

Sea Monsters On Medieval And Renaissance Maps



Synopsis

The sea monsters on medieval and Renaissance maps, whether swimming vigorously, gamboling amid the waves, attacking ships, or simply displaying themselves for our appreciation, are one of the most visually engaging elements on these maps, and yet they have never been carefully studied. The subject is important not only in the history of cartography, art, and zoological illustration, but also in the history of the geography of the "marvelous" and of western conceptions of the ocean. Moreover, the sea monsters depicted on maps can supply important insights into the sources, influences, and methods of the cartographers who drew or painted them. In this highly-illustrated book the author analyzes the most important examples of sea monsters on medieval and Renaissance maps produced in Europe, beginning with the earliest mappaemundi on which they appear in the 10th century and continuing to the end of the 16th century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“[B]eautifully illustrated. . . . People interested in maps, cryptozoology, folklore, and arcane zoology and zoological history will want to check it out.” (Scientific American) “The book features striking images of maritime monsters taken from maps of the ocean made between the 10th and 16th centuries.” (Boston Globe Brainiac Blog) “Full of charming stories and cartographic detail, Chet Van Duzer’s book is an entertaining and rewarding book for general readers and a well-researched reference for scholars.” (Alessandro Scafì Times Literary Supplement) “In the large-format, hardcover that this thing is, it’s basically

as near to the ultimate nerd-level coffee table book that you could ever want, and I love it for that. — (Aidan Flax-Clark Lapham's Quarterly) — "[An] authoritative, wide-ranging study. . . Sumptuously produced. . . . The author is an encyclopedic scholar of historical cartography, with a magisterial command of comparative knowledge and scrupulous attentiveness to detail. — (Marina Warner New York Review of Books) — "Medieval and Renaissance map scholar, Chet Van Duzer, backed by the British Library as publisher, have teamed up to produce a spectacular new book, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps*, a topic, oddly enough, for which there is little by way of real precedent. This book will become the sea monster authority by default. Although this beautiful book is a product of academic quality, it is very readable and accessible and requires no prior knowledge. — (BibliOdyssey) — "A truly charming book, and one that will turbocharge the imagination of anyone staring over the side of a boat at a bunch of waves that could hide just about anything. — (Sam Llewellyn Marine Quarterly) — "Lavish. . . . The sea monsters depicted throughout Van Duzer's beautifully illustrated British Library volume strike absolute wonder in the reader today, and the author provides valuable insight into what medieval and Renaissance viewers must have made of these sinewy, silly, horned, fanged, and fearsome creatures. . . . Van Duzer reminds scholars that it sometimes helps to let the eye wander to the margins, to get a different historical perspective of medieval perspectives of their surrounding seas. This critical analysis of a hitherto ignored cartographic trope adds much-needed depth to our understanding of medieval and later perceptions of the sea and its mysterious creatures. — (Vicki Ellen Szabo, Western Carolina University Nautical Research Journal) — "An in-depth dissection of ancient maps and sea beasts from days past. — (Andrew Belonsky Out)"Duzer offers a sublime examination of the genealogy of individual sea monsters and the artistic techniques of placing them on maps. . . . The author and the British Library both deserve great praise for creating such a visually stunning work." (Historical Geography)

Chet Van Duzer is a Kislak Fellow at the Library of Congress. He is the author of Johann Schöner's Globe of 1515: Transcription and Study and co-author with John Hessler of *Seeing the World Anew: The Radical Vision of Martin Waldseemüller's 1507 & 1516 World Maps*.

Gives a concise history of maps, along with the origins and evolution of their accompanying monsters. Makes you wonder; were people just bad at accurately drawing animals before the 1700s, or did the explorers just not even try. A written description of an octopus ends up looking like a lobster on the map. I guess eight legs meant lobster to the artist, because it was all he knew. A

simple sketch from someone who had seen an octopus (or for that matter, a dead one preserved in brine) would have allowed the artist to get a lot closer to reality. Most inaccuracies are easily attributable to misunderstandings. Obviously sea-dogs were seals or sea lions, but something was lost in translation and the artist ended up drawing something closer to a dog than a seal. A quick read, because of all the pictures, which are great. My only gripe would be that many of the pictures didn't go with the text on the same page, so there was some flipping back and forth required to follow along. I realize though that it must be difficult to edit things to fit the text near the appropriate pictures, so I didn't take away a star.

This wasn't quite what i was expecting, but I'm not at all disappointed. I was expecting something akin to a bestiary or a catalog of all the sea monsters, maybe with a bit of history or a description of the monster. Instead, the Author goes into depth as to why the monsters were put on the maps at all, sometimes for religious reasons, sometimes for decoration, and sometimes the monsters were just cases of mistaken identity. While it didn't list every single monster ever drawn, it did have a few sections like i had described above. All in all it's an excellent book, and became one of my favourites pretty quickly.

I like the paper quality and size of this book, but was disappointed with the rest. The illustrations are nowhere near one would expect from such a wonderful theme. I am going to print some images I find through a Google search, because this book left me totally uninspired. Do not be mislead from the cover picture - that is probably the prettiest (and least cropped) map you will see.

It's very interesting. Not a subject you would expect to see.

Chet Van Duzer always delivers excellent research and this book is no exception. This is a topic that fascinates many readers both inside the cartographic community and the generalist. Very well illustrated.

This is so cool. And I want the author to give a talk about it. I bet the background stories are equally cool

Nice book. Thank you.

Loved it. Even my grandson enjoyed it.

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