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MAP, MANUSCRIPT, AND MEMORY: THE EMERGENCE OF
AN ANGLO-SAXON IDENTITY BETWEEN
ORIGIN AND APOCALYPSE

by

Juliana Marie Chapman

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Humanities, Classics, and Comparative Literature

Brigham Young University

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Juliana Marie Chapman

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Date

Joseph D. Parry, Chair

Date

Miranda Wilcox

Date

V. Stanley Benfell

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Juliana Marie Chapman in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

Date

Joseph D. Parry
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

Allen J. Christenson
Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College

Joseph D. Parry
Associate Dean, College of Humanities

ABSTRACT

MAP, MANUSCRIPT, AND MEMORY: THE EMERGENCE OF AN ANGLO-SAXON IDENTITY BETWEEN ORIGIN AND APOCALYPSE

Juliana Marie Chapman

Department of Humanities, Classics, and Comparative Literature

Master of Arts

As the only extant detailed world map of the Anglo-Saxon period, the Anglo-Saxon map, c. 1025, presents a unique opportunity to explore a sense of Anglo-Saxon social identity as evidenced in this graphic worldview. The Anglo-Saxon map has most often been dismissed as an ill-fitting illustration when viewed solely in its manuscript context or an equally poor navigational tool when considered in the context of modern cartography. The purpose of this thesis is to present the argument that the Anglo-Saxon world map is neither simply a bad illustration nor a poorly rendered map intended for travel, but is rather a richly articulated graphic and linguistic representation of a particularly Anglo-Saxon sense of social identity as it is explored in the midst of a belief in a divine creation, secular origin, and inevitable social apocalypse. This reading of the map is supported by a comparative study of these same three foundational themes as they

occur in Old English elegiac literature. The goal of this study is to read the Anglo-Saxon world map in the context of the theoretical framework of social identity demonstrated in Old English elegiac literature. In so doing, a concept of Anglo-Saxon social identity, a cultural expectation of the pull of history and the future, will be presented as it is expressed across artistic genres in Anglo-Saxon England. When viewed in the context of this greater elegiac artistic tradition, the Anglo-Saxon map can be seen as a participatory exploration of Anglo-Saxon identity in the context of the themes of creation, origin, and apocalypse. As such, the map can rightly be viewed as an artifact which was created to be, and remains even now, a carrier of the memory of Anglo-Saxon identity for future generations.

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To my family: we started this program with five, and ended it with six. Though some days are crazy, at least I have the best cheering section around. I can't adequately express my love and gratitude for each of you.

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INTRODUCTION

Stephen G. Nichols expresses with ample understatement, “space [is] not a neutral topic in the Middle Ages.”¹ Indeed, the world and virtually everything within it are deliberately situated within a sense of defined space in the Middle Ages. In medieval culture, space shapes both the relations of all things and also the very sense of time and chronology—both religious and secular. The Anglo-Saxons are not the only culture, then or now, interested in ideas of space and its impact on identity, yet how they engage these issues provides a perspective of a particularly Anglo-Saxon approach to what are otherwise seemingly more universal concerns. Whether written or drawn, many of the extant examples of Anglo-Saxon art and literature define space and assert a sense of social identity by incorporating common themes and images across genres.

Stephen Harris and others have explored this area, laying the foundation for further study that bases itself on the assumption that although the actual social identity of a culture’s past is “irremediably unrecoverable,” scholars may approach an understanding of these lost social identities by exploring “how an author (or group of authors) imagined a collective, and the categories by which those images came into physical being in narrative.”² This thesis will examine the visual and

¹ Stephen G. Nichols, “Poetic Places and Real Spaces: Anthropology of Space in Crusade Literature,” *Yale French Studies* 95, (1999), 111-33 at 111.

² Stephen Harris, *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, in *Medieval History and Culture*, vol. 24 (New York: Routledge, 2003), 9. In this presentation of the foundation for much of his study in this

verbal narrative in the Anglo-Saxon world map on folio 56v of London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B.V., by extending Harris's argument to include not only "authors" but also "mapmakers."³ As scholars approach Old English literature and art, the common themes and forms throughout can be used to deduce a sense of the world view, priorities, religious and political beliefs, and social customs of the Anglo-Saxons. All of these characteristics, collectively, serve to illustrate a social identity—who a people are as a people is predicated upon how they portray themselves in relation to one another and the rest of the world, and is inherently both "literary and historical."⁴ Harris distinguishes between his ideas of social versus individual identity for the Anglo-Saxons as he asserts that "Anglo-Saxon selves were first and foremost responses to social [order]."⁵ As such their sense of moral and ethical law, and I would suggest their individual sense of place in their own society, was a "[condition] of word and act...assessed according to a communal *telos*, a larger end to human history."⁶ From here, Harris goes on to explore the diversity of ethnicity expressed in Old English literature, an occurrence which he views as belying the common view of Anglo-Saxon England as somehow more

book Harris references Michael Richter as having proposed this approach to ethnicity (or, as I term it, social identity) and literature.

