, geometry, and vision in several early examples, I will demonstrate that portolans are more empirical than others have claimed, and that this empiricism must have shaped Opicinus’s creation of the body-worlds.

This investigation of the portolan charts, and other types of fourteenth-century spatial representations and technologies, is part of my larger concern in this study to bring Opicinus’s drawings into dialogue with late-medieval visual culture. With only a few exceptions, the eccentricity of his work has led to an isolationist approach in the scholarship; it also formed one of the primary arguments for Ernst Kris’ diagnosis of mental illness.\(^{50}\) One of Victoria Morse’s contributions was to turn our gaze more widely onto Opicinus’s other works, particularly the textual portions of the Vaticanus; mine, I hope, will be to continue to look outward, to other traditions of medieval representation that both influenced Opicinus’s art (and thought) and may nuance our own view of his unusual drawings. I begin this comparative approach with this chapter’s investigation of portolans, *mappaemundi*, and proto-perspective projections, and the culture and meaning of empiricism in the early fourteenth century.

\(^{50}\) Kris, 122-23. A few authors have tried to bring in comparative material, most notably Adelheid Heiman, in “Die Zeichnung des Opicinus de Canistris,” an essay tacked onto the end of Salomon (1936), 295-321. Caviness (1983) and Camille (1994) also discuss Opicinus’s work in the context of larger artistic trends, but only very briefly (Caviness discusses the drawings’ place at the end of a long tradition of what she terms “images of divine order,” while Camille situates them within other macro/microcosmic drawings).
Early Portolan Charts

Portolan charts are among the most original and influential scientific creations of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They are highly accurate maps of the Mediterranean region, usually stretching from Gibraltar to Jerusalem, Carthage to Scotland (see, for example, fig. 24). Their incredibly precise geographic details changed little over time; through the seventeenth century, even when newer methods of cartographic projection had been developed, and when maps covered a much greater geographic range, many sailors continued to use portolans to navigate the waters of the Mediterranean. The term “portolan chart” comes from the Italian “portolano,” which usually refers to a list of sailing directions. The word “portolano” literally means “harbor finding,” and the charts must originally have been created for this practical purpose, showing the Mediterranean region from the point of view of the mariner. For viewers used to looking at maps that emphasize landforms, the charts can be disorienting, since the land, not the sea, constitutes the negative space. Many early examples leave out non-coastal cities and topography entirely, focusing on coastal features such as ports, bays, islands and shoals. Their function will be discussed in detail, but it is certain that most charts were used on ships to aid in navigation. Documentation on their use is scarce, but King Peter of Aragon’s order in 1354 that every ship carry at least two of the charts suggests their widespread use and efficacy at sea by this date. Their primary virtue, and the reason they were so influential for such a long period of time, was that they worked.

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52 Campbell (1987), 375. The terminology surrounding the charts can be confusing. I use both “portolan chart” and “portolan” to refer to the charts, and the italicized “portolano” or “portolani” to refer to the books of sailing directions. When possible, to prevent confusion, I use the names of individual examples.

Surviving portolan charts are usually divided into two styles or schools: the Italian and Catalan/Majorcan. They are similar in most respects; the primary difference is the amount of elaboration and detail in the depiction of the landforms. Maps of the Italian school tend to be more sparsely decorated, leaving the interiors of the land blank, while Catalan and Majorcan chart-makers included more cities, flags and topographical details (mountains, rivers, etc.). My discussion will focus primarily on two examples: the Carte Pisane, an Italian-style chart from the late thirteenth century, and the Dulcert Chart, made in Majorca by Angelino Dulcert in 1339 (figs. 23 and 24). Both of these examples share the primary features of any early portolan chart. Their geographic range always shows the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea (damaged on the Carte Pisane), and the Dulcert Chart and many others include the western and northern coasts of the European continent, as far as Germany and the British Isles. Both charts are drawn in ink on full sheets of vellum, and the skin of the Carte Pisane retains the elongated skin of the animal’s neck on its eastern side.

The two most distinctive features of any portolan chart are the numerous place-names along the coasts and the network of lines covering the surface. The place-names can confuse the modern viewer when he or she encounters a portolan chart for the first time – we see the long line of names perpendicular to the outline of the coast and assume that the names labeling coastal cities are written over the water, as is the case on modern maps. Instead, the reverse is true; the names are written along the inside edges of the coastlines, leaving the oceans empty and unobstructed. The names are always written perpendicular to the coastline, meaning that the charts must be rotated in order to be read – in most cases, they have no true top, bottom, left or right. Certain cities, important because of size, trade, or political or strategic significance, are labeled in red, while the others are dark brown or black. The hundreds of coastal towns and cities written on every portolan chart constitute a vast body of data. Toponymy, the study of place-names, has been a major preoccupation of scholars who trace influences and sources from one chart to another to establish their chronology; Campbell calls them an “unrivaled diagnostic

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54 Campbell (1987), 391-94, discusses the differences between these two schools in greater depth.
55 These examples were chosen for several reasons. The Carte Pisane (Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale Res GE B 1118), which was probably made in Genoa and later owned by a family from Pisa, hence its name, is the oldest surviving chart, and thus is crucial for the discussion of the charts’ origins which follows shortly. The Dulcert Chart (Paris, BN GE B 696) is a particularly well-preserved example from the same decade as most of Opicinus’s artistic production. Together, I think they give an excellent picture of the earliest portolan charts that Opicinus must have worked from. Both Taylor and Mollat du Jourdin and de La Roncière state (without naming their precise source) that Opicinus used both Genoese and Majorcan nautical charts to create his drawings; whether or not this is true, I think it is certain that he could have used either type (or both). They share enough common features that either one could have been his primary example – he usually only used the outlines of the coasts, which were similar in both schools of charts. See Mollat du Jourdin and de La Roncière (1984), 201 (Dulcert Chart) and 198 (Carte Pisane). See also M. Pelletier, “Le Portolan d’Angelino Dulcert, 1339,” Cartographica Helvetica, IX (1994), 23-31, Tony Campell (1987), 404 (Carte Pisane) and 378 (Dulcert) and Lanman (1987).
56 I define charts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as “early.”
source” for determining provenance and tracing different groups of copies.58 The massive number of place-names that had to be included on the charts in order for them to be useful also established a kind of minimum scale; the names have to be large enough to be legible, with the result that few surviving charts are less than two feet long, and are often far larger.59

The lines on the surface of the charts are called rhumb lines. Usually, they are generated within two identical sixteen-point circles, whose size is determined by the geographical coverage of the map – most charts arrange the circles so that the rhumb lines inside of them cover the entire Mediterranean. The two circles were placed side by side along an east/west axis, with one point in common at the center of the chart (usually in Italy). Lines were then drawn between the sixteen points inside each of the circles, creating the complex network. The sixteen points correspond to the winds: eight primary winds and eight “half winds.”60 On most charts, including the Dulcert, these lines were divided by color, usually red, green and brown. These colored networks were laid down before the coastlines, place-names or other details; in addition to aiding navigation, they also provided a rubric that aided chart-makers in the delineation of the coastlines.61 Often the lines continue outside of the sixteen points that structure them, possibly as a way of giving mariners some direction outside of the central spaces of the chart; this can be seen at the edges of the Dulcert Chart. In rare cases, including the Carte Pisane, smaller grids or networks of lines are fitted between the larger sixteen-point rhumb networks, sometimes even on a different axis, to fill gaps not covered by the rhumb lines.

The concept of rhumb lines may have come to the charts from non-geographic sources. They are rarely found on medieval mappaemundi; indeed, the only example of a medieval world map with such lines is Pietro Vesconte’s 1321 mappamundi (fig. 27), which was influenced by portolan charts rather than the other way around.62 Instead, the inspiration for the rhumb lines

58 Campbell (1987), 415 (see pages 415-28 for his discussion of toponymy).
59 Campbell (1987), 421. Campbell points out that there are no examples that we know of where the number of place-names was cut down to fit a smaller-sized map; the names were considered an integral part of the map, and there is no evidence that larger charts have a denser toponymy than smaller ones.
60 In the Italian system, the eight primary winds were known by traditional names: Tramontane (N), Ostro (S), Levante (E), Ponente (W), Greco (NE), Sirocco (SE), Maestro (NW) and Libeccio (SW). Names for the half-winds were devised from the primary labels – NNE, for example, was “Tramontane-Greco.” Quarter and Eighth-Winds were constructed the same way. Other systems were also in use; Taylor briefly discusses the interesting example of Matthew Paris’s wind-rose drawing which attempted to combine a 12-point Latin system with a 16-point Norman-French system. See Taylor (1971), 98-99.
61 Campbell (1987), 390-1.
62 See, for example, fol. 203v-204r of Bodleian Library MS Tanner 190, a world map by Vesconte illustrating Mario Sanudo’s Secretum Fidelium Crucis. This map, which will be discussed later in detail, is a kind of hybrid between the portolan and mappamundi types. On Vesconte see especially Edson (2007), 64-68, Woodward (1987), 316, and B. Degenhart and A. Schmitt, “Marino Sanudo und Paolino Veneto: Zwei Literaten des 14. Jahrhunderts und ihre Wirkung auf Buchillustration und Kartographie in Venedig, Avignon und Neapel,” Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte, XIV (1973), 60-73. Another copy of the same map is found in British Library Add MS 27376, fols. 8v-9r.
can be sought in earlier theoretical diagrams of the winds, and in medieval star-maps. The science of astronomy was highly developed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; such networks of lines and angles were often used to map the changing positions of stars and constellations, and are found on the surfaces of many early astrolabes. The geometry of the rhumb-lines on portolan charts was substantially different, however, and has often been attributed to the introduction in western Europe of the mariner’s compass sometime in the thirteenth century. An earlier directional technology was known to have existed in Europe in the twelfth century: a lodestone was used to magnetize an iron needle that was then inserted into a small piece of straw and floated in a bowl of water, where it would point to magnetic north. Taylor argues that the sophistication of early portolan charts and other documented navigational tools suggests that, “the refinement of the wind-rose [in early portolan charts] could only have taken place after the discovery of the magnetic needle. It is clear, too, that no such delicate readings would be possible [on board a ship] with a needle floating in a basin.” I have seen little compelling evidence to suggest that Taylor is wrong in placing the widespread use of the so-called “dry compass” or “mariner’s compass” (which mounted the needle on a flat card inside of a box, rather than floating it in a bowl of water) sometime in the mid-thirteenth century. The new technology of the compass was an integral part of both constructing and using these new maps. 

Origins

Campbell and others have remarked on the co-development of the mariner’s compass and the portolan charts in the thirteenth century, but most scholars have been cautious in attributing the charts’ development to the compass, specifically. While most agree that the charts were constructed such that they could be easily used with compasses, Campbell argued that, “it remains a matter of debate whether the instrument was actually concerned in the initial construction of portolan charts.” It is to this question of their origins that I now want to turn.

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63 There is also a possible relation between the rhumb lines and the representation of the winds on earlier *mappaemundi*, but most of these include twelve winds around the edges, rather than sixteen. See, for example, the Psalter Map and Orosian-Isidorian Map in Woodward (1987), 350.


65 Taylor gives a number of early documented examples of such instruments being used aboard ships. Alexander Neckam, an English monk, mentions the aid of a magnetized needle in navigation across the English channel around 1180, and both Vincent of Beauvais and Thomas of Cantimpré (probably using a common source) describe this use of the magnet on board ships around 1240. Taylor (1971), 94-5.

66 Taylor (1971), 98.

67 The most eloquent and convincing support of Taylor’s argument comes not from Taylor himself, but from Jonathan Lanman, who systematically debunks all four of Nordenskiöld’s points of evidence that compasses were not used to draw the charts (or to compile the data that they were based on). See Lanman (1987), 2.

68 Campbell (1987), 384. In my own mind, it does not seem likely that these objects could have been made to be used with a compass-like device (either a magnetized needle in water or a dry
The charts’ origins reveal much about their theoretical underpinnings, and how they were used and conceptualized. The literature on the charts’ origins is necessarily speculative; no document survives that tells us when, where, or how the first portolan charts were made. I will briefly outline the two main approaches that have been taken in answering this question, before explaining in detail a theory put forth in 1987 by Jonathan Lanman that I find to be wholly convincing, underappreciated, and highly significant for any discussion of the charts’ meaning and therefore the meaning of Opicinus’s drawings.

The charts’ origins are always presented as conjectural. Several reviews of the literature on this question divide the prevalent theories into two groups – the “ancient” and “medieval” schools. Those in the “ancient” school argue that the primary inspiration for the portolan charts must have come from lost Greco-Roman or Byzantine prototypes. The most frequent argument is that the prototype was a lost chart of the Mediterranean made by Marinus of Tyre (known through Ptolemy) in the first century C.E.; Trias argued that this lost chart was reflected in a fifteenth-century Venetian copy, and that the medieval copies replaced Marinus’s square projection with the rhumb-line network. The sophistication of Ptolemy’s (and presumably Marinus’s) maps and projections certainly make such theories appealing, but so far little evidence has been found to suggest that thirteenth-century chartmakers were aware of them at all. Others have put forth various theories of Neolithic, Egyptian, Phoenician, and Roman prototypes, but none are convincing, and there is little evidence of their transmission through either Byzantine or Islamic cartography, the two main civilizations that could have bridged the gap between these periods.

The “medievalist” school has been more widely accepted– it is an umbrella term for a number of different theories of how the charts may have been developed slowly in Western Europe during the twelfth and/or thirteenth centuries. Many theories point to particular people or cities – these are what Campbell calls the “single-origin hypotheses.” For the purposes of this study, debates over the precise date and location of the charts’ origin are not particularly important; the theoretical discussions of how are more important than when or where. Many look to the portolani, books of sailing directions, for evidence that their data may have been used to compile the first portolan charts. Fragmentary local portolani survive from as far back as

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69 Campbell (1987), Edson (2007), and Monmonier (2004) all use this approach in their surveys of the literature.


72 Campbell (1987), 282. He argues that the most intriguing of these hypotheses is one put forth by Destombes that the Knights Templars may have contributed geographical knowledge in some way, following their extensive travels in the Eastern Mediterranean. This theory, though interesting and suggestive, is not yet supported by substantial evidence.

73 Bacchisio Motzo argued that the first portolan charts actually accompanied the portolani and that the two were derived from the same sets of data. See Motzo, “Il Compasso di Navigare, opera Italiana della meta del secolo XIII,” Annali della Facolta di Lettere e Filosofia della
the eleventh century, but they were much less accurate than those that followed; the earliest extant example covering the entire region is the *Compasso di Navigare*, which survives in a copy of 1296, but appears to have been written in the 1230s or 40s.\textsuperscript{74} It was suggested that the earliest portolan charts may have been based on the same sets of data as the *portolani*, or that they were drawn to accompany them. Campbell dismisses these arguments on toponymic grounds, arguing that the two must have been based on different sets of data since each included numerous place-names left out by the other.\textsuperscript{75}

The other primary theory of medieval origin, favored by Campbell, is that the charts were compiled piecemeal from a number of smaller maps, possibly of the different basins that constitute the Mediterranean; this proposal was initially discussed by Nordenskiold and championed by James Kelley. Kelley’s primary point of evidence was his observation of certain differences in scale between the Mediterranean, Adriatic and Black Seas.\textsuperscript{76} Fernand Braudel and Peter Pelham proposed theories of how such charts might have been compiled and knitted together, either through methods of triangulation or trilateration, or through the technique described by Campbell as the “least squares” method.\textsuperscript{77} The data for these local maps would have come from direct experience of the bodies of water involved, from measurements based on dead reckoning, and could theoretically have been based solely on measurements of distance rather than direction since the confinement of the charting to smaller areas would have reduced local distortion.\textsuperscript{78} It also makes the question of the compass irrelevant, an important advantage for those who remain nervous about firmly attributing its use to the thirteenth century. Still, as Campbell himself points out, all of these theories lack evidence as to who had the hydrographic knowledge to execute the combination of these multiple scales and systems, and how massive distortions were avoided in the process.\textsuperscript{79} Ultimately, all the recent major surveys of this literature, by Campbell, Edson, and Monmonier, state that the questions of origin, methods of compilation, and the type of projection used remain unresolved.

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\textsuperscript{74} H.C. Freiesleben and P.A. Collinder also suggested that written sailing guides could have been a source for the charts’ construction. See Freiesleben (1983), 124-9, and Collinder, *A History of Marine Navigation*, (New York, 1955). See the footnotes on Campbell (1987), 382 and Lanman (1987), 1-3, for further sources.

\textsuperscript{75} Such books of directions also existed in the Ancient Greece, where they were known as *periploi*.


\textsuperscript{77} This is the primary theory of the “triangulation” method – that if the exact distances between three locations are known, they can be triangulated to ascertain their angular relation.

\textsuperscript{78} Campbell (1987), 390.
Many of these problems have been convincingly addressed, however, by Jonathan Lanman’s 1987 study, which argued that the first portolan charts were plotted on a square grid from the distances and courses listed in *portolani*, or pilot books.⁸⁰ After undertaking a review of the literature on the origin of the portolan charts, Lanman concluded that they likely were plotted using the measures of direction and distance in medieval *portolani*. To prove this hypothesis, Lanman set about constructing a map of the Mediterranean region based solely on the data contained in one example, the thirteenth-century *Compasso di Navigare*. He initially plotted the chart on graph paper, using the distance and bearing segments for the perimeter of the Mediterranean (the *Compasso di Navigare* contains point-to-point data for travelling the perimeter of the Mediterranean, and also for selected “pelagic,” or open-sea routes).⁸¹ He drew these courses around the perimeter of the sea, starting and ending at Gibraltar, a total distance of 7824 nautical miles. He used no modern tools or techniques, though he did leave out fourteen entries (out of a total of 426) because they were missing a measure for either distance or direction. The resulting diagram (fig. 28) is strikingly similar in scale, shape, and orientation to the earliest charts, particularly the Carte Pisane.⁸²

Lanman’s argument is not that the Carte Pisane was necessarily drawn from the data in the *Compasso di Navigare*; indeed, he asserts that this is certainly not the case. But he does show that it was theoretically possible for a chart to be constructed, quite easily, from such data.⁸³ His proof for this hypothesis of the charts’ origin is threefold. First, he identifies a

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⁸⁰ Lanman (1987). Jonathan Lanman was not an academic historian or cartographer – he was a prominent pediatrician and medical researcher in Washington D.C., and was an amateur map collector all his life. After his retirement from the N.I.H. in 1978, he pursued his interest in the history of cartography full-time, publishing several articles in addition to his book, and presenting papers at conferences. He co-founded the Washington Map Society in 1979, and started its journal, The Portolan, in 1984. In 1980, he donated his extensive collection of antique maps to the Yale University Library. Though he was not a professionally trained cartographic historian, his work was accepted in scholarly circles and his monograph on the origins of the portolan charts was published by the Newberry Library. His work is characterized by a strict attention to methodology and statistics.

⁸¹ See Lanman (1987), 5, for a sample entry from the *Compasso di Navigare*.

⁸² See Lanman (1987), Chapter 2 (Method) and 3 (Measure of Accuracy). He points especially to the similar error in the shape of Italy both in the map made from the Compasso and in the Carte Pisane – the width of the Italian peninsula is greatly exaggerated, which is surprising given the fact that the maps were made in Italy and the waters around it were some of the most heavily traveled in the region. The fact that they share this error points even more strongly to an ultimate common source.

⁸³ A book by Patrick Gautier Dalché pushes back the possible date for such an operation considerably. He discovered a text, which he dates to 1160-1200, called *Liber de Existencia Riveriarum et Forma Maris Nostri Mediterranei*, which he argues was made in Pisa. The text includes distance and direction data, but also descriptions of inland features; it is a highly unusual document. It may have been accompanied by a map or portolan chart, which is now lost. Thought this discovery may push the possible origins of the portolan charts back by almost a century, it does not invalidate Lanman’s argument, which is that the development of the charts from the *portolani* was theoretically possible. See Dalché, *Carte Marine et Portulan au XIIe Siecle*, (Rome, 1995). Edson (2007), 43-47, contains an excellent summary of Dalché’s findings.
persistent skewing of both the portolan charts and the chart he constructed from the data in the *Compasso*; in most extant portolans, and in the chart he drew from the *Compasso*, the east-west axis Mediterranean is skewed to the north-east by between eight and ten degrees (see fig. 29). This observation on its own would suggest a common source, but Lanman goes a step further by introducing paleomagnetic data from lava flows on Mt. Etna that suggest that magnetic declination in the region during the thirteenth century was approximately eight degrees in the same direction. The magnetic declination in the region was fairly constant until it changed drastically in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, precisely at the time that this skewing was corrected on portolan charts, “suggesting that navigators and chart-makers were alert to the changing declination and acted promptly to correct the charts.” All of this suggests that the data used to compile the lists of sailing directions in medieval portolani and to draw portolan charts were taken from compass readings; there is no other plausible explanation for the consistent skewing of the charts and their near-exact correspondence to the contemporary magnetic declination in the region.

Lanman’s second proof concerns the pelagic sailing routes included in the *portolani*; the *Compasso di Navigare* contains over 200 of these open-sea routes. Their inclusion further suggests the widespread use of the compass. Much other evidence suggests that sailors traveled on open water (and throughout the cloudy winter months) with far greater confidence in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries than had previously been the case. More importantly for our purposes, the pelagic data is even more accurate than the coastal, containing an average distortion of between two and seven percent in both distance and direction (after being corrected for magnetic declination). As Lanman points out, “the bearing and distance data for the pelagic courses could have been of value in adjusting the gross dimensions of a Mediterranean chart such as could have been constructed from coastal sailing directions for the perimeter of the seas.” Thus, Lanman’s discussion of the pelagic courses in the *portolani* is further evidence for the use of the compass in the collection of the data, as well as their practical function in the construction of the charts.

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84 Lanman (1987), 23-27. Magnetic declination (also called magnetic variation) is a term for the ever-changing difference between “true north” and “magnetic north” – i.e. a compass reading at different places and in different centuries will yield different readings of “north.” Scientists of these issues are called “paleomagnetists,” and they have collected data from all over the world and created a map of the changing magnetic variation throughout the globe over the past millennium.

85 Lanman (1987), 27.

86 For an interesting discussion of the economic, political, and social factors that were a result of this change in sailing practices, see Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*, (Oxford, 1989), 102-34.

87 Lanman (1987), 20. An earlier argument against the use of such pelagic courses to construct a chart was that they were thought to be incorrect, because some of them (allegedly) cut across intervening land (islands or peninsulas). See Edson (2007), 39-40. Lanman, however, plotted every course and proved that this is not the case, writing that “considerable care seems to have been taken to select origins and destinations that give single, straight, unobstructed courses...The pelagic courses are clearly intended to be practical sailing routes and obviously derived from experience.”
Lanman’s third contribution is his discussion of the portolan charts’ projection, which has been a point of much debate in the scholarship. Edson, and others, have characterized the charts as projectionless, but every data-based map implies some projection, even if it is not explicit. Others have argued that the charts’ projection comes closest to the much-later Mercator projection. Lanman states that the portolan charts were drawn using a square grid. Such a method would, of course, produce distortion, because of the curvature of the earth, but the geographic area covered by the charts is small enough (most cover about 40 degrees of longitude and 15 degrees of latitude) to reduce the distortion significantly. A number of early portolan charts bear a large square grid superimposed over the entire chart, including the rhumb lines. Even those that do not have a larger grid, however, do contain a number of smaller grids within the rhumb lines themselves; these are constructed out of the different-colored rhumb lines and lie on a number of different axes. Further evidence for the square grid can be found in scales drawn on the charts. Lanman points to the scales on the Carte Pisane: there are two identical scales on both the vertical and horizontal axes, as would be the case on a square-grid projection.

Summarizing Lanman’s points, portolan charts and portolani appear around the same time, were both designed as aids to navigation, cover the same geographical area, and both give directions in terms of the compass, “with the directions named not in degrees, but as wind directions adapted to use with the compass.” Neither referenced longitude or latitude, and the toponymy of their place-names is closely related (though not identical). With his drawing, Lanman demonstrates that easily recognizable and usable charts could be constructed directly from the data in the portolani, which are skewed in precisely the same ways as surviving portolan charts. The reverse is also logically possible – that the portolani were compiled from

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88 See Mollat du Jourdin and de La Roncière (1984), 15. Many cartographic historians point to the charts’ lack of a graticule of longitude and latitude. See Monmonier (2004), 23. Edson states that the charts are projectionless because “the chart makers did not consciously take into account the earth’s curve.” Edson (2007), 118.

89 This was the argument of A. Clos-Areduc, “Enigme des portulans,” Bulletin du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques: Section de Géographie 69 (1956), 225. Campbell writes that the Mercator projection “was not mathematically explained until the 16th century. This hypothesis [that the portolans show a Mercator projection] seems to rest on two conflicting assumptions – that on the one hand there was consistent, intentional, and remarkably sophisticated cartographic manipulation, and on the other that they were based on pure observation.” Campbell (1987), 386. Though the Mercator projection may offer the “best fit” when superimposed over the portolans, Lanman argued that superimposition is not a suitable method for deciding which projection was used; instead, he undertakes a statistical analysis of a series of points, calculating the average variation for each. Lanman (1987), 34.

90 Lanman (1987), 47-48. The square grid also aids in navigation because all vertical lines notionally point due north. Lanman points out that in this small range of latitude, the square projection does greatly resemble the Mercator projection; all the straight lines on the chart are not loxodromes (as they are on the Mercator projection), but they do approximate them closely.

91 See Lanman (1987), 33-48, for a complete discussion of the square-grid projection.

92 Lanman (1987), 49.
data on earlier portolan charts, but I think the evidence suggests that the portolani came first. For my purposes, Lanman’s new picture of the charts’ origins provides two crucial points. The first is that the charts are empirical objects, based on actual measurements of the region taken with compasses. They are diagrams of the space of the Mediterranean as it was known and measured, and they could have been used to calculate both distance and direction to navigate new coastal and pelagic courses. Second is Lanman’s discussion of the grid: both his argument that the charts were initially drawn (and usually copied) using a square grid, and his recognition of the grids within the rhumb lines of every portolan chart. The data and the charts harness both practical experience and geometry to create their new representation of the land and sea. The data were collected through navigation, measurement, and impressions of travel and movement, and they were represented using geometric tools and techniques.

The 1339 Dulcert Chart and the Significance of the Grid

The Dulcert Chart provides an excellent case study for a close examination of one chart and several proposals about their construction and use (see fig. 24). The chart was made in 1339 in Majorca, which was part of a large maritime empire in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries after its annexation by Aragon in 1229. In addition to being nearly contemporary to Opicinus’s drawings, the map’s outlines are strikingly similar to Opicinus’s, suggesting that he may have used and copied a similar chart. The chart is about one hundred by seventy-five centimeters, and is in excellent condition, suggesting that it may have been made for display or as a prototype, rather than for use on board a ship. Its bright colors, frequent use of gold leaf, and extensive detailing of mountains, rivers, flags, and cities could also suggest some special status or function.

Close examination of the inks and vellum reveals that the light-brown grid covering the entire chart was in fact laid down first – all of the other colors/features lie on top of it in the archeological strata of the page. The grid is actually two grids, one laid according to the cardinal directions and another at a forty-five-degree angle to it; parts of it are slightly irregular, especially near the edges, but for the most part it establishes a basic, squared geometric frame for the chart. This initial grid provided the framework for the rhumb lines; all of the brown rhumb lines within the wind-rose circles (i.e., any line within the rhumb circle running along a precise N/S, E/W, NW/SE, or NE/SW course) are lines from the overall grid, which was therefore used to place the sixteen wind-points in each circle. Then the rest of the wind rose was filled in, first with the red rhumb lines and finally with the green. The two sixteen-point networks share one

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93 The primary evidence for this claim is that the earliest surviving pilot books far predate the earliest surviving charts (by at least 200 years). Pilot books survive in far greater numbers for the thirteenth century, especially.
94 Mollat du Jourdin and de La Roncière (1984), 201.
95 That Opicinus used a portolan chart to construct his drawings is beyond doubt; no other possible source for the accurate shapes of the continents and coastlines existed at the time. The Dulcert Chart is a good example for the type of chart Opicinus may have used both because of its date and its geographic coverage, which is similar to Opicinus’s.
96 This initial grid, oriented to the parchment’s sides and covering its entire surface, is not standard on every extant example, but many do include it. See, for example, the 1439 “Valesca Chart,” inv. no. 3236 in the Museo Marítim, Barcelona, and the famous Catalan Atlas of the late-fourteenth century, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Ms. Esp. 30.
common point at the chart’s center, at the bottom of the Italian peninsula. Within these networks of lines are a number of grids; the two brown grids covering the whole chart, three grids created by the red rhumb-lines, and two grids created by the green rhumb-lines. Excepting only minor variations, every one of these grids is the same size and scale, since they are all based from the same points and initial gridded structure.

Through these grids, the space of the chart becomes quantifiable. Samuel Edgerton argued that portolan charts were primarily used to calculate angular directions, but Lanman’s analysis of their origins, and the recognition of the grids on the chart, suggests that they precisely measured space, as well. The distance-scales on the Dulcert Chart further strengthen this claim. At least six scale bars lie scattered across the chart’s surface; two in north Africa, two near the British Isles, and two in northern Europe (see fig. 25, a detail of Dulcert Chart showing one of these scales). On most charts, scales such as these are divided into a number of segments, and each of these is marked with four dots, each of which indicates ten miglia. But what has never been remarked in the literature, as far as I know, is that each of these scale bars is the same length as one side of the square unit in all of the grids on the chart. This means that measuring or estimating distance on the Dulcert Chart would have been far easier than has ever been thought. To estimate the distance between two points, one would only need to find the one of the seven grids on the chart that aimed in the direction where you wanted to go, and then count the number of squares/units between the points, knowing that the length of each square represented four hundred miglia. With this observation, we begin to get a sense of the ease with which such estimations could be made.

Thus, a chart like the Dulcert may have been used as follows. Since the wind rose is equivalent to a compass-rose, fairly precise courses could have been calculated between any two points, either following a rhumb line that ran between them, or by using a nearby line to approximate. Distance could then be calculated using the scale bars, counting the number of grid units between the two spaces or measuring them with a ruler. The captain’s inherited knowledge of the ship’s approximate speed, local currents, and weather patterns could be used along with speed-measuring tools and compasses to calculate the time it would take to make the voyage. Captains would have used these methods to choose routes and guide their ships, and merchants, generals, and courts could use them on land to plan commercial routes, travel, or military campaigns.

We find concrete evidence that the charts were used in this way in Opicinus’s own writings, which thus provide a crucial, unrecognized source on the use of early portolan charts. Opicinus discussed the portolans’ distance scales in precisely this context of use, demonstrating how he used them to estimate distances. On folio 59 recto, he wrote the following explanation of how the charts were used:

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99 The actual measure for each of the scale bars on the Dulcert Chart is not indicated, but convention dictates the measure of ten miglia for each of the points, indicating a total distance of four hundred for each of the scale bars.
In the map of the navigable ocean drawn up by the Genoese and the Majorcans, one can calculate exactly the number of feet with the aide of the miles indicated on the corners of the map. Each point corresponds to 10 miles (that is to say, the distance between two points). After this, five of these spaces, there is an elongated rectangle, and the space between each of these is 50 miles. And these rectangles, multiplied by seven, permit one to calculate with precision a distance of 7 times 50, or 350 miles, divided into feet. And if one can precisely make an estimation of a distance in the sea, it is no more difficult to measure a distance on land.\(^\text{100}\)

Though Opicinus does not mention the use of the grids, his discussion of the distance scales makes it clear that he believed the measures of distance on the charts to be reliable. We thus have concrete proof that angular measure was not their only use; the precise measurement of distance was also implied on the maps, and, as we will see, was harnessed by Opicinus to explain allegorically the shapes and relative position of different lands and cities.

The grids that cover the portolan charts were present from the earliest examples, though their forms seem to have become more systematic over time. The earliest example, the Carte Pisane (fig. 23), is notably different from most of the later examples. It includes the rhumb-line grids within two congruent sixteen-point circles, like the later examples, but fewer rhumb-lines are actually included. Only nine points radiate out from each of the points on the outer circle, instead of the usual eleven on later charts. The rhumb-line grids are also slightly less regular than in later examples, perhaps suggesting that their exact system was still being worked out at this early stage. There is also no master grid for the chart as a whole – the rhumb lines do seem to have been oriented cardinally according to the rectilinear shape of the parchment sheet, but there is no grid covering the whole surface.

