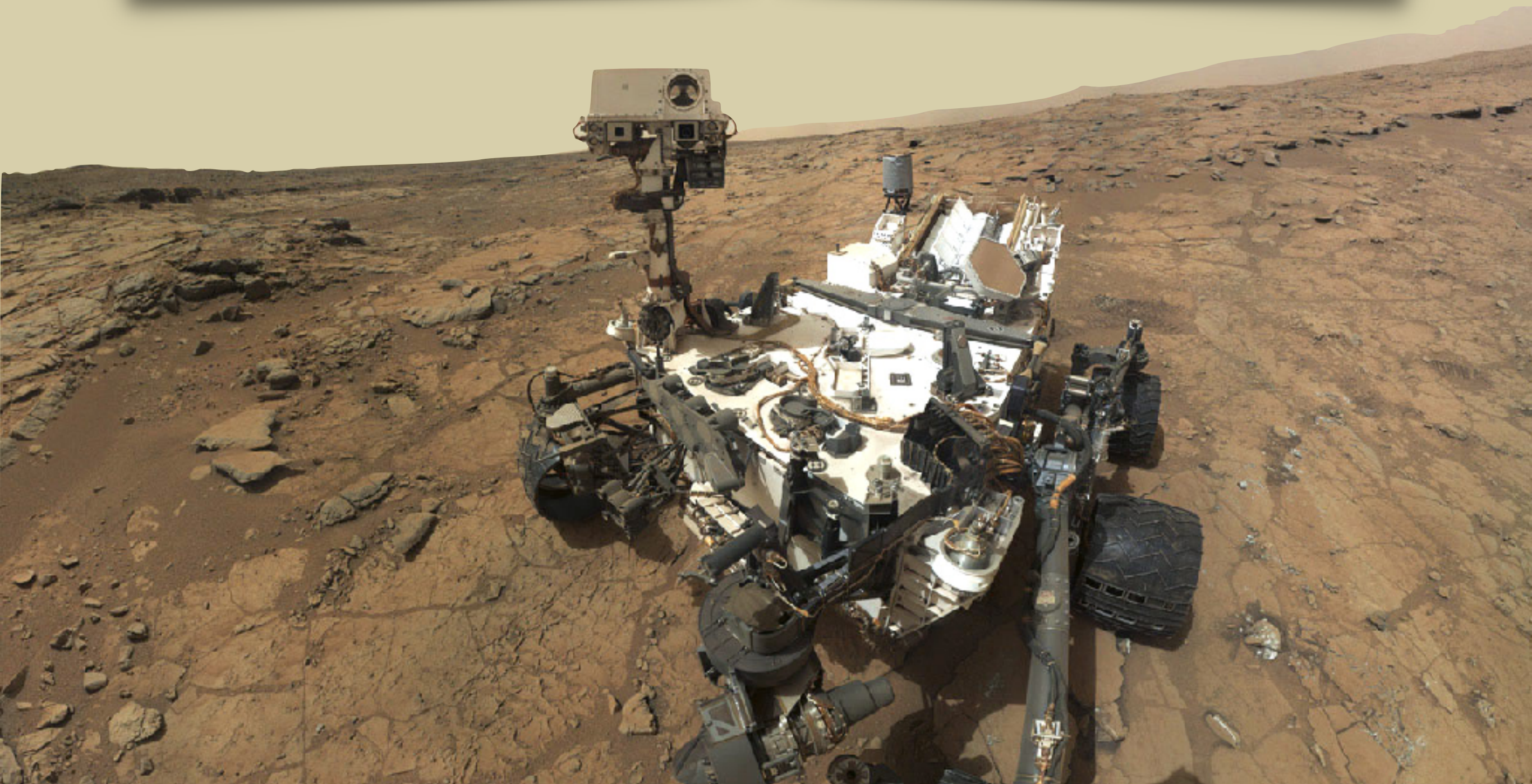


literary productions. Then as now man, insecure and very much aware of his limitations, was eager to escape into a dream world of boundless power. Then as now he derived vicarious pleasure from visualizing fantastic accomplishments and experiences of a race of superior beings. Their distant abode was as yet inaccessible to ordinary mortals: the Indies, in the twelfth century, were almost as remote from Europe as are Mars and Venus from Earth in our time. But man, then as now, was



Otherness

What is your initial reaction to the monsters and marvels of Prester John's kingdom?

Do you try to rationalize them, to explain them away, to seek intertextual connections, to understand them as allegories, or do you simply accept the Other in all its weirdness?

Historical Connections

According to Helleiner, when does a man claiming to be the ambassador from the Christian Church in India arrive at the Papal court in Rome?

When do Pope Calixtus II and Henry V, the Holy Roman Emperor, sign the Concordat of Worms?

What does the Concordat of Worms settle?

Does the original letter of Prester John address any of the effects of the Concordat of Worms?

Original Letter (Ross' Translation in Brooks 2009 A)

Where is John's land? Where is his palace?

What is the name of his land?

Why are there no liars or thieves in the land?

What protect John from poision, drunkenness, and lust? Why does he need protection?

What is the role of food/dining?

Original Letter (Ross' Translation in Brooks 2009 A)

Who are John's servants? What do they have in common?

What is John's (the character's) rhetorical purpose in writing the letter? What does he want?

Where is he going with his army?

Does this sound like anything Europe is doing?

What news arrived in 1145 (Helleiner 1959: 51)?

Best Known Letter (Uebel)

What is new, what has changed, and what is missing?

Where is John's land? Where is his palace?
What is the name of his land?

What is the Ydonus river?

What is said of the Jews? Who is their king?

Best Known Letter (Uebel)

Are there horses in Prester John's land?
Does he have a cavalry?

Are there poor people? thieves? liars? adulterers?

Describe the looking-glass. Why does Prester John place a guard of 10,000 on it?
Why does he need the mirror?

Best Known Letter (Uebel)

Who is Prester John's father?

Why are there no walls in Prester John's palace?

Best Known Letter (Uebel)

What are the nations of Gog and Magog?

Who is their ally?

Why does Prester John use them in battle?

Is Prester John the Antichrist?

How many monsters in Prester John's kingdom
displease God?

How old is Prester John? When was he born?

What about the Jews?

French Letter of ~1500 (Slessarev in Brooks 2009 B)

What is new, what has changed, and what is missing?

To whom is the letter addressed?

Who are “our Greeks?” Is Prester John Greek?

How much time has passed since the first letter?

French Letter of ~1500 (Slessarev in Brooks 2009 B)

How old is Prester John?

What is Prester John's palace like?

What does Prester John want in this letter?

Why does he write?

Is Prester John's kingdom a utopia?

How is it like classical utopias and political fiction?

How is Prester John's kingdom different?

French Letter of ~1500 (Slessarev in Brooks 2009 B)

What new thing has John promised?
Does this relate to Europe's crusades?

Who are the Hospitalers?
What is Prester John's problem with Hospitalers?
Do the Hospitalers (*Supremus Ordo Militaris
Hospitalis Sancti Ioannis Hierosolymitani Rhodius et
Melitensis*) still exist today?

French Letter of ~1500 (Slessarev in Brooks 2009 B)

Why would it displease god if the 60-cubit (now 20-cubit) giants left the desert?

How old is Prester John?

How does he live so long?

What does John have to say about Jews this time?

Why does nobody lie or commit lechery?