³ I purposefully avoid the term "cartographer" here and throughout this study in order to emphasize two points about the map and its maker: first, as is the case with most medieval manuscripts, in all likelihood the creator of the Anglo-Saxon map was a member of a monastery with sufficient artistic, religious, and historic training though not trained in the science of cartography as we employ it today; and second, the modern sense of the term "cartography" connotes at least an attempt to recreate the world as it is for the purpose of relational navigation and record keeping, which, as I discuss in the following chapter on the medieval geographic tradition, is far from the intent in medieval mapmaking.

⁴ Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 9.

⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁶ Ibid., 17.

homogenous than modern societies.⁷ Although this may be the case, this thesis will explore the common themes of creation, origin, and apocalypse in the Anglo-Saxon map and Old English literature as they circumscribe any disparate ethnic traces in the literature, reinforcing the reading of the map, and present, overall, a cohesive Anglo-Saxon identity.

In this thesis, I wish to show how the Anglo-Saxon world map is as deeply interested in the principles and questions of Anglo-Saxon social identity as any of their other extant artifacts and texts are. The Anglo-Saxon map strives to illustrate an Anglo-Saxon identity primarily through an engagement with three fundamental, and somewhat universal themes: creation, origin, and apocalypse. For the sake of this study, these terms will be defined as follows. “Creation” refers specifically to the early Christian belief in a real, initial, divine creation of the earth and all things therein, including man. “Origin” has a dual meaning, referring to both a politically and religiously accepted historic origin in the empires of the past as well as a connection to the mythic, secular origins of various empires which predate Anglo-Saxon England. “History” and “myth” are here used in their modern context. History therefore refers to a past which can be documented, recalled, and traced. Myth, on the contrary, refers to a past which has no documented basis, or which relates specifically to the pagan mythology of the Greco-Roman period. “Apocalypse” likewise has a dual meaning, referring to both a particularly medieval-Christian belief in a worldwide apocalypse as well as an Anglo-Saxon expectation of a societal apocalypse. Although the Christian belief in a worldwide apocalypse is not

⁷ Ibid. 16-25.

itself a uniquely medieval belief, I term it a “medieval-Christian” belief here in order to emphasize the point that during the medieval period it was in some ways considered to be especially near and impending, at least when compared with a more modern sense of the Apocalypse, marked by a decided lack of urgency regarding it. With regard to the Anglo-Saxon sense of a societal apocalypse, this need not be thought of as an entire annihilation of every Anglo-Saxon, and their land, from the face of the earth, but rather an end to their society as they know it.

The map strives to establish a sense of Anglo-Saxon identity by engaging these three themes in concert; mediating the pull of the past and future. Not intended to serve navigational needs, the Anglo-Saxon world map rather depicts the placement of England within the context of religious and secular time and space, a continuum that begins with an original, divine creation; extends through the historic and mythic secular origins of Anglo-Saxon England; and concludes in an inevitable societal apocalypse. The Anglo-Saxon map is created as a visual analysis presented by the mapmaker and experienced by the audience over time. The map itself becomes a socially participative exploration of the placement and even purpose of Anglo-Saxon England in the context of the rest of religious and secular history—it strives to illustrate what it means to be Anglo-Saxon, and serves as a means of perpetuating that understanding, carrying the memory of this place and people forward in time.

At first glance these themes may seem like rather a lot to read in a mere map: creation, worldly origin, and societal apocalypse, and all the places and history that that entails. If it were only in the Anglo-Saxon map that these stories play out then

perhaps it would seem like too much material for one sheet of vellum. But it is not: it is neither too much for one sheet of vellum to contain nor is it only in this single sheet that Anglo-Saxon artists, both visual and literary, wrestle with these themes. These same three themes recur throughout Anglo-Saxon literature. From prose to poetry, from the sacred to the secular, the literature supports this reading of the map, and reinforces the idea that the Anglo-Saxons constructed a sense of identity that articulated their own sense of place and purpose in their conception of a divine creation, secular origin, and inevitable societal apocalypse. These themes are, in fact, so widespread that an exhaustive comparative analysis encompassing all their occurrences in the Old English corpus is well beyond the scope of this study. I will limit myself to the study of the themes of creation, origin, and apocalypse as they appear in and are informed by primarily Old English elegiac poetry: including *Beowulf*, the Exeter Book Elegies, and the prose of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, in conjunction with the Anglo-Saxon map. These poems, Bede's prose, and the Anglo-Saxon map all depict a fundamental Anglo-Saxon attitude toward time and space that can be characterized as elegiac. These works all form a similar sense of Anglo-Saxon identity, by mediating among their conceptions of religious time beginning in a divine creation, secular time as documented in a mythic past, and the end of both in an impending apocalypse.