However, we see that the chart’s makers have made a concerted effort to cover the areas outside of the rhumb-line circles with grids. Where the later charts simply extended the same rhumb-lines outside of the boundaries of the circle, radiating in all directions, the Carte Pisane has smaller grids squeezed into various areas outside of the rhumb-circle which were still important enough to require measurement. There are four of these smaller grids; they cover western Spain and Gibraltar, Tunisia, the Dalmatian Coast, and the northeastern coast of the Black Sea. These four areas all contain grids in the same scale and orientation; each consists of two superimposed grids (one red grid aligned with the cardinal points, and one black grid at a forty-five degree angle to them), and each is fitted carefully to abut the margins of the rhumb-line circles, filling in the space between. They do not appear to relate to the scale of the larger rhumb-line grids; each square is about one-ninth the size of their larger counterparts, but the relationship is not exact. But they could still be used to concretely measure the space inside of them, by using one of the two distance scales on the chart – one to the east in the neck of the parchment, and one (partially obscured by the damage on the chart) in the Balkans.

\(^\text{100}\) Vaticanus fol. 59r: “In mappa maris navigabilis secundum Ianuenses et Mairicenses, habetur certa taxatio passuum per miliaria que in lateribus huius carte. Per quodlibet punctum denotat $X$ miliaria (scilicet in spacio inter punctum et punctum). Deinde per $V$ spacia ipsa facit unam quadraturam oblongam, que per quinquies $X$ computat $L$. Que quadrature per VII faciunt certam taxationem in longum habentem septies $L$, id est CCCL miliaria passuum. Habita certa descriptione maris, sine dubio intelligitur certa descriptio terre.”
The Carte Pisane confirms that gridded systems were foundational to the charts’ use from an early stage. Their forms would become more systematic in later examples, as we have seen in the Dulcert Chart, but there was always an interest in covering all the parts of the chart that were used with grids to measure and structure them. The move to standardize these systems was a primary characteristic of the charts’ development and elaboration in the fourteenth century.

Returning to the geometry of the Dulcert Chart, given the perceived (and actual) precision of the distances on the chart and the grids, we might be tempted to characterize this work as a “digital image.” Though the rhumb lines are not a grid of longitude and latitude, and thus do not use coordinate geometry per se, they do represent space in a concrete manner – points on the grid indicate specific spatial placement on the map below. This claim stands in opposition to one made by David Turnbull, who argued that the portolans are analogue, not digital.101 Contrary to Lanman’s conclusions, Turnbull sees the charts as anti-empirical. He writes that,

Portolan charts were not based on the techniques of coordinate geometry, perspective, calculation, and the notion – central to our notions of science and rational action – of a mathematically and logically consistent plan or set of rules...their heterogeneous components were not assembled by rendering them equivalent through quantification, measurement and calculation. The diverse components were preserved in analogue rather than digital form and were assembled through the attribution of directionality.

Turnbull argues that the rhumb lines and their grids are only directional (and thus analog, according to his analysis and terminology), and that their changing position on each chart removes the possibility that they are meant to quantify space. “Directionality” is the key concept in his theorization of the charts. The main problem with Turnbull’s analysis is that he doesn’t see the ways in which the grids and rhumb lines can be flexible measures of space – they can be placed in a different location and scale on each chart, but still precisely measure the spaces of the chart below. Opicinus’s discussion above, as well as the geometry of the charts, themselves, disputes the notion that the charts only contain data on direction, not distance.

In this question of analogue versus digital, I think the charts would be best characterized as hybrid. Given their creation from a series of data-points, their overall construction is digital, but it is true that many of their smaller features are analogical, especially their depiction of local coastlines. Some coastal details seem to be based on observation and measurement, while others fall back on established patterns of generalized scalloped edges; this is yet another point of evidence for the suggestion that the portolan charts were primarily used for open-sea, or pelagic, navigation, since their digital accuracy is greater for these routes than for local coastal navigation.102 Thus, some areas of a chart might be more digital, and others more analogical, but neither term can encompass the whole.

101 See Turnbull, “Cartography and Science in Early Modern Europe: Mapping the Construction of Knowledge Spaces,” Imago Mundi 48 (1996), 9. See also his book, Masons, Tricksters, and Cartographers, (Routledge, 2000). I hope my discussion and recognition of the correspondence between the charts’ scale bars and grids has proven that this analysis is problematic.

102 On this stylization of small coastal features, see Monmonier (2004), 18-20.
Before moving to the next chapter’s examination of how Opicinus may harness the empirical and experiential aspects of the portolans in his imagery, I want to explore a series of questions concerning the portolan chart’s place in a web of thirteenth and fourteenth-century spatializing strategies and technologies. Broadly speaking, this period was a time of great transition in conceptions of space. The Aristotelian idea of the universe – finite, bounded, and tied to individual bodies – confronted a new conception of space most commonly associated with the rise of medieval optical science and linear perspective – a space that was theoretically measured, concrete and possibly infinite (not the Cartesian and Newtonian “infinite” space of early-modern coordinate geometry, but at least a space that existed as its own entity and that it could be measured). Much of this transition is due to a rise, broadly speaking, in the study of vision. Particularly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with the rediscovery of key Aristotelian works and the work of contemporary scholars of optics and light in Oxford, Paris, Baghdad and Alexandria, vision became, again, the primary means for acquiring scientific knowledge of the natural world. It is possible to begin to see this transition in a number of different spheres: in the complicated relationship between portolan charts and medieval mappae mundi, in proto-perspective painting and relief sculpture, in newly-planned urban spaces, and most vividly in Opicinus’s use of the portolan charts in his drawings. This section is exploratory; I want to pose a series of questions about differing conceptions of space across these different contexts, but a full examination of the topic is outside the scope of this project. One question that I want to raise here is whether the portolan charts (and by extension Opicinus’s drawings) negotiate or facilitate the ultimate transition to linear-perspective representations, or whether they sought to create an alternative in the face of this change.

Spatializing tools and strategies are common across many of these different contexts; one of the most important was Euclidian geometry. Thus far I have discussed geometry mainly in terms of grids, and their spatial significance in the portolan charts; they indicate a new awareness of distance and measurement in this new form of medieval cartography. The grid, used in tandem with both theoretical optical geometry and practical measurement, held a new currency and interest in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Europe, especially in Italy.

Following the lead of Marvin Trachtenberg, however, I want to be careful not to place these two systems at extreme odds with one another. Though they may have been distinctly different conceptions of space, the transition from one to the other was not, Trachtenberg argues, necessarily progressive. Trachtenberg writes that, “the commonly held notion implanted by Panofsky, that the drag of Aristotelian space held painters back from attaining the new ‘homogeneous, infinite, and isotropic’ mode of Renaissance spatiality, is something of a red herring (if not altogether wrong).” See Trachtenberg (1997), 176, and Panofsky (1993).

This process was, of course, extremely complicated and has been widely discussed in the literature. See Biernoff, Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages, (Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), Chapter 3, esp. 63-7 and see also Suzanne Akbari’s excellent discussion of optics and perspectiva in Akbari (2004), Chapter 2. See also notes 41 and 42 in the introduction.

For a theoretical discussion of grids see David Summers (2003), 363, 410-17. Summers distinguishes between the general grid, “used to describe any system of perpendicular lines,” and the true grid, which is a grid with “equal measure in two dimensions on a planar surface.” For the most part, I speak of the grid in terms of its general sense. For discussions of the physical tools used by surveyors, engineers, etc., see especially Kemp (1990), and O.A.W. Dilke, The
engineers and architects in late-thirteenth and fourteenth-century Florence used gridding and Euclidian geometry to construct idealized urban spaces according to medieval theories of sight and the visual angle. The space carved out in the Piazza del Duomo and the Piazza della Signoria in Florence created what Trachtenberg called a “scenography” of the buildings; in the Piazza del Duomo, for example, precise distances were plotted and measured to ensure that each point of entry into the space allowed for the entire church to be contained within the visual pyramid, using the “45/90 principle.” Crucially, objects in the visual field were oriented toward the viewing subject, with vision itself constructed as a kind spontaneous mode of surveying. Like the makers of the portolan charts (who were their contemporaries), these urban planners created spaces based on directionality and angles, which were then concretized into measured placement; both participate in what Edgerton calls the “grid mentality” of fourteenth-century Italy.

The study of medieval geometry and optics is vast and rich, and I can sketch out only a few brief observations. Medieval opticians such as Roger Bacon, Robert Grosseteste, Al-Kindi and Al-Hazen brought the study of geometry ever closer with the science of vision and perception in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In his De lineis, angulis et figuris, Grosseteste emphasized the objective properties of sensation, and their basis in geometry. He wrote that,

The usefulness of considering lines, angles and figures is the greatest, because it is impossible to understand natural philosophy without these. They are efficacious throughout the universe as a whole and in its parts, and in related properties, as in rectilinear and circular motion.

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107 Trachtenberg (1997), 33-41. The “45-90 principle” dictated that the field of vision was 45 degrees horizontally and 90 degrees vertically. This led to the construction of a 1:1 ratio between ideal viewing distance and object height.
108 Edgerton (1975), 114. Edgerton writes eloquently of the grid’s significance, stating that “The power to render an abstract image of space in our minds, rendered by an inflexible coordinate framework of horizontals and verticals, is what makes any grid system of measurement so instantly meaningful.”
109 The best recent treatment of this interaction between European and Arab opticians is Katherine Tachau (2005), 336-58.
110 “Utilitas considerationis linearium, angulorum et figurarum est maxima, quoniam impossibile est sciri naturalem philosophiam sine illis. Valent autem in toto universo et partibus eius...”
Grosseteste’s reasoning implies that he “accepted without question that a mathematical model could adequately express the world it described.” Central to Bacon and Grosseteste’s investigations was the concept that geometry was a reflection of God; this led, in some cases, to the positing of “a special relationship between the centric visual ray and the moral power of God.” This perfect geometry was used to codify the rules of perfect vision, with the ultimate result that a precisely-constructed Albertian perspective picture could be thought to project the world from God’s vision, bringing the laws of divine seeing into the eyes of the human subject. This observation gets us a bit ahead of our material, chronologically, but the geometry that led to this point was well-established by the end of the thirteenth century. Central to this understanding was a regularized, possibly gridded visual field like the one used by Trachtenberg’s Florentine surveyors.

The joining of gridding, vision, and projection was accomplished within Roger Bacon’s own work; David Woodward describes and analyzes their place within Bacon’s mid-thirteenth-century terrestrial coordinate system. Building on all of these well-established suggestions about human and divine vision, I want to suggest the possibility that the grids and rhumb lines on portolan charts render the forms below more visible – more see-able. The portolans necessarily depict the earth from a “God’s-eye view”; what seems to us like a “bird’s-eye view” would necessarily have appeared to a fourteenth-century captain, priest, prince, or merchant as a view


See Biernoff (2002), 69. Though Biernoff explores the “objective” aspects of Grosseteste’s and Bacon’s theories of light and vision, her project overall seeks to emphasize their subjective nature and basis in bodily experience.

See Edgerton (1975), 164.

By extension, and as Trachtenberg suggests, the rise of linear-perspective in painting in the fifteenth century was not (only) because there were advances in geometry and optics at precisely that moment, but because new aesthetic interests activated principles of geometry that had long been in place.

The recognition of the grid’s role in the construction and use of the portolans complicates Woodward’s otherwise cogent examination of the three “fundamental types of mapping-space” prevalent in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The first of these he calls “equipollent-coordinate space,” which is based on Roger Bacon’s development of a coordinate system in his Opus Maius (1266-7); this system, while it didn’t have a specific graticule for longitude and latitude, demonstrated Bacon’s interest in “conceiving of the world’s space geometrically,” and employed a grid in which cities could be plotted based on terrestrial coordinate tables that had entered Europe from the Islamic world in the twelfth century. The second was the space of the portolan charts, which he called “route-enhancing space,” which he argued could useful and sophisticated on its own, but who accuracy ultimately depended on its combination with an “astronomically-fixed coordinate system,” which would help to curb incremental error. The third type of space, called “center-enhancing space,” was used to construct medieval mappaemundi, the frame and center of which were strictly determined. See Woodward, “Roger Bacon’s Terrestrial Coordinate System,” Annals of the Association of American Geographers 80 (1990), 109-22, esp. 116-19.
from a divine perspective. The charts’ self-conscious geometry could have reinforced this concept, creating a view of the earth as it was measured and plotted by humans, but according to divine laws and drawn from a divine perspective. A “God’s-eye view” is not necessarily a geometric entity – there is no precise visual angle, for example, from which God could be thought to operate. The complex gridding and geometry on the charts, though, suggests that the principles of human vision have been ascribed to a view from above (and, of course, human vision was also thought to have been based on divine laws of light, making the entire process somewhat circular).

Theoretically, the God’s-eye view and the human view cannot be completely distinguished – each adopts the viewpoint of the other in certain cases, such as examples where views of cities are drawn from high towers or mountains. But the approach of the portolans, to project the laws of human vision and geometry from a divine position, does stand in contrast to the one that would be taken by the fifteenth-century perspectivists. Perspectivists used many of the same tools and concepts toward a different end, placing divine vision into the human eye and projecting the laws of vision and light out from the human subject standing on solid ground. Though in many ways I think the portolans anticipated, and could even have influenced later perspective constructions through their creation of quantifiable, regularized spaces, their theoretical aims and viewpoint are quite different when seen in this light. Opicinus, we will see later, negotiated a kind of middle position.

I suggested earlier that the grids on the portolan charts were indexes of space – signifiers that conveyed a “real relation” between themselves and the space of the earth represented below. If the suggestion is correct that they also serve another function – to indicate the “see-ability” of the landforms below – then we might say that they are also iconic or symbolic. The grids’ forms both measure space and instruct the viewer how to perceive and contextualize that space. The idea that the grids on the chart could render the charts more visible can be supported by looking at several wide-ranging examples of other cases where grids take on a more symbolic or iconic function. An initial example can be found within the portolans themselves, in the rhumb lines that are extended out into the Atlantic Ocean outside of the sixteen-point wind-roses in many existing examples. In the Dulcert Chart, for example, the western wind-rose circle extends just past the western coast of Spain; the spaces within these networks are, as we have seen, measured, and the grids formed by their lines indicate precise distances. Yet in the Dulcert Chart, and most other portolans, these lines and grids are extended outside of the two sixteen-

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115 Morse also uses the term “God’s-eye view” in her forthcoming essay on Opicinus’s “Moralized Geography.”

116 For the purposes of this study, I am less concerned about the precise differences between the Peircean icon and symbol, and am more interested in establishing their difference from the index. I take these three terms as follows. I define an index as a sign that denotes its object through an actual connection between them – what Peirce calls a “real relation.” The classic example is that smoke indexes fire; in my material, I argue that the grids and place-names on the portolan index its space – they constitute physical traces of the earth’s surface taken from measurement. Opposed to this are symbols and icons, which are signs that denote their objects through a resemblance (icon) or a learned or interpreted connection (symbol). In my material, I am exploring the ways that the grid comes to symbolize or iconize its indexical or empirical function. See Arthur Burks, “Icon, Index and Symbol,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 9 (1949).
point circles, covering the entire piece of parchment. In the Dulcert chart, the lines extend past this western edge of the continent, far into the waters of the North Atlantic that, during the early fourteenth century, we assume were not usually navigated (see fig. 26). The lines that are cut off by the chart’s western edge do not “go” anywhere, or measure any distance; rather, I think they have been extended out into the ocean to indicate the existence of space. The grid measures space on one part of the map, while simply indicating its presence on another. Inside the rhumb-circles, the grid is both an index and an icon of space; in the ocean at the edge of the chart, it is only an icon. On the entire chart, the grid tells us that what is represented below is something that can be measured, even when that is not the truth.

Two other examples briefly illustrate this conceptual point about grids’ iconic potential. Artists such as Giotto, Simone Martini, and the Lorenzetti brothers placed grids on the floors and ceilings of their painted interiors to indicate spatial depth and recession, in works that we might characterize as “proto-perspectival.” In the Birth of the Virgin (1342), for example, Pietro Lorenzetti constructed his painting around various gridded surfaces, such as the cloth on the Virgin’s bed and the various tile floors (fig. 30). Though such grids certainly play a role in the construction of a perceptual illusion (an issue that I will not discuss in depth here), it is less a part of an overall construction of receding space than a kind of iconic visual statement that space exists and recedes. As Trachtenberg writes, “angular modulation occurred [in trecento painting] far more commonly within horizontal planes than between them, that is, not in their angle as a whole but in their ornament and decoration.”117 Though gridded floors and coffered ceilings would later be used to construct whole perspectival systems, during the fourteenth-century their grids more commonly indicated the presence of space non-geometrically.

Several drawings in Opicinus’s own Palatinus manuscript provide a final example of this use of the grid to indicate space. On fol. 24 recto, in a complicated diagram that I will discuss more fully in Chapter Three, Opicinus copied a grid of rhumb lines from a portolan chart without including the chart itself (fig. 22). Labels on the drawing indicate that Opicinus meant this grid, which occupies much of the lower half of the drawing, to indicate the space of “the earth,” which is contrasted with a divine space above. Opicinus’s viewers would presumably have been familiar with the rhumb-line grids from their use in his other drawings and in contemporary portolans, and would have accepted that they could stand in for the earth’s space, even though the grids were left empty. Rather than including an image or diagram of the earth’s surface, Opicinus places the grid into the overall diagram as an icon or symbol of that space – as a placeholder for the space of the earth within the larger structures of the universe and the Church.118

Images, Pictures, Diagrams and Maps

If the structure, viewpoint, and geometry of the portolans can suggest a “God’s-eye view,” what kind of representations are they? Even if the geometry and grids indicate to a viewer that they are seeing something “see-able,” we must acknowledge the fact that no fourteenth-century viewer could, in fact, ever “see” this view of the earth. There was no “correct” mental image or physical picture to refer back to, and the shapes of the earth delineated

117 Trachtenberg (1997), 172. His whole section, “Trecento Pictorial Perspective Reconsidered” (pp. 165-84) is the most lucid treatment of the subject in the literature.

118 A similar use of the grid can be found on other folios, as well, including Palatinus fol. 9r, Palatinus fol. 15r, Palatinus fol. 17v, and Vaticanus fol. 85v.
in these early charts were entirely unfamiliar and new. They are thus not pictures in the traditional sense; rather, I propose that the earliest portolans are better understood as diagrams. The first chartmakers who plotted data points from lists of sailing directions were diagramming the earth’s surface rather than picturing an image of it. As portolans entered the mainstream in the fourteenth century, the new shapes of Europe, Africa and the seas may have begun to linger in people’s minds as images of the earth’s various forms, but in their conception they were closer to diagrams, “used” rather than exclusively “viewed.”

Though still under-theorized in the field, the medieval diagram has been recently explored by Steffen Bogen in a series of articles. Bogen argues that diagrams disrupt traditional conceptions of the medieval binary between “image” and “text,” which extends as far back as Pope Gregory’s dictum on the proper use of images, as well as classical philosophical discussions of ekphrasis. Gregory in particular, Bogen argues, has led art historians to view text and image as “complementary semiological forms of expression” in the Middle Ages. Bogen calls the diagram the “forgotten third,” and maintains that it is not simply a hybrid form, combining text and image, but is rather a different category and points to a different type of cognition. Diagrams, and diagrammatic structures within images, set up internal comparisons, oppositions, and arguments through their form and structure; they point to connections between sign and object, yet induce a kind of abstraction.

Bogen is most interested in how diagrams fit into or disrupt the traditional medieval text versus image paradigm; I am more concerned with the distinction between images, pictures and diagrams in all of the manifestations of medieval “cartography.” Bogen never discusses maps or portolan charts in his discussion of the medieval diagram, but they form one of its most vital manifestations, and broaden our conceptions of what diagrams could do. As I have demonstrated, portolan charts claimed a kind of digitality or indexicality; they not only resembled their referents, but also measured them. Diagrams could express concepts and their relative position within an overall schema, but they could also be more concrete expressions of place. One of the keys to distinguishing a diagram is that its meaning is activated through use. Bogen points to this issue of engaged reception, arguing that to make a diagram is to make a hypothesis, but to use one is to interpret and test it. The portolans definitely pass his test of “use.”

Here, terminology is crucial. If we call portolan charts “maps,” we would come closer to a modern definition of the map, which we typically understand to be digital. But the term “map,” in the Middle Ages, is usually only used in the context of world maps, or

121 Bogen and Thurlemann (2003), 9.
"mappaemundi," discussed below. Modern definitions of the word "diagram" point to three key characteristics: illustration of the relationship between part and whole, the spatial representation of information, and the manipulation and use of line. The Latin term, originally from Greek, meant "that which is marked out by lines." These definitions can be applied to the portolans in a number of ways; the portolans were diagrams of information and data from pilot-books, and they established the relation between various parts using lines and grids.

The earliest charts, especially the Carte Pisane and other Italian-style charts, are blatantly anti-pictorial – they had little ornamentation, few inland details, and none of the vignettes that we find on the Dulcert Chart. Such diagrams stood in direct contrast to the other primary form of mapping in medieval Europe – the highly pictorial mappamundi, or world map. What we would simply call a “map” today could, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, be either a diagram or a picture. Using these terms, I refer specifically to the ways that a fourteenth-century viewer would have seen these objects; interestingly, modern viewers would probably view them in the exact opposite way – the portolan chart, with its more accurate coasts and scale, seems to us more like a picture of the world, while a mappamundi would seem more like a diagram of historical information. But for a literate thirteenth or fourteenth-century viewer, a mappamundi would probably have provided the dominant image, mental and pictorial, of the world.

Though some parts of their forms are spatially meaningful, mappaemundi aimed primarily to show the context and objects of God’s creation, to “speculate on the role of the

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122 Another good example of these early anti-pictorial “Italian-style” charts is the so-called “Cortona Chart,” a fragmentary portolan that is likely the second-oldest extant example after the Carte Pisane. See Campbell (1987), 405.

123 There is a very extensive literature on medieval mappamundi. All of the pertinent sources are included in the notes and bibliography of David Woodward (1987), 286-370. Interesting work since that time includes Marcia Kupfer, “Medieval world maps: embedded images, interpretive frames,” Word and Image 10 (1994), Kupfer (1996), E. Edson, Mapping Time and Space, (London, 1997), Daniel Connolly, “Imagined Pilgrimage in the Itinerary Maps of Matthew Paris,” Art Bulletin 85 (1999), M. Gaudio, “Matthew Paris and the Cartography of the Margins,” Gesta, 39 (2000), 50-57, N.R. Kline, Maps of Medieval Thought: The Hereford Paradigm, (Rochester, 2001), Asa Mittman, Maps and Monsters in Medieval England, (New York, 2006), and Edson (2007). The tradition of medieval mappaemundi stretched back at least to the seventh and eighth centuries, to the T-O maps in the encyclopedia of Isidore of Seville, and the larger maps in Beatus of Liebana’s commentaries on the Apocalypse. See Woodward (1987), 299-304 on this early period. Medieval mappaemundi were always included in textual contexts; the map was rarely thought complete without a corresponding text. This is famously elucidated by the comments of a fourteenth-century Italian friar named Paolino Veneto, who wrote, “I think that it is not just difficult but impossible without a world map to make oneself an image of, or even for the mind to grasp, what is said of the children and grandchildren of Noah and of the four Kingdoms and other nations and regions, both in divine and human writings. There is needed, moreover, a twofold map, composed of painting and writing. Nor wilt thou deem one sufficient without the other, because painting without writing indicates regions or nations unclearly, and writing without the aid of painting truly does not mark the boundaries of the provinces of a region in their various parts sufficiently [clearly] for them to be described almost at a glance.” Translation from Juergen Schulz, “Jacopo de’Barbari’s View of Venice: Map Making, City Views and Moralized Geography before the Year 1500,” Art Bulletin 60 (1978), 452.
habitable surface of the earth – the oikoumene – within God’s scheme for the universe.”\textsuperscript{124} Jerusalem always lies at the center of these maps, which are oriented with East at the top. The space of the earth is often divided along the so-called T-O division, with Europe and Africa occupying the bottom two quadrants, and Asia the top half of the circle, divided by primary rivers and seas. The maps were filled with Biblical sites (Paradise, Noah’s Art, Gog and Magog, etc.), pilgrimage destinations, historical tales, and some inherited geographic knowledge (see, for example, the Hereford Map, the most famous surviving medieval world map, or the so-called Psalter Map, fig. 32). They took objects from a viewer’s cultural database and established their position within a contained cosmic schema. Relative position is important, but not as important as the completeness and unity of the whole image, and its position within the broader picture of the universe. \textit{Mappaemundi} made no claim to represent the world as an eye (human or divine) could see it; this is not a pejorative assessment, but rather the recognition of a different set of goals.

In the absence of textual sources regarding the reception and use of the earliest charts, it is difficult to imagine how different the portolans must have seemed to their users from other images of the world that they had seen. Visual evidence suggests that artists and cartographers struggled to find ways to render these two kinds of forms, portolan chart and \textit{mappamundi}, compatible with one another. I don’t mean to imply that the two forms were at odds with each other (it was certainly possible to believe in the truth-value of both), but rather that there is evidence of an interest in finding ways to interweave their very different content. This concern existed for about 150 years; by the early fifteenth century, the recovery of Ptolemy’s \textit{Geographia} and the increased movement and expansion of Europeans around the globe in the “Age of Exploration” rendered it a moot point, as map projections, functions, and conceptualizations became increasingly codified. In the early fourteenth century, however, the question of how to reconcile the information and perspectives of these very different objects was a significant one. Pietro Vesconte, in his famous \textit{mappamundi} drawn for Marino Sanudo’s \textit{Secreta Fidelium Crucis}, a manual for aspiring crusaders, tried to combine the two types into one image (fig. 27).\textsuperscript{125} Vesconte was an accomplished maker of portolan charts in Venice and Genoa between 1310 and 1330, a number of which survive and conform quite closely to the standard features of early charts.\textsuperscript{126} His map for Sanudo’s crusader manuscript, however, departs dramatically from convention, seeking to combine the mathematical system and new land-shapes of the portolans with the contained, circular, Jerusalem-centered format of most \textit{mappaemundi}.

In this map, the influence of the portolans can be seen at a glance; in contrast with the amorphous forms of Asia and southern Africa (familiar from other \textit{mappaemundi}), the Mediterranean world is instantly recognizable and proportionate, drawn directly from the outlines of a portolan chart. Even more striking is the network of lines that are drawn in a sixteen-point wind rose that encircles the whole earth. He used an exact copy of one of the rhumb-line networks that covered half of a portolan chart to grid the space of the entire world,

\textsuperscript{124} Mollat du Jourdin and de La Roncière (1984), 8.
\textsuperscript{125} Vesconte was one of the first mapmakers in this period to sign and date his works. He was born in Genoa, and worked primarily in Venice. See above, note 17, for citations on Vesconte. Marino Sanudo is also sometimes known as “Sanuto.”
\textsuperscript{126} See Campbell (1987), Appendix 19.2, for the list of surviving charts by Vesconte, now kept in Florence, Paris, Venice, Vienna, Rome and Lyon. He illustrates one example as Plate 29, from a portolan now in the Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome (Vat. Lat. 2972).
rather than just one part like in the portolans. The grid, however, no longer holds any indexical significance outside of the small corner of the map that has been drawn from the portolans. The rest is a strange hybrid that would have provided little navigational assistance to any traveler. The rhumb lines claim for this new map a kind of symbolic empirical authority, when in actuality the points on the rhumb-circle do little more than indicate the positions of the winds (much like the circular wind-faces depicted along the edges of the world in a work like the Psalter Map, fig. 32). What the map actually shows varies little from a traditional mappamundi; what has changed is its desire to be perceived as modern and accurate in a different sense.\footnote{Mollat du Jourdin and de La Roncière point out that slightly earlier, thirteenth-century mappaemundi also became increasingly interested in concreteness; they point especially to the Hereford Map and to the itinerary maps of Matthew Paris as the culmination of this emphasis on the concrete, but they are still well within the medieval tradition for this type of image. The changes that Vesconte makes to the map (to evoke the portolans) constitute a greater break with tradition. See Mollat de Jourdin and de La Roncière (1984), 11.}

Opicinus similarly negotiated between these different forms of mapping. Vesconte clearly saw in the portolans a symbolic, modern power that could be combined with the forms of a traditional world map to form a new kind of image. Opicinus also seeks to change the portolans into something new. The question is what, how and why? Before I conclude this chapter with several preliminary suggestions, I want to briefly return again to the argument of one other scholar who has tried to answer this question. In his brilliant short essay on Opicinus, Michael Camille situated him within many of the discourses on space and worldview that I have discussed. Camille also argued that Opicinus saw the new science of the portolan charts as being opposed to an older Aristotelian and Augustinian picture of a unified world and universe. He wrote that, “if geometric lines are signs of order and stability for Opicinus, the quivering outlines of the new portolan charts represent chaos…in these drawings Opicinus is trying, through the power of his own vision, to prevent the stripping away of a stratified and unified Augustinian world order by the analytic eye of nominalist science.”\footnote{Camille (1994), 94.} This argument raises all of the richest questions surrounding Opicinus’s use of the portolan charts, but its solution ultimately fails to convince. Most importantly, Camille neglects to see that the coastlines on the portolan charts were themselves the product of geometric order, not instability.

Several textual and visual elements of Opicinus’s work make it clear that Opicinus did not view the charts as unstable diagrams; Opicinus was certainly aware of the charts’ empiricism. In addition to the text quoted above in which Opicinus demonstrates his familiarity with distance scales and measurement, there are also numerous instances in which he copies the charts’ grids into his drawings. On folios such as 53 verso, 61 recto, 68 verso, and many others, the grid is copied lightly into the background of allegorical-geographic drawings; the grids must have helped in the actual copying of the landforms onto the new page, but they also remain as physical reminders of the rhumb-line grids. Though Opicinus usually strips the actual rhumb lines away, the geometry that created the charts is always implicit. Opicinus learned to copy the charts prior to his vision, and his extensive education about their use is clearly conveyed in his numerous discussions of distance and travel.\footnote{Opicinus briefly describes his experiences with chartmaking in the Vaticanus on folio 77 verso. He claimed “to have never seen the charts made,” but that he had learned to copy them before his visions. Morse transcribes this passage – see Morse (1996), 124. “Numquam vidi fieri
one that I will characterize throughout this dissertation as one of fascination; rather than reading the fundamental ways that Opicinus changes the charts as evidence that they troubled him, I see it instead as evidence of the potential for meaning that he saw in them. Like Morse (and unlike Camille), I see Opicinus’s project as constructive rather than deconstructive; he uses the measured forms of the charts to uncover new truths, rather than expressing anxiety over the portolans’ instability.

As we finally move to investigating Opicinus’s body-worlds firsthand in the chapters that follow, we must remain mindful of all of these tensions: between the theoretical and experiential aspects of the portolans; between the spatial and symbolic application of grids and geometry; between representing a contained universe and an open one; between the representational strategies of mappaemundi and portolans; between the impossibility of “seeing” the earth from the charts’ divine perspective and the simultaneous “see-ability” engendered through optics and geometry; and finally between the terms “picture” and “diagram.” I don’t set up this list of binaries out of convenience; rather, my use of them reflects the position of binaries at the core of Opicinus’s project. As we will see, Opicinus was deeply invested in the charts’ ability to both represent binary systems and allow for their negotiation, deconstruction, or destabilization. Opicinus took the portolan diagrams, fully aware of all that they represented, and turned them into pictures. As diagrams, the portolans constituted some kind of value of truth for Opicinus, suggested both through their divine viewpoint and through their implied objectivity as products of what we might call empirical science and measurement.

mappas maris nec curauj uidere fieri eo quod ignorantia mea non permittebat me talia scire. Solus autem dues aperuit mihi intellectum ut ad exemplar alterius illam transscriberem nemine me docente, ignorantae me tamen presens misterium nisi postquam a terribili infirmitate convaluij usque ad annum expectationis...”
Opicinus’s beliefs about the earthly, the heavenly, and the human are encoded in the very structures of his drawings. Following the first chapter’s discussion of the portolan charts, this chapter examines the interaction between the charts’ formal structures and the allegorical content that Opicinus often placed inside them. He was not trying to express a single concept or doctrine, but rather to communicate an entire new way of looking at the world, based on what he had seen during his visionary experience of 1334. The images of Africa and Europe as human figures were the core of this experience, but the interpretation of the vision was left up to him. The incredibly diverse drawings that he created in the years that followed were his way of exploring the meaning of this vision and experimenting with different strategies for representing its shape.

