for 34 yer he was in travelyng [ENG]

"**And this knyght wente of Ingelond and passid the see the yer of Our Lord 1332 and passid thorgh many londes, contreis, and iles, and compiled this book and let write hit the yer of Our Lord 1366, at 34 yer after that he wente out of his contré, for 34 yer he was in travelyng**"

This place, Mandeville realizes, is a petrified wrestling match. Roofs like knobbly limbs, window frames like crooked teeth, sweat gushing and a skyline that's out of joint. Very different from the drawing the conjoined twins are working on. With trembling lines, they sketch a terrifying city, where the gates are thicker than the roofs. Nonsense, he thinks. He ostentatiously begins sketching the contours of the Holy Land as he sees it: soft, downy colors, but above all a place forged through struggle, like all good things, so he thinks.

The twins speak in a language he doesn't understand. He brushes the dust from his trousers, stands up and asks where they're from. They frown and look away. So be it, Mandeville thinks, and kicks a pebble. Or is the pebble falling *on him*? He wakes with a start and looks straight into the eyes of Hugo, the crow who's settled with them and sometimes wakes him by dropping collected objects from his beak. Mandeville tries to see it as a sign of affection. But this time it's inconvenient – he waves Hugo away with grand gestures.

"I have seen Jerusalem!" he shouts, to no one in particular. And again, louder. He keeps shouting it, elated, until his wife – who had been awake much earlier and is just back from the market – looks at him wide-eyed and insists he write it down immediately so he doesn't forget what he saw. Or, she thinks, so he'll be quiet for a moment, because she still has a manuscript to finish. And that's hard with a roaring husband in the background.

They sit down at the table together. With sturdy hands, he works on his *Memoirs*, she on a cycle of poems about the repetitive nature of household labor. He thanks her. They keep writing. Light falls on their shiny gray hair – it looks like the sea, Hugo thinks, before sinking into memories of all the seas he's ever seen. More than Mandeville, that much he knows for sure.

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This is the year 1356. Or 1321. Or 1298. No one knows for certain. The exact publication date of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* remains unknown. There are more questions surrounding the book's origins: In what language was it originally written? Who was John Mandeville, really? His own explanation – that he was an English knight who traveled for 34 years – is most likely fictitious. The book is a literary pastiche, built from dozens of existing sources. What Mandeville 'remembers' of 'the East' is largely borrowed, as researchers have shown.

In academic debates, much has been written about how Mandeville describes the world and 'the Other.' The work is progressive for its time – considering its unusually humble and open-minded tone – but is also inseparable from the racist ideologies that dominated medieval Europe and crystallized further through imperialism and colonial violence.

Warre Mulder uses Mandeville's work to reflect – visually and architecturally – on the reach of stories and imagination. Mandeville may not have been an accurate traveler, but he gathered stories – and with them, perspectives: medieval views of people on places known mostly through hearsay. Mulder continues that conversation. His colorful visuals build on

Mandeville's collage characters. They are not mimetic representations: those who consult the original text will notice Mulder's images deviate from the descriptions. He imagined them further.
The following text gives voice to Mulder's visuals. Instead of the 'I'-perspective Mandeville uses to narrate, this text opts for the viewpoint of 'the Other' Mandeville describes – a reversed encounter.

"Ethiope, a gret lond"
You might not guess it, but the biggest challenge he – and by extension the whole principality – faces is tourism. Take that chatty Englishman, who kept repeating how amazing he thought it all was here. *A gret lond*, he said, as if it were obvious that everyone on this flat planet spoke English. He had welcomed him with open arms, as protocol demanded: hands raised, nose to the sky. That was how they greeted every visitor. On their end, everything had gone according to protocol. The tourist, on the other hand, had arrived with a tired donkey and supplies from the north and would provoke irritation across the area. After a night's sleep – during which he reportedly kept every gazelle in the area awake – he set out. In the following days, complaints began trickling in to the prince. The tourist had ogled someone's foot. He had drunk water not meant for drinking. And: he never spoke to them. When the prince tried to strike up a conversation, he saw the Englishman had already left. He caught a glimpse of a grey speck in the distance, the slow donkey.

"These men lyven with the smel and savour of wild apples"
'Humans,' says Graz, 'are destined for a short life. Think how much they need just to survive, let alone to be happy. We get by on blades of grass.' 'On grass and each other,' his partner interjects. They nod. Without each other, they'd have had no one to tell about the human who stumbled in, with a bulging bag and filthy beard, brushing grass from his clothes. He demonstratively took out a piece of paper, a goose feather, and a pot of ink. He stared at Graz 1 and Graz 2 and began writing feverishly. They offered him an apple; they didn't need sugar themselves, but that hairy man with literary delusions could probably use some glucose.

"And som sayn that in the ile of Lango is Ypocrasis doughter..."
Her entire youth she lived in the spotlight. She had to be slim and agile and silent, as if she too regretted being a woman and not a statue. With such a famous father, it couldn't have been otherwise, people said as they shrugged to end the conversation. That famous father was no help. He only truly looked at her after she shaved her hair off in protest – blond locks blown away – just as blood trickled down her thighs. "Hysterical!" he shouted and ran to his study to quickly describe how uteruses brew unreliability. He named the condition "hysteria" and thought of his daughter, his wife, and really every woman who had ever used the word '*but*' in his presence.

Since being exiled to that island, she receives many letters, often with a lock of hair. These women too had let go of their locks – and often their families. It made her sad. She also got nasty letters, from men who "wanted to tell her things," since she "must be so lonely on that island." One of those men was John Mandeville. When it all became too much, she drew a fire-breathing dragon, taped a lock of hair to it, and sent it to Mandeville. He never replied.

"In that lond beth trees that bereth wolle..."
She had warned him – multiple times. Still, he thought he could avoid the trek to the bleating cotton bushes. During a game of "who can pretend to be a knight best," he'd torn his new sweater on a thick, prickly stone. "If anything happens to that sweater, you're making a new one yourself," his mother had said. He had nodded solemnly, and now he faced a field full of baaing shrubs, occasionally producing tufts of cotton. He had to fill an entire bowl. Judging by the sun, it was midday, and the sheep had decided as much too – they were mostly lounging, not producing any cotton. Suddenly he heard a donkey, and then the panting of a man. He wore clothes wrapped with silver thread, bearing the initials J.M. They waved – failed knights recognizing each other.

“Relikes”

He watches the foam reach again and again for a point just out of reach, only to collapse back into the sea with the waves. No ships have docked in three weeks. Today, it must happen. What’s the use of a reliquary without a relic? Last night in the tavern, he got into a conversation with John. John said it must be something from a distant saint. And just like everything John says, that led to Jerusalem again. He let him speak, secretly enjoying the stories of whipped-up seas, three-headed chatterers, and hidden beings in forests unlike any here. “No ship today?” asks the composer. She wears a shirt as blue as lapis lazuli. He startles, blinks, and gazes back at the sea. “Not yet.”

“And ye shal understonde that the lond of Prester John...”

When the gritty mother of John Mandeville was asked about her son’s literary success, she grinned and said the idea of Prester John was actually *hers*. Back when John was a toddler – with fiery curls and tantrums – he regularly demanded the impossible. Spices in his porridge, for instance. Or a golden altarpiece. “That only exists in the land of Prester John,” she’d say, shaking her head, while her son expressed his disbelief in grand gestures. He had, she thought, significantly less grasp on reality than her eight other children combined – and they weren’t exactly paragons of reason.
But he listened. And apparently, he remembered well.

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