Old English elegiac poetry has, of course, often been viewed in terms of its depiction of a universally Anglo-Saxon human condition or identity within a mortal world. In speaking specifically about *Beowulf*, J. R. R. Tolkien suggests that the author of the poem was "concerned primarily with *man on earth*, rehandling in a

new perspective an ancient theme: that man, each man and all men, and all their works shall die. ...As the poet looks back into the past, surveying the history of kings and warriors in the old traditions, he sees that all glory (or as we might say 'culture' or 'civilization') ends in night."⁸ Tolkien articulates an attitude that is not true only of *Beowulf*, but also a fundamental aspect of heroic-elegy. Indeed, the awareness of the passing away of all societies, and by extension of their own, is a theme present in the Exeter Book elegies and Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, as well as in the Anglo-Saxon map. Still, as we shall see, it is not simply an anticipation that their society will end which defines a sense of Anglo-Saxon identity, for their identity is not as regretful as that. Rather, the Anglo-Saxon sense of identity is approached through a mediation between beginnings and ends: who and what has transpired on this earth between the two; and who and what may yet transpire on this earth beyond their own time in it.

The elegiac mood of Anglo-Saxon artistic creations is not solely focused on lament and death, but is also very much concerned with divine creation and the secular origin of their own society. Additionally, the Exeter Book Elegies and other elegiac poetry, such as *Beowulf*, are singular in their ability to convey the narrative voice of a range of characters, men, women, and anthropomorphized objects, pagan and Christian, from the Anglo-Saxon period. In that range of voice we find a representation of social identity which engages a community in a fashion which is perhaps more immediately apparent than that which we might find in a genre with a more limited voice and audience. This is certainly not to say that much of a culture

⁸ J. R. R. Tolkien, *Beowulf, The Monsters and the Critics* (Folkcroft, PA: Folkcroft Press, 1969), 21.

cannot be gleaned by exploring examples of literature they've left behind which may have had a more limited voice and audience, such as a legal text. Indeed, many historians focus their studies on medieval charters as expository of an Anglo-Saxon cultural identity. This thesis will, however, focus on the breadth of narrative engagement with the themes of divine creation, secular origin, and apocalypse which are particularly well articulated in the elegiac literature of Anglo-Saxon England.

In anticipation of the insight to be gained from a comparative analysis of the elegiac verse of the Anglo-Saxons and the only such (at least extant) image of their own vision of themselves in the world we now begin a study of what Nicholas Howe describes as “place in its relation to memory, as mediated through the canons of rhetoric; memory in its haunting of place, as recorded by words and the shaping of the earth” and, I propose, images; “place and memory as ways of understanding the past, as we look at it across the centuries” and it is projected forward as a last offering for those to come from a society now past.⁹ Howe’s work with space, place and identity, particularly as it relates to Anglo-Saxon England has largely set the bar for studies of this kind in recent years. Howe argues that a sense of social identity is founded upon a perception of how we fit in with and connect with others in the world and in our communities, and invariably ties into feeling connected to the places and spaces we inhabit and which form the backdrop of our lives and

⁹ Nicholas Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008), xi. At this first of several references to Howe in this study, I owe him a debt. His work has extended and shaped the scope of studies of space, identity, and literature, both applied to a medieval setting as well as a modern one. It is largely due to his work in this final book, though spurred by a disagreement with his opinion of the map, that I began my study of the Anglo-Saxon map in the current context.

histories.¹⁰ Although Howe explores his sense of Anglo-Saxon identity in space and time through his analysis of Old English literature, I would argue that this same paradigm can be applied to a reading of the Anglo-Saxon map. Considered by Howe to be a disappointingly “limited...form of representation...beside written and illustrated maps” in the Cotton Tiberius manuscript, I will argue that Howe misread the map. Howe falls into a common modern cartographic trap: he sees the Anglo-Saxon map as simply an ill-fitting illustration for any of the texts in the manuscript, and a bad map in its ability to actually help a traveler navigate. This is not, however, the purpose of the Anglo-Saxon map, as can be seen when it is placed in its larger medieval geographic tradition and alongside the corpus of Old English literature, in theme and form.

This thesis is not simply a study of the role of disparate ethnic and cultural identity in Anglo-Saxon England as it is explored in Old English literature, as some cultural theorists, including Stephen Harris have focused on. Rather, the goal of this study is to read the Anglo-Saxon world map in the context of the theoretical framework of social identity demonstrated in Old English elegiac literature. In so doing, a concept of Anglo-Saxon social identity, a cultural expectation of the pull of history and the future, will be presented as it is expressed across artistic genres in Anglo-Saxon England. The very fact that the three main themes of divine creation, secular origin, and apocalypse occupy the thought of so many Anglo-Saxon authors and artists is, in itself, cause for notice. I propose that these three themes embody an Anglo-Saxon view of the world and of the Anglo-Saxon place in that world;

¹⁰ Howe, *Writing the Map*, ix-xi and 1-72; Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1-7.

perspectives that can help even a modern audience approach questions of identity, relationship, and memory.