There has been little systematic examination of the formal structures that Opicinus constructed using the body-worlds. Over half of Opicinus’s eighty drawings in the Vaticanus and Palatinus manuscripts include at least part of a portolan chart. Some drawings contain one chart, others up to four; sometimes the continents and seas are embodied, while other times they are left plain. The varied formats of these diagrams cannot be taken for granted – their arrangements form a crucial and largely unexplored aspect of their meaning. To probe this question, I propose four structural categories for Opicinus’s body-worlds drawings, and will look closely at one example of each: single portolan charts, portolan charts overlapped with local maps, multiple portolan charts overlapped, and multiple portolan charts mirrored. Through this comparative approach, I seek the moral, spiritual or allegorical implications of these different formal devices and structures.\(^{130}\)

\(^{130}\) In her discussion of what she calls the “visual grammar” of the Vaticanus drawings, Victoria Morse deals with many of the same examples that follow. She does so in the context of a discussion of Opicinus’s spiritual intentions and self-understanding – his use of the maps for personal exploration, conversion and guidance of his fellow Christians. My own discussion focuses on these drawings much more for the sake of understanding their structure: how different forms are suited to making different kinds of arguments, and what these formal structures can tell us about how Opicinus understood vision, appearance and allegory to operate. I use many of the
Of all of these subjects, allegory is perhaps the most crucial. At the turn of the fourteenth century, allegory emerged in the visual arts as a crucial tool for expressing hidden meanings that could not be expressed with words. This in turn called for a greater investment on the part of viewers; as Anne Dunlop points out, “[allegory] opened a space between sign and referent to be bridged by the operation of mind and memory, and from this space a new need for active viewer interpretation emerged.”131 The issue of how Opicinus’s forms activate his allegories is a central question of this chapter. Suzanne Akbari’s characterization of the use of allegory in literature during this period may provide a helpful introductory framework for this issue. She distinguishes between two types of allegory in medieval literature—vertical and horizontal:

Vertical allegory points toward a hidden meaning that the reader must construct within his own mind, a transcendent truth that cannot be conveyed through literal language; horizontal allegory satisfies the reader here and now, exposing the double (or triple) meaning of language explicitly within the text as pun or euphemism. Vertical allegory aims to convey a transcendent truth…whether it concerns God, creation or the nature of identity; horizontal allegory celebrates the play of words and the unfixed nature of linguistic meaning…no allegory is a perfect example of either extreme of allegory; yet each can be characterized fruitfully by using the terms of this dichotomy, for between the two points stretches a broad spectrum of possible variations of the genre.132

It is precisely in this space between the serious, revelatory aspects of allegory and the playful, coincidental counterpoint, that Opicinus created his body-worlds. Rather than allegorizing language or knowledge alone, Opicinus allegorized forms – the empirical forms of a newly mapped earth, and, in turn, these forms’ correspondences when they were embodied, doubled, overlapped, etc. The literal multiplication of forms and spaces on the page is the catalyst for an allegorical interpretation of the earth, in all its contrasts and contradictions.

A Single Chart: Vaticanus Folio 74 verso

In a number of drawings, Opicinus uses the most basic form of the body-worlds – presumably the one that describes having received in 1334. These drawings depict a single Africa and a single Europe, separated by the Mediterranean Sea.133 In creating a series of basic categories, I am not suggesting that all of the drawings in each category necessarily have all of

same examples as Morse both because her rich analysis of these drawings has raised so many interesting questions, and also because these drawings are, I believe, particularly important and interesting within Opicinus’s oeuvre.

133 Examples of this most basic type of drawing in the Vaticanus manuscript include folios 53v, 69r, 74v, 85v and 87r, and Palatinus folios 20r and 22r. Another variation, which I also include in this first category, is a series of drawings in which there is a single chart in the lower half of the page and a non-geographical figure, usually seated, in the top half of the page (both elements, though, are always part of the same drawing). Examples of this type include Vaticanus folios 54r, 71v, 73v and 79v.
the same formal features, or that Opicinus thought of them as a group or set; rather, I am trying to find language to describe the different types of structures that Opicinus used to probe the meaning of the body-worlds. Indeed, the drawings in this first category are very diverse. Several folios depict only a western portion of the standard Mediterranean portolan chart, limiting their view to the area between Gibraltar and the boot of Italy. Others include the entire range of the chart, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea and the Holy Land. But all of the drawings in this category share a single feature: they include only one map, one level of cartographic reality on the page.

Folio 74 verso of the Vaticanus manuscript exemplifies the features of this type (fig. 10). This folio includes a cartographic drawing in the upper two thirds of the page, and text at the bottom. Embodied drawings of Africa and Europe confront each other at the top of the page. The geographic range of the depicted portolan outline is narrow—we see Gibraltar, Tunisia, France, Spain and Italy, but none of the eastern Mediterranean, which is cut off by the drawing’s lower edge. Small captions and rotae are positioned at various points on the map; some of these are placed to comment specifically on a geographical feature, while others comment more generally on the drawing and its characters.

The two figures that lie within, constitute, or coexist with Africa and Europe are classic examples of Opicinus’s body-worlds (the third figure in the Mediterranean is not included in this particular drawing). The female figure of Africa faces north, her body seen in profile along the coastline. She seems to speak directly into the ear of the European figure, who is depicted partly in profile and partly from the front. Europe’s head occupies the Iberia Peninsula; the chest and stomach are in France, with an arm and shoulder arching through the lowlands and Germany; the Italian peninsula is a leg with a booted foot. The relationship between these human figures and the landforms is, as is always the case in Opicinus’s drawings, very difficult to describe. Depending on the viewer’s perception of the forms, the figures can seem to be lying on top of the land, growing out of it, or somehow placed under it—viewed as if the landforms are the outlines of a window that we see through. My own perception of these enigmatic forms is that they depict the earth and the bodies as coextensive, and of the same material—that these are bodies *made out of the earth*. I find that the more one looks at these body-worlds, the more one sees the human figures as figures—the stranger parts of their bodies, where the landforms don’t align so easily with normative human shape, become less and less noticeable.

As in all of Opicinus’s drawings of the body-worlds, each figure takes on a specific identity, though in this example these identities are complex. The figure of Africa appears to be a woman; she is labeled “*Babilon maledicta*,” or “cursed Babylon,” by the small caption above her forehead. She is a rare example of a figure with a distinct racial identity; Opicinus darkened her skin with a grayish-brown wash in a clear reference to an African or Middle-Eastern skin tone. The figure appears to be bare-chested, although no breasts are visible (perhaps they are covered by her long hair). Little is visible of her lower body, but she wears some kind of cloth wrapped around her waist. A worm emerges from an otherwise empty circle on her stomach, twisting along the North-African coast, its mouth gnawing on the figure’s thumb near Carthage.

The identity of the European figure is far more complex. Captions suggest various identities: Christ, Òpicinus, and a female personification of “prudence” are all indicated. Muriel

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134 The only other figure in the Vaticanus that has been clearly racialized is a male figure of Africa, labeled “*Infidelitas*,” on folio 73v; a cloak covers most of his body, but his face, hands and feet are all darkened to indicate his race.
Laharie identifies Europe in this drawing as a kind of conglomerate figure of “Christianity,” which I think is a convincing interpretation. But the label above the head of the figure seems to identify it as Opicinus (as “the house of God”). Another caption in the Mediterranean Sea off the southern coast of France labels the figure as an “ymago prudentie.” Yet the most prominent indicator of the figure’s identity is the large rota around the face in the Iberian Peninsula, which seems to label the figure as Christ. Large red capital letters spell out C-R-I-S-T-U-S, with each letter also being the first letter of one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. In two outer concentric rings Opicinus wrote the names of the seven planets and the days of the week. Another rota lies inside France, near the location that Opicinus usually associated with the “heart” of the Europe figure. At the center of the roundel is a seated figure of Christ showing his wounds; around this are included the names of seven Episcopal seats, and the seven planets and their positions.

It seems most probable that the figure depicts a sort of hybrid – a personification of Christianity, with Christ at its head and its heart, surrounded by elements of the cosmic order. Opicinus then related the figure to himself in a separate caption. Yet the figure remains enigmatic; firstly, its gender is highly indeterminate. The fact that the face is labelled as Christ’s would certainly indicate on the surface that the figure is male. Its chest is bare (we can see the cloak falling away from the shoulder on the northern coast of France), but the lower roundel covers the place where a breast is often revealed in Opicinus’s female European figures. The face is smooth and beardless (most male figures in Opicinus’s work wear beards), and has long, flowing hair. The strongest indicator that the figure is female is the small child lying over Lombardy – the area always associated with the womb of the European figure. It appears that Europe is pregnant. The drawing thus suggests a combination of male and female elements: a pregnant female personification of Christendom, with Christ at the head and heart.

So what, then, is the drawing’s content? It is mainly a confrontation between two figures: a figure of Babylon (probably representing Islam), and a figure of Christianity. This simplicity of this contrast stands out despite the extensive texts and interpretations written around it. Yet beyond the basic characters and the captions, the drawing’s meaning is clearly activated in some essential way by the placement of the two personifications within the geographical forms of the portolan chart. In this first example, where the contrast between the two figures is simple, direct, and in some sense uncomplicated, I want to suggest two ways that the form of the drawing – it’s geographical frame – changes the meaning of these figures. I think that Opicinus uses the portolan chart to construct a binary system in which values can be opposed, and also to place these allegories or personifications within a space that is, in the broadest sense, real.

The first point is the easier to explain. The forms of the body-worlds encouraged a kind of dualistic, binary opposition: Europe versus Africa. We find this again and again in the drawings that include only one map. Binary themes on similar drawings include a contrast between the mouth of hell and the temple of the Lord (folio 79 verso, fig. 13), allegorized figures of Opicinus and Pope Benedict XII (folio 69 recto), and personifications of infidelity and faith.

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135 Laharie (2008), 767.
136 The full caption reads, “Ego vivifica domus Dei, in qua invocatum est nomen eius, sum a Christo christianitas dicta.”
137 These are “consilium, robur, intellectus, sapientia, timor, utilis pieta, scientia,” or “council, strength, intellect, wisdom, fear, useful piety, and knowledge.”
Yet the placement of such binaries within a map, particularly an empirical one, which was actually used for traveling, emphasizes the tenuousness of such binary oppositions. On the map you can literally sail by sea from one “place” or “body” to the other – each place is accessible to the other. In these simplest drawings, though, such a possibility is only hinted; a much fuller manipulation of the metaphor of travel and movement between binaries, and indeed a subversion of the very concept of binary opposition, will be discussed with regard to Opicinus’ more complicated images.

The second point, that the forms of the portolan charts change the meaning of the allegories and personifications inside them, is more complicated, and I will return to it throughout this chapter. Opicinus’s drawings bring to issue the very nature of allegory in fourteenth-century representation, dealing with issues of surface appearance and interior meaning. Allegory had been a primary form of textual interpretation for centuries, and was codified as the second part of Thomas Aquinas’s famous four-fold reading of scripture. But, as David Summers has pointed out, in the fourteenth century allegory “took on a more specialized meaning as the visible vehicle of high, abstract, and invisible truth”; Boccaccio defined it as, “truth set out in a fair and fitting garment of fiction.” Summers argues that this concept is central to a crucial aspect of the Western philosophical tradition – the “split between appearance and reality,” itself based on an essential difference between Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy (whether a concept of formal perfection was “above” or “below” the world of appearance – an unattainable goal, or part of its very structure).

Dante’s definitions of allegory are especially illuminating with regard to Opicinus’s drawings. In Il Convivio, which preceded Opicinus’s work by about thirty years, Dante famously distinguishes between the “allegory of the poets” and the “allegory of the theologians,” writing that:

The next is the allegorical, and this is the one that is hidden beneath the cloak of these fabrics, and is a truth hidden beneath a beautiful fiction…Why this kind of concealment was devised by the wise will be shown in the penultimate book. Indeed the theologians take this sense otherwise than do the poets.

This passage is usually interpreted to mean that for poets the surface level (the imagery or the structure) is fiction while the allegorical level (the meaning) is true, whereas for the theologians

138 The most influential definition from the early Middle Ages was Isidore of Seville’s. He wrote that “allegory is a alienioloquium. It says one thing but means another.” (Allegoria est alienioloquium. Aliud enim sonat et aliud intellegitur). Etymologiae, I, XXVII, 22.
140 Summers (2003), 530.
both the surface and allegory are true.\textsuperscript{142} Dante goes on to remark that he primarily uses allegory in the manner of the poets, but his acknowledgement of the other mode is crucial. This second model, the “allegory of the theologians,” has a long history in medieval Biblical exegesis, based on an acceptance of the truth of both the \textit{words} of the Bible and the meanings (allegorical, typological, historical, etc.) that lay beneath them. The \textit{world} was in many ways comparable to the (Biblical) \textit{word}; Hugh of St. Victor wrote that the earth was “like a book written by the finger of God” (\textit{quasi quidam liber scriptus digito dei}).\textsuperscript{143} God’s message was transmitted to man through biblical text and the created world; as Umberto Eco writes, “interpreting the world allegorically meant interpreting it like the Bible.”\textsuperscript{144}

This definition of allegory, articulated by Dante in \textit{Il Convivio}, implies a kind of coexistence between appearance and divine reality, a concept that is fundamental to Opicinus’s thought and imagery, and to which I will return.\textsuperscript{145} Opicinus may have used the portolans to frame his allegories because their form, to him, was empirically calibrated to capture the divine meaning intended by the Creator. In this understanding, Opicinus wouldn’t have seen himself as a poet or artist, but as an exegete, decoding the meaning of the earth’s forms like a theologian who uncovered the allegorical meaning of biblical text. Within the context of this thirteenth and fourteenth-century allegorical theory, the portolans provided a perfect hybrid image of the literal and the divine – a hypo-icon of their identity, demonstrating their coexistence and coextension. Opicinus’s allegories were not truths masked by fictions, but truths of one kind embedded in truths of another kind.

Another way to express this concept of legitimacy is to think of the forms of the continents depicted in the portolan charts as a kind of \textit{relic}. We know that Opicinus saw the earth around him as full of hidden signs of God’s presence and intentions, and it seems that he viewed the very shapes of the continents, viewed from a heavenly perspective, in much the same way. Relics in the Middle Ages were not only the bones of saints, or the objects that saints touched or wore during their lives. As David Areford demonstrated ten years ago in a seminal article, certain types of empirical knowledge also possessed the miraculous powers of the

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\textsuperscript{142} On the “allegory of poets” and “allegory of theologians,” see especially Leonardo Cecchini, “Allegory of the Theologians or Allegory of the Poets: Allegory in Dante’s Commedia,” \textit{Orbis Litterarum} 55 (2000), esp. pp. 352-8, which contains extensive notes and literature on the debate over the precise meaning of this passage.
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\textsuperscript{143} See Hugh of St Victor, \textit{De Tribus Diebus}, Chapter 4. Reference from Eco (1986), 57. See also Cecchini (2000), 345. Morse emphasizes this concept throughout her work (and, interestingly, proves that Opicinus was greatly interested in Hugh of S.V.’s work – he even completed a (lost) translation of one of Hugh’s text, probably the \textit{De arca noe morali}. See Morse (1996), 90. Her approach to the material is best summarized in the introduction to her dissertation, when she writes that “This choice of media is connected to his belief that the natural world, as God’s creation, spoke to mankind, not only collectively and generally about the Creator, but also specifically about the sins of each individual.” Morse (1996), 33.
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\textsuperscript{144} Eco (1986), 59.
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\textsuperscript{145} This definition of allegory is different in some ways, though, from Aquinas, who tended to confine allegorical interpretation to biblical text. See Eco (1986), 63.
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relic. Areford’s examples are fifteenth-century woodcuts that claim to depict Christ’s side wound as “life-sized,” with captions that read, “this is the length and width of Christ’s wound which was pierced in his side on the Cross.” Areford also mentions woodcuts with lists of the exact number of drops of blood shed by Christ during the passion (547,500), and the precise number of wounds on his body (5,475). This numerical, empirical (or pseudo-empirical) information was treated like a relic and used in devotion – it was a key to understanding Christ’s life in a material, “real-world” way.

I think the portolan charts may have functioned in an analogous way for Opicinus. They depicted, for the first time, the shape of the world exactly as God had created it – the shapes of the continents that it reveals are relics of the moment of Creation itself. As relics of this moment, drawings of the forms could carry an intrinsic meaning, by turns talismanic, theological, and corporeal. Any content, figure or personification placed inside these forms took part in their truth. As Areford argues, such relics “exemplify a late-medieval tension between the rendering of symbolic space and real space,” aiming to establish both a spatial and theological precision.

David Summers identifies what I think is an analogous kind of visual allegory in the personifications of the virtues and vices painted on the lower level of the Arena Chapel in Padua by Giotto in the first decade of the fourteenth century. The “palpable presence” of these human personifications – their weight, spatial depth, and detail – creates a similarly “real” allegory. Through a weighty, three-dimensional figure like Justice (fig. 33), “Giotto was able not simply to ‘show’ or ‘illustrate’ the idea of justice, but to figure it, to characterize it and make its meanings emphatic.” With these allegorical figures, Giotto not only depicts concepts, but also renders them “see-able” – he pictorializes or iconizes the indexes and symbols that are represented, so that they are subject to the geometry of our gaze. Like Giotto, Opicinus “figures” his allegories, giving them human form; in addition, however, he “spaces” them, adding a geographical element that is coextensive with the figural, visible, and symbolic. Like a perspective painting that placed holy figures into a space contiguous with our own, or medieval devotional texts that encouraged the reader to imagine Biblical events in a contemporary context, this first example of Opicinus’s body-worlds concretize abstract personifications through a relation to both the human body and a fixed and measured world.

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147 Areford (1998), 223.
148 Summers (2003), 531.
149 My terminology for this, “empirical allegory,” is not meant to correct or replace Victoria Morse’s interesting term, “moralized geography.” Morse’s term “moralized” is better suited to her investigations of Opicinus’s personal motivations and conscience, while my use of the concept of allegory is aligned with my interest in how Opicinus’s drawings can be related theoretically to fourteenth-century visual culture. My reasons for using the term “empirical” over something like “geography” should be clear by this point; it captures what I see as the charts’ measured qualities, emphasizing these over the typically abstract connotations of medieval “geography.” See Morse, “An Apologist for Papal Avignon: The Moralized Geography of Opicinus de Canistris,” forthcoming.
Global / Local: Vaticanus Folio 84 verso

In three folios near the end of the Vaticanus manuscript, Opicinus creates cartographic drawings that add one more layer of meaning on top of the basic arrangement outlined above; he superimposes a local grid map of Pavia, his hometown, on top of a single portolan. This interplay between the local and the global is not unusual within Opicinus’s texts and captions on other drawings, which are often used to comment on the everyday world of his youth and family (we must remember that he made these drawings in Avignon, not Pavia), but the specific visual alignment of parts of Pavia with parts of the Mediterranean region is unique. Opicinus played with this arrangement differently in each of the three drawings, changing the scales and position of the two maps, presumably seeking different correspondences.

Folio 84 verso offers a clear example of this type of format (fig. 16). On the page we see the body-worlds with which we are now familiar: here, a female Europe confronts a female Africa, and the Mediterranean devil lies between them, his head to the east. The figures are full of interesting anecdotal and often graphic detail, much of it interpreted in the marginal texts. For example, the Mediterranean figure has two phalluses—one massive penis that seems to be ejaculating onto the southern coast of Spain, and another that he clutches in his fist (presumably an image of masturbation) near Venice. On the southern coast of France, a basket-woven pattern is explained in a caption as a basket to catch the excrement of the sea-figure. Despite these and other details on the figures, the actual bodies seem less important in these three drawings, which focus more on the physical interplay between the overlapping maps. The body-worlds below are covered over by the city grid of Pavia. This grid, eight squares by ten, is oriented in the same way as the map below, with East at the top of the page (the street grid of Pavia was, and still is, slightly off axis from the cardinal points because of its alignment with the river, which is reflected in its positioning at a slight angle on the page). The local grid is filled in

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150 The three drawings that utilize this local/global structure are Vaticanus folios 84r, 84v, and 85r. Several other drawings also imply a local topography; for example, Vaticanus folio 71r, while it conforms generally to the “overlapped” type with two complete portolans, also includes the names of Lombard cities overlapping the larger charts. The “local” doesn’t always just mean Pavia – here, it means Lombardy. Vaticanus folio 76v follows a similar pattern.

151 In my use of the term “global,” I do not wish to imply that Opicinus’s maps, or the portolan charts, in fact represented the globe in its entirety; they represented the region around the Mediterranean basin. But to the inhabitants of this region, these maps depicted the whole “world” as they knew it, and I think that in contrast with the local maps of Pavia, the portolans were on a more global scale.

152 I look extensively at these sexual aspects of the folio in Chapter Four. As far as I can tell, neither of these penises is explained in the captions, although there is a highly confusing passage at the bottom of the page that seems to compare the arousal of the penis to (I think) alchemy, or the general process of one thing becoming another. Vaticanus fol. 84v: “Cum uirga infigitur vitreo isti camino ardentis, ex modico flatu uas uitirem generatur, cuius material feno conficitur ante quam uitro.”

153 This caption, which also is a play on Opicinus’s family name, Canister, is in the upper right corner, near Cairo: “...de canistro rupto ad colligenda stercora maris.” Morse argues that it was placed near the Canister family’s parish, Santa Tecla, to indicate their presence. See Morse (1996), 219.
with detail; the numerous small labels in brown indicate churches, city gates, bridges and monasteries in Pavia, while the few red captions refer to cities or regions on the portolan below. The huge green swath at the right of the page indicates the Ticino River, which is coextensive with the long veil or cloak worn by the Africa woman. The green lines at the top and bottom of the page show the path of several Pavian canals, and the three concentric red boundaries drawn around the page indicate the city walls.

The precise placement and scale of the two maps is certainly not accidental; the maps have been placed in a precise relation to one another in order to seek out and explain correspondences between them. This assertion is supported by the similar drawing on folio 84 recto, in which the scale of the portolan chart is completely different (much smaller in comparison to the grid of Pavia); here, Opicinus comes to different correspondences and conclusions as a result of the change in scale. Back on folio 84 verso, numerous captions explore the moral, theological, quotidian, and incidental correspondences created by the overlay of the city grid on the portolan chart. For example, in a short passage in the upper-left corner of the page, Opicinus mentions the fact that the body of the sea-devil extends beyond the inner city wall of the Pavian map, which he interprets as a sign that malice and mischief are spread out in the city, “passing beyond the old city walls.”154 It’s not that he thinks that this image of the two maps placed in this particular arrangement are necessarily “correct” or “true” – on folio 84 recto, the body of the sea-figure does NOT transgress the city walls. Opicinus just seems to be testing each possible arrangement on either side of the folio, turning it back and forth to see which parts of it align with things he believes to be true.

In contrast to this relatively simple correspondence, another caption shows how complicated these interpretations could become. In the bottom right corner of the page is a caption that reads, “Just as the islands of purgatory pay a tax to the Church in Rome, so too the Chapel of St. Gregory (of the England of Pavia) and the Chapel of St. Patrick (off to the side of the Ireland of Pavia) are subject to the monastery of the senator.”155 This passage explains a parallel that Opicinus noticed, probably incidentally, when he drew the two maps in this particular relation to one another: that the Pavian Church of St. Gregory (a Saint who led a vigorous campaign of conversion in England and Northern Europe at the end of the sixth century) fell over England on the portolan below, and the Pavian Church of St. Patrick fell close to Ireland (though not directly over it). Even further, the monastery with which they were both associated fell near Rome on the portolan chart. In this example, there is no great meaning or revelation that is uncovered – it is just a recognition of the structural similarity between these local and global relations. Opicinus seems to say that when any two maps are placed in relation to each other, if they are true representations of God’s created earth, one will find correspondences between them.

Other captions on the drawing allude to different connections. One interprets the significance the placement of Opicinus’s home parish district, around the Chapel of Saint Mary, delineated with a red outline near Tunisia and Sicily on the lower map. Another seeks the “global” meaning of the location of Opicinus’s father’s house. Such interpretations are, I think,

154 Vaticanus fol. 84v: “Tempore maioris malitie Papiensis excedentis muros ueteris ciuitatis, absconduntur peccata que tamen celari non possunt.”
155 Vaticanus fol. 84v: “Sicut insule purgatorie dant censum Romane Ecclesie, ita capelle Sancti Gregorii Anglie Papiensis et Sancti Patrii elongati ab Hibernia Papiensi sunt subiecte monasterio senatoris.”
meant as models; he hoped that the drawings could be used by others to probe their own consciences and personal histories. The revelation and the experiment were meant to be used by anyone – Opicinus is using himself as a test case, taking examples from his own life, family history, and childhood, and using them to interpret the correspondence between the two charts. But anyone else could do the same, and would arrive at different connections.

With its flood of content and connections, folio 84 verso brings to mind a statement made by Michael Camille, who characterizes Opicinus’s universe as “overdetermined,” and argues that everything in it is “burdened with multiple meanings.”

A drawing like 84 verso must have been what Camille was thinking of. Here, each part of Opicinus’s hometown is given multiple interpretations, usually based on its placement on the portolan chart, but other times simply based on etymological connections, family stories, dreams, or coincidence (the “horizontal” allegory of Akbari). Yet the drawing is all about experimentation, layering, and play – I don’t see the burden or the struggle of a drawing like this. Many parts of it must have been intentionally humorous: the basket for collecting the sea-man’s feces, the graphic sexual organs, an interpretation of the Europe woman’s pearl earrings, the depiction of the Africa woman’s cloak as a green river.

Certainly the drawing contains multiple levels of reality: it is an allegorical depiction of three body-worlds in contact and dialogue, a depiction of the structural connections between local and regional realities, and a series of musings about the significance of these connections for Opicinus’s own life and family. But Opicinus piles on meanings, and multiplies forms and plays with realities seemingly as a form of experimentation. Even when texts in the Vaticanus indicated the stressors in Opicinus’s life – spiritual, moral, legal – the drawings remain exploratory and even lighthearted. Opicinus created an “overdetermined” world because of its opportunities and flexibility, not to build a burdensome system that would collapse on top of him. An overdetermined world allowed him to make visible to himself and his potential readers the primary concerns, impulses, histories and spaces of his world and his body in a way that led to productive connections and revelations.

As a final word on this drawing, I want to return to one more visual feature: the form of the local grid. As the reader may already have noticed, this grid strongly evokes the rhumb-line grids that were placed over contemporary portolan charts. The grid may offer a clue to Opicinus’s working process, or the way he was inspired to create these drawings. Without any words from him on the subject it is impossible to know where such an idea comes from, but perhaps the grids on the portolan chart(s) from which Opicinus was working reminded him of a gridded map of Pavia that he had seen, or perhaps even made. The very idea of creating this local/global drawing may have been inspired by seeing the portolan grids. Even beyond this suggestion, I think the grid on folio 84 verso offers further evidence that Opicinus viewed the portolans as empirical representations. Here, the grid structures the space of the local map, but also shapes the way we view the portolan below. Any resident or visitor familiar with the city would recognize that the local map of Pavia was a measured, accurate representation, and the fundamental hypothesis of this image and its interpretation is that correspondences can be deduced through the alignment of one measured map with another. Once again, a grid serves two functions, measuring the space of one reality and indicating the measurability of another.

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Two Charts, Overlapped: Vaticanus Folio 61 recto

In each of the two previous examples, Opicinus constructs a drawing using only one portolan chart; on folio 61 recto he uses the skeletons of two portolan charts of the Mediterranean region, which have been rotated and overlapped to form one image (fig. 5). Each of the two charts is rendered in a different scale, with a larger one oriented toward the top of the page and a smaller one pointed toward the bottom. The two images have been flipped along both a north/south and an east/west axis (in effect, mirrored two ways), so that they are positioned as opposites. This basic format is repeated in a number of drawings; again, there are variations in the size and placement of the two maps, but all of these examples include two portolans that are laid on top of one another.

On folio 61 recto, parts of each of the charts remain intact, while others are distorted or hidden by the overlapping forms. On each map, the western Mediterranean retains its integrity – France, Spain, and the northwestern coast of Africa are clearly visible both at the top and the bottom of the page. At the center, however, the confusion becomes overwhelming for the uninitiated viewer. In the smaller, lower image, the negative space of the chart – the sea – is tinted with a light brown wash, delineating the forms of the body of the so-called “Mediterranean Man,” often labeled “Lucifer.” His head and beard occupy the eastern Mediterranean (his ear tucked against the Nile delta and curving beard shaping the coast of the Anatolian peninsula), his arms gesture near Italy (one fist plunging up the Adriatic), and his feet poke out near Gibraltar, between the faces of Europe and Africa. In contrast, the sea of the larger top map is not embodied, and retains the color of the paper. At the center the embodied eastern Mediterranean of the lower map (including the Black Sea) overlaps both the land and the sea of the upper map, so that its eastern half (part of Italy and all of Greece, Egypt, and Turkey) is obscured.

But is the map beneath really hidden? If one looks closer, certain parts of it are still present, if only in textual form. In the Italian peninsula of the upper map, for example, which is overlapped by the eastern Mediterranean of the lower map, we see the word “Roma” written over the sea (on the Sea-man’s forehead), signaling where the city would have been on the map below. The maps’ superimposition encourages the viewer to seek correlations between them, and Opicinus reinforces these correspondence by drawing actual lines and lines of text that connect various parts. On this page he connects the two representations of the Adriatic with a diagonal line that slices through the center of the image, running from one Venice to the other. This line could help the viewer perceive the image’s orientation, by providing a reference point for the location of the same city on each map at this crucial juncture at the center. Or, given the opposing genders of the two Europes in the maps, and the fact that the area at the top of the Adriatic was understood as the erogenous zone of the European body, the line could even suggest a sexual point of contact – even intercourse – between the two figures. It looks like a kind of symbolic twin to the spatio-indexical rhumb lines of the original portolan charts.

Victoria Morse has argued convincingly that this doubling and mirroring of the portolan chart serves a specific purpose: it allowed Opicinus to contrast the world as it was seen and known with the possibility of an alternate world converted to a state of grace. In this particular example, the map shows the natural world at the bottom and the spiritual world at the

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157 On folio 61r, see Morse (1996), 212-15, and Harding (1998), 32-34.
158 Examples of this type in the Vaticanus are 61r, 61v, 68v, 69v, 71r, 76v, 77r, and 78r.
labels on the drawing indicate that *africa naturalis ypocrita* and *europa naturalis* occupy the continents of the smaller chart while *africa spiritualis* and *europa spiritualis* talk to each other in the larger chart above. Both figures of the “natural world” are male (a bearded, older figure in Europe and a tonsured monk in Africa), while both of the “spiritual” figures are female (Africa is a robed nun and Europe is a younger woman with long, flowing hair). Morse also points out that different renderings of the sea for the two charts likely corresponds to their content; she writes that, “sin, in the form of the diabolical sea, lies between natural Europe and natural Africa, [while] the space of the Mediterranean between spiritual Europe and spiritual Africa is empty and thus perhaps meant to be seen as pure.” The sea-figure takes control of the page’s crucial center, superimposing his twisting body over the eastern half of the upper, spiritual chart – his “negative” space dominates the positive space of the other chart.

Each of the four land-figures bears an emblem on its chest – these presumably signify the intention or motivation of each character. *Europa naturalis* bears a tarasque (a river demon from the Rhone) and *europa spiritualis* contains an image of Christ showing his wounds (his side-wound situated suggestively close to Avignon). The two figures of Africa contain circular *rotae*, each labeled with the word *lanua*, or “door,” that show how different mental/sensual processes can lead to (or are the door to) sin or God. Catherine Harding explains how the *rota* on the breast of *africa naturalis* shows the mental process that leads to sin: thinking, imagining, deciding, and delighting in (*coitatio, ymaginatio, electio, delectatio*) lead the sinner to consent to sin (*consensus peccati*). Small lines connect the first four concepts to the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth of the Africa-figure, indicating the complicity of the exterior senses in this pathway to sin. In contrast, a caption on the *rota* for *africa spiritualis* points to the interior senses (*sensus interiores*) that indicate spiritual progress: meditation, contemplation, discretion, and degustation (*meditatio, contemplatio, discretio, degustatio*). These lead to the comprehension of God (*comprehensio Dei*).

Together, these elements constitute an allegorical representation. The message itself is simple: one must abandon the external senses that lead to sin in order to follow the internal senses to redemption. The question, just as in the previous examples, is how its meaning is changed, complicated, or simplified by its construction within these doubled and overlapped forms of the portolan charts. We saw on folio 74 verso (fig. 10) how Opicinus, by framing his allegories within the portolan charts, solidified their meaning into measured form, aligning the world’s shapes with the truths and figures they revealed. But if folio 74 verso showed this process to be relatively straightforward, folio 61 recto demonstrates that Opicinus was also aware

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160 A drawing like this one complicates the traditional view of Opicinus’s body-worlds as consistently gendered; Camille and others stated unequivocally that the female figure of Africa emerged repeatedly as a “sign of sexual sin.” Camille (1994), 90. In this drawing, and in many others, we see that the gender relations are far more complicated; here, it is the female figures who signify spiritual virtue, and the continent of Africa that is associated with the Church.

161 Morse (1996), 214.

162 In a new article on Opicinus and Papal Avignon, Morse discusses the Tarasque, a river demon that was expelled by St. Martha, “as a prelude to her evangelization of the area” in the first century C.E. See Morse, “Moralized Geography,” (forthcoming). On the Tarasque, see also Salomon (1962), 137-41.

163 Harding (1998), 34.

164 Morse (1996), 214 and Harding (1998), 34.
of the dangers of aligning appearance with truth; appearances could just as easily deceive as reveal.

In a recent book, Dallas Denery explores exactly this subject – late-medieval discussions of the difference between what appears and what exists.\textsuperscript{165} His book reflects on medieval epistemology and its relation to sight and perceptual processes, particularly as discussed in preaching. Denery’s discussion of Peter of Limoges’s late-thirteenth century preaching manual, “\textit{Tractatus moralis de oculo},” contains many interesting parallels to Opicinus’s work. Denery describes the conflicts that Peter encountered as he sought to moralize or interpret allegorically certain maxims of perspectivist optics and visual theory. He points to the tension between optical theory that defined vision in terms of perfect geometry, such as Francis Bacon’s assertion of the co-identity of the visible object and what is perceived, and a long theological tradition that human vision was essentially flawed and distorted. Since Peter’s allegorical or spiritual interpretations are considered as “real” as the science itself, they make demands to reconsider the nature of vision, itself.\textsuperscript{166} Like Peter, Opicinus wanted to interpret the visible world allegorically, and Denery’s work reminds us that the way he would have interpreted his visionary experience depended on how he hypothesized the concept and mechanics of vision, itself (a point to which I return in this chapter’s final section). Crucial to both Opicinus and Peter of Limoges is the interplay between appearance and truth, and its implications on one’s interior spiritual life.

All of these problems relate intimately to the dualistic forms of the maps that Opicinus used and manipulated. We saw in this chapter’s first example how the basic form of a Mediterranean portolan chart creates a binary system, opposing the continents of Europe and Africa. Such binary contrasts are still present on folio 61 recto, but other elements suggest a destabilization of dualism. In her analysis of folio 61 recto, Morse gestured toward this possibility, writing that the structure of these doubled portolan charts, “gave [Opicinus] a powerful way to express the problem of unseen realities hidden under, yet also mirrored in, visible forms.” In her analysis, the interconnectedness of the two maps in fol. 61r “provides further evidence that, for Opicinus, the natural and spiritual worlds were not separate from one another; rather, they seem in his drawings to flow out of each other, suggesting that the possibility of conversion to a more spiritual state of being was never absent.”\textsuperscript{167}

This analysis is the foundation of my own – it was Morse who first took seriously the idea that Opicinus’s formal structures implied a deeper (and intentional) meaning. Yet I think a closer reading of the drawing’s structure can push this argument even further. First, the relationship between the two maps on the page is not only one of mirroring.\textsuperscript{168} Other drawings, which I will discuss in the following section, do include mirrored forms, but folio 61 recto and the drawings that resemble it show an overlapping of forms, rather than a mirroring. Even more specifically, we might say that one map is a kind of \textit{refraction} of the other; it repeats the form of the first chart, but emerges from the center as if from a prism – in a different size and orientation.

\textsuperscript{165} See Denery (2005), especially pp. 75-115.
\textsuperscript{166} Denery (2005), 95, 81.
\textsuperscript{167} Morse (1996), 212, 215.
\textsuperscript{168} Morse uses the term “mirror” to describe these forms’ relation to one another, while Muriel Laharie uses an even less specific term, describing such charts as being “opposed” to one another. See, for example, Laharie (2008), 615, where she describes the two portolans of folio 61 verso as “\textit{deux cartes opposes}.”
Even after carefully describing the arrangement of these forms on folio 61 recto, numerous ambiguities still exist. For example, Opicinus does not clearly indicate which of the two depicted worlds, the “natural” or the “spiritual,” is preeminent. The “spiritual” pair may be larger, but they are completely physically overwhelmed by the earthly pair—particularly by the figure of the devil that emerges in the sea. Is size a greater indicator of relative importance, or does the position of one of the charts on “top” of the other indicate its supremacy? In this confusion, moving from one “state” to another is complicated and fraught with dangerous ambiguities about their points of juncture.

Similarly, directionality is undermined by the maps’ overlapping and opposite directional orientation. If we imagine ourselves traveling across the earth depicted on the page, we would realize at a certain point that we were traveling in opposite directions on the two maps—moving east on the “natural” map means moving west on the “spiritual” one, for example. Every path that leads one way also leads another way; no way can be said to be the right or wrong way, and every path in a sense leads both to everywhere and to nowhere.

Thus, in addition to allegorizing the natural and spiritual worlds, and the sensual pathways in and out of sin, Opicinus allegorizes the very concept of uncertainty, itself. He wrote extensively in the Vaticanus manuscript about precisely this problem; of the terror of having to decide on a path, and of never knowing whether one was being deceived, or, even worse, deceiving one’s self. In a section of the Vaticanus that he titled “On the difference between the wisdom of God and worldly wisdom,” Opicinus explains the insufficiency of relying only on scripture or only on signs in the world.

I experimented with the practice of both kinds of wisdom. I discovered such a great opacity in the study of worldly wisdom that I could not find the beginning, middle or end of the things I researched. I discovered such a great clarity in the study of divine wisdom that the beginning, middle and end of everything was unveiled before my eyes. In effect, the wisdom of the world told me every day, “go study canon law. Your knowledge permits you to obtain great honors for you, your family and your friends. And with their aid, you will be held in esteem by your fellow citizens.” But obeying right away this wise voice, I became blind and miserable, for I could not understand the virtues of the canon law because I was attached only to the letter and the commentary; and I became even blinder. And this worldly wisdom addressed me a second time and persuaded me to turn to sacred theology. During the time I devoted myself to it, I began to pay attention only to the letter and its spiritual explanations. But of its true spirit and meaning I had even less knowledge. And I became totally blind.

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169 Morse also notes this ambiguity. See Morse (1996), 214.
170 Vaticanus fol. 51v. This passage is also partially quoted in Morse (1996), 299-302.

“Expertus sum utriusque sapientie studium. Tantam cecitatem inueni in studio sapientie mundi ut nullius rei quesite potuerim scire principium, medium neque finem. Tantam reperi lucem in studio sapientie Die ut mihi patuerit uniuersitatis principium, medium atque finis. Dicebatur enim mihi quotidie sapientia mundi: “Vade et stude in iure canonico per cuius scientiam adipisceris magnum honorem persone tue et domus tue et omnium amicorum tuorum, quorum auxilio magnificaberis inter tus conciues.” Statim ego miserrimus cecus obediens uoci huiusmodi sapientie, numquam potui scire uertutem iuris canonici attendens ad solam litteram cum glosulis suis; et factus sum magis cecus quam prius. Tunc iterum illa sapientia mundi me
Opicinus was first and foremost a priest, and could never reject the importance of scripture and the word; indeed, both his texts and drawings reveal his intense interest in textual exegesis. But Opicinus remains committed to returning to the visual – to the world, as it was measured, mapped and re-imagined – for the most perfect truths. In a passage on folio 3 verso of the Vaticanus, he explains how the painter creates more perfect pictures if he studies examples in nature. He compares this to scripture, arguing that one can learn plenty from the words themselves, but that the letter is ultimately “corruptible” and “infirm.” He then asks,

So where does one find the most solid demonstrations: from the [spiritual] authorities or from a visible argument? No wise man would give a different response than ’from a visible argument.’ For following the Scriptures, many of the weak become blinded; but the perfect could never be blinded by the proofs that they find in their own conscience.171

As Morse insists throughout her work, Opicinus aligns the visible world with his own conscience, so that it could become an indicator of his spiritual state and progress. As we can see from these texts, Opicinus was concerned with which media – textual, pictorial, and mental – would lead the Christian to God, and which had the potential to lead him astray. When was the appearance of the world real, and when did it distort the truth? We find this same problem emphasized in the content of the allegory on folio 61 recto, which seemed to indicate that it was necessary to abandon the external senses, which led to sin, and instead turn inward. Yet the forms of the drawing, and much of the allegorical theory of the period, contradicts this message. The very concept of mapping, and especially of the empirical portolans, suggests a reliance on the senses, especially vision and measurement, and visual allegories increasingly aimed for truth in their appearance and forms. What Opicinus emphasizes with a drawing like folio 61 recto is that both the physical and spiritual senses can be deceived. Visualizing this problem, he seems to suggest, can help one to avoid it. He grafts a spiritual system of correspondences and coordinations onto this new image of the physical world, but specifically includes details that undermine both systems, seeking instead a negotiation between the two.

Yet, in this constant push-pull between certainty and doubt, we again have to look at the other side. Even as Opicinus seeks to undermine and destabilize monolithic approaches to interpreting God’s message(s) in this visible world, he also makes an effort to create interconnection and points of contact throughout the drawing. These points of connection – the anchors or bridges between the binary systems – are most often found in lines that are stretched between corresponding points. We already saw one example of this in the line stretched between “spiritual” and “natural” Venice on folio 61 recto, but other, even more concrete examples can be found in other drawings. On folio 58 recto of the Vaticanus, for example, Opicinus combines

persuasit ut adirem ad sacram theologiam. In cuius studio uacans cepi ad solam litteram cum spiritualibus expositionibus suis attendere, cuius spiritum et uirtutem minus cognoui quam prius, factusque sum totaliter cecus.”

171 Vaticanus fol. 3v: “Quis est ergo locus fortior arguendi ab auctoritate an ab argumento visibili? Nemo sapiens ista dixerit aliter quam ab argumento uisibili. In auctoritate enim Scripture multi excecantur infirmi; in argumento uero conscientie proprie nunquam excecri possunt perfecti.” Morse also quotes this passage. Morse (1996), 302-3.
four small embodied portolans to create juxtapositions between the four seasons, the four cardinal directions, and the four states of the soul (fig. 4).\(^{172}\) Within the drawing, he drew small lines to suggest points of correspondence between elements in each of the four quadrants. These can either connect the same geographical location between two separate maps (as in the line drawn between the two Carthages on the upper left map and the lower left map), or they could establish a point of contact between the same physiological parts of two body-worlds on the same map (as in the line drawn between the reproductive areas of the Europe-woman and the Africa-woman in the upper-left map). The meaning of such lines is still ambiguous, but they do suggest points of contact and interconnection between elements that are otherwise set in opposition to one another. They also establish that the body-worlds’ identities as both bodies and maps remain significant on their own; one is not preeminent over the other.

This concept is also mirrored in the Palatinus manuscript; in a fascinating drawing on folio 13 verso that I can only briefly address here, Opicinus superimposes four maps (see fig. 20). Only one is represented visually; the presence of the other three maps is referenced only through labels. But what is suggested is that the same map is rotated four ways and superimposed, meaning that any geographical location is present on the map four times. Opicinus then drew long diagonal lines across the page, which connect each of the four locations of Jerusalem to its diagonal twin. At each Jerusalem, he draws a small vignette—a Crucifixion in the upper-right, a Resurrection in the upper left, a Madonna and Child in the lower right, and a Man of Sorrows in the lower left. The diagonal lines that are drawn between these points almost seem to collapse them all on top of one another, establishing their simultaneous difference/distance and sameness/proximity.

Finally, the true use and function of portolan charts reminds the viewer of the ever-present possibility for connections between all the parts of these images. What, after all, were portolan charts for? They allowed seafarers to move, to travel, to cross open water with a new confidence in direction and distance. Having learned to copy these charts, and living and working at a thriving papal center that was greatly involved in travel and trade, Opicinus knew this; he knew that his ultimate audience for these drawings (the Christian seeking a renewal of faith, members of a parish flock, even the Pope), would think of this travel when they saw these portolan diagrams, even though he had pictorialized them in a new way. Looking back at folio 61 recto, we have discussed the directional ambiguity inherent in the charts’ overlapping—how up was also down, right was left, etc. But even as this overlapping creates confusion and disorientation, it also establishes a kind of safety net. The drawings tell us that if we are traveling metaphorically across the sea of sin in the “natural” chart, we may in fact be over solid, dry land on the chart beneath. Any good position can also be a bad one, and any dangerous place can also be safe. Doubling and positioning the portolan charts in this way allowed Opicinus to establish binaries and then collapse or navigate between them, creating complex allegorical messages that are nearly infinitely interpretable and difficult to describe with words.

**Four Charts, Mirrored: Vaticanus Folio 82 recto**

In my final example, folio 82 recto, we see many of the principles and techniques of the other drawings pushed to their limits of recognition and interpretability (fig. 14). This drawing is unique in Opicinus’s oeuvre: it contains four complete portolan charts, all the exact same size, placed in careful relation to one another through overlapping and mirroring. All four of these

portolans are embodied, creating eight distinct characters: four male figures of Europe, and four figures of Africa (two angels and two male figures). The seas remain empty and un-embodied. First I will describe and analyze the drawing’s enigmatic and complex structure, before discussing its content in light of several captions.

The drawing contains two primary layers. On its surface lie two complete portolan outlines that retain the white color of the paper. These meet in the precise center of the drawing, where their forms are mirrored. This is different than the numerous drawings in the previous category, in which the two charts overlapped one another; here, the two white charts on the surface of the page are both complete diagrams of the region, reflecting one another along an invisible horizontal line in the Holy Land and Asia Minor. Rather than containing the figure of the diabolical sea, the spaces of the Mediterranean and Black Seas on these two charts are left as windows through which the viewer can see the other maps in the drawing. This window or outline – the negative space of the upper drawing – provides a view onto a world of color. In the space below, the continents are shaded a brick red, while the seas are painted a soft brown-gray.

The arrangement of these colored maps beneath the surface of the white ones is the most complicated aspect of the drawing. One complete map lies below the upper, white map, and one complete map lies below the lower, white map, but each is placed in a different relation to its chart above. On the top half of the page, the tinted map below is a precise mirror image of the upper map, reflected from it along a red horizontal line that bisects the upper, white body-worlds. The white body-worlds in the top layer always overlap the lower, colored ones, which are only visible in the negative space of the sea. The same system is repeated in the lower half of the drawing, except that the lower tinted map is reflected along a vertical line, also colored red. The two maps on the bottom half of the page are also mirror images of one another, but along a different axis.

The brown labels on the white, upper charts do little to clarify this confusing situation. On the upper half of the page, the brown labels all point out the location of cities on the colored chart, even though all lie on the space of the white chart; they indicate the continued presence of the map below, even when it is obscured by the upper chart. On the bottom half of the page, similar captions placed on the white chart actually point to cities on that chart, rather than on the one below.

Other captions around the drawing indicate the identity of the characters. At the top of the page are two labels for Europe and Africa: Europe is the “aduena rector nouus,” the strange new priest, and Africa is the “parrochia aliena,” the parish of another. The figures seem to present the encounter between a new priest and his new parish (a situation that Opicinus underwent several times in his early career as a priest). Morse argues that the captions point to an even more specific and ethically dubious situation – that of a priest approaching a parish already occupied by another priest. See Morse (1996), 216. Morse interprets the folio in relation to several other passages about interactions between priests and the role of advice and council in making decisions.

Morse argues that the use of mirroring and reflection in this drawing indicate that all eight of the figures on this page are reflections and mirror images of just two – that the repetitions indicate different motivations and potential states of two individuals. This analysis is convincing, and works within her argument about Opicinus’s use of the drawings to explore the
precision. Here we see two angels and two male figures of Europe. The angels are labeled “angelus tenebrarum” and “angelus lucis” – an angel of light and an angel of darkness.\textsuperscript{175} The angel of light in the surface map whispers into the ear of the upper male Europe, labeled “homo spiritualis,” while the angel of darkness whispers to “homo carnalis.” The arrangement recalls nothing so much as the angel and devil of the human conscience that perch on the shoulders of cartoon figures in modern movies and comics; in the drawing, the heads of the angels seem to rest directly on the shoulders of the figures below them.

One more ghostlike form is created from this incredible arrangement of maps and bodies. At the precise center of the drawing, a cruciform shape is created by the two mirrored shapes of Asia Minor and the Holy Land; Asia Minor forms the two arms, and the land below forms the body of a cruciform vestment. This is labeled in a caption on the right side of the page, which reads “behold the vestment of the Church soaked in blood.”\textsuperscript{176} The form of the vestment is accentuated by a small cutout for the neck. The role of this form in the drawing is ambiguous – its cruciform shape and its “soaking in blood” certainly evoke Christ’s sacrifice, and its position at the heart of the drawing, precisely where the two white maps are mirrored, suggests that it may significant in the transition between the two. It also visually unites the two charts since it places part of each into the same “garment.”

Even after identifying all of the figures in the drawing, its meaning (if it is meant to have one) remains elusive. While other drawings seem programmed to create a single allegory or a primary confrontation between figures (which, I have argued, is often reflected in or reinforced by the particular cartographic forms that Opicinus chose for the drawing), this drawing resists this type of single analysis. The longer captions on this folio do not always contain a single focus, and many make no comment at all on the drawing. One caption on the left side of the page is a short rant about the mosquitoes that were bothering Opicinus while he made the drawings, while another, longer text at the lower left is an extended metaphorical description of the penis, describing how, like a heretic disobeying the church, the penis disobeys the orders of the body.\textsuperscript{177}

\begin{quote}
conscience and concepts of motivation, but I think the mirrored forms may also structure a different way of thinking and seeing. See Morse (1996), 217.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{175} The full captions are “angelus lucis (id est homo consiliarius recte uie)” and “angelus tenebrarum (id est homo consiliarius prauue uie)” – angels of light or darkness that guide one along the right or wrong path.

\textsuperscript{176} Vaticanus fol. 82r: “Ecce uestimentum Ecclesie mixtum in sanguine.”

\textsuperscript{177} The text on the mosquito reads, “Me agente hoc, ualde molestauerunt musce circumuolantes et sciniphes uel culices.” The other quote is quite interesting. It says “the member of desire, the more it is caressed, the more it becomes erect and grows independently of the will of the man of whom it is a part, indicates the individual that, sensitive to flatteries, rebels against the Church which desires other things for that person. And the human body symbolizes the church. And just like this miserable member [i.e. the penis] works to sink a man entirely into the desires of the flesh, so it often takes just one person to disrupt the entire Church” (translation mine).

“Membrum concupiscentie – quod quanto plus tangitur, tanto magis erigitur et inflatur preter voluntatem hominis cuius est membrum – significant singularem personam que adulationibus tacta erigitur, et inflatur aduersus Ecclesiam que uult alium quam persona. Et corpus humanum figurat Ecclesiam. Et sicut illud miserum membrum plerumque submergit totum hominem in concupiscentiam carnis, ita sepe una persona totam conturbat Ecclesiam.”
There is one caption in the drawing, however, which offers a tantalizing and substantial comment on its form and content. In the lower-right corner of the page, Opicinus writes that,

> It was once said in error that men are changed into angels of good or angels of evil. According to the letter, this is a heretical position, since one species cannot be transformed into another. But taken in spirit, it is true in this mirror [i.e. in this drawing], since it is not possible to find any fiction or allegory that does not give birth to some truth in this mirror, at least in part.\(^{178}\)

There is a lot to unpack in this short statement. First, it outlines the general principle that Opicinus follows in these drawings that employ mirroring or correspondence – that the forms he creates generate truths. Second, it raises the crucial issue of the mirror, a subject that I will investigate in this chapter’s final section. Here, Opicinus seems to say that men do not transition literally into angels of light or darkness – the figures of the priest and parish at the top of the page do not actually become the figures at the bottom of the page. But “according to the letter,” their mirror image contains these qualities. Opicinus’s statement about the generation of meaning seems to apply both to this drawing and to many others that depict multiple levels of reality (usually through multiple iterations of the body-worlds). The mirror of any of his creations, which he acknowledges are fabrications (in the sense that they are imaginary and exploratory), will always contain some new level of meaning.

This drawing depicts Opicinus’s allegorized geography at the height of its complexity and beauty. As usual, he provides the viewer with visual cues to make sense of the drawing’s disorienting forms. The two red lines indicate the precise point where worlds are mirrored, and the differentiation in color – white, brown and red – brings the forms of the body-worlds into a kind of relief. The interpretive paradigm for this drawing must be one of experimentation; it is the only drawing in the manuscript with this particular arrangement of forms, and through it Opicinus only seems to have arrived at fragments of meaning. The image of a church vestment and the unusual juxtaposition of four faces in close proximity at the bottom of the page are two of the unusual features that are created by these mirrored continents – two of the “truths” generated by the fiction of the drawing’s structure. Yet any “truth” of the whole drawing must, I think, relate to the meanings implied by its overall structure and shae, rather than in any one detail or caption.

**Reality, Reflection, Refraction**

The previous sections have shown four structures that Opicinus used to organize his geographical drawings. We have also seen examples of the kinds of content – allegorical, literal, anecdotal – that Opicinus placed inside of and around these structures. My working hypothesis when I began to examine these drawings was that their content would always relate to the structure in which Opicinus chose to place them – that is, that form and content would always be mutually sustaining and reinforcing. But this does not always seem to be the case. In a drawing like folio 61 recto (fig. 5), the form and content seem closely linked; the use of two maps

\(^{178}\) Vaticanus fol. 82r: “*Error olim dicentium hominess converti in angelos bonos uel malos. Iuxta litteram heresies est, cum nulla species posit converti in alteram speciem. Spiritualiter autem in hoc speculo veritas est, cum nulla heresis, nulla fabula, nulla parabola ualeat reperiri que in hoc speculo saltem in parte aliquam non pariat ueritatem.*
allowed for a depiction of both the natural and spiritual worlds, and their refracted intersection gave Opicinus a way to evoke the sense that the two worlds were both united and separate. In other drawings, like folio 82 recto, the relation between structure and content is less clear; its complex arrangement of four mirrored worlds suggests no obvious interpretation, even with the help of the captions. Such examples lead me to believe that in many cases Opicinus forced content or meaning on these different structures and frames – it didn’t always flow naturally. Sometimes their relation makes sense, while other times it is obscure. Yet even when they don’t align neatly with the drawings’ content, I think the forms and structures remain crucial to our understanding of the body-worlds and Opicinus’s epistemology.

In this final section, I want to explore the theoretical implications of these organizational structures with relation to medieval debates on vision, perception and allegory. The examples I have presented in this chapter suggest that Opicinus interpreted his visionary experience of the body-worlds through ideas about how vision itself worked: interpretation of a vision depends on one’s understanding of vision and perception. Or, conversely, interpreting the concept of vision can structure one’s spiritual visions, depending on how one chooses to view medieval concepts of visionary experience. The crucial point demonstrated by these four drawings is that Opicinus didn’t have only one idea of how vision could operate – he had many. Thirteenth and fourteenth-century conceptions of how vision and perception work may have seemed as multifaceted and contradictory to Opicinus as they do to modern historians. We rarely find him operating from a single position – he is not arguing for a certain theory of vision or a certain way of viewing the world, but, rather, is exploring all of the potential ways that a person could “see” the body-worlds. Thus we should speak of Opicinus’s theories, rather than theory, of vision.

The three theories of vision evoked by the forms of these drawings are direct, reflected, and refracted; the Latin terms are contutio, intuitio and detuitio. We see direct vision in a straightforward drawing like folio 74 verso (fig. 10), reflected vision in the mirrored forms of folio 82 recto (fig. 14), and refracted vision in the numerous overlapped drawings such as folio 61 recto (fig. 5). In thinking about these three kinds of vision and formal structure, we must emphasize again the point from the last chapter that the body-worlds (and, indeed, all portolan charts) depicted the forms of the earth from God’s perspective. The different structures of the drawings show the different ways that the earth could appear from God’s all-knowing and all-

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179 This analysis, like so many others in this study, is closely related to Morse’s work on Opicinus. The issues so crucial to these drawings, especially the relationship between reality and appearance, were first raised by Morse in her dissertation. I hope to push her analysis further, not to correct it; I think our understanding of these works can be enriched through a wider discussion of perception and allegory, and an even closer reading of their forms. Rather than engaging Morse point by point, I want to reframe the discussion of these drawings through these four structural categories.

180 These are the basic categories described most famously by William of Conches, who was in turn looking at Calcidius’s commentary on Plato’s Timaeus. They are discussed extensively in William’s own commentary on the Timaeus, the Glossae super Platonem, as well as in his Dragmaticon, both of which were widely copied and circulated. See Akbari (2004), 34, 39, 60 and Denery (2005), 96-8.

181 The three drawings that layer global and local systems don’t fit neatly into any of these categories; rather than speaking to a particular theory of perception, I think they address broader conceptions of microcosm and macrocosm.
seeing position: the body-worlds as a direct, co-extensive form embedded in the earth’s shape, the body-worlds as a reflection of some other reality, or the body-worlds as a refraction or distortion of another reality. This formulation is perhaps a bit too neat, and we must always remain aware of the disorder that creeps into Opicinus’s work, but I think these three views of the created world are implied through these three formal structures, independent of the content placed inside them. The world of appearance and surface can be interpreted, Opicinus shows us, in many ways.

Discussions of vision, appearance and reality dominated many academic discourses in the early-fourteenth century. The complicated transition from theories of extramission to theories of intromission in the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, debated by scholars such as Roger Bacon, Robert Grosseteste, William of Conches, Albertus Magnus, John Pecham, and William of Ockham, and their reception of earlier works by Al-Kindi and Al-Hazen, has been the subject of extensive discussion. The division of vision into the categories of direct, reflected and refracted was foundational to many of the key optical texts of the period, introduced into the mainstream by Calcidius’s fourth-century commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus*, particularly as discussed by William of Conches’s, and it would remain a crucial distinction into the fifteenth century. Direct vision was considered to be the most perfect, unmediated form. Reflection occurred as a result of a mirror, while refraction was caused by light or species passing through a medium with a different density, such as air, water, or glass. Both reflection and refraction were considered to be weakened or distorted forms of vision. The distinction between these three types of vision would likely have been a primary frame through which Opicinus learned about theories of vision.

Just as important as any individual theory or argument, however, was the discourse itself – its vocabulary and the way it went about exploring problems. Both Akbari’s and Denery’s recent studies demonstrate the ways in which the vocabulary and epistemology of debates on vision and optics were used in other spheres; as Akbari writes, “the developing science of optics generated a rich vocabulary that could be used to characterize such intangible concepts as the relationship of subject and object, the nature of mediation, and the process of understanding.” Opicinus’s work deals with all of these ideas, as well as other optically informed debates on appearance, truth, motivation, and causality. He addresses these optical concepts in his writings and captions, but also, I think, in the very forms of his drawings.

Optical texts were not the only source for such issues; a primary source for Opicinus’s understanding of appearance and truth within theology and salvation history must have been the Victorines. As Katrin Kärcher points out in her brief article comparing a drawing from Opicinus’s Palatinus manuscript with the famous zodiac man of the Hours of Jean de Berry, Victorine philosophy emphasized the existence of two worlds, the visible and the invisible. This concept was codified in Gottfried of S. Victor’s *Microcosmos*, with the concept of the “duplex habitatio.” This split between visible and invisible worlds was itself based on the division of

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183 See Akbari (2004), 42, and Denery (2005), 1-18, 75-116. Akbari shows how the vocabulary and concepts used to discuss optics are used to structure allegory in medieval literature, while Denery focuses on preaching.

184 See Kärcher (2006), 165-83.
body and soul. Kärcher, like Morse, points out that Opicinus was intimately familiar with the work of Hugh of St. Victor, and she points to the primary channel through which Victorine philosophy reached early-fourteenth-century Italy, in the work of Bonaventure. Working from these foundations, Kärcher’s article asserts a distinction between two different ways of representing this duality: the use of the “shadow” by Opicinus, and of the “mirror” by the Limbourg brothers. The discussion of the shadow makes sense with relation to the drawing she focuses on, Palatinus folio 20 verso, but it does not translate seamlessly to the kinds of dualism, superimposition, and mirroring that we have discussed in the examples above. Many of Opicinus’s drawings take this basic distinction between body and soul, homo exterior and homo interior, and project them outward onto the world. Rather than primarily using these terms, however, Opicinus created his own binaries, preferring to underline the contrast between the natural or carnal and the spiritual.

Returning to examples from each structure provides a final opportunity to see these principles in action. As I argued previously, the portolan chart represents the most direct, unmediated, and empirical vision of the world that was possible from a divine perspective. Everything in Opicinus’s body-worlds is built on this foundation, and all of his drawings allegorize this initial, direct vision. Drawings like folio 74 verso (fig. 10) allegorize this direct vision: they place a single chart on the page and proceed to interpret its contents, personify its landforms, or stage a confrontation between the forms of Europe and Africa. Folio 74 verso presented a contrast between Babylon and the Christian Church, and other examples follow this basic type. Folio 79 verso, for example, depicts a bloody conflict between Africa as the aggressor, the “corrupted world,” and Europe as the defeated temple of the Lord, whose rivers have turned into red wounds dripping in blood (fig. 13). A direct vision of the world – the two basic continents of Europe and Africa – is allegorized through the lens of conflict. There is only one level of reality; in this drawing, these geographic forms are the characters that embody them. There is no transition to another reality implied in the drawing – our experience of these “worlds” is unmediated, except through the most basic construction of allegory during this period – personification.

As we have seen, this basic format is complicated in the drawings that I characterize as “refracted” or “overlapping,” which comprise the greatest number in the Vaticanus. The discussion of folio 61 recto (fig. 5) demonstrated the dizzying array of interpretive possibilities of such drawings: they establish binaries, break them, establish correspondence, and create

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185 Opicinus mentions reading and translating Hugh’s work on folio 57v of the Vaticanus. See Kärcher (2006), 174 and Morse (1996), 90.
186 This is one of many examples of cross-pollination between discourses on the body and on the world; here, a fundamental distinction between body and soul is reframed through a geographical depiction, a situation that we will see repeated and also reversed in several examples in the next chapter.
187 The caption above Europe begins with the words, “Ecce prostratio Templi dominici, cuius flumina conuertuntur in sanguinem corruptibilem,” or “behold the defeated temple of the Lord, whose rivers have changed into corruptible blood,” while the caption above Africa identifies the “armed woman” who represents the “descendents of the corrupted world” and endeavors to sow division in the Lord’s temple. “Ecce...quelibet corruptibilis progenies mundi, quasi mulier armata que arripiens sagittam Herculis...pro cutius ambitione totum templum Domini point in scismata uel scissuras.”
distance. Looking at other examples, we see that ideas of transition and change, from one reality to another, are present in nearly all of the examples of this type. Some, like folio 61 recto, show a less perfect (carnal) world in one half and a perfected (spiritual) world in the other, and, following Morse, I have thus far read the drawing as demonstrating the possibility of converting from the carnal world to a state of grace in the spiritual. But the metaphor (and science) of refracted vision suggests that we could also read the drawing in the opposite way: that it shows the spiritual world, as created by God, and its less perfect refraction – the world around us. It is as if the world has passed through a prism, through water or through compressed air; the outline has remained the same, but the size, orientation, and identity of the body-worlds has changed. This is another “true” drawing of the world as God could choose to see it – the remnants (or possibility, depending on one’s view) of a perfect world, and the refracted, fallen vision of that world that is seen by carnal men and women.

This metaphor (and theory) of refraction enriches our understanding of drawings in this category even when their moral implications are less straightforward. On folio 71 recto, for example, we see this same basic structure: two portolan charts of different sizes, each oriented in a different direction, with a complicated area of juncture at the center (fig. 8). Rather than one “good” world juxtaposed against a “bad” one, Opicinus depicts two similar comparisons between the active and contemplative life. At the top of the page, the “active” Saint Martha is juxtaposed with the “contemplative” Apostle Thomas; the pair below contrasts “contemplative” Saint Mary with the “active” Apostle Jacob. Again, it is as if one world as been refracted through a prism into another world. The size and orientation have been changed, as have the roles of the continents: both male Europe and female Africa get the chance to play both roles – active and contemplative. Thus, it is not so much about showing the transition from one “state” to another, but about showing that, in these two refracted worlds, either existence is possible for each form.