I

VISUAL IDENTITY

Medieval Geography and Maps

The study of medieval maps has experienced a sort of rebirth with the increased interest in research about identity, place, and space, which largely began in the 1990s and has continued through today. Ranging from the focus of work by scholars such as Evelyn Edson and P.D.A. Harvey, to peripheral anecdotes in larger studies, medieval maps have shown that they are not merely the cartographic blunders of naïve monks and illustrators, not just the pretty, visual addendum to weightier literature, but rather that they carry a very rich history and meaning, both for their own period as well as for today's scholar. The medieval map tradition includes three main types of *mappamundi*, or world maps: detailed maps, T-O or Y-O maps, and zonal maps.¹ Though described in more detail later, one may consider these three types of world maps as on a continuum, from the more similar to a modern view of cartography to an increasingly schematic vision of the world, respectively. Despite the differences in depiction, as will be discussed, each of the

¹ This classification system is my own simplified form of the categories suggested by Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed their World*, in *The British Library Studies in Map History*, vol. 1 (London: British Library, 1997), 2-9. Scholars have alternately suggested a variety of classification systems for medieval maps, ranging from those which distinguish based on criteria such as overall shape, level of detail, or division of continents; sometimes involving as many as 5 or more distinct categories. In reviewing these earlier systems as she presents her own, Edson herself includes a fourth type of map, the list map, in her categorization. However, as the list map is presented as more of a subset of T-O or Y-O maps, and my focus here is on the similarities between map types within the geographic tradition, I have here adopted a more simplified system of medieval map categorization.

three types of medieval world map were intimately involved in the same tradition of medieval geography, including referencing not only the phenomenal world, but the world of religious and secular history, in a rough chronology of time and relationship.

Much recent scholarly interest in space and place has been focused on the literary maps of the medieval period. Indeed, for a depiction of the world viable for navigation and travel, the medieval audience turned to a sort of narrative map, a listing of places to be passed. A pilgrim did not set out for Jerusalem with a roll of velum under their arm, illustrated with a T-O (a somewhat schematic medieval map, with the three main continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa laid out in the shape of a “T” circumscribed in the “O” of the surrounding ocean) or detailed world map, but rather a memorized itinerary of stops along the way. In this same linguistic vein, what we know as the medieval world map originated from a geographic tradition of literary mappings of the world, reaching back to early Christian traditions of describing the world.

Stretching as far back as 167 BC and the writing of the *Book of Jubilees*, what becomes the medieval geographic tradition in maps begins with an earlier tradition of religious geography which stems from the stories in the Bible of not only the first creation but also the significant religious moments and places, highlighting a world still oriented according to the time and place of religious chronology and actuality.²

² Jean Delumeau, *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition*, trans. Matthew O’Connell (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 39.

Indeed, for many during the late Classic period and Middle Ages “the Bible [is] the first and only authoritative geographical text.”³

The *Book of Jubilees* relates the story of how Noah, following the flood, divided the cleansed world among his three sons. Of particular interest to the later Medieval geographic tradition is the description of the part which was given to Shem. “It included the garden of Eden in the east, Mount Zion at the center of the inhabited world, and Mount Sinai in the south.”⁴ Not only are these three locations discussed as locations which were originally created as holy places, but they share a reality in the physical world of fallen man. Beginning with this layering of religious time and space over the daily reality of the phenomenal world, other writers continued to describe the world in these dual-terms: religious and secular. From the work of St. Ephraem the Syrian in the fourth century AD, who begins to propose a physical and spiritual reality upon certain religious places, Eden in particular, to Cosmas Indicopleustes’ belief, in the sixth century, that the inhabitable world is surrounded by an encompassing, unnavigable ocean, which separates the world of men from other continents which men may not access, a vision of the phenomenal world is crafted in the literature which the medieval map tradition later seizes upon in graphic form. This view of the world is perpetuated and expanded through the later writings of various authors, including Augustine, Isidore of Seville, Bede, John Damascene in the eighth century, the ninth century bishop of Bethraman, Moses Bar Cephas, all the way up to Honorius of Autun in France in the twelfth century.⁵

³ Nichols, “Poetic Places and Real Spaces,” 111.

⁴ Delumeau, *History of Paradise*, 39.

⁵ For a concise summary of this early geographic tradition in literature, see Delumeau, *History of*

Yet, even these traditions of geographical literature are at variance with a modern sense of geography, for they are complicated by an inexorable twining of both time and space, both religious and secular, as Edson points out.⁶ From the scholarly prose tradition of geography then stems the visual rendering of this blend of religious and secular reality in time and space. Medieval maps have long been criticized by cartographic historians as woefully uninformed and poorly rendered.⁷ However, it is not the case that map makers were incapable of rendering the world realistically, it is simply that that was not their intention. The purpose of medieval maps is not the same as the usual purpose of modern maps. Modern maps are generally used to provide reference for travel, for science, for actual movement and specific location in the world as it is. Medieval maps cannot be viewed from the same perspective; they are not naively full of “geographical blunders,” for they are not trying “to represent the world by a physically accurate model.”⁸ Despite the popular medieval idea of pilgrimage, maps “were not conceived as an aid for travelers, and neither pilgrims nor Crusaders used maps on their journeys, only the itineraries’ lists of places to be passed en route.”⁹ Not intended to be a resource for travel, the medieval map instead organizes “physical space according to philosophical or religious principles.”¹⁰ In terms of the Catholic tradition of religious geography, this specifically means a rendering of “the Christian concept of

Paradise, especially chapter 3, 39-55.