Thus, the meaning of a “refracted” form in these drawings is not static; an inherent implication of change, transition or uncertainty is activated only by the content placed within the forms, as well as by small structural variations. For example, within this category of refracted, overlapped forms, the form that emerges pre-eminent is constantly changing. In some drawings, the world that seems to relate more closely to our lived experience (body-worlds that are labeled carnal or natural, for example) are those which are depicted complete, rising to the surface of the drawing and blocking out parts of the worlds below. But other times it is the more “perfected” worlds – those labeled as spiritual or ecclesiastical – which are closer to the surface and in turn dominate the drawing. Several examples that use color further exaggerate these differences, with the world placed below often appearing as a kind of shadow of the world above, its forms darkened and less distinct. All of these variations in form, I think, refer back to basic theological and philosophical dichotomies about how to interpret the world around us; whether perfection exists at the heart of all created object, or whether forms in the world strive to mimic a perfection that exists above.

This kind of experimentation with the structural/legendal interpretation of refraction – the play with the inherent concepts of change or distortion – is echoed in numerous works of thirteenth and fourteenth-century literature. In her discussion of Guillaume de Lorris’s Roman de la Rose (ca. 1230), Akbari deftly explains how the poem’s narrator constructs a series of experiences that follow each of the three modes of vision – direct, reflected and refracted. She connects the Latin term for refraction, detuitio, to the French term deduit, which is used to refer both to the concept of poetic diversion and the optical-scientific concept of refraction. Akbari
shows that the term most often refers in literature to changes of state, course or direction.\textsuperscript{188} Such understandings of refraction were a commonplace of literary and academic discourses in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, and I think Opicinus’s drawings constitute an interesting visual analogue to these literary uses of optical tropes.

The final type of vision, mirrored, is clear only in one drawing in the Vaticanus, folio 82 recto (fig. 14), but is also alluded to by many drawings in the Palatinus, several of which I discuss in the next chapter. The forms of these drawings activate many of the same questions as the refracted ones, but their forms are more often used to show multiple “views” of the same thing. Folio 82 recto depicts a worldly encounter between a priest and a parish, and the mirror beyond it depicts the interior conflict that accompanied it. The mirror seems to have been less important to Opicinus as a structural device, and thus I have explored it in less detail, but I think it is crucial to note that he did attempt a drawing using the principles of mirroring, which may indicate that he had the three modes of vision in mind as he created forms and structures out of his initial vision of the body-worlds. Perhaps the drawing was less satisfying to him, since he never repeated it, or perhaps he was worried that its forms were too confusing for viewers to read (if he indeed intended there to be viewers for these works), but it stands as a testament to his interest in experimenting at least once with the mirror as an interpretive allegorical and structural device.

The implications of the body-worlds’ shape and form are thus not binding rules, but rather are one more piece that must go into reading, interpreting, or even just viewing one of these complex drawings. Each drawing activates its structure differently, but the structure is always fundamental to the meaning, whether it supports, complicates, or contradicts it. Up and down, right and left, surface and depth, size and scale – these categories, when placed into the epistemological context of the fourteenth century, have the power to suggest essential meanings.

As a coda, I want to end this chapter with a comparative example that, on the surface, would seem to share little with Opicinus’s body-worlds. At the turn of the fourteenth century, numerous artists produced frescos and panel paintings depicting perhaps the most famous miracle of the Middle Ages – the stigmatization of Francis of Assisi. In these pictures, such as those in the Church of S. Francesco at Assisi, the Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce in Florence, and in several large painted panels, Francis is depicted in an outdoor landscape, kneeling on the ground and holding his hands in the air (see figs. 34 and 35). Above him flies Christ on the cross in the form of a seraph, his own arms outstretched. In every example, lines picked out in gold connect the five wounds on Christ’s body with the fresh wounds on Francis’s body. It is these lines, and what they tell us, that relate so interestingly to Opicinus’s work.

In a recent article, Hans Belting investigated the golden lines that cross these paintings, arguing that their exact positioning is a crucial aspect of the meaning created in these works.\textsuperscript{189} He first contends that we must understand Francis’s body as an image of Christ; the question is how that image was produced. There were two main theories in the thirteenth century that sought to answer this question. The first was that Francis had brought about the stigmata himself, through an act of miraculous internal mimesis; he came to mirror Christ so much in his heart that the wounds magically emerged on the outside, and the exterior reality matched the

\textsuperscript{188} Akbari (2004), 61-2.
interior self. The other hypothesis was that Francis’s stigmata were a miraculous bodily image enacted on his body from the outside, by God. The body is the critical medium. As Belting writes,

In this miracle, either an inner image within the body became visibly manifest on the outside, or a human body was elected as medium for a supernatural image. The body is involved as medium twice – once as the generator of inner images and once as the bearer of an outer one.¹⁹⁰

The paintings depict this moment of transformation, from body into image, as Francis’s body becomes a living work of art, generated either internally or by God.

Belting then brilliantly and unexpectedly connects these two hypotheses to the depiction of the gold lines in the paintings. These works, he argues, depict the precise moment when the miracle took place, and the lines indicate to the viewer whether the miracle is coming from within or without. In many examples, such as the panel by Giotto now in the Louvre (fig. 34), the lines between Francis and Christ are mirrored: the two figures face each other, and the lines reflect their bodies, with Christ’s right hand matched with Francis’s left. It is as if one body is a mirror of the other. In other examples, however, such as Giotto’s Bardi Chapel fresco (fig. 35), the lines cross each other, running from Christ’s right hand to Francis’s right hand, etc. Belting argues that the first type, where the bodies mirror each other, depicts the stigmata emerging from within Francis’s own body; the seraph above is simply a mirror of Francis’s interior state, and need not be seen as real. The second type, where the lines connect the same parts of each body, right hand to right hand, imply causality: Christ as the seraph is acting in the body below, through a direct physical connection between their two bodies.

The textual and visual debates over Francis’s stigmatization raise a number of interesting parallels, both formal and conceptual, to Opicinus’s drawings. First, as Belting points out, Giotto and other artists were using natural-scientific theories of vision to theologically interpret a supernatural vision.¹⁹¹ Mirrored lines of sight and light are contrasted with physically-connected ones. Both the stigmatization paintings and Opicinus’s drawings share a medium of visual expression that is not wholly pictorial – lines of connection and correspondence are required to convey the entire idea of each, and they become, in a sense, picture-diagram hybrids. While I don’t necessarily think that Opicinus was influenced directly by these paintings, although it is certainly possible, I think they point to an interest in the incorporation of both scientific and theological discourses on vision into the visual representation of a miracle. Similarly, for Opicinus, interpreting the imagination means interpreting the process of vision. Also intriguing is Belting’s discussion of Francis’s outer appearance coming to reflect his interior state, which relates closely to Opicinus’s discussion of the real versus the seen.

Most striking, however, are the visual connections between these images. We have seen how, in numerous drawings in the Vaticanus, Opicinus similarly draws lines between reflected body-worlds. Most often, these follow the pattern of real, rather than mirrored relation; that is to

say, lines cross depictions of the body-worlds, connecting the exact same part of the body on both charts, such as in folio 58 recto, discussed above. With Belting’s arguments about causal versus mirrored lines, Opicinus’s lines and overall formal structures – mirrored versus overlapped and physically connected – take on a different emphasis. Most often found in drawings whose forms suggest refraction, perhaps these lines similarly imply causality, change, transformation or distortion. Like in the stigmatization paintings, certain lines can imply not only correspondence, but also the idea that multiple representations of the body-worlds in a single drawing show different aspects of the same body and the same world, or the process of how one thing is changed into another. The world of the interior can mirror the exterior, or refracted forms can be physically connected through the lines on the page.

In this complicated range of examples, we can make few claims with certainty. But it is evident, I think, that Opicinus was thinking about vision, optics and perception when he interpreted his visionary experience through these drawings, and that a recognition of these issues makes the drawings both more captivating and more intertwined with other contemporary modes of representation. That optics and allegory were irrevocably linked in the literature and theology of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries has been aptly demonstrated by others, but the ways that such concepts were investigated visually in the “proto-perspectival” years of the fourteenth century remains an open question, that scholars like Belting are only just beginning to explore. My reading of Opicinus’s drawings demonstrates another series of views of how the visual representation of abstract theological and philosophical concepts could, through an engagement with perspectiva, address fundamental philosophical issues of uncertainty, change, reflection and causality. In the future, I hope that other clues to these issues will be found in Opicinus’s vast oeuvre of texts and drawings; in this chapter I hope to have opened up a new interpretive window, and to have demonstrated the utility of a structural and formal approach to these unusual drawings of the body and the earth.
Opicinus used his drawings to seek out what his body/world revelation could tell him about the world and about God. His drawings depict not just a superimposition of bodies and continents, but their very identification and coextension. Using the geometric forms of early portolans he presented diagrams of the earth using human measurements but depicted from a divine perspective; he then further links human and divine truths (and vision) through allegorical constructions within the charts. In the drawings examined thus far, primarily in the Vaticanus manuscript, the frame for these revelations was the portolan chart, itself; its forms contained the allegories, their coexistence implied through form. But many of his other drawings, particularly those in the Palatinus, differ both conceptually and visually. Rather than seeking meaning inside of the body-worlds, he places them at the center of much larger cosmological and theological structures. Here, calendars, genealogies, astronomical diagrams, and ecclesiastical hierarchies contain portolans, both embodied and plain. These drawings probe the relation between the body-worlds and larger outside structures, rather than their own potential to frame discourses within.

As I suggested previously, part of Opicinus’s aim seems to have been to reconcile and unite the new forms of the portolan charts with existing epistemological systems. In many of his drawings, he grappled with the new form of the portolans as images of the world, perhaps pictorializing the charts in an effort to render them more familiar within previous context of medieval cartography, and allegorizing the charts to find the kinds of theological significance inside their forms that medieval theologians were accustomed to seeing in the created world. The drawings that I explore in this chapter also demonstrate an interest in situating the portolans within existing knowledge, but they look outward to broad cosmological systems. The place of the earth and its inhabitants within larger universal and theological structures was a key question of thirteenth and fourteenth-century thought. As fundamentally new images of the earth, the portolans upended a number of conventions within contemporary “theories of everything,” and

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192 Evelyn Edson uses the term “theory of everything” to describe one approach to studying medieval computus manuscripts – a key type of medieval manuscript that I will discuss
Opicinus’s unveiling of new connections between maps, bodies, and doctrines led him to re-examine the earth’s position in these universal schemas. If Opicinus saw new truths within the portolans, which I believe he did, how did these truths fit into what he already knew to be true about the broader structure of the universe?

As in his other drawings, Opicinus sought to unite portolans with existing systems, diagrams, and images, rather than to juxtapose them against each other. In his placement of the body-worlds within cosmic structures, the concept of celestial influence was crucial. That the stars and planets could have an impact on certain aspects of the human body, through macro/microcosmic connections, was a largely uncontested tenet of late-medieval cosmology, though, as we will see, the extent of this influence was always a vexed issue. From Opicinus’s perspective, if the human body can actually be read within the spaces of the new map of the earth, then these astrological doctrines could be extended to both the human and geographic-spatial elements of the body-worlds. Stars and planets control bodies, which are microcosms of the universe, but bodies are now maps, too – a new perspective that opened up new questions. In negotiating these changes in his drawings and diagrams, astrological representational systems emerged as a crucial tool that, like the portolans and empirical allegories, links the representation of the earthly with the divine.

To examine the new connections that Opicinus diagrammed between the portolans and larger structures, I will take several approaches. Theories of cosmology, astronomy, and astrology were not monolithic in the early fourteenth-century, and it is necessary to examine the primary debates to fully understand Opicinus’s own conception of cosmology, and determine from which sources he would have learned the most. As part of my aim to relate Opicinus more fully to fourteenth-century visual culture, I will propose both textual and visual sources for Opicinus’s cosmological drawings – computus manuscripts, diagrams of “divine order,” the visual tradition of the “zodiac man,” and the writings of Peter d’Abano, in particular, provide little-discussed contexts for understanding Opicinus’s drawings. Also critical are Opicinus’s own comments on astrology, particularly from his Vaticunus manuscript. Through an investigation of four drawings from the Palatinus manuscript, I hope to propose a new way of viewing Opicinus’s cosmological drawings, one that situates them fully within their visual and philosophical milieu and that always looks to the structure and form of the drawings as the most important source.

Palatinus Fol. 5 recto

Looking briefly at one example, Palatinus fol. 5 recto, will crystallize the most important questions about Opicinus’s cosmology. At first glance, this folio (fig. 18) follows the representational conventions of portolan charts more closely than any of Opicinus’s other drawings. A large portolan, its continents un-embodied, dominates the drawing. The two usual sixteen-point rhumb-line circles create the grids that structure the chart’s space, and a third circle, the same size as the others, is superimposed over the chart’s center (a feature that is occasionally found on other portolan charts). The ocean and seas are painted with a delicate light-green wash, while the land retains the color of the parchment. An oval frame surrounds extensively in the following sections. See Edson, “World Maps and Easter Tables: Medieval Maps in Context,” *Imago Mundi* 48 (1996), 12.

193 Harding briefly discusses the graphic methods that Opicinus might have used to create the underlying structures for the drawings. See Harding (1998), 30-32.
most of the portolan (the area covered by the rhumb lines), though it does not contain it entirely – several landforms transgress its boundaries (the British Isles and Morocco, for example). Thus, the outer oval does not seem to be a frame containing the map, but some other kind of structure, embedded precisely within its space. Visually, we cannot say that it is either superimposed over the map, or that it lies beneath it; some of the landforms obscure it, while others are obscured by it.\(^{194}\)

Upon closer inspection, we see that this outer circle is a calendar, as is the circle superimposed over the center. Each contains all of the year’s 365 days marked along its circumference, labeled with the corresponding liturgical feasts (the most important are written in red ink, the others in black). The names of the months are written perpendicular to the days, and between them are small line drawings of the figures of the zodiac – two sets in the inner circle, and one in the outer oval. Just outside of the oval are the names and tiny pictures of the planets – the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn. The periods of the human life cycle are written across the space of the map – “Infantia” of the southern coast of Spain, “Adolescentia” near Sicily, etc. These days, months, ages of life, zodiac, and planets emphasize medieval concepts of cyclical temporality. This cosmic content is interwoven, however, with theological groupings and systems, which underline the linear, eschatological dimension of Christian time. The four evangelists lie at the outer corners of the oval, wings spread to contain passages of scripture, and between them are the names of the major and minor prophets. Similarly, the smallest circle in the center of the drawing contains twenty-four tiny roundels that enclose and coordinate the names of the patriarchs, minor prophets, apostles, and evangelists. The drawing thus combines two types of information – cosmic cycles and Christian history – with the forms of the portolan.

All of these systems are linked together by the ghostlike female figure at the center. Arms outspread, with her head oriented toward the east, she lies at the chart’s exact center. The meeting point of the two sixteen-point rhumb-line networks (also the center of the third large circle) is exactly at the center of her body, from which thirty-two rhumb lines spring. Labels on either side of her head name her “the corporeal church at the time of the conversion of the gentiles.”\(^{195}\) As the Church, she is truly the physical heart of the image. Her body is placed precisely to fill the small center in the circle, and her appendages reach out to touch the theological roundels at its edges. Moving outward, the rhumb lines connect her to all of the earth’s spaces, and to the calendars, evangelists, planets, and zodiac. Both the midpoint of the map’s surface and the heart of the theological diagram around and within it, this figure connects the textual content of the diagram to the earth around her.

That this body connects the earthly with the spiritual is not only evident in the structure of the drawing; a small caption to either side of the figure’s head also alludes to this concept, that reads “lamentations ecclesiae in domibus laqueatis,” or “lamentation of the church in the covered/ceiled house.” Here, Opicinus alludes to a passage from the Old Testament Book of Haggai, which reads “is this a time for you yourselves to live in your ceiled houses, while this

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\(^{194}\) See, for example, the area near Gibraltar, where the coast of North Africa appears to be on top of the oval at the coastline, but then is superimposed by its markings as the oval moves south and east.

\(^{195}\) Palatinus fol. 5r: “ecclesia corporalis olim de gentilitate conversa.”
The passage calls attention to man’s focus on their own, earthly dwellings, while neglecting the house of the Lord. The ghostlike figure of Ecclesia at the center could thus be interpreted as the ignored, almost invisible house of the Lord, while the forms of the earth are the dwelling-place of men. But, in typical fashion, Opicinus doesn’t just repeat or represent this concept, but rather uses the space and structure of his diagram to question its precise meaning. The “lamentation” of the Lord’s church, placed at the center of the “covered house” of the earth, shows the way that the two are connected and intertwined, rather than juxtaposed. The Lord’s house, though shadowy and easy to miss, lies at the earth’s heart, and is connected to every part of it through the lines that emanate outward from it. The rhumb lines that spring from Ecclesia’s body connect “the church” both with the earth and with the cosmic structures at the outside – the calendar and zodiac. This reinforces an idea that will resurface throughout this study: that Opicinus believed the forms of the earth to be capable of reflecting divine forms and knowledge. The earthly and the spiritual are, for Opicinus, never truly separate.

Salomon’s interpretation of the folio is overly colored, I think, by his focus on one small inscription, written in a bottom corner, which reads “this earth is completely wretched and dark, where there is no order but only eternal horror.” From this caption, Salomon interprets the entire portolan as a representation of the wretchedness of the earth; he argues throughout his study that Opicinus used the earth as a sign for sin and corruption. In her much briefer treatment, Catherine Harding labels the entire drawing “Diagram of the Corporeal Church and Lamentations About its State,” similarly taking one caption from a part of the drawing and presuming that it speaks for the meaning of the whole. Salomon’s and Harding’s approaches to Opicinus’s oeuvre could hardly be more different, but in this case they both make a rhetorical move that this study aims to avoid – using single captions or texts as keys to the content of drawings that are far more complicated. All of the other elements of the drawing suggest that it is about linking the earthly, divine and cosmic spheres, rather than in positing them against one another. Salomon’s caption has a role to play in the drawings’ interpretation, but not at the expense of its form.

I want to explore further the ways in which Opicinus uses a new picture of the earth (the portolan) in drawings like folio 5 recto to enrich and complicate what Madeline Caviness has called “images of divine order.” How, exactly, did Opicinus believe the earth’s forms fit into micro/macrocosmic frameworks of the divine? Why are the zodiac used so persistently in his drawings? How did his central body/world revelation change the ways in which he believed cosmic influence could work? What is behind the encyclopedic impulse to combine so much information in single drawings? These are the central questions of this chapter, which I will address by situating Opicinus within several different histories – of contemporary debates on celestial influence, of cosmological illustration, and of computistical traditions, seeking the terms and strategies of his (re)use of these elements in the formation of new diagrams of the universal and the particular.

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196 This reference to Haggai 1:4 was noticed, though not interpreted, by Salomon (1936), 173 n. 3.  
198 Caviness (1983), 99-120.
Astronomy/Astrology (Truth/Consequences)

The concept that cosmic events and cycles influence the terrestrial sphere, a fundamental element of Opicinus’s drawings, has a long history. Particularly crucial was Aristotle’s doctrine of the “Prime Mover”; he argued in the *Meteorologica* that the motions of the heavens governed all the power that exists on the earth below.\(^{199}\) Aristotle wrote at length on the mechanics of this influence, describing how the different kinds of motion in the stars and planets affected different types of motion, movement and growth on the earth. Astrology, the science of analyzing and predicting the effects of these forces on human bodies and actions, was practiced widely throughout the ancient world, though not without controversy, especially between those who approached it as an astronomical science and those who treated it more as a religio-mystical study. Especially controversial was “judicial astrology,” the practice of predicting a person’s future based on the configuration of the heavens at his or her birth. Philosophers also argued over whether the sun, moon, or planets exerted more influence over the earth. These controversies aside, however, Aristotle’s central doctrine of the rule of heavenly bodies over earthly ones was rarely questioned.

Aristotle’s theory of the Prime Mover often aligned easily with Christianity, and Aristotle’s enduring influence on Christian philosophy and science ensured astrology’s acceptance. All of the most influential medieval interpreters of Aristotle – Avicenna, Averroes, Albertus Magnus, Bartholomaeus Anglicus, Thomas Aquinas and Dante – “accepted the Aristotelian theory of motion as a fundamental postulate.”\(^{200}\) But if the essential theory was unchallenged, its application was vexed. The main point of contention was the extent to which the stars and planets could influence the human mind and soul. Augustine acknowledged some celestial influence over the body, but maintained that the concept of free will had to remain intact.\(^{201}\) Albertus Magnus expanded this position, arguing that the stars’ primary influence is on the body, but that because of the interconnections between body and soul, human will may be influenced as well, though indirectly. Aquinas argued for more separation between the body and the will, though he, too, acknowledged the close connections between body and mind.\(^{202}\) Through Aquinas, especially, the Church’s acceptance of astrology in meteorological, scientific, and especially medical contexts was assured.

Ideas about astrology were intimately bound together with concepts of macrocosm and microcosm – the concept that the same structures and patterns could be found in natural beings of vastly different scales, especially between man and the universe. The connections between man and the earth or universe were expressed through both material and analogical means. Bede, following Isidore of Seville, described the four elements from which both man and earth are

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\(^{200}\) Wedel (1920), 63-4.


\(^{202}\) Wedel (1920), 64-7.
composed (earth, air, fire, water), and their four qualities (heat, cold, moistness, dryness). Though this material relationship between man and earth remained fundamental, in the thirteenth and fourteenth century cosmic relationships began to be expressed more through analogy, focusing on their proportional and structural similarities, rather than on physical substance.

In the earlier Middle Ages, because of the importance placed on the material similarities between microcosm and macrocosm, man was commonly described as a miniature world. But as Michael Camille has pointed out, with the later-medieval intensification of interest in astrology the influence was increasingly seen to go in one direction only, from superior to inferior things. Citing changes in the ways that microcosm and macrocosm were represented, Camille wrote that, “if earlier medieval writers...had seen in the microcosmic image of the outstretched human body the splendid Augustinian order of the universe with man as its focus, fourteenth-century thinkers faced a less comforting picture...[men are] more like insects trapped in a spider’s web,” (see fig. 39). The shift, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, was not only toward understanding the connections between above and below in terms of analogy, but also toward thinking of the relationship in terms of control rather than merely influence, at least as far as the body was concerned. This question of control had been controversial for centuries, with opinions divided between followers of Aristotle and Augustine; the Augustinians considered cosmic events to be signs of terrestrial ones, while the Aristotelians believed them to cause terrestrial events. On this issue, the pendulum was generally swinging back toward Aristotelians in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but, as Pomian writes, “between these two poles lay an entire spectrum of intermediate positions which tried to reconcile or synthesize Augustine with Aristotle, theology with physics and astronomy, significance with causality, prophecy with prediction.”

This is merely a sketch of medieval attitudes toward astrology; before moving on to a discussion of cosmic representations, I want to mention briefly one astrologer from the early-fourteenth century in northern Italy, as a way of probing the debates and concepts that may have been particularly important in Opicinus’s milieu. Peter of Abano provides just such a case study. Born around 1250 near Padua, he earned doctoral degrees in philosophy and medicine in Paris, before returning to Padua where he taught medicine and practiced astrology. Like many medical philosophers of his time, he devoted much of his research to reconciling and incorporating recently translated Arab texts with Greek medical theory. Though his views on astrology do not appear to have been significantly out of the mainstream for his time (like many early-fourteenth century astrologers, he was a strict “astrological determinist,” placing little

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204 See especially Fritz Saxl, Macrocosm and Microcosm in Medieval Pictures, (London, 1957).
205 Camille (1994), 68.
207 Pomian (1986), 32.
208 For an interesting overview of Peter’s life and works, particularly his perspectives on astrological images, see Nicolas Weill-Parot, Les “Images Astrologiques” au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance, (Paris, 2002), 500-31.
emphasis on free will), twice he was brought on trial for magic and atheism, dying in prison around 1316 while awaiting trial.\textsuperscript{209}

Peter’s astrology was shaped both by the Aristotelian/Ptolomeic tradition and the work of the Arab astrologer Abu Ma’shar (also called Albumasar). Peter’s texts are extensive, focused on giving, as Graziella Federici Vescovini states, “a rational account of the contingent.”\textsuperscript{210}

Several points in his text are interesting when viewed in comparison to Opicinus’s work. First is Peter’s discussion of the (lack of) difference between astronomy and astrology. His \textit{Lucidator dubitabilium astronomiae} was intended to demonstrate that astronomy and astrology were in fact the same thing, bringing together the work of astronomers, astrologers and theologians. This stood in contrast to strict Aristotelians like Averroes, who had defined astronomy as a metaphysical science, and astrology as mere calculation.\textsuperscript{211}

Defending astrology, Peter emphasizes both its theoretical nature and basis in calculation and the demonstration of truths. Conceptually, and even etymologically, Peter argues, astronomy and astrology are one and the same; rhetorically, this is part of Peter’s defense of astrology as a science, asserting its influence on terrestrial phenomena, from historical events to the differing periods of gestation in animals.\textsuperscript{212}

This conceptualization of astrology as a scientific field may have been important in the ways that Opicinus inserted it into his diagrams, many of which were also based on similarly “scientific” types of data.

In the \textit{Conciliator}, Peter explores the connection between astrology and medicine, arguing that astrology can aid in both prognosis and treatment. He writes that the astrologer cannot prevent disease or injury—astrology can hardly interfere with the progress of the stars—but that he can do his best to predict them, and “fortify the body against their dire effects.”\textsuperscript{213}

In his discussion of medicine, Peter crystallizes the rise in analogical thinking about the micro/macrocosm, arguing that, in Vescovini’s words,

\begin{quote}
Although every part of the body corresponds to a sign of the zodiac, and every humor and bodily organ corresponds to a planet…it does not follow that the individual contains within himself all the elements of the world, rather he contains them \textit{in nuce}, potentially, and reflects the universe by analogy…[Peter] emphasizes that man and world are analogous because their existences are orchestrated and conducted by the same proportions.\textsuperscript{214}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{211} Vescovini (1987), 24.

\textsuperscript{212} Siraisi (1970), 326-7.

\textsuperscript{213} Vescovini (1987), 31.

By emphasizing the analogical, rather than material aspects of micro/macro astrology, Peter underlines its theoretical basis; based on natural-scientific principles, astrology could be accepted as a branch of philosophy and theoretical science. This concept of body and universe echoing one another by analogy is a key feature that reappears in Opicinus’s cosmic diagrams.

Before turning to visual representations of astrology and cosmology, I want to briefly gesture toward one more branch of astrology that is of particular resonance when thinking about Opicinus’s works. In the *Tetrabiblos*, Ptolemy describes the effects that different groupings of zodiacal signs may have over different geographic zones of the inhabited earth. Individual kingdoms, regions and cities come to be governed by combinations of zodiacal signs and planets. Abu Ma’shar also wrote extensively on the subject of zodiacal/geographic correspondence; both he and Ptolemy used this theory to explain the different appearances and temperaments of different races of men, as well as the historical fates of nations and rulers. Abu Ma’shar, and Peter of Abano were concerned not only with the ways in which astrology influenced individual bodies, but also how that influence changed based on geographic location. This position finds a visual analogue in Opicinus’s drawings, many of which seem to show zodiacal influence over both aspects of the body-worlds.

**Diagrams, Correspondence, Computus**

Visual media played a crucial role in structuring, communicating and interpreting these concepts about the cosmos and astrology. Diagrams and drawings in manuscripts, especially, played a vital role both in transmitting this theoretical information for use by theologians, philosophers and natural-scientists and in giving it a practical application in fields like medicine, time-keeping and navigation. In this section I want to explore some of these types of diagrams, searching for the potential sources for Opicinus’s cosmic imagery, which will in turn shed light on what he was trying to express by appropriating and reshaping them.

In a seminal article Madeline Caviness examined a group of drawings that express cosmic and divine systems of order through abstract geometric forms, tracing their origins in both pagan northern-European and southern neo-Platonic contexts. She contrasts the often static, symmetrical, diagrammatic forms of these diagrams with the expressiveness that medieval artists frequently employed in depictions of disorder or disharmony. Across numerous media and centuries, in examples that range from the sculptures of the Royal Portal at Chartres, to small metalwork medallions, to numerous schemata in scientific and theological manuscripts, she suggests the existence of a recognizable mode of representation that was used to express divine harmony and establish the correspondences linking part and whole. Following Focillon, Schapiro and especially Katzenellenbogen, Caviness asserts that in this mode of representation, “form is content.”

Caviness’s discussion of this diagrammatic mode of “divine order,” along with Steffen Bogen’s theory of diagramming, provide the primary foundation for my own study of Opicinus’s cosmic forms. Opicinus’s drawings reveal many of the same geometric schemata and representational strategies as Caviness’s “images of divine order” – indeed, Caviness briefly incudes Opicinus in her article as a kind of end-point for this tradition in the fourteenth century.

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216 Pomian (1986), 34-5.
Opicinus’s diagrams reshape, rely and comment on a number of earlier traditions in this representational mode. Medieval cosmic representations are found in a number of different contexts – there is not one unbroken tradition. Here I examine a number of different traditions of representation, all of which contribute one piece to what we might call a medieval cosmological mode: basic geometric schemata and diagrams, actual diagrams of the cosmos, mappae mundi, creation imagery, and computus manuscripts. Each will provide another comparative frame through which to view Opicinus’s own schemata. But as will become clear when viewed in comparison with Opicinus’s most complicated diagrams, each of these traditions only contains certain parts of medieval cosmic theology and philosophy, while Opicinus’s drawings aimed to include aspects of nearly all cosmic relationships. Only in such totalizing diagrams could Opicinus express his views of the multiplicity of his physical and spiritual reality.

Basic geometric structures, Caviness argues, could themselves communicate the concept of celestial harmony. Combinations of the circle and the square were the most common, and were often combined with (or into) cruciform shapes. These simple forms were elaborated into more complicated schemata, and were used for medieval exegesis, genealogies, and diagrams of correspondence. Such diagrams were especially common in the twelfth century, when Scholastic conceptions of argumentation encouraged the classification and ordering of nearly every aspect of the spiritual and natural world. As Michale Evans writes, “the essence of the scholastic method is the dialectical analysis of concepts…a necessary prelude to all of its investigations is the division of concepts into their basic elements.” The paradigmatic visual example is the famous copy of Byrhtferth of Ramsey’s diagram of microcosm and macrocosm in Oxford, St John’s College MS 17, fol. 7v, adapted from Bede’s *De Temporibus* (see fig. 36). This diagram of cosmic relationships coordinates the so-called “physical and physiological fours” – the four elements, qualities, ages of man, cardinal directions, and letters of Adam’s name, as well as the months and the zodiac. The actual correspondences between astronomical, astrological, geographic, and physiological elements that the diagram structures were not new, but the spatial clarity with which they were organized is impressive. The formal repetition of circles, ovals, and lozenge-shaped quadrilaterals reveals the structural similarity and correspondence between microcosmic and macrocosmic content with greater clarity than any text. The self-consciousness of the diagrams’ geometry is a conceptual analogue to the structural transparency that Panofsky described in both Gothic buildings and the organization of Scholastic treatises.

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220 Evans (1980), 35.
222 Evans points out that diagrammatic presentation was both more immediate and more economical than a prose account. Evans, (1980), 36.
both twelfth-century buildings and diagrams such as Byrhtferth’s do their best to wear their organizational systems on their sleeves.223

The circle emerged as the most crucial shape for Scholastic diagrams. Circles, or *rotae*, effortlessly conveyed the cyclical dimension of many concepts, and, as Evans asserts, they were crucial for demonstrating interrelationships while still maintaining clarity and order.224 Circles could be used to look at a number of different aspects of a single topic, or they could establish cyclical analogies between multiple areas of content. Though circles were used in images with explicit theological or moral content, such as Wheels of Fortune or Wheels of True and False Religion, they were most useful in depictions of natural, cyclical concepts such as the zodiac, calendar, or planetary orbits.225

Other diagrams of cosmic relationships were less overtly geometric. Literalizing and pictorializing the human/cosmos metaphor, many placed standing human figures at the center of simpler geometric diagrams. Two such cosmic drawings accompany a medieval copy of Aristotle’s *De Caelo et Mundo*, placing the human figure inside of a large empty circle, in the manner of Leonardo’s Vitruvian man.226 Caviness describes a more elaborate drawing, Munich Staatsbibliothek MS Clm. 13002, fol. 7 verso (fig. 37), which places a symmetrical male body at the center of a diagram that contains much of the same information as the Byrhtferth diagram. Here, the relationships are more particularized to the represented human body: lines drawn to it indicate its composure from the four elements, and labels drawn on the body align different body parts with different cosmic areas – the feet are equated to the earth, the stomach to the oceans, the chest to the atmosphere, etc.227 These drawings are less geometric, but they provide an interesting comparison to Opicinus’s use of both geometry and human figures in his cosmic drawings.