⁶ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 13-15.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹ Rudolf Simek, “The Shape of the Earth in the Middle Ages and Medieval Mappaemundi,” in *The Hereford World Map: Medieval World Maps and their Context*, P. D. A. Harvey, ed. (London: British Library, 2006), 297.

¹⁰ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 15.

the world as a temporal phenomenon, derived from the simultaneous creation of time and space as described in Genesis,...[which inspires] a mapping which [shows] both dimensions.”¹¹ Medieval maps are largely concerned with rendering a visual depiction of the world in both religious time and space—they are a chronology as well as a geography of religious history.

Despite the variations between each of the three main types of world map there are themes and elements, both verbal and visual, which recur with significant regularity throughout the early medieval geographical tradition. Though the specific references vary from one map to another, they can be categorized into our three main Anglo-Saxon themes: divine creation, secular origin, and anticipated apocalypse. Whether any one map visually depicts Eden or Rome, monsters or saints is less important. What is important is that in engaging with the tradition of which all these images are a part, the very populous history of religious belief and secular authority, the makers of medieval maps, and for this paper the Anglo-Saxon map in particular, participate in actively defining their own place in that long stretch of space and time, their own situation among a divine creation, secular origin, and an elegiac sense of their own societal mortality.

As is the case with the prose tradition of religious geography, though each representation differs slightly from every other, the three themes of divine creation, secular origin, and apocalypse, and from them a sense of their intent (as it clearly wasn't travel or navigation), can be illustrated by a look at one of each of the three

¹¹ Ibid

main types of medieval maps in turn: detailed maps, T-O or Y-O maps, and zonal maps.¹²

Perhaps the most easily accessible of the medieval maps for modern viewers are the detailed maps. One of the oldest examples of this type of map is the misleadingly named “Isidore” map, or Vatican map, c. 8th century, Vatican Library, MS Vat. Lat. 6018, 63v-64r. Originally it was thought that this map’s manuscript was connected with Isidore of Seville’s much copied *Etymologies*, however, more recent scholarship has argued that the connection of this map and its manuscript to Isidore of Seville is misplaced.¹³ Although the manuscript of which this is a part originated in France, not England, its antiquity and connection to later medieval maps, including the Anglo-Saxon map, make it an effective example of early detailed maps.

As is the case with this map, detailed maps approximate an almost modern cartographic view of the world, depicting continents, islands, oceans, rivers, and cities in at least recognizable, graphic ways, if not as necessarily geographically accurate models. Although the Vatican map maintains smooth contours and lines for land and water boundaries, many other detailed maps would, at times, attempt more realism by incorporating undulated borders and waterways, as is the case with the Anglo-Saxon map. However, the visual similarity between early detailed medieval world maps and modern maps remains their closest similarity, and from there their purpose and meaning diverge quite dramatically.

¹² Images of each of the specific map examples discussed are included in the Appendix for reference.

¹³ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 62-64.

As has been discussed, medieval maps are not intended as mere representations of the geographical features of the world, but rather as a process of creating, both visually and mentally, a philosophical depiction of the world and the purpose of man in it. This purpose seems at odds with the common view of the purpose of modern geography. Of course this is an over simplified view of modern geography as well. To claim that the only purpose in mapmaking is to document the globe and provide a tool to guide one in travel is naïve. Kathy Lavezzo explains that, as some scholars in both the fields of geography and humanities have recently argued, “space is itself...socially produced,” not a “static entity possessed of universal and essential attributes.”¹⁴ Along these lines, the editors of the *History of Cartography* have likewise expanded their definition of what a map is to include a recognition that maps are “graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes or events in the human world.”¹⁵ Despite the changing perceptions among some scholars of the intent and extent of the purpose behind modern or medieval maps, one could argue that the primary function of a modern map is to provide a means of relational travel and navigation in as close to a realistic and accurate graphic representation as possible, it is likewise defensible that although this could have been achieved with some of the “better” medieval world maps, this was not their primary purpose and therefore they cannot be compared to modern maps based on this criteria. Certainly for the medieval period at least we might say that, “geography is...a humane study

¹⁴ Kathy Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World: Geography, Literature, and English Community, 1000-1534* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 11.

¹⁵ Leo Bagrow, *History of Cartography* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), I. xvi.

committed to interpret the meaning of human attachments and aspirations.”¹⁶ In line with this greater purpose, the Vatican map incorporates references to both the geographic realities of the world as it is and references to religious and secular history and time, important places and moments outside the limitations of a simple mapping of the land.

The Vatican map is bound in its manuscript with south oriented toward to top of the page; however, because the writing on the map is oriented in almost every direction, by turns, it is not possible to definitively point to a single, intended orientation of the map. As most medieval maps are oriented with East at the top, and in so doing define a beginning and end point as the map is read, the lack of any clearly defined orientation in the Vatican map makes an understanding of the features which it shares with the geographic tradition, literary and visual, of which it is a part, even more important.

On a secular level, the inhabited world is shown as a circle, within an oval ocean containing depictions of each of the three continents thought to make up the known world: Asia, Europe, and Africa; a large part of the map is dedicated to a depiction of the Mediterranean Sea and its islands. The Mediterranean Sea may refer to the Greco-Roman history associated with that sea and the islands which inhabit it. The largest island depicted on the map, located in the far east, is Laperbana, or Ceylon. Situated off the coast of Asia in the east, it represents the limit of the known world to the east, just as Spain represents the limit of the known continental world to the west. England and Ireland are not depicted on this map at

¹⁶ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Morality and Imagination: Paradoxes of Progress* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1989), vii.

all. Instead, in what would seem to be their place, there are two island-looking images which are named for two oceans on the other side of the world. Considering that this map is believed to have been created in France, by a mapmaker who would certainly be familiar with the isles to the west, it is curious that England and Ireland are left off, as though they are too far from the rest of the world to be worth noting.

Yet despite these similarities to the world as we know it in the secular history and geography of the map, a modern viewer is arrestingly caught by the elements of Christian history and geography which are incorporated as well. Like many later medieval detailed maps, Eden, the earthly paradise, is depicted as a real location in the world, here designated by a rosette in Asia, opposite Ceylon. However, it is separated from the rest of the continent by mountains to the north and a series of five rivers to the south and west—themselves an echo of the biblical history in Genesis, 2:10-14, of four rivers flowing out from Eden to water the world. Among other places of importance in Christian history (such as Bethlehem and the river Jordan) the Vatican map even incorporates a small gap in the Red Sea, to show the crossing of the Israelites on their flight out of Egypt, a common scene in later detailed maps.

Most importantly, Jerusalem is labeled and marked by a stylized Star of David. Because it is located in roughly the center of the map, a common placement in later world maps, Jerusalem, and the Christian theology it represents, shares the focus of the map with the Mediterranean Sea, and its association with Greco-Roman history and origins. Given the otherwise fluid sense of orientation (North or South, East or West) of the map, one could argue that the orientation of the map is truly the

center. Jerusalem is the central focus of a Christian life, and also represents Christ as having come in the meridian of time to save all men. Whereas the Mediterranean Sea and Rome represent both the new sacred order of the Christian church, but also the origin of European political order and the mythical origin which many rulers based their authority on. Although the distinctions which set the Vatican map apart from other medieval maps are interesting in their own right, it is the similarities with the greater medieval geographic tradition which inform an understanding of the purposes of that tradition.

The second type of map is the T-O or Y-O map, as illustrated by a T-O map found in a computus manuscript, Oxford, St. John's College, MS 17, FOL. 6r, from Thorney Abbey, England, c. 1110. This particular map seems to bridge the gap between the most schematic of T-O maps and a detailed map. Quite obviously arranged as a T-O map, in that the world itself is depicted as a circle (O) within which the three known continents are generally divided around the shape of a T (or sometimes a Y). This simplified, almost schematic rendering of the world is perhaps less approachable to a modern viewer, yet it serves a useful purpose. In its simplest form the T-O map represents only the known world, as a circle divided into three parts, corresponding to the three continents believed to have been divided among Noah's sons after the flood, and generally labeled with the continent names of Asia, Africa, and Europe. However, this visual aid is sometimes elaborated on, including spaces between the continents to represent bodies of water with the ocean surrounding the whole of the known world, the four directions of the compass, the twelve winds, and the names of Noah's sons. Occasionally the T-O map is modified

with a crucifix, a representation of Christ being sacrificed for the entire world, even as the symbol of his crucifixion is overlaid across the known world.¹⁷ The more elaborate T-O map from Thorney Abbey incorporates not only the names of the continents and of Noah's sons, but also a cross in the center (to designate Jerusalem and Christ), and a number of place-names on each continent, including a prominent label for Rome. Oddly, however, this T-O map, from an English abbey, despite including depictions of the islands of Britannia, Hibernia, and Thule, strangely places them in the far north, almost floating off the map itself. Only Britannia is encompassed within the outside boundary of the depicted ocean, while Hibernia and Thule aren't even included in that space. Despite the simplification of the subject, both the Thorney map and even the most unadorned T-O maps share a core of similarities with the greater medieval map tradition, namely that the known and habitable world comprises the three continents given to Noah's sons, and they are oriented with east at the top; despite the absence of a rendering of Eden, still there exists a reference to Eden in the east as a real part of the world, though separated from the world of men, as seen in the Vatican map.