None of the drawings mentioned so far, however, are diagrams of the cosmos itself – they are drawings of cosmic relationships. Other diagrams come closer to representing the entire system. For example, in a tradition stretching from the seventh to the twelfth century, diagrams of the winds often include small images of the earth at their center.228 Like diagrams of correspondence, these wind diagrams could be more or less figural, depending on context. They were often used to make arguments about different theories of celestial influence; some show the winds as more active agents, enforcing God’s will, while others depict them more as one part of a whole natural system. The diagrams are usually circular, with divisions for twelve winds at the outside edge, and most contain the cardinal directions. T-O world maps were often placed at the exact center, establishing the familiar role of the winds as terrestrial directional indicators.229

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223 Panofsky (1957).
224 Evans (1980), 42.
225 Evans (1980), 42. Also see Caviness (1983), 113-5 on the Wheels of True and False Religion.
226 Camille (1994), 64-5.
228 The essential text on wind diagrams is Barbara Obrist, “Wind Diagrams and Medieval Cosmology,” *Speculum* 72 (1997), 33-84.
229 See Obrist (1997), 49-53, and Edson (1996), 27-8. Interestingly, however, Obrist also discusses the spatial ambiguities inherent in the wind diagrams that include a map at the center; she writes that it is difficult to tell where or even if the diagram places the winds in a specific physical location. For example, are they inside the atmosphere, or outside? She argues, based
Some wind diagrams include information on tides, which necessarily leads to an inclusion of the days of the month, adding a temporal dimension to the spatial.\textsuperscript{230} To my knowledge, however, the diagrams never include specific astronomical or astrological components, or extensive theological groupings.

Hildegard of Bingen’s cosmic drawings accompanying her \textit{Liber divinorum operum}, from the third quarter of the twelfth century, also come closer to being depictions of an entire cosmic system, not just individual relationships.\textsuperscript{231} Several manuscripts of the text survive, the most important of which is preserved in the Biblioteca Statale in Lucca (Ms. 1942), and contains ten full-page miniatures, one for each of the visions described in Hildegard’s text.\textsuperscript{232} Numerous drawings evoke the cosmos, but the striking illumination on folio 9 recto representing the second part of the first vision is the most relevant for our discussion (fig. 31).\textsuperscript{233}

Here we see a large, richly colored circular diagram with multiple figures. At the outside of the circle is a red figure with arms spread, described by Hildegard as the “fiery force.” He embraces and contains a depiction of the universe inside. Moving inside the circle are layers of different types of fire, air, ether, and the earth at the center. At the heart of the drawing stands a male figure with arms outstretched (in the Vesuvian pose), whose hips, thighs and navel overlap the earth while the rest of his body reaches out into the layer of air and wind. Around all of these figures, Hildegard represents the forces that act within the universe – winds and planets that spit lines across the page, superimposing the human figure with a near-grid. While elsewhere in her work, Hildegard is deeply concerned with scientific data and theories of the universe, drawings like this one show a different interest: depicting a passionate, colorful, vibrant picture of the cosmos and its agents. The micro/macrocosmic illumination certainly makes arguments about the structure of the universe and its relation to man, but it also appeals to the senses and the imagination.

Many medieval \textit{mappaemundi} also incorporated cosmic elements like those in Hildegard’s illustrations, though in a different context. \textit{Mappaemundi} are usually more overtly doctrinal than Hildegard’s more abstract visions. The thirteenth-century “Psalter Map,” for example, stresses the importance of Christ’s body as a structural device uniting macrocosm and microcosm (fig. 32).\textsuperscript{234} Christ’s body both frames the circular picture of the earth and is somehow united with it. David Areford, citing early Christian interpretations of Ephesians 3:18,
writes that images like the Psalter Maps underline the connection between the cross and the cardinal points, stressing “Christ’s power, by means of the cross...to bind the cosmos, hold it together, and restore it.” The Psalter map includes the winds around the edges of the earth, but does not incorporate other cosmic structures – physical or temporal – beyond its assertion that Christ’s body was in some sense the physical container of the world. Most medieval mappaemundi show one picture of the Christian conception of the relationship between God and the world, but they are not usually diagrams that posit complex spatial relationships between multiple cosmic elements.

Hugh of St Victor’s famous lost diagram described in his De arca noe was perhaps one of the most influential cosmic representations of the High Middle Ages – one with which Opicinus was almost certainly familiar, since, as Morse demonstrated, he prepared his own translation of the text into Italian. Many scholars have offered reconstructions based on Hugh’s description, but it is certain that the diagram contained at least three major elements. First, and probably at the outer edge, was a depiction of Christ in majesty, as seen in a vision by Isaiah. Second was a symbolic depiction of the cosmos, with the earth at its center, surrounded by the regions of aer and aether. Third was a schematized drawing of Noah’s ark, depicting it from above. Grover Zinn asserts that these three units were arranged so that the figure of Christ held the symbolic cosmos in front of his body (with only his head, hands and feet visible), while the diagram of the Ark was placed at the center of the symbolic cosmos so that the earth surrounded the ark. The drawing therefore resembled closely an image like the Psalter Map, with Christ’s body containing the other elements, though it included greater detail in its depiction of the atmospheric layers around it.

The reader may have noticed that many of the “cosmic” representations discussed so far relate specifically to visionary experience – Hildegard and Hugh’s diagrams, many mappaemundi, and Opicinus’s own drawings all either represent or could be used to spark visionary experience. Evans argues that this should come as no surprise; the medium of the diagram, he states, is particularly well-suited to the representation of the visionary, lending it authority and certitude, and enabling the author to express multiple levels of meaning simultaneously. Diagrams are also likely to have inspired visionary experience, and contributed to the later diagrammatic representation of them. Evans briefly discusses the ways that various mystics, including Hildegard, Joachim of Fiore, and Opicinus, used different kinds of schemata to structure representations of their visions. The question of what visual forms “influenced” visionary representations is always vexed, since it raises issues of their authenticity. I adopt Evans’s neutral viewpoint; he writes that, “visionary experience is a picture which the mind

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235 Areford (1998), 228.
236 Unfortunately, the text is now lost. See Morse (1996), 90.
constructs with the raw materials already at its disposal." The question of how and why the diagrammatic mode is used so often in the representation of the visionary remains under-explored, and is an area to which I hope to return in future research.

The last major context for medieval cosmic diagrams that I want to address is the material found in computus manuscripts, a specific type of book that placed all of this theoretical cosmic information into practical contexts. They were books meant not only for study, but for use. They contain a variety of different diagrams and texts, but their primary function was calculating the date of Easter – a major preoccupation of both theologians and scientists. To this end, they included canonical astronomical texts from authors like Pliny the Elder, Macrobius, Martianus Capella and Isidore, as well as a series of diagrams of each of the most important cosmic cycles. Most surviving computus manuscripts also include the following material: a diagram of the seasons, equinoxes and solstices, a diagram of planetary orbits, a series of drawings showing the phases of the moon, various calendars, a wind *rota*, a tidal *rota*, and a table or *rota* with the zodiac. With these diagrams and tables, the movements of the sun, moon, and stars could be tracked and used with calendars to determine the dates of moveable feast days in the ecclesiastical calendar.

More elaborate computistical manuscripts also included a variety of astronomical and medical diagrams. Both medical prognosis and treatment were intimately bound together with lunar, solar, and astrological cycles; bleeding, purgation, and surgery were timed according to both the current astronomical conditions and to individual horoscopes. The most common rule dictated that a person should never be bled or operated on while the moon was in the house of the zodiacal sign governing that particular body part, and a series of zodiacal tables showing the rising and falling of astrological signs within the lunar cycle is often included to help make this determination. Other medical diagrams were also included: drawings of the hands (called chiromancy diagrams), drawings of the human figure with locations pointed out for bloodletting, and diagrams showing a series of different colors of urine, used to diagnose illness. Tradition had long established which body parts were ruled by which constellations, and these correspondences were illustrated in several types of diagrams in the computus. The most common is the *homo signorum*, often called the zodiac man. These drawings depict a standing

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239 Though, as Edson points out, the computus tradition was of greatest importance from the eighth to the twelfth century, it remained important and influential into the thirteenth and fourteenth, and constitutes, I think, the most significant direct influence on Opicinus’s drawings after the portolan charts. See Edson (1996), 25.
240 Edson includes an appendix with descriptions of all the major diagrams, and a list of manuscripts that include them. Edson (1996), 41.
241 Bober (1948), esp. 6-7.
242 See Bober (1948), 7-13. Examples of these lunar-astrology tables can be found in Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 391, item 5, fol. 7v, and British Library MS Sloane 282, folio. 13r.
243 An interesting manuscript case study for all of these medical/astrological image-types is Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 391, item 5. It is a short binding of parchment inserted into the larger manuscript, written by Nicholas of Lynn in the fourteenth century.
244 The best sources for these images of the zodiac man are Charles Clark, *The Zodiac Man in Medieval Medical Astrology*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Colorado, 1979), Clark, “The Zodiac Man in Medieval Medical Astrology,” *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance*
human figure with the zodiac symbols drawn on and around his body at the appropriate locations: a lamb (Aries) sits on top of the head, two twins (Gemini) scramble up the arms, etc. (see fig. 38). In some examples the figures interact with the body, while in others they are simply superimposed over it. Another variation on the tradition places a human figure at the center of a circular diagram with the zodiac symbols drawn along the outside, connected to the parts of the body with lines (fig. 39). Usually fit in around the drawings is a text that explains the correspondences. These correspondences between the body and zodiac are almost always represented visually with their own diagram; these suggest not only correspondence but also hierarchy and, often, the concept that a cosmic human body actually contains the zodiac. In all of these examples from computus manuscripts, astrology is the element that binds the material together into a cohesive set – the stars and planets bridge the gap between medical, astronomical, human, calendrical and theological spheres. Multiple discourse are piled together into the manuscript, though not usually into single drawings. Each individual drawing, diagram, or table serves a specific purpose, but few combine this material into a single diagram of everything.

Much of the computistical and calendrical material contained in these computus manuscripts was geared toward a single theological question, the date of Easter, but I want to examine one final example in which the astrological content so ubiquitous in the computus manuscript was used in an explicitly theological representation: the so-called *thema mundi*. The *thema mundi* is essentially an astrological depiction of the Creation of the World – a picture of the world’s natal horoscope. Kristen Lippincott identifies a persistent interest in the astrology of Creation in fourteenth-century Italian painting; in her article on a predella panel by Giovanni di Paolo, she identifies a tradition of at least three monumental frescos, from San Gimignano, Padua, and Pisa, in which God gestures toward or holds a circular cosmos with the zodiac signs and planets in a particular arrangement. These frescos, she argues, all depict the Sun in the house of Aries, a feature that identifies them with a tradition that dated the Creation to that time of year (see, for example, fig. 40, Giusto de’Menabuoi’s fresco in the Duomo Baptistry in Padua). This tradition aligned the creation of the earth to the incarnation of God, the feast of

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246 The frescos are: Bartolo di Fredi’s 1367 *Creation* in the Chiesa della Collegiata in San Gimignano, Giusto de’Menabuoi’s 1376-78 *Creation* in the Duomo Baptistry in Padua, and Pietro di Pucci da Orvieto’s 1389-90 *Creation* in the Camposanto in Pisa. These are only the primary examples – Lippencott also points to a half dozen other instances in manuscript painting, stained glass, and fresco.

247 Lippencott also refers to this type as the “single scene Genesis,” and argues that its popularity might have been due in part to a growing acceptance of the arguments made by Augustine and Aquinas, particularly, in favor of an “instantaneous Creation.” They depict “frozen in time” the precise moment of the world’s birthday. Lippencott (1990), 468. It is also important to note that an alternate tradition, dating back to Macrobius, configured the astrology of creation somewhat
the annunciation also falling under Aries, on March 25. All three of these frescos combine multiple cosmic elements into a single image with a specific theological argument; they each include a (more or less detailed) world map at the center, concentric circles representing layers of aer and aether, and the circles with the orbits of the planets and the motions of the zodiac constellations. The frescos testify to the enduring interest in astrology for dealing with explicitly theological questions, and are rare examples of images that, like Opicinus’s, combined multiple cosmic discourses.

I believe that Opicinus drew from all of these different types of sources of cosmic illustration in his elaborate diagrams in the Palatinus manuscript. Opicinus’s drawings of the universe and the Church are singular in their inclusion of many different categories of information; as we have seen in this review of different visual incarnations of medieval cosmology, most other traditions isolated one or several cosmic elements – they represented the world and the winds, or the stars and the sun, or the body and the zodiac, or Christ and the earth, but never all of these at once. Opicinus’s drawings reveal an interest in all of this content, and in combining it into one system – one visual and epistemological statement. This allowed him both to find the correspondences between each part and also to demonstrate the multiplicity of the system. Opicinus appropriates and repurposes elements of both form and content that recur throughout medieval cosmological illustration: circular formats, cruciform shapes, lines of correspondence, larger bodies that contain smaller ones, and larger systems that contain the earth all play a significant role in his cosmic structures.

Opicinus’s own written comments on astrology and cosmology are found mostly in the Vaticanus manuscripts, and a few brief comments should help to frame the case studies of his cosmic drawings that follow. Like many of his contemporaries, Opicinus’s attitude toward astrology can seem ambivalent at times, but he is keenly aware of its danger when misused. In a crucial passage in the Vaticanus on folio 56v, Opicinus explains the problem:

So what if this constellation signifies that the child who is born will be rich? This is yet more rubbish. A man was born and became very rich: to what end? None. This practice is a vanity and an illusion. But if such superstitions are explained spiritually, then they can indicate a form of truth.248

The problem with astrology is not that it is incorrect. Opicinus never questions its efficacy, or the epistemological systems that underpin it. Rather, he points to the problem of its use toward non-spiritual ends – essentially, he objects to fortune-telling.

Exactly how much training Opicinus received in astrology and astronomy remains unclear. He certainly had access to certain types of computistical data; on folio 75 recto of the Vaticanus, for example, he explains the paths of the planets, including the time it takes for them to complete a full orbit (Iupiter per XII annos et circa, Saternus per XXX annos et circa, etc.).249

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249 Vaticanus folio 75 recto. See Laharie (2008), 777.
On other folios, however, astrology is simply another vehicle for allegorizing whatever topic Opicinus is concerned with. On folio 69 recto, for example, Opicinus uses debates over the sun’s place in the cosmos to demonstrate the wisdom of one of his figures over another, contrasting the Platonic belief that the sun was, after the moon, the closest object to the earth with the more contemporary (in his day), Aristotelian belief that the sun’s orbit was placed between Venus and Mars. Regardless of the precise astronomy depicted in drawings like this one, the presence of such information and debates clearly indicates Opicinus’s interest in and engagement with contemporary and classical astronomical and astrological literature.

**Palatinus Folio 10 recto**

The drawings in the Palatinus vary more widely in structure and content than those in the Vaticanus, making it very difficult to choose representative visual examples of Opicinus’s cosmology. I will discuss three case studies—folios 10 recto, 20 recto, and 24 recto—which, collectively, should give a sense of Opicinus’s strategies and structures for depicting the cosmic relation between the physical and spiritual worlds, and the artistic sources from which he drew most heavily. These drawings each use very different (but always striking and unexpected) visual strategies to frame the world in relation to the cosmos, but they do share many features: an emphasis on astrology, a geographic component (indicated either textually, visually or symbolically), and a highly symmetrical structure.

Perhaps more than any other drawing, folio 10 recto demonstrates the ways that Opicinus drew on earlier visual traditions to form his diagrams (fig. 19). This drawing uses layers of image and text to create a single diagram of the earthly and spiritual Church (it does not deal as explicitly with cosmology as other diagrams, but it offers the best example of how Opicinus combines multiple discourses and sources). Opicinus forms his ecclesiastical hierarchy with four main figures. Near the top of the page is the largest of these, a male figure whose body expands to contain all the others. On either side of his halo, he is labeled “incorruptibile regnum totius ecclesie,” or “incorruptible rule of the whole church.” Both a personification of the entire church and an image of God the Father, his robe falls outward, creating a circle that encompasses the other three figures: the crucified Christ, Mary, and John the Evangelist. The crucified figure is labeled “Christi membra mortalia,” or “the mortal members of Christ,” and Mary and John are labeled as the sacramental and corporeal churches, respectively. Opicinus uses several different pictorial strategies to tie these figures into a specific spatial relationship. The hands of the outer figure reach down to lightly touch the heads of Mary and John, suggesting both the connection and subordination of the sacramental and corporeal churches to the universal church. Two small lines, red and green, connect Christ’s side wound with Mary’s mouth and hands, which proclaims Christ’s body the source of the sacraments.

The drawing suggests a number of different iconographic sources. The overall arrangement of the figures suggests the first and most obvious parallel: the so-called “mercy-seat” trinity that was common throughout medieval Europe, in paintings, manuscript illuminations, and sculpture. In this image-type, God the Father holds a smaller figure of Christ

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in his lap, still attached to the cross. Opicinus combined this iconography with that of a traditional crucifixion scene, where Mary and John stand below at either side of the cross. This hybrid representation was an ideal way of expressing the interrelations that he had worked out between the various parts of “the Church,” broadly conceived.

This central hierarchy is surrounded by a complex diagrammatic frame, composed of ovals, circles and lozenges – forms typical of Opicinus’s drawings, and familiar to the reader from an image like Byrhtferth’s Diagram of the Fours (fig. 36). At the outside are the symbols of the four Evangelists, their wings spread to form the overall lozenge-shape that contains the series of ovals that in turn contain the human figures. Each Evangelist stands beneath a caption marking one of the four cardinal directions. Their wings contain passages from the Old and New Testaments, and the half-circles between each set of wings contain short aphorisms of each of the four doctors of the church – Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome and Gregory. Inside the ovals Opicinus reveals his love of wordplay: near each of the Evangelists, he creates poems that play off the letters of their name and their animal symbol.252 Overall, the use of such simple geometric forms, and their highly symmetrical and schematic arrangement, evokes the sense of stability typical of Caviness’s “images of divine order.”

This much could be read in an almost-straightforward manner, but another layer of meaning complicates the image, changing it from an abstract diagram to a concrete, spatial one. Though it is not represented pictorially, inscriptions inside the circle formed by the cloak of the largest figure indicate that we are meant to read a portolan-style map under, on top of, or coexistent with the diagram. The three continents are labeled in large capital letters; “ASIA” is written on either side of the largest figure’s head, while “EUROPA” and “AFFRICA” are written vertically along either side of the cross (according to the traditional distribution of the continents in the T-O schema). Smaller inscriptions indicate the location of specific countries; to point out just a few, one sees “Italia” on either side of the crucified figure, and “Hispania” along his legs. The faint square grid that structures most of the diagram (and was probably used to help construct it) highlights this implied space. This implied map relates the overall composition to the T-O mappaemundi mentioned above; the fact that the map is contained within a body and structured by a smaller cruciform figure brings to mind parallels such as the famous Ebstorf Map and the smaller Psalter Map (fig. 32).

Other content in the drawing recalls aspects of the diagrams in computus manuscripts. On either side of the drawing, running vertically in one of the oval bands, are the twelve signs of the zodiac (on the right) and the twelve parts of the body to which they correspond (on the left). Thus, just above the head of God, and to either side, are “aries” and “caput” (head). The pattern continues with “taurus” and “collum” (neck) just below, and goes all the way down to “pisces” and “pedes” (feet) at the bottom of the page, just to the side of God’s reemerging feet. In this

252 Thus, at the top of the page one reads the larger words “HOMIMIS MATHEUS” and a smaller series of texts that begin with each of these letters. The same strategy is used for the other evangelists and their symbols on the other sides of the oval. Another acronym at the top of the page creates the words “Vultum” and “Gestat,” and the arms of the cross at the center of the page bear letters that form the word “CRUX.” This kind of wordplay was typical of medieval mnemonic techniques. See especially Mary Carruthers, The Book of Memory, (Cambridge 1992), and, on wordplay, Christian Heck, “Raban Maur, Bernard de Clairvaux, Bonaventure: expression de l'espace et topographie spirituelle dans les images médiévales,” in The Mind’s Eye, ed. J. Hamburger and A.M. Bouche (Princeton, 2005).
way, the figure of God is almost like a non-pictorialized zodiac man, with the names of the parts written along the sides, rather than shown as tiny figures crawling on the actual body. Lying at the intersection between the world of the corporeal, sacramental, and mortal Church (and the map of the earth) at the center and the a-historical realm of Holy Scripture at the outer edges, the oval with the zodiac forms a crucial structural link between the two spheres. The references to the natural world – to the body parts of man and the movements of the stars – are intimately bound together with these two parts of the Church.

Thus, Opicinus combined elements of multiple iconographic sources: a T-O map, a portolan chart, a mercy-seat trinity, a zodiac man, and a typical 14th century Giottesque crucifixion. He then schematized these elements into a picture of divine order using longstanding visual conventions of symmetry and basic geometry. The result is a drawing whose individual forms are familiar, but which are recombined into a new image – one which emphasizes not the sinfulness or fallen nature of the earth, but its role as part of the fabric, literally, of God’s Church.

**Palatinus Folio 20 recto**

Maps appear and reappear throughout the Palatinus manuscript. Some are clearly represented, like folio 5 recto, while others are merely implied, such as in folio 10 recto that we just saw. But the embodied continents so familiar from the Vaticanus manuscript appear only five times. A particularly interesting example of these is folio 20 recto, another diagram of the link between the heavenly and earthly spheres (fig. 21). Here, Opicinus surrounds his entire drawing with a large oval calendar, which in turn contains two smaller interlocking calendar-ovals.

The content of the oval surrounding the entire diagram contains a number of basic correspondences. A calendar, labeled with the months and days, forms its base. Around the outside are the names of the twelve Apostles, each written above small half-circles that contain the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. To the right of each of these circles is the name of an Old Testament prophet, with an accompanying excerpt from their writings. As is often the case, Opicinus seeks to establish systems of correspondence between content with analogous structures – in this case, things that come in sets of twelve.

The upper calendar contains three figures: a large face which is unlabeled but probably represents Ecclesia (given its similarity to other such figures in the Palatinus); a smaller figure representing the Pope (labeled “paternitas multarum gentium,” or “father of many peoples”), who has a medallion in his chest with the sponsus and sponsa figures (labeled “amor spiritualis”); and the smallest figure, a man representing a Christian king (labeled “ego sum populus Domini fidelis in verbis et in operibus sanctus,” or “I am faithful to the people of God in words and sacred deeds”). These figures are surrounded by the upper oval, which contains a complete calendar, labeled with the days of the year, the months (just outside the oval), and the signs of the zodiac (just inside the oval). Though the face of the largest figure is circumscribed by the smaller oval at the top, the hands of the figure emerge outside the largest oval at the center of the drawing, suggesting the coextension of all of the different frames, all connected to this body.

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253 Embodied continents are apparent only on folios 2v, 18r, 20r, 22r, and 22v in the Palatinus. Many other drawings combine maps and bodies, but only these folios include the actual body-worlds so ubiquitous in the Vaticanus. On folio 20r, see Salomon (1936), 261-66.
The lower oval contains the body-worlds. A bearded, male Europe, a hooded, female Africa, and the bearded Mediterranean Man fill the upper two thirds of the oval, while a sphere of ocean (rendered in a green wash) lies at the bottom. The oval surrounding the map contains a calendar, with the months just at the outside, just like in the upper oval. Unlike the upper oval, however, the lower one contains labels indicating the zodiac symbol, rather than the astrological sign. The top oval places “Capricorn” between December and January, while the bottom one indicates “edus” or “goat,” its symbol.

Unlike many of Opicinus’s body-world drawings, the embodied figures in this drawing contain no explicit allegorical message. Yet the precise physical relation between the map and its oval frame is significant. Particularly interesting are the two lines that cross the drawing, their point of intersection at the bottom of the Italian peninsula (precisely at the center-point of most contemporary portolans). The line running from bottom left to upper right is drawn with bright red ink. It connects the date of the feast day on the outer calendar-oval of Pope Gregory the Great, March 12 (the day of his death), to a tiny drawing of the Crucifixion drawn over the holy land; the red line actually ends directly in the side-wound of the crucified Christ, also painted in red ink, setting up a typological parallel between Gregory’s death and Christ’s. The other line, from lower right to upper left, drawn in green, connects the same date on the outer calendar-oval and the smaller calendar inside; the date appears to be March 28. The date of this drawing’s creation is unclear – there are few fixed dates in the Palatinus manuscript, which was likely produced over a number of years between 1335 and 1350. But it is my suspicion that the line indicates the date of Easter in the year that the calendars represent; Easter fell on March 28 in 1339, which may suggest that the drawing was completed in that year. Regardless, the line establishes correspondence between the outer oval and one of the inner ovals, suggesting that they represent the same year.

Temporal correspondence is thus established between the outer, larger oval-calendar and the smaller oval-calendar in the lower half of the page. Further evidence suggests a similar correspondence between this lower calendar-oval and the one above it. The calendars of the two ovals are arranged as mirrored opposites, meaning that they meet in the center on precisely the same days. The days that overlap each other are, in both cases, the days governed by the sign of Aries; at the center of the drawing, we see the labels “aries” and “agnus,” or lamb (the symbol for Aries). The importance of Aries in certain theories of Creation was discussed above; in representations of the thema mundi, Aries was usually placed at the top of the calendar, given its importance as the month when the world was said to have been created. Lippincott also points to a tradition throughout the Middle Ages that the Creation, Annunciation and Crucifixion had all taken place on the same day, under the sign of Aries.

Thus, various means are employed to establish temporal correspondence, but all serve the same goal of depicting the co-temporality and simultaneity of each calendar-framed portion of the drawing. The outer calendar is related to the lower calendar by the line that connects Easter on each calendar. The lower calendar is then bound together with the upper one by a physical overlapping under the year’s most sacred sign, Aries. The three ovals thus frame three different sets of content, but are made contemporary to one another – they depict three different realities, all present in the same time. Such simultaneity and temporal correspondence is a key, and thusfar unappreciated, aspect of many of Opicinus’s drawings; the precise positioning of the
zodiac signs to suggest the *thema mundi*, as well as the lines of correspondence between multiple calendars, are features of dozens of the drawings.  

Like so many of the other drawings in the Palatinus, this one depicts the connection between two different spheres: the earthly and the spiritual. The upper oval represents the domain of the eternal Church, while the lower one depicts the physical spaces of the earth. The zones overlap not only in their physical arrangement, but also in their content. Both contain calendars, the structural tool that binds together heavenly time with earthly time. Both contain the zodiac: the names of the astrological signs in the heavenly sphere, and their earthly symbols in the terrestrial sphere. Both also contain human figures, which give their respective content recognizable shape. As is so often the case, Opicinus separates the two spheres while still maintaining basic similarities of content and structure and complex correspondences that indicate their union or co-extension. He draws on numerous visual, cosmological, and theological traditions to create this spatial diagram of a single year, in all its different manifestations.

**Palatinus folio 24 recto**

This colorful folio coordinates a vast amount of information, far more than any of Opicinus’s other drawings (fig. 22). The drawing includes at least twenty separate sets of content: the major prophets, minor prophets, planets, two different sets of zodiac symbols, the doctors of the Church, four monastic orders and their founders, months, days, an implied world map, the genealogy of Mary, the Ave Maria, three personifications of the Church, two crucifixions, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the four types of biblical exegesis, the four Evangelists, the Apostles, and the names of the letters of Paul. To group all of these things in a meaningful layout, Opicinus carefully planned the page, starting with the overall geometric structure and then filling in each set of information. Like so many of the previous folios, the primary frame is a long oval, inside of which are six circles. The top circle contains a face, presumably belonging to a giant body consisting of all six circles (it was standard in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to describe the body as six “heads” high). This large figure is labeled “*ecclesia universalis*.” Like folio 10 recto, this folio depicts a representation of the Church, but it is different in its focus on Mary as the link between the cosmic and human spheres.

Several spatial hierarchies are built into the image. The first runs from top to bottom: the three circles at the top are representations of the heavenly church, and the three at the bottom represent the earthly church. The top circle depicts the face of God as the universal Church, surrounded by tiny busts of the doctors of the church. Below it is a circle depicting Mary and Christ enthroned in the heavenly Jerusalem, and below them is an image of the Madonna and

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254 By my count, at least 18 of the 31 drawings in the Palatinus that include a calendar depicting Aries at the top, and several of these drawings depict the sun in a relation that also suggests the *thema mundi*. Each drawing presents its own set of correspondences and issues, but the folios that I think may at the very least suggest the *thema mundi* include Palatinus folios 1r, 5r, 6r, 6v, 10r, 13r, 14r, 15r, 15v, 16v, 17v, 19r, 20r, 21r, 22r, 24r, 24v, and 25r. Lines establishing correspondence between multiple frames are similarly found throughout the Palatinus. I hope to study these types of connection in more detail in future research.

255 On this folio, see Morse (1996), 256-63, Salomon (1936), 277-82, and Whittington (2009), 154-5.
Child carrying the label “ecclesia spiritualis.” The face in the first circle corresponds to the body whose hands reach down and out into the elliptical zone of the large, colorful zodiacal symbols. The zodiac then corresponds to the rectangular calendar just outside, which includes saints and feasts for nearly every day of the year, and to tiny representations of the planets, just to the inside. Thus, the outline of the large figure that contains all of the circles is physically meshed with a cosmic order that includes the calendar, stars, and planets.

The three lower circles are images of the earthly church. At the bottom is another tiny picture of the Madonna and Child, this time labeled “infantia ecclesie sacramentalis,” or “infancy of the sacramental church.” Two circles above contain the large wind-rose of contemporary portolans. The landforms and continents are not delineated, but these networks of lines are ubiquitous within Opicinus’s work and are always associated with maps, so we can assume that the map is implicit. Inside are three figures. Two opposite images of Christ crucified are arranged toe to toe, all four feet meeting at a single point at the center of the two circles. The top figure, whose head droops to the side in death, is labeled “Christus mortus,” while the bottom figure’s upright body is “Christus triumphans.” At the apex of the top circle is the head of the third figure, labeled “filius hominis”; his feet emerge from the bottom of the second circle, below the head of the triumphant Christ crucified. This complex arrangement suggests that Christ’s birth, death, and triumph within the physical space of the earth are the heart of the earthly church and the sacraments.

In this drawing Opicinus establishes Mary as the link that connects the spiritual with the earthly. The tiny drawings of the Madonna and Child are repeated in both the spiritual top of the drawing and the earthly bottom. Furthermore, two sets of Marian text connect the inner space of the circles, representing the Church, with the outer, cosmic sphere. Running in two vertical columns between the circles and the large zodiac animals are the genealogy of Mary on the left and the text of the Ave Maria in capital letters on the right. These texts constitute a physical bridge in the diagram between the ecclesiastical and cosmic spheres, a spatial concept that is aligned with Mary’s theological role as the link between God the father and Christ the son. Many of the other spatial connections in the drawing remain elusive, but Opicinus clearly intended this drawing to be complicated, and to require extensive probing and exegesis. It is not a picture that a beholder could simply “view,” but rather a diagram with multiple layers. The process of working through the content of the diagram mirrors the process of its incremental creation, part by part.

Two lines of text at the top of the diagram shed further light on the drawing’s meaning. Near the top, in the neck of the parchment, are the words “speculum fidei nostre nunc invisibilis,” or “mirror of our now-invisible faith.” Opicinus is concerned throughout the Palatinus manuscript with the visible and the invisible; here, he seems to use the drawing to make present and visible that which is invisible – what “faith” actually looks like. This “mirroring” is then repeated within the drawing: the three “spiritual” circles at the top mirroring the three “physical” and “sacramental” circles at the bottom. The metaphor of the mirror indicates, in this case, the sameness and coextension of these two worlds. Using the word “speculum” in the fourteenth century would also have called to mind a particular genre of text, such as Vincent of Beauvais’s Speculum Maius, written in the thirteenth century; this work, and others like it, were like encyclopedias, compiling knowledge of all things (they aimed to be “mirrors” of the world). Vincent’s work was divided into three sections, the Speculum Naturale, Speculum Moralis, and Speculum Historiale.

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256 Salomon (1936), 281-2.
Speculum Doctrinale, and Speculum Historiale; each section aimed for a complete account of nature, doctrine, and history. I don't think there is a necessary connection between any particular Speculum text and Opicinus’s drawing, but it is interesting that his drawings share with this genre an emphasis on totality, combining multiple layers of interpretation and content in order to paint a picture of the whole. Like these texts, the drawing itself aims to be a mirror, and then turns inward to mirror itself.

This idea of reflection is further complicated by another inscription at the top of the page, written in larger letters in red ink: “imago et similitudo dei.” That this inscription acts as a sort of title for the entire page is clear from its prominent placement and color, but its precise meaning is elusive. These words could certainly refer to Genesis 1:26, where man is made in the “image and likeness” of God. Multiple other theological discourses, however, could have shaped Opicinus’s thinking about these terms. Following Augustine’s discussion in the De Trinitate, the drawing’s title could refer to the mirroring of the spheres of God and Christ, leaving the question of man largely aside. One could also read the title in an entirely different way, as a representation of God’s imago et similitudo, leaving aside the question of where else it is reflected or recreated; the drawing could refer to the totality of God’s imago, in both its heavenly and natural settings (which mirror each other).

But another group of texts further complicates these interpretations. In several passages, Hugh of Saint Victor, whose works were known to Opicinus at least in part, discusses imago and similitudo at length. The most crucial section is in his De Sacramentis, a book which, like Aquinas’s Summa, aimed to describe and explain all theology (in Hugh’s case, by using an exploration of the sacraments to explain the ways that man relates to God):

Man was made to the image and likeness of God, because in the soul, which is the better part of man, or rather was man himself, was the image and likeness of God; image according to reason, likeness according to love; image according to truth, likeness according to love of virtue; or image according to knowledge, likeness according to substance; image, because all things in it are according to wisdom; likeness, because it is itself one and simple according to essence; image because rational, likeness because spiritual; image pertains to figure, likeness to nature. Now these things were made in the soul alone, because corporeal nature could not have received likeness of the Godhead, which was far from its excellence and likeness in this very fact, that it was corporeal.257

257 From De Sacramentis, book 1, part 6, paragraph 2. Translation from Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, Theological aesthetics: a reader, (Eerdmans’s Publishing, 2005), 75. “Factus est homo ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei, quia in anima (quae potior pars est hominis, vel potius ipse homo erat) fuit imago et similitudo Dei. Imago secundum rationem, similitudo secundum dilectionem; imago secundum cognitionem veritatis, similitudo secundum amorem virtutis. Vel imago secundum scientiam, similitudo secundum substantiam. Imago, quia omnia in ipsa, secundum sapientiam; similitudo, quia una et simplex ipsa, secundum essentiam. Imago quia rationalis, similitudo quia spiritualis. Imago pertinet ad figuram, similitudo ad naturam. Haec autem in anima sola facta sunt, quia corporea natura similitudinem capere non potuit Divinitatis, quae ab ejus excellentia et similitudine in hoc ipso longe fuit quod corporea fuit.”
The discussion of imago and similitudo is found in the context of Hugh’s explanation of how man can be restored from the state of sin after the fall into a state of grace – a question of paramount importance to Opicinus throughout his works. In this passage, and elsewhere in the De Sacramentis, Hugh suggests that at the fall, man lost his "similitudo" to God, i.e. his identity to spiritual God’s nature, but still has his "imago" – which could be translated as impression, appearance, or reflection. The program of De Sacramentis is to explain that by using the qualities associated with imago – reason, learning, knowledge – man can be restored into a state of grace, which would mean that he would regain his "similitudo Dei." Perhaps to reason and knowledge Opicinus would add the shape of the earth, itself – a material sign left by God to lead humans back toward God’s likeness.258 These suggestions remain conjectural – we have no way of knowing how much context Opicinus would have for understanding Hugh’s text, even if he had read it. What I think is particularly interesting about this passage, though, is its stubborn refusal of setting up imago and similitudo in a relation to each other that we would think of as consistent; similitudo, for example, is equated with both the “spiritual” and the “natural,” with both “love” and “substance.” Hugh’s text reminds the reader not to get so caught up in binaries that we lose sight of the coexistence of the natural and the spiritual within these discourses. This issue, as I have been suggesting, lies at the heart of Opicinus’s works, which seek both to show the boundaries and limits of different spiritual and natural places and states, while at the same time depicting them as mirrors of one another or as contained by the same structures. Ambiguity, and the possibility of multiple interpretations, structures all of these drawings.

**Locating Meaning**

In folio 24 recto, we have seen yet another example of Opicinus’s fluid cosmology. Here he piles layer upon layer of text and image, searching for connections. The zodiac symbols stand out in this drawing more than in any other – their size, placement and bright color establish their primacy within the drawing, presumably as a link between the cosmic and the earthly. The drawing is intimately connected with the others examined in this chapter, folios 5 recto, 10 recto, and 20 recto, as well as numerous other drawings throughout the Palatinus; all seek some way of representing the connections that Opicinus knew existed between the cosmos, the earth, and the human body. The foundations of these diagrams are the use of the body as a vehicle of allegory and personification, the use of the zodiac as bridges between earth and heaven, an interest in the Church as it exists on earth and in heaven, and a repeated insistence on placing all of these connections within a concrete time and, often, place. Each drawing contains calendars that place the elements inside firmly within Opicino’s own time – this was the earth, Church, and cosmos as it existed now, concretized by the individual days of each month on the calendar. But just as the calendar particularizes the drawings’ content, it also universalizes it, relating it to natural cycles that repeat in the future and the past.

The most interesting element of these drawings, when they are viewed in comparison, is Opicinus’s changing representation of “the earth,” which appears very differently in each of these four folios. Folio 5 recto (fig. 18) depicts a straightforward portolan chart, its continents and sea carefully delineated but un-embodied. In contrast, folio 10 recto (fig. 19) doesn’t include

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258 Morse discusses a similar idea, writing that, “God had created the world to help teach human beings.” My reading of Opicinus’s spiritual interpretation of the earth’s forms is certainly informed by Morse’s work on the subject. See Morse, “Moralized Geography,” forthcoming.
any landforms, using instead small geographical labels mixed in among the figures and text to indicate the presence of the earth’s space without actually drawing a map. Folio 20 recto (fig. 21) once again includes a portolan chart, but this time the continents and sea are embodied, recalling the drawings of the Vaticanus. In the final example, folio 24 recto (fig. 22), the earth’s space is represented by the rhumb lines of a portolan chart, but the actual landforms are nowhere to be found. Thus, the “earth,” or the portion of the diagram that indicates “the earthly,” can take many forms – simple portolans, text-only maps, body-worlds, and rhumb lines can all indicate its presence and position within larger schemas. It is tempting to ask why each different kind of “map” is used in each drawing, but to assume a concrete answer to this question may be a mistake. Opicinus experiments in the Palatinus with nearly every possible combination; he tries different ways of representing the world, different strategies for framing it, various hierarchies and scales, and different degrees of pictoriality, geometry and abstraction. It is impossible to know which drawings “succeeded,” for Opicinus or any unknown viewers of these drawings; it is enough here to describe and understand the different pieces of the puzzle, without trying to ascertain which drawings, if any, show those pieces put together “correctly.” Making these drawings was a way for Opicinus to express how different kinds of knowledge could be combined and connected.

The different manifestations of “the earth” throughout the Palatinus and Vaticanus manuscripts are linked together with the cosmic and astrological elements of the diagrams by means that are on the one hand analogical and structural, and on the other highly specific and spatial. Different hierarchies and containing structures position the earth in relation to the Church, the planets, and the days and months of the year, placing it in a spatially meaningful, yet always somewhat abstract, relation to the cosmos. Yet many of the drawings establish far more precise connections. In a recent article, Victoria Morse demonstrated the ways that Opicinus used drawings in the Vaticanus manuscript to demonstrate spiritual connections between various cities, particularly Jerusalem, Rome and Avignon; particularly, he aimed to prove the historical inevitability of the Papacy’s move to Avignon. Opicinus created these connections by overlapping multiple maps and using metaphors of the body; events like the move of the Papacy, or the translation of Augustine’s relics to Pavia could be explained by different arrangements of the body-worlds.259

Another example of Opicinus’s use of the drawings to establish concrete connections may be found in the use of the zodiac in the folio discussed at the start of this chapter, Palatinus fol. 5 recto (fig. 18). Rather than using the zodiac only as an abstract bridge between heaven and earth, or as a way of connecting the cosmos with the calendar, Opicinus positions individual zodiac symbols over certain parts of the earth. Earlier, I mentioned briefly that Ptolemy, Abu Ma’shar and Peter of Abano allude to correspondences between particular zodiac signs and particular geographical locations; folio 5r, I think, explores how this concept would look when integrated into a larger cosmic structure, tied to the portolan charts, and combined with the established medical connections between the zodiac and the body. As I argued before, the zodiac controlled the body, but the body is now the earth. Folio 5 recto, I think, explores how the zodiac could thus exert control over the earth.

Looking at the drawing, we see the tiny, semi-transparent zodiac figures placed over different parts of the portolan chart – twelve along the outer oval, and two sets of twelve to the inside and outside of the large circle at the center. A viewer familiar with Opicinus’s cosmology

259 Morse, “Moralized Geography,” forthcoming.
would assume some kind of correspondence between these zodiac symbols and the landforms below; it can also be assumed that any viewer of Opicinus’s works would quickly become familiar with the forms of the body-worlds. By this, I mean that a viewer would make an association between Italy and the leg of the Europe-figure, or its head and Spain. Searching out these kinds of correspondences, we find that the lion, which in medical astrology corresponds to the chest, stands on the outer calendar between the labels for July and August and in the area near Germany and northern France, which generally corresponds to the chest or stomach area of the European body. Carpricorn, the horned goat associated with the legs, lies on the outer calendar near the legs of the seated African body. Such alignments can be found on the drawing, although not every zodiac symbol, of course, lines up with the correct body part.

An interesting passage on folio 59 recto of the Vaticanus confirms the impulse to seek out such correspondences in Opicinus’s work. Here, he demonstrates the significant interrelation between two astrological signs and two locations:

Genoa and Majorca point me toward the truth with evidence, because Genoa is pulled by January and Majorca by May, between other months that one could measure on this sea, and they possess [zodiac] signs endowed with reason, with the knowledge that the symbols for Aquarius and Gemini take on human form [the water pourer and twins]…As the other months have signs of the zodiac which are devoid of reason, January and May appear, as sure as if I could see it with my own eyes, as signs of the air or the sky; because Aquarius is passing just over Genoa, the door of the belly of Africa, and because the twins of Gemini, united in charity, are about to pass the major port in the of the stomach of this Europe.260

This passage is difficult to follow because it does not accompany any existing drawings, but it likely refers to a drawing where multiple portolans were overlapped with the zodiac spread across them. Opicinus points out the significance between sign and place based on a number of different factors: the identity of the zodiac symbol, its placement over the chart, and its placement within the year. We can see here that he does not believe that this kind of system is static – that certain parts of the cosmos always rule over certain areas of the world. Rather, I think, Opicinus emphasizes the cyclicality of the cosmos; depending on the particular year (and thus, the particular arrangement of the calendar over the lands), certain zodiacal symbols could occupy different parts of the body-worlds. Since it is a calendar, and thus partakes in the meaning of past and present cycles of days and months, we can assume that each part of the earth will in turn be ruled by or aligned with each cluster of stars represented by the zodiac, and meaningful correspondences like the ones above can be extrapolated.

Like the overlapping worlds in Vaticanus folio 61 recto (fig. 5), which established a template for simultaneous travel in multiple directions (its ambiguity underscoring both the

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260 Vaticanus fol. 59r: “Certitudinem veritatis significant mihi Ianua et Maiorica, quemadmodum a ianuario Ianua et a maio Maiorica inter ceteros menses mensurabiles huius habent rationalia signa, scilicet Aquarius et Geminos in forma humana…Existentibus enim ceteris mensium signis irrationalibus, ianuarius et maius mihi producunt in testes veridicos Aquarius et Geminos aereos vel celestes, cum Aquarius produxerit usque ad nos Ianuam pectoris Affricani et Gemini caritate parati sint introire maiorem Ianuum pectoris huius Europe.”
uncertainty and boundless possibility of this movement, both physical and imagined), folio 5 recto establishes patterns of content that seek a correspondence between many parts but sometimes fall short. Opicinus knew so many things to be true of the universe: the long-established connections between zodiac and body, the empirical accuracy of the new portolan charts, the picture of the cosmos with the earth at its center, the role of the Church in giving man a way to access the meaning of the cosmos, and God’s role as Creator of it all. But combining all of these systems into one drawing proved a daunting task. By looking at a number of the drawings, we begin to see what he was after – a diagram of “everything,” which showed the spatial interrelation of each part while also finding ways for those parts to mirror each other and prove their co-identity. Familiar geometric frameworks and structures could be used to unproblematically assert the logic and harmony of the systems as a whole, but variation and visual-spatial play were the rule within. The visual delight of these drawings lies in their interpretive freedom; no drawing with so much content can aim to represent just one idea. Drawing from dozens of sources – both visual and textual descriptions of all or part of the cosmos – Opicinus created drawings unmatched in their period in richness and complexity, attempting to uncover the hidden meaning of the visible and give shape and place to the invisible.
Chapter Four

Graphic Art: Gender and Sex in Bodily Form and Metaphor

Whether or not the figures depicted in Opicinus’s body-worlds are meant to be fully human shapes remains an open question. But a feature that all of them share with real human bodies is that they are gendered. And, like so many other features of these drawings, the meaning of their gender is unstable. Few of the binaries that Opicinus represented and used to structure his drawings carry fixed meanings. If we choose a single drawing, we might find certain aspects of Opicinus’s use of categories like gender and race to be predictable. In folio 73 verso, for example, Africa is depicted as a man with dark skin, labeled “infidelitas,” while Europe is a pure woman with white skin, labeled “fides” (fig. 9). In the contrasts established in such drawings, we might expect Africa to always carry negative connotations, and Europe positive ones; or to find women depicted as either pure personifications of concepts like “faith,” or as negative figures of sexual temptation. But in fact, when the body-world drawings are viewed as a group, the meaning conveyed by gender is elastic. We find evil men and evil women, good men and good women, abstract allegorical men and abstract allegorical women. Europe can be a man or a woman, as can Africa, and contrasts can be made between two men, two women or a man and a woman.

If gender does not carry a specific meaning across these drawings, how can we understand its use as a category within Opicinus’s work? In this final chapter I demonstrate the different ways that Opicinus played with and represented gendered, sexual bodies in his body-world drawings. The approach to this issue must be both broad and specific. In the first section, I will demonstrate the different gender combinations that we find in the drawings, and the ways that they structure various types of relationships between figures. The second section probes more specifically the individual visual motifs that create the gendered bodies – body parts, clothing, gesture, and reproduction. Then in the final section, I will do a close reading of one drawing in which the gendered body is crucial as both a formal device and as a metaphor. I demonstrate the overall use of gender within the drawings, the visual means by which Opicinus communicates them, and their function within individual works.

This chapter also begins to address the graphic sexuality that Opicinus regularly includes in the Vaticanus drawings. Partly, I want to describe and catalogue the sexual aspects of the drawings so that others can begin to see them. But these graphic details also provide material for
several other investigations – particularly into Opicinus’s working methods and the inclusion of himself as a represented actor or character (a question that I have avoided in the first several chapters, but which must be raised here). The focus of this chapter is in many ways different than the others in this study. Here, toward the end, building on the previous discussions of Opicinus’s sources and representational strategies, we can isolate a specific thematic or representational issue. But this chapter maintains the approach of the previous ones by seeking the answers to our questions about gender and sexuality within the visual evidence. The forms of the drawings remain the primary focus, even as we turn from questions about mapping, structure, and representation to questions of the body.

**Male/Female, Africa/Europe**

In his continuing search for meaning and correspondences between lands and figures, Opicinus experimented with gender as another variable that could be manipulated to create the contrasts and connections he was looking for. As I discussed in the introduction to this study, a statistical analysis of the two manuscripts can be a helpful way to cut through many of the generalizations that have been made by other scholars. Table 2 shows the distribution of male and female figures in the 23 drawings in the Vaticanus and 5 drawings in the Palatinus that include the body-worlds. This set of data is complicated to present because there are often multiple versions of the body-worlds within a single drawing. But here I show all of the different combinations that Opicinus uses, so that we can get a sense of the frequency of each:

TABLE 2
GENDER OF THE BODY-WORLDS IN THE VATICANUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male-Europe vs. Female-Africa: 2v, 18r, 20r, 22r, 22v</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Male-Female, Africa/Europe**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female-Europe vs. Male-Africa: 53v, 54r, 73v, 85r, 85v</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male-Europe vs. Female-Africa: 71v, 79v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-Europe vs. Female-Africa: 58r, 74v, 84r, 84v, 87r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-Europe vs. Male-Africa: 69r, 87v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-Europe vs. Female-Africa AND Male-Europe vs. Male-Africa: 61r, 61v, 68v, 69v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-Europe vs. Female-Africa AND Male-Europe vs. Female-Africa: 71r, 78r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-Europe vs. Female-Africa AND Female-Europe vs. Male-Africa: 76v, 77r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-Europe (x2) vs. Female-Africa (x2) AND Male-Europe (x2) vs. Angel-Africa (x2): 82r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL MALE AFRICA: 13
TOTAL FEMALE AFRICA: 19
TOTAL ANGEL AFRICA: 2
TOTAL MALE EUROPE: 18
TOTAL FEMALE EUROPE: 16
TOTAL MALE: 31
TOTAL FEMALE: 35
TOTAL EUROPE: 34
TOTAL AFRICA: 34

GENDER OF THE BODY-WORLDS IN THE PALATINUS

Male Europe vs. Female Africa: 2v, 18r, 20r, 22r, 22v
Thus, in the Palatinus manuscript, the gender pairings are constant. A male figure of Europe always confronts a female figure of Africa. This consistency in the Palatinus is perhaps what led to other scholars’ arguments that this particular situation, Male-Europe vs. Female-Africa, is the normative one in both manuscripts, as well as to the argument that most of the figures of Europe are representations of, or at least associated with, Opicinus’s own body.

In the Vaticanus, these patterns break down. While there is a slight trend toward male figures of Europe and female figures of Africa, the numbers are almost equal. Indeed, on the whole, there are approximately the same number of female and male figures depicted in the Vaticanus body-world drawings – 35 female and 41 male. And of the eight different categories I propose for the gender contrasts in the drawings, none is numerically dominant over the others – out of the 23 drawings, several categories are represented by five drawings, and most by two or three. As Opicinus tried out all of these different gender combinations, there is no convincing statistical evidence that he preferred one type over the others – each allowed him to express different things.

Perhaps the most significant revelation of such an analysis is that Europe and Africa are represented as men and women in approximately equal measure. This fact, unremarked in the scholarship, disproves several common claims. First is that the figure of Europe usually refers to Opicinus, which is suggested by Morse, Laharie and Camille. This argument is not without basis – many of the images do show Opicinus identifying with the European figure. One of the key connections between the two is that they are both crippled – Opicinus often saw in the awkwardly-bent figure of Europe his own body still crippled from illness. But in the numbers, we see that Europe is represented as female 18 times. This could mean two things (both of which turn out to be true in different examples): that Opicinus included many female (and male) figures that had nothing to do with himself, and also that on occasion he identified himself with a female figure of Europe. We see an example of the first case in folio 73 verso (fig. 9), mentioned above, where Europe is a female personification of “faith” – no connection to Opicinus’s own body here. But numerous other drawings show Opicinus identifying himself with a female figure, for example folio 74 verso (fig. 10), where Opicinus creates a female personification of Christianity, but explicitly identifies himself with it in a caption. Opicinus also identifies himself with male and female figures of Africa, such as on folio 79 verso (fig. 13), where he drew a circle using the letters of his name to point to the location of the mouth of hell within the female figure of Africa. By looking at the drawings as a group, we can see that Opicinus’s relation to the continents is not static – he may identify himself with either male or female figures, and with either Europe or Africa. Or, significantly, the continents may exist without any reference to Opicinus’s body.

The other key revelation is that Africa is not always portrayed as a female figure (there are 13 male and 19 female Africas in the Vaticanus). Both gender and moral identity change throughout the drawings: Africa can be a man or a woman, and either gender can carry either positive or negative connotations. Thus, on folio 73 verso (fig. 9) we see a male figure of Africa, labeled “infidelitas” and portrayed with dark skin, while on folio 77 recto (fig. 11), a female

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262 Morse (1996), 201-8, discusses several passages where Opicinus refers to his “withered” right side, and compares the damage his body suffered during his illness to the shape of the European coastline.

263 This stands in contrast to the claim made by Camille. See note 44 from introduction.
figure of Africa is labeled as the seductress of a virtuous male Europe. Both male and female figures of Africa can also carry positive weight. We have also seen in earlier examples, such as folio 61 recto (fig. 5), that the body-worlds do not always carry strongly positive or strongly negative associations; they can be used to express more nuanced concepts or comparisons. On 61 recto, two “natural” continents were juxtaposed against two “spiritual” ones, breaking down the positive/negative binary of many of the other drawings. Though some patterns emerge, for the most part each drawing is its own exploratory world, with a new cast of characters.

Among these gendered figures in the Vaticanus, numerous types of relationships emerge. Violence inflicted on one figure by another (79 verso, fig. 13); the seduction, or failed seduction, of one figure by another (77 recto, fig. 11); a juxtaposition of two opposing concepts like faith and infidelity (73 verso, fig. 9); all of these concepts, as well as more abstract explorations of philosophical concepts or binaries, appear and reappear throughout the manuscript, each time with different figures and genders playing different roles. Within this flux, Morse did identify one very interesting thread that runs constant throughout a number of the drawings (though certainly not the majority). Taking as his departure the apparent crippled and distorted pose of the European figure, and the relatively relaxed seated pose of the African figure, Opicinus often interpreted Africa as externally perfect but negative on the inside, and Europe as distorted on the outside but internally good.264 This split between exterior appearance and internal reality in the figures of Africa and Europe can be noted in multiple drawings throughout the manuscript, depicted through various genders.265

In a search for the way gender operates in all of these drawings, one must look also at what kinds of figures Opicinus represents — what sorts of status these bodies have. Looking broadly at the body-world drawings as a group, one can note a great variety in the types of figures that are portrayed and embodied. The figures include personifications of both abstract and specific concepts, depictions of actual historical figures, and familiar “stock characters” of medieval visual culture. The figures of the natural and spiritual worlds on folio 61 recto are examples of personifications of more abstract concepts. On the opposite side of the page, 61 verso (fig. 6), we find four continents who embody more specific concepts: two images of Africa as “the community of carnal men” and “the universal charity of God,” and two figures of Europe as “the church of the sick” and “the charity of God in the universe.”266 These are still allegorical personifications, but of very specific formulations, invented by Opicinus and placed in dialogue or comparison with one another. In each of these drawings, Opicinus opposes two male figures on one side of the page with two female figures on the other side, but on folio 61 recto it is the

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264 See Morse, 208-213. Morse cites a passage on folio 48 recto, where Opicinus describes this precise break between exterior appearance and interior nature in the two figures, and demonstrates that the exterior appearance of each acts as a kind of mirror, revealing the interior state of the other. “Africa, which has a whole physical nature externally, according to internal things, however, signifies the good spiritual nature of man corrupted by sin. And Europe, having a corrupted physical nature, nevertheless signifies according to internal things the good spiritual nature of man healthy and whole…Africa, healthy and whole in body, signifies the spiritual health and wholeness of Europe. And Europe, frail and corrupt in body, signifies the spiritual infirmity and corruption of Africa.” Translation from Morse (1996), 209.

265 Morse points especially to folios 54r and 61v.

female figures who embody the purer or more spiritual side, while on folio 61 verso the male figures are more positive.

Other body-worlds represent specific historical figures. Sometimes these are individuals who embody or stand in for abstract concepts, such as the figure of Judas as Africa on folio 76 verso, labeled “Judas proditur, id est universitas carnalium hominum,” or “Judas the traitor, that is to say the community of carnal men.” On other folios, continents are representations of specific people, such as on folio 71 recto (fig. 8), a drawing that allegorizes the active versus contemplative life, where two male figures of Europe are labeled “Thomas, the citizen-apostle” and “Jacob, the apostle-voyager,” and the female figures are identified as Saints Martha and Mary. Thus, the body-worlds can be both abstract embodiments or actual representations of people.

A final group, which could perhaps overlap the first category, are those bodies that I call “stock figures.” These are not particular people from history, but rather characters from a medieval Christian index. The figure of the devil is the most obvious example; he sometimes remains unlabeled, while other times (such as on folio 69 verso), is identified specifically as “Lucifer.” Another example would be the figures on folio 82 recto of the angel of light and the angel of darkness, discussed in the second chapter (fig. 14). A final stock figure is muse on folio 71v, a female figure of Africa labeled “muse poetice,” who confronts a figure of Europe that represents the philosopher Boethius (fig. 7). The female muse of poetry wears robes far more elaborate than most of Opicinus’s figures, with decorative trim, fancy pointed shoes, a jeweled or beaded circlet in her hair, and a long ornamented braid. We might identify her with the medieval “goddesses” described by Barbara Newman – female personifications who reappear throughout medieval allegorical works of art and literature.

Thus, some of Opicinus’s body-worlds are representations of people, historical or fictional, while others are representations of concepts (or of people as concepts). Some of the drawings represent men and women, while others depict figures with male or female characteristics. Newman underlined this helpful distinction in her discussion of medieval “goddesses,” arguing that most of them are represented as “female” but not necessarily as “women.” She writes that the primary function of such figures was mediation or participation with the Divine, but that another important function was the allegorical dramatization of internal conflict – a context that we have certainly discussed in relation to Opicinus’s work in earlier examples.

The representational status possessed by Opicinus’s figures is crucial; they relate especially to the representation of fiction versus experience. These issues are bound together with the question of how Opicinus conceptualized the visions that he tells us had inspired his project. Peter Dinzelbacher proposed a distinction between “experienced visions” and “literary visions,” demonstrating that people who believed they had seen real visions were likely to avoid representing them through allegory, while the depicters of literary visions embrace allegory.

267 In this particular example, Opicinus identifies the figure of the devil with an idol – specifically with a statue of Venus commissioned by Hadrian, which dishonored the Cross. See fol. 69v: “Statua Veneris, id est Luciferi...Hanc statuam Veneris plantavit Helius Adrianus, in obprobrium dominice crucis Veneris sancti qui dicitur Paraceseve.”
(though Newman points out that the force of literary convention is always in play, even in the textual or visual representation of real or experienced visions). The question of whether Opicinus was representing something that he believed had come to him in a vision, or just using the format of the body-worlds to work through imaginative fictions, comes to bear on whether he is representing “real” figures of men and women, imaginative allegorical personifications with male and female characteristics, or, most probably, both. As is so often the case, theories developed by modern scholars of medieval material to deal with these kinds of questions are helpful to a point, but ultimately break down in the face of Opicinus’s constantly changing forms, formats and figures.

**Graphic Strategies**

If certain continents and concepts are not always associated with male or female figures, and if the meanings that gender conveys are not constant, then what does playing with gender allow Opicinus to do? To answer this question, we have to look first at the motifs that Opicinus uses to convey markers of gender and sexuality, and in turn how they shape the contrasts and correspondences established between figures. In this section, I look to motifs of dress and undress, gesture and violence, graphic genitalia, and imagery of birth and reproduction. Cataloguing and describing these themes, which show up throughout the Vaticanus body-world drawings, gives us both a truer picture of Opicinus’s interests and a sense of the role gender and sexuality play within his system.

The facial features and dress of the figures are the primary indicators of their gender. Male figures usually wear a beard or some facial hair; some have longer hair than others, and tonsures identify many as monks. Female figures usually have long hair that flows down the shoulders, or they wear a full habit that hides their hair entirely. The figures’ dress is usually very simple; when there is deviation from a plain robe, it is usually to indicate a special status. This is the case for the poetic muse of folio 71 verso (fig. 7), and another fancily dressed female figure on folio 84 recto. But the standard garb is a plain, flowing robe. In the case of the figures of Africa, this usually hangs neatly from the body, bunching slightly at the lap and knees, and continuing to the floor where it covers most of the shoes. Europe’s robe changes position more often; frequently, it is shown pulled back or almost falling off the figure, revealing the chest. On folio 61 recto, for example, the female figure of Europe seems to shrug off her cloak, which falls down her right arm near northern France (fig. 5). On other pages, such as folio 53 verso, Europe’s robe falls off completely and she is depicted naked except for her boots, with her breasts and crotch completely exposed (fig. 3). Male figures of Europe are also portrayed with their robes falling down and, in the case of folio 78 recto, almost totally naked (fig. 12).

To some degree, the outlines of the map determine the types of clothing worn by these figures. Graphic concerns are always in play when Opicinus formed and dressed these bodies. Empty places on the map needed to be filled, and every body part of the figures had to be squeezed into an available space. For example, the long flowing robe worn by Europe in drawings like folios 71 verso and 73 verso falls northwards in a wide swath, conveniently hiding the whole of Northern Europe and the Balkans – areas which were only sketchily indicated on portolan charts. The robe seems designed to hide this space. Similarly, the European figure wears heeled boots that fit nicely into the shape of the Italian Peninsula and Greece, while the

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figure of Africa wears either simple flat shoes or is depicted barefoot, choices that better fit the geography of their location. Opicinus plays with dress, but only within the confines of the portolan outlines, which determine many of his choices.

The gestures of the body-worlds are also largely bounded by the outlines of the portolan chart, but there is some significant variation between the drawings. The figures’ hands are usually static – the right hand of the European figure arches backwards, and the left hand is never visible. Africa’s hands are usually clasped together to form the area near modern-day Tunisia. One of the only deviations from these arrangements is on folio 74 verso (fig. 10), where Europe’s hand arches at a more acute angle, as she reaches her hand forward toward her womb to catch the tiny upside-down figure of a baby (this drawing is discussed in more detail below). But the main changes in gesture occur not in any different poses of the two continents, but rather in the presence or absence of the Mediterranean figure. When the sea is embodied, one of the most shocking gestures emerges – Lucifer’s arm and fist plunging up the Adriatic Sea, right between the two legs of the Europe figure (for example, in figs. 3, 5, 11 and 16). The violence and aggression of this gesture is unmistakable. Opicinus rarely comments on it, but it appears and reappears numerous times (seven in the Vaticanus). It is difficult to discern the intent of the gesture; it seems possible that in certain cases it could imply aggressive sexual manipulation of the European figure’s genitalia, with its curving figures seeming to penetrate the continent. Like the position of the hands of the other figures, this aggressive gesture was determined in large part by the shape of the map. When the idea first came to Opicinus to place a figure into the negative space of the sea, he must have simply seen the arm in that location. Its violent effect may or may not have been part of Opicinus’s initial inspiration for the figure, but it stands out as one of the most evocative forms in the manuscript. Since it doesn’t appear in every drawing, it is interesting that it plunges into both male and female figures (four male, three female). Both, Opicinus seems to be telling us, are vulnerable to this figure’s aggression.

The issue of the devil’s fist raises the next subject: the genitalia that appear on numerous folios throughout the Vaticanus manuscript. Male genitalia surface often in fourteenth-century art (such as in depictions of Christ’s Baptism, the Madonna and Child, Creation scenes, and some martyrdom scenes), but rarely with the frequency, detail, and scale of Opicinus’s drawings. Penises appear in the Vaticanus in four different configurations, two of which can be observed on folio 84 verso (fig. 16). Here, the Mediterranean figure boasts an oversized penis the size of his arm; it appears toward the bottom of the folio, running along the southern coast of France and Spain. It is hard to tell at first how it relates to the rest of the figure’s body, but it seems that Lucifer is standing in a complicated, twisting position; his head looks back to the left, but his body is striding forward – we see his right leg walking toward the right side of the page. The penis dangles down behind this right leg (we are viewing it from the side). That the body stands in this twisting pose is cemented by the detail in this drawing of the figure’s rear end; Opicinus tells us in a caption that the cross-hatched pattern that we see along the southern coast of France is in fact a basket that he added to the drawing later, placed precisely to catch the excrement of the sea-figure (thus implying that the rounded coast of southern France and northwestern Italy should be read as the buttocks of the devil-figure).271

What is so incredible and shocking about this penis, within the context of the drawing, is its proximity to the face of the European figure. The head of the penis literally rubs under the

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271 Vaticanus, fol. 84v: “Additum XII kalendas septembris, de canistro rupto ad colligenda stercora maris.”
chin of Europe, and on this folio we can see something, presumably either urine or ejaculate, coming out of the penis and into the hair surrounding Europe’s face. Oral sex is, I think, strongly implied by this incredible juxtaposition of phallus and face, which is unprecedented in medieval visual culture. We see this massive penis pressed under the chin of Europe in eight drawings; four times it is under the face of a male figure and four times under a female figure, making it clear once again that both have to confront it.  Other genitalia can be found in other locations on the drawings, but it is in this spot that it is most noticeable and shocking.