The final type of medieval map, and in many ways the most schematic and removed from our present idea of a map, is the zonal map assumed to be an illustration accompanying Ælfric's *De temporibus anni* in the same manuscript as the Anglo-Saxon map, London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B.V. 1, fol. 29r. In general, zonal maps are characterized by a division of the world into five climatic zones, two frigid at opposite poles, two temperate, and one torrid zone at the

¹⁷ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 4-5.

equator.¹⁸ While this map maintains at least a passing indication of the shape and orientation of the three continents of the known world, this level of detail is not always present. Zonal maps are unique among medieval maps in that it is far more common for a zonal map to be oriented with north at the top instead of east—as is the case with the Cotton Tiberius map. As is common in zonal maps, this map maintains a strict parallelism in the division of climatic zones, yet also incorporates detailed waterways and oceans, and a simplified yet clearly delineated detail of the northern temperate zone. This detail includes two elaborate cities, though they remain un-named, and undulating coast lines for each continent and island. It seems likely that these cities are meant to depict Jerusalem and Rome, the two most often depicted cities on early medieval maps. Additionally, some zonal maps include designations of the twelve signs of the zodiac, associated with the twelve directions of the wind, and occasionally a diagonal band, crossing the map from northeast to southwest, intended to mark the passage of the sun across the sky.¹⁹

Though not often as overtly religious as either the detailed maps or even the T-O maps, the zonal maps are just as strongly a visual reminder of the place of man in the world and the relation of the world itself to God. As Christian Jacob relates in his article on the cultural significance of maps, “a schematic diagram, such as the zone-type *mappamundi* [or world map]...displays a great deal of information for it serves as a mnemonic summary of an entire cosmological treatise.”²⁰ The very simplicity of the form of the map makes it more accessible to, for instance, a

¹⁸ Ibid, 7; Simek, “The Shape of the Earth,” 296.

¹⁹ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 95.

²⁰ Christian Jacob, “Toward a Cultural History of Cartography,” *Imago Mundi* 48 (1996): 192.

worshiper in a church where a map like this may have been displayed, allowing him to recall the more complex tradition as echoed in the simple lines.

Understanding the intent in the form of the maps, the history they depict of geography in both secular and religious time and space, and the overarching themes they engage, it is likewise important to recognize the placement and use of maps in the early medieval period. In relation to the rest of the extant corpus of literature and art, they are not extremely common therefore their presence is significant when they do show up. Typically they are found in manuscripts, appropriately or not assumed to be illustrations of surrounding texts, and less frequently on their own in churches and monasteries. From this it is clear, as has been stated, that maps are not intended for travelers, but rather for “a group for whom travel was strictly limited,...the cloistered religious, monks and nuns, who dreamed of pilgrimage, but remained at home.”²¹ For this audience, an educated, religious group, the medieval map, whether simple or complex, offers a contemplative means whereby they can reflect on the visual image of the world. While doing so they can envision themselves not only on “spiritual journeys...to wonderful destinations,” as Edson has suggested, but I would propose also that they use these visual tools to work out, both graphically and mentally, their own place and sense of significance in the world and history around them.²² This placement and purpose of medieval maps easily illustrates the idea that “a map may display a view but it also provides the viewer with a point of view, a place in space.”²³ Even the maps found in manuscripts, like

²¹ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 14.

²² Ibid

²³ Jacob, “Toward a Cultural History,” 192.

the zonal map contained in Cotton Tiberius, help to serve this greater purpose of placement in space and time, being situated in relatively few works which hold a particular significance to an educated and Christian Anglo-Saxon audience.

The Anglo-Saxon World Map

The Cotton Tiberius manuscript originally contained three maps: the Anglo-Saxon map, the zonal map discussed above, and a lost celestial map. The manuscript was originally compiled at Christ Church, Canterbury in the early 11th century, just a few decades prior to the Norman Conquest (1066), but held at Battle Abbey by 1100, and now resides at the British Library.²⁴ The Anglo-Saxon map is one of the more rare detailed maps. There are only a handful of detailed maps extant which date prior to the Anglo-Saxon map, among them the Vatican map discussed above, and those which date after it bear the marks of its influence.

The Anglo-Saxon map is generally viewed in the context of its relationship with other medieval maps, as part of that greater European tradition, or in the context of its manuscript, as an insufficient illustration of any one of its neighboring texts.²⁵ However, as stated, the purpose of this thesis is to illustrate another view of the Anglo-Saxon map: one in which it stands as its own artifact, presenting a visual rendering of what its companion manuscript texts do in language and engaging

²⁴ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 74.