On the same drawing, folio 84 verso (fig. 16), we find a second penis, which the sea-figure is grasping in his right hand in the Adriatic. The proximity of this penis to the genital area of the European figure can cause confusion as to whose genitalia this is, but it appears in this example to be a second penis belonging to the sea-man, since Europe is represented in this drawings as a woman (so presumably it can’t be hers). This second penis is smaller, and lies in the palm of the devil’s hand, in what must be read, in the absence of counterevidence, as some kind of masturbatory gesture. As far as I have found, this second penis is not discussed in any of the captions or texts of the Vaticanus, but it appears in three drawings, folios 84 recto, 84 verso and 87 verso. On all of these folios, the sea-figure bears this penis and the penis near Spain.

This sexualization of the devil in many of the drawings is not without precedent in fourteenth-century art. But what is perhaps unusual is the degree to which his sexuality appears human. The most famous devils in this period, such as Giotto’s devil from the Arena Chapel Last Judgment, do not have human genitalia. Giotto’s figure seems to give birth to or defecate a person from between its legs, but there are no external genitalia to be found. Other contemporary depictions represented the devil’s genitalia with serpents or flames. But I know of few other comparative examples where the devil is depicted with such a human penis.

There are several other depictions (or suggestions) of male genitalia in the Vaticanus manuscript, each of which is unique. The first two are on folio 77 recto (fig. 11). This drawing contrasts two complete sets of body-worlds, one overlapping and partially obscuring the other, and two very different depictions of genitalia are found in the area around Venice on both depictions of Europe. In the overlapped body-worlds, which are tinted with red and brown wash, we see a small penis depicted inside of the figure of Europe, just past the fist of the Mediterranean figure. The small caption nearby simply reads “Venetie,” or “Venice,” and without further explanation it is unclear whether the penis belongs to the European body, depicted lying back against his stomach, or whether he is somehow being penetrated by a small penis belonging to the sea-figure. Given the penises in this region that we discussed above, this latter proposition is not without basis, but it seems more likely that it belongs to the European figure, since it is tinted the same color.

Across the page, inside the body of the female European figure, we see two tiny figures. At first, we would not identify these as genitalia – they are simply two small, robed bodies that stand within the genital region of the European body. It is the caption that tells us something different; over their heads are written the words “matrix” and “virga” – womb and penis. It

272 The female figures are on folios 53v, presumably 77r (it’s hidden behind another figure), 84r, and 84v, and the male figures are on 61r, 68v, 69v, and 87v.

seems that these two tiny bodies represent the male and female reproductive systems. It must be acknowledged that both figures are shaped like small penises, and it is also true that in medieval anatomical texts the female genitalia is often described as an interiorized mirror image of a male penis, so perhaps we should not be surprised that the two are “personified,” if we want to use that term, in similar ways.\textsuperscript{274} Still, the strangeness of this representation is breathtaking; I have seen no other example in pre-modern representation where the male and female genitalia are personified in this way. We find and almost-identical representation on folio 61 verso (fig. 6), where two tiny figures with the same labels hold between them a tiny baby, its head positioned downward, pointing toward the area near Venice through which we presume it would be born. Here, the two “personifications” of the penis and the womb have produced a tiny child and are preparing it for birth. These personifications’ sexuality is normative and non-transgressive – male and female members come together inside of the female body. A caption on folio 77 recto (fig. 11) describes their encounter as a “kiss of peace,” with Pavia as the womb, Milan as the penis, and Venice as the “testicles” (the medieval term for female ovaries) and the vulva.\textsuperscript{275} The meeting of male and female within these European female bodies depicts reproduction as it should be, as opposed to the sexual aggression and engorgement of the devil-figure in the sea.

Many Vaticanus drawings contain more explicit imagery of birth and reproduction; as Morse argued, metaphors of birth and rebirth are one of Opicinus’s primary ways of expressing the spiritual transformation that he underwent following his illness of 1334.\textsuperscript{276} At least six drawings in the Vaticanus represent birth or pregnancy. Four of these drawings depict the body-worlds, and the reproduction always takes place within the body of the European figure.\textsuperscript{277} In her work on the Vaticanus drawings, Morse demonstrated that the pregnancy and birth represented inside of Europe was a way for Opicinus to convey how both good and evil tendencies enter the world. In an early textual passage in the Vaticanus, Opicinus describes how the “diabolical sea” inseminates an already-pregnant Europe, splitting the child unnaturally into two figures – Europe and Africa.\textsuperscript{278} According to Morse, Europe’s pregnancy was also related to local political situations, visualizing the (sexual) corruption of Lombardy within an otherwise holy European body.

\textsuperscript{274} On the representation of the penis and vagina as anatomically similar, in the “one-sex model,” see Thomas Laqueur, \textit{Making Sex: Gender and the Body from the Greeks to Freud}, (Harvard, 1990), 63-113. For an opposing view, see also Joan Cadden, \textit{Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages}, (Cambridge, 1993).

\textsuperscript{275} The caption also indicates that these figures were added to the drawing at a later date. Vaticanus folio 77r: “\textit{Additum III kalendas septembris, de osculo pacis inter matricem et virgam. Papia est matrix feminea et Mediolanum est virga virilis in ventre mulieris. Venetie sunt testes et vulva.}” On the terminology of the male and female “testes,” see Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, \textit{Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages}, trans. Matthew Adamson, (Princeton, 1988), 14, 30-33.


\textsuperscript{277} See folios 48v, 49r, 53v, 61v, 74v, and 87r.

\textsuperscript{278} Morse (1996), 225.
This interpretation is convincing with regard to the two incredible drawings in which Europe is actually pregnant with a tiny map – folios 53 verso and 87 recto (figs. 3 and 17). In each of these drawings, Opicinus drew a small copy of the body-worlds over the area of Lombardy, even extending slightly into the sea near Genoa. Both Morse and Laharie explained this positioning of the tiny body-world figures as indicating a Caesarian birth; as Opicinus explains, the two figures are born through Genoa, the “forced port” in the stomach, rather than through Venice, the “natural port.”  

Morse shows the way that Opicinus read meaning into the precise position of these two tiny body-worlds over Lombardy below, determining which local cities fell under Africa and Europe. She then contrasts this “violent” delivery of the figures with the small baby depicted on folio 74 verso (fig. 10), which is positioned for a normal delivery through Venice, with its head down and its arms folded peacefully in prayer.

But beyond these convincing interpretations of the specific content, one must also take a step back to appreciate the multiplicity of meaning that is being suggested: the drawings simultaneously imply a world giving birth to another world, a human body giving birth to two human children, a world giving birth to human bodies, and a human body giving birth to an entire world. The drawings visualize medieval concepts of microcosm and macrocosm in a way that is both breathtakingly simply and highly complex. Bodies and worlds not only align, but can recreate themselves or each other. These visual metaphors convey more clearly than any of the other drawings the sense that the body-world drawings were both the evidence and the impetus for Opicinus’s spiritual rebirth.

Other birth imagery in the Vaticanus has been less noted in the scholarship to date. Particularly, I want to call attention to a recurrent “birthing pose” that appears several times in the manuscript, and which, when noticed, suggests some surprising interpretations. On folio 48 verso of the Vaticanus, in a drawing without parallel in either manuscript, Opicinus depicts a short parable about the life cycle of the rich and the poor (fig. 1). The drawing shows six figures – three of a rich man and three of a poor man. In the first two vignettes, we see two scenes of birth: a rich woman wearing a crown on the left and a poor woman in a ragged cloak on the right each give birth to identical small babies, each of which is positioned upside-down beneath the figures, cascading out from them with a gush of blood. Below, the parable continues; the two babies grow up to be rich and poor, and then are shown lying dead in the bottom scene. The birth and death scenes underline the point that people of all social classes are born and die the same way.

The poses of the two women giving birth are not unique among medieval representations of childbearing in medical texts (see, for example, fig. 41), and we find the pose of the woman, and the position of the baby in relation to her, echoed in several other drawings. One is Vaticanus folio 49 recto (fig. 2), a schematic autobiographical diagram. Here we see a seated figure in the center, with a tiny baby positioned beneath. On this page, however, the figure is

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279 See Morse (1996), 227-8 and Laharie (2008), 529-33. This is explained in a caption on fol. 53v, “Ecce Ianua resistens Venetiis perdit nomen Ianue naturalis et fit Ianua violenta, ut venter noster per vim partiat abortivos.”

280 Morse (1996), 227.

281 Morse (1996), 227.

Christ, and the baby is labeled “quelibet persona christiana,” or “some Christian person.” It is as if Christ assumes the female birth posture in “giving birth” to each Christian. The labels on the diagram also indicate that this child represents the sacrament of baptism, and we might thus read this “birth” picture as an allegorical representation of how each Christian is literally reborn in Christ at their baptism.

We see an almost identical picture on folio 74 verso (fig. 10), discussed above in the context of the baby positioned for a “natural” birth through Venice. Yet this baby (or fetus) is also positioned in the “birthing pose” beneath a diagram containing a seated Christ. No caption on this folio illuminates the meaning of these figures. But visually, it is as if the tiny child, placed precisely over Pavia, is metaphorically and physically situated between two births; it has already been birthed by Christ, but it awaits birth through the Venetian birth canal of the European figure, who holds the child effortlessly within her womb with a single finger under his or her head.

The child positioned between these two births seems to echo a passage from earlier in the Vaticanus manuscript. On folio 56 recto, in a section entitled “On Carnal and Spiritual Reproduction,” Opicinus writes:

> The human body is engendered on the earth where is represented the image of the diabolical sea, and where it becomes a diabolical human, with his soul delivered over to his instincts. The Christian body is regenerated in the sky, which towers above the celestial waters, there where he contemplates the image of God, thanks to his soul that has been imbued with reason. This soul chained to his instincts keeps reason a prisoner, though it will never die; and the soul imbued with reason subjugates the part of the self that is tied to instincts.

This passage does not refer explicitly to these drawings, but it indicates that Opicinus believed that human birth had both a physical and spiritual dimension. Perhaps the positioning of these figures beneath Christ is a subtle indication of the spiritual rebirth that is to come, after the carnal life of the body that must first be born physically out of Europe, into the “diabolical sea.” The life of a man on earth is carnally engendered, but stands between an initial spiritual conception/birth and an eventual rebirth.

All of these figures show how powerful and elastic the metaphor of birth was for Opicinus; he uses it to create ambiguous but charged relationships between figures and lands within many of his body-world drawings. The gender of the larger body-world figures plays a vital but often ambiguous role as containers for this reproductive metaphor and meaning. The discussion of folio 74 verso (fig. 10) in Chapter Two, for example, already demonstrated the ambiguity of Europe’s gender; it seems to be a pregnant female personification of the Church,

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283 Another possible example of this motif is on folio 61v, discussed above as the example in which the personifications of penis and womb were holding a tiny baby, preparing it for birth. Here, too, the baby is positioned underneath a figure of Christ, though in this example he is standing rather than seated in the birthing pose.

284 Vaticanus fol. 56r: “Corpus humanum gignitur in terra ubi est descriptia ymago diabolici maris et fit diabolicus homo per animam sensualem. Corpus christianum regeneratur in celis super quos sunt aque celestes, ubi speculatur ymaginem Dei per animam rationalem. Illa anima sensualis incarcerat rationem nunquam morituram et anima rationalis subicit sibi sensuale.”
explicitly associated in the captions with Opicinus’s own body, and with Christ’s name written around her face and his body drawn over her breast. This female/male hybrid figure shows both the male Christ and the female Church giving birth to the tiny figure near Pavia. This drawing helps to flesh out our view of the flexibility of gender and birth within Opicinus’s visual matrix.

**Vaticanus Folio 78 recto**

To explore all of these ideas further, I want to analyze the texts and drawings of one folio in the Vaticanus manuscript in greater detail. Folio 78 recto is drawn using a structure found nowhere else in Opicinus’s oeuvre (fig. 12). Broadly speaking, it would fall under the category of two different body-worlds overlapped. But rather than only overlapping certain parts of the two maps, Opicinus places them completely on top of one another, with the top map left the white color of the paper and the body-worlds beneath tinted in red and brown. Both maps show a sleeping male figure of Europe, with his eyes closed, and an alert female figure of Africa.

As in so many of his drawings, Opicinus uses the structure of the overlapping map to draw connections between the lands and figures above and those below. Some of these are straightforward interpretations of the visual evidence. In a caption on the lower-left side of the page, for example, Opicinus comments on the superimposition of Tunisia on the bottom map and Brittany on the top one. He writes that, “reuniting Tunis with Brittany is clothing a poor person who is naked.”285 And indeed, we see the hand of the lower Africa figure pulling up the cloak that falls off the naked upper figure of Europe.

Through other captions, Opicinus allegorizes the superimposition of figures in ways that are far more ambiguous. The area I want to focus on is the reproductive area of the “upper” figure of Europe (the white figure). The figure as a whole is labeled “Holy Christianity reposes and sleeps.” Between the figure’s legs, three small bodies emerge from the land near Venice – a large full body in the center, with two faces at its base. Without reading the captions, these figures can be interpreted, I think, in two ways. To me, what is most suggested visually is that the larger figure is actually in the process of being born. Despite the fact that the Europe-figure from which it is born is clearly represented as male, the detail near Venice evokes external female genitalia, and a tiny male figure in the process of being born. The other visual interpretation is that this figure represents the Europe figure’s penis, and the two small faces at its base reference his testicles.

The captions make it clear that the latter interpretation is correct – the figure represents Europe’s penis. It is really the only explicit and to-scale representation in the manuscript of the European figure’s genitalia; normally, as we have seen, it is the sea devil whose organs are on view. Most shockingly, however, the penis also appears to be a representation of Opicinus, himself. A caption above it begins with the large “O” written on his forehead, and reads “Opicinus, minister of the Church.” Given that Europe as a whole is labeled as a personification of Christianity (and that the figure has some of the markings of Christ, such as the nails through the feet), Opicinus is interpreting his own body in this drawing as the penis of the Church. More than any other drawing, this one does seem ripe for a psychoanalytic interpretation, and Guy Roux interprets this drawing in relation to the fact that none of the other male figures of Europe

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285 Vaticanus fol. 78r. **“Coniuncto Tunicii cum Britania est vestimentum largiri pauperi nudo.”**
really seem to have genitalia, which he views as a sign that they have all been castrated. For him, changes of sex organs are not exceptional among psychotic artists.286

In this drawing, however, the depiction of the sexual organs, and of Opicinus himself as a sex organ, is just one part of an elaborate metaphor that contrasts the physical circumcision with what Opicinus calls “spiritual” circumcision. In several long, confusing captions, at the top and left of the drawing, he writes,

The first of January. Fundamentally this page deals with the circumcision of God, that is to say the crown of the penis; more visibly it has to do with the rebirth of man, when a personal name is given. In effect, when a man is baptized, he is circumcised to pass from being an ancient man to being a new man, thanks to the testament of the new year. And also for a long time he was a layman, which concealed his spiritual circumcision. And when he adopted the marks of the cleric (that is, the crown of the penis), he shows his circumcision in the flesh, testifying to his formerly-hidden spiritual circumcision.287

There is a lot to unpack in this short text. It seems to speak in general terms about the significance of Christ’s circumcision, celebrated on the first day of January. Opicinus relates baptism to circumcision, as two acts which signal the rebirth of man. The circumcision was always understood this way in the fourteenth century – numerous sources explained the blood shed at the Christ’s circumcision as a prefiguration of the blood shed at the Crucifixion.288 Augustine, in particular, argued that the Circumcision was the first step toward the renewal of man, cleansing the stain of Original Sin.289 This, presumably, is what Opicinus refers to in his discussion of passing from an old to a new man.

But Opicinus also contrasts this physical circumcision with a spiritual circumcision, which is presumably an interior reflection of this redemption within the soul. Inner and outer can both convey that a person is “circumcised” both physically and spiritually, or the two can be out of synch. In the second part of the passage, Opicinus talks more specifically about himself, writing that, as a layman, his true “spiritual” circumcision was not visible to the world. It was only when he took on the role and appearance of a priest that his soul and his appearance finally aligned. Opicinus underlines this point in another caption on the same page, writing that, “I received that day the spiritual circumcision; and I hid it spiritually as a lay person, but then made

286 See Roux (2005), 266-8 for a discussion of these genital organs and his arguments about the “castration” of the European figure.
287 Vaticanus fol. 78r: “kalendis ianuarii. Fundamentaliter ciruncisio Domini (quasi corona prepucii); speculariter regeneratio hominis ubi imponitur nomen proprium sibi. Cum enim homo baptizatur, circunciditur a veteri homine in novum hominem per testamentum anni novi; et quamdui fuerit in habitu laicali, hanc spirituallem circumcisionem abscondit. Cum autem assumperit caracterem clericalem (quasi coronam prepucii), tunc ostendit circumcisionem suam in carne, in testimonium spiritualis circumcisionis abscondite.”
it visible through the sacraments as a clergyman.” The circumcision thus becomes a vehicle for one of Opicinus’s most frequently discussed topics – the relationship between exterior appearance and interior reality.

The forms of the drawing offer an even more precise interpretation of what Opicinus refers to when he speaks of the outer signs of the hidden circumcision. We are meant to read this person/penis dangling between Europe’s legs as circumcised; the caption just next to the figure’s head reads, “the mark of the circumcision, below the testicles.” Presumably, the fact that we can see the figure’s head refers to the completed removal of the foreskin, the edge of which we could then identify with the loose collar around his neck. Even more interesting, though, is the “O” placed on the head of this tiny figure/penis. Its placement would seem to suggest that the figure (Opicinus) is tonsured, with the hair shaved at the center – a detail found in many representations of monks throughout the Vaticanus manuscript. With this “O,” Opicinus aligns the bare head of a tonsured monk with the exposed head of the penis following circumcision. In the passage above, he wrote about the exterior “marks” of the cleric, and how these revealed the spiritual circumcision within, and the tonsure is perhaps the clearest expression of this. Opicinus allegorizes the heads of monks around him (and, presumably, his own tonsured head), to signal that a tonsure is an outward indication of the “rebirth” offered by circumcision.

This interpretation of the tonsure as a mark of circumcision seems to be alluded to also in a later drawing, Vaticanus folio 83 recto. Here, a phallic form is suggested but not represented directly (fig. 15). This page depicts a calendrical medallion, with the four evangelists at the outside corners, and a large seated figure of Christ inside. He holds up his hands, showing his wounds, pierced by two red lines that cross the drawing. In his breast sit the sponsus/sponsa pair, their chests pressed together around a central red point that presumably represents Christ’s wound. Finally, between Christ’s knees, we see the unlabeled figure of a priest, which juts upward in a form that is undeniably phallic. The figure is an exact copy of the penis/Opicinus on folio 78 recto (fig. 12); its erect posture is cloaked in the smooth robe, hands hidden, and at the top is a tonsured head. Without stating it explicitly, the drawing mirrors the idea that the tonsured priest (possibly Opicinus here, as well) is a physical and metaphorical substitute for Christ’s circumcised penis.

Representing himself as the penis of the Church/Christ thus served a specific purpose in these two drawings, underlining the visual and metaphorical connection between the body of the cleric and the form of the circumcised penis. It visualizes the idea that all clerics wear the mark of Christ’s circumcision (and thus sacrifice) on their heads. After identifying himself with this symbolic situation, Opicinus tells us in another caption that, “my ancient and carnal self was buried in the shallows.” He has left behind his previous self in the sea of sin, emerging from it to become a part of Christ’s body.

Returning to folio 78 recto, other elements of the drawing are also interpreted according to sexualized themes. Even as he gives a spiritual significance to the penis of the European figure, Opicinus interprets the genitalia in a negative light, as well, as he does throughout the manuscript. In another caption on folio 78 recto, he writes, “While the Lord sleeps, his servant [i.e. Opicinus] keeps watch, posted at the door to the stomach of Italy. Who is therefore the

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290 Vaticanus fol. 78r: “in illa die fuit spiritualiter circuncisus; quam circumcisionem laicus ego spiritualiter abscondi et clericus sacramentaliter manifesto.”

291 Vaticanus fol. 78r: “signaculum circumcisionis sub testibus.”
indisputable master of the body: the servant who dangles or the head of the Lord?" On folio 82 recto, Opicinus conveyed a similar sentiment, mentioned in Chapter Two, which suggests that the genitalia and the mind serve different masters:

“the member of desire, the more it is caressed, the more it becomes erect and grows independently of the will of the man of whom it is a part, indicates the individual that, sensitive to flatteries, rebels against the Church which desires other things for that person. And the human body symbolizes the church. And just like this miserable member works to sink a man entirely into the desires of the flesh, so it often takes just one person to disrupt the entire Church.”

Again, the meaning of a form is not fixed: the penis on folio 78 recto is part of an elaborate metaphor about the rebirth indicated through the spiritual circumcision, while still remaining enmeshed in a discourse on its carnality and concupiscence.

Playing again with the superimpositions created by the formal arrangement of the maps, Opicinus also comments on the alignment of the figure/penis with Spain below, in a caption to the upper right. He writes that, “Here, Europe is evolving to endure, in its right jaw, the deceits of the genital organs, that is to say the Lombards who have become the seed of Granada, the infidel who disfigures the jaw.” In the drawing, Spain and Granada, then controlled by Muslims (the “infidels” to whom Opicinus refers), lie directly below the penis of the upper European figure. The caption suggests that the position of the continents is static, and that evil in Granada on one map is uniting with the deceit of the genitalia of the other, a situation that the figures as a whole must simply “endure” during their sleep. This particular caption seems more incidental, but shows the way that Opicinus looked for a potential significance in each superimposition and correspondence on such drawings.

A drawing like folio 78 recto illuminates both Opicinus’s interest in gendered sexual play and metaphor, and also his working process. The drawing is not only “about” one thing. Building meaning is a cumulative and additive process. He started with the overlapping forms of the two body-worlds, and then gave these figures different identities. He then probably drew the genitalia, and determined that circumcision would be a primary subject of the drawing, discussed in at least four of the long captions. But his interpretation of the drawing did not stop there. He kept adding more material, dating at least four separate phases of additions, some of which elaborated on the themes of circumcision, rebirth and lust, while others dealt with completely separate topics (for example, the triangle he drew between the cities of Avignon, Pavia and

292 Vaticanus fol. 78r: “Dormiente Domino, vigilat servus insertus porte ventris Italie. Quis est ergo verior dux huius corporis: servus pendens an Domini caput?”

293 Vaticanus fol. 82r: “Membrum concupiscentie – quod quanto plus tangitur, tanto magis erigitur et inflatur preter voluntatem hominis cuius est membrum – significant singularem personam que adulationibus tacta erigitur, et inflatur aduersus Ecclesiam que uult aliud quam persona. Et corpus humanum figurat Ecclesiam. Et sicut illud miserum membrum plerumque submergit totum hominem in concupiscentiam carnis, ita sepe una persona totam conturbat Ecclesiam.”

294 Vaticanus fol. 78r. “Ecce quod revolutio corporis Europe patitur in dextra maxilla illusiones lumborum, id est Lombardorum qui conversi sunt in semen infidelis Granate deturpantis maxillam.”
Rome, and a long discussion of Saint Longinus). A drawing like this one proves that each page was not presented as a complete, thought-out statement on a particular topic. Rather, the relations and correspondences between the various forms that he initially constructed are played with, meditated on, allegorized and interpreted over a long period of time.

Conclusion

In many ways, Opicinus’s body-worlds do seem to represent real bodies. So many of his metaphors deal with body parts and bodily processes, and although the “body” of an allegorical figure could contain these parts and systems, there is something undeniably human about the discussions and representations of gender, birth, sexuality, and process that we find throughout the drawings. The examples discussed above reinforce the emphasis placed on the bodily by Michael Camille in his essay on Opicinus; my own understanding of the body-worlds is based on these two poles of inquiry – the map and the body. Within Opicinus’s system, both body and world bring empirical or specific associations and metaphoric, allegorical or philosophical information to the drawings. His full manipulation of both spheres – geographic and bodily – underlines that the figures in these drawings occupy both of their states fully – each is fully earth and fully human. Through his play with gender and sexuality, Opicinus brings individuality, an essential aspect of the human, to each figure (which, because of the shapes of the maps, would otherwise be identical).

The play with bodies is also one of Opicinus’s devices for engaging attention – of an assumed viewer or even his own attention. They introduce an element of humor to drawings whose messages can otherwise be quite serious. Sin, salvation, violence and betrayal are paired with sly intimations of oral sex, masturbation and human relationships. The Vaticanus drawings were Opicinus’s stage to explore not only his new theology, but also his own humor, personality and imagination. Several captions illuminate the secretive, adventurous aspect of the project. On folio 87 recto (fig. 17, one of the folios where the European woman is pregnant with a tiny copy of the body-worlds), in a passage mentioned by Camille and Salomon, Opicinus writes that, “At the moment when I wrote these lines, I was obliged to cover up with a piece of paper the stomach of the woman, because of the arrival of a simple Lombard preacher, to make sure that he was not shocked.”

He knew how strange these drawings were; even as he drew from so many different visual sources (portolans, frescoes, scientific diagrams, etc.) to create the body-worlds, he understood that his recombinations had the power to shock, and he seems to have taken a sly pleasure from their imaginative humor.

Like the most penetrating jokes, Opicinus’s drawings are both deadly serious and tongue in cheek. Depicting a body-world figure as pregnant with a whole other world was a visual metaphor intended to carry real meaning, but also a delightful imaginative fiction. And it was a particular and unusual artistic process that made these fictions possible; one of the most crucial things that I hope to have suggested in this chapter is that the meaning of these bodies is born out of the artistic process. Each graphic decision in his working process led to the next layer of interpretation and representation. Depicting bodies in the forms of the portolan chart led to their position in particular poses. These strange poses led to the creation of certain gestures, actions, attributes and apparel. And it is in these details that meaning is manufactured. The ideas at

\[295\] Vaticanus fol. 87r: “Hora qua hoc agebatur, necessa habui operire quodam folio papyri ventrem mulieris propter supervisionem Lombardi presbiteri simplicis, ne scandalizaretur ob hoc.”
which Opicinus arrives could not come into being without the process that created them; this is what makes them visual ideas rather than visual depictions of mental creations. Each stroke of the pen led to the next, in an additive, dynamic process of making.

Crucial to the creation of this humor and visual play is the emergence of each body-world as an individual figure, a process enabled by their marks of gender, race, allegorical status and sexuality. We have seen the ways that Opicinus positioned himself as an individual within the drawings, but also, crucially, the fictional others that he created. In each encounter on the page, he imagined new men and women, whose individuality was created around a central identity or concern. These concerns may often have been born from his life, problems and possibilities, but they are born into other figures, not only represented within him. It is in their creation that we see him looking inward on himself yet also outward on the world.

At the end of this last chapter, we begin to see the limitations of the approaches that I outlined in the introduction to this dissertation. Most of this study follows a visual-cultural, structural-formal approach; drawings were analyzed based on their form and structure, and their relation to other types of representation, as a way of demonstrating their place within fourteenth-century trends in representation, piety and imagination. But in looking at these final drawings, we see that a comparative approach begins to break down, and the strangeness of the drawings reasserts itself. There are simply no other contemporary images that play so freely with concepts of sex and self. This is not to discount the contextual-formal approach, which I think has yielded new insights and interpretations for many of the drawings. Perhaps, however, it is impossible, and undesirable, to isolate the personal and textual elements of the drawings so completely. Both elements must be present to create a complete picture. The challenge of studying these drawings is to both make them comprehensible and simultaneously embrace their difference. From a methodological perspective, this has indeed been a daunting task. Only when we swing the pendulum both ways, taking multiple position and approaches, can these drawings stake their claim both within and outside of the culture that produced them.
Conclusion

Opicinus’s place within medieval art history remains enigmatic. His drawings offer the perspective of both an eccentric and an informed insider, using unique and creative forms to explore the problems occupying his mind. In my own contribution, in addition to describing and analyzing individual drawings and themes, I hope to have shed light on several issues crucial to medieval art history at large. First is the way that Opicinus complicates traditional conceptions of the relationship between art, science and the Church in the Middle Ages. Rather than seeing the new perspectives offered by scientists and engineers as threatening to a Christian worldview, Opicinus instead harnesses their theories and evidence to probe deeper into the meaning of God’s creation and the human body and soul. For Opicinus, science and knowledge are the gateway to meaning, rather than an impediment. Second, I hope to have raised the issue of creativity, too often neglected in studies of medieval art history. These drawings show the way that entirely new forms and perspectives could emerge from the intense creativity of one person’s artistic method and process. Fresh perspectives and unmistakably different forms can still be found when one considers neglected objects of medieval visual culture. And finally, Opicinus’s drawings raise the issue of diagrammatic forms and formats in the fourteenth century.

In thinking about directions for future research, it is this last question that begs further inquiry most acutely. For all the strangeness and difference of Opicinus’s drawings, I want to suggest by way of conclusion that these works do belong to a particular interest during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in what I call a diagrammatic mode of representation. Rather than placing Opicinus’s works at the end of a long tradition of symbolic medieval images of the cosmos, or at the beginning of a Renaissance interest in the individual and his place in the world, I want people to see him in relation to the images and representational strategies of his own time. In the fourteenth century, the diagrammatic mode can be found in images of many media – in programs of relief sculpture, in allegorical frescoes, in cartography, and in scientific drawings of all kinds – cosmic, medical, and astronomical. To name just a few examples we might think of a fresco from the famous Camposanto in Pisa that uses a massive diagram of the cosmos to illustrate the moment of Creation (fig. 42), or of tiny manuscript diagrams of the zodiac man (fig. 38), or of the huge fresco of 1360 of the Tree of Life by Taddeo Gaddi in the refectory of Santa Croce in Florence, which directly contrasts a diagrammatic mode at the center with illusionistic proto-perspectival works in the scenes around it (fig. 43). When we think of fourteenth-century Italian art, our minds jump so quickly to the new interest in pictorial space in Giotto, the
Lorenzetti or Taddeo Gaddi, or to the expression of new modes of popular piety by the Dominicans and Franciscans. But we must also think of these other works – programmatic or diagrammatic images that overwhelm the viewer not with illusion or with sacred presence, but with information – more information than a viewer could hope to take in at a single glance. Such diagrammatic forms of course existed in earlier centuries, but they are used on a whole new scale in the thirteenth and fourteenth. Precisely when new interests in pictorial space initiated the direction that would dominate the artistic production of the next five hundred years, diagrammatic forms rose to offer an alternative mode of communication.

Such diagrammatic works have a double power. Through their longstanding association with scientific content and explanatory ability, they can lend authority to the expression of any idea, codifying it within a fixed structure. But as we have seen, diagrams can also spark extensive processes of interpretation. Diagrams structure meaning without closing it off. As Steffen Bogen has argued, to make a diagram is to make a hypothesis, and to use one is to interpret and test it. Existing outside of the traditional medieval paradigm of text versus image, diagrams do not exist only to “represent” or “explain” – they do both, setting up internal comparisons, oppositions, arguments and counter-arguments through their form and structure. The challenge of art historians must be to analyze such diagrams as visual objects – not just for the information they convey but for how they convey it. This subject of the diagrammatic mode is something that I plan to explore further in future research.

At the end of this study, we remain uncertain about what exactly Opicinus was trying to say in his dozens of drawings and diagrams. But I hope we have emerged with a clearer sense of how he was saying it. It was through his twisting, overlapping, mirrored forms of bodies and worlds that he engaged with some of the most crucial questions of the western philosophical tradition and of Christian doctrine: how is the world around us connected with the divine? How does one relate what one sees to what one knows? How can one reconcile and position all the things one knows to be true? Such complicated questions demanded complicated answers, and Opicinus was happy to oblige. The complexity of his drawings testifies more than anything to his audacity and boldness in asking, and perhaps believing that he had answered, questions like these. The drawings are a lasting testament to his creativity and talent, and his deep engagement with both the pictures in the world around him and the images hidden in his imagination.
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Fig. 1 – Opicinus de Canistris, Vat. Lat. 6435, folio 48 verso
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