²⁵ Barber, "Medieval Maps of the World," in *The Hereford World Map: Medieval World Maps and their Context*, edited by P. D. A. Harvey (London: The British Library, 2006), 4-8; Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 75-6, 95; Patrick McGurk, *An 11th Century Miscellany: British Library Cotton Tiberius B.V. Part 1, Together With Leaves from British Library Cotton Nero D. 11* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1983), 79; Fabienne Michelet, *Creation, Migration and Conquest: Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 154-7; and Howe, *Writing the Map*, 175-176.

themes which other Anglo-Saxon literature likewise engage.²⁶ The Anglo-Saxon map may be read as visually mediating the placement of England within its pertinent, broader context, and in so doing this unique world map is not a poor illustration, but more appropriately a map of Anglo-Saxon social identity.

The Anglo-Saxon map is the only surviving example of a detailed world map from the Anglo-Saxon period in England. As such, it holds a unique place in geographic and Anglo-Saxon studies, regardless of whether or not it is a copy of an ancient Roman original, as P. D. A. Harvey believes.²⁷ Because the manuscript has been rebound, it is impossible to definitively say what order the constituent parts were originally in. Many believe that the Anglo-Saxon map was originally located adjacent to a copy of Priscian's poem, *Periegesis*, as an illustration of that text.²⁸ The map's meaning in the manuscript has caused some controversy as it doesn't really seem to be a fitting illustration of *Periegesis*, nor of any of the other texts in the manuscript itself; which include, among other things, a copy of *Marvels of the East*, computus texts, excerpts from Bede, genealogies of church fathers and Anglo-Saxon kings alike, and Aelfric's *De temporibus anni*.²⁹ Ultimately, whether the map was intended as an illustration to accompany a specific text, or just as an appropriate visual mapping of the world among texts which literarily map the world both

²⁶ In discussing the study of Old English literature, Fred C. Robinson, in "Old English Literature in its Most Immediate Context," in *The Editing of Old English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1949), 3-24, has cautioned that these texts must be read in the context of their original manuscripts and not separated out piecemeal. Although this study focuses on the Anglo-Saxon map itself, it is ever with reference to both its place in its manuscript, the greater Old English corpus, and the religious and secular history and philosophy which it invokes in image and word.

²⁷ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 74. Whether the Anglo-Saxon map was based off of an ancient Roman original and what bearing that may have in how we read the map is discussed in greater detail later on in this chapter.

²⁸ Ibid, 75-6; WL Bevan and HW Phillott, *Medieval Geography: An Essay in Illustration of the Hereford Mappa Mundi* (Amsterdam: Meridian Publishing, 1969), xxxiv.

²⁹ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 74-75.

geographically and chronologically, the Anglo-Saxon map has its own place and influence in the geographic tradition and its own societal narrative to tell.

The Anglo-Saxon map is relatively small, only measuring 21 x 17 cm. The layout is rectangular and so the landmasses are shaped to fit a rectangular space. Though the landmasses are mostly delineated and designated in black, the oceans are predominantly gray-blue, mountains are colored green, and many of the waterways in south Asia and Africa, including the Red Sea, are colored red (another common feature among colored early medieval maps).³⁰ As with most medieval maps, there is more writing to designate landmarks than illustration. As with the rest of the Cotton Tiberius manuscript, the Anglo-Saxon map is bilingual; landmarks are designated primarily in Latin and occasionally in Old English, but most of the narrative descriptions are in Old English. As Peter Barber suggests, it appears that whoever the artist was, he took great care in his work since “evidence of repainting suggests that he had second thoughts about the form and size of the northern part of Scotland.”³¹ Just as the Anglo-Saxon map served as a model for later medieval maps, it is commonly believed that an even earlier map was a model for the Anglo-Saxon map. Although the posited source map is no longer extant, most scholars believe that it was an ancient Roman detailed map, perhaps a map created by Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa.³² Certainly a logical argument could be that the Anglo-Saxon map must not really be particularly Anglo-Saxon because it stems from an ancient Roman original. On the contrary, it is the very fascination with Rome,

³⁰ Barber, “Medieval Maps of the World,” 6; Bevan and Phillott, *Medieval Geography*, xxxiv-xxxv.

³¹ Barber, “Medieval Maps of the World,” 4.

³² Ibid.

contemporary and ancient, which, when coupled with a new Anglo-Saxon perspective, serves to distinguish the map as truly Anglo-Saxon. The map may mimic contours and place names from a Roman original, but it goes beyond that original.

In part, the Anglo-Saxon map distinguishes itself as particular to its society because of its bilingual nature, incorporating both Latin and Old English. Indeed, the use of language in the map is particularly telling. Although applied to the written works in the Cotton Tiberius manuscript, Howe argues for the Anglo-Saxonness of those works despite their bilingual nature by saying that, “the use of both Latin and Old English, even on occasion for the same text, was more than a strategy for reaching various audiences: these forms accomplish the work of cultural transfer...What can be written about in the native language, this transfer insists, cannot remain entirely foreign or incomprehensible.”³³ Further, a truly bilingual approach to a “text,” meaning a free substitution for one language in the place of the other as opposed to a series of translations and glosses, would indicate an acceptance or ownership of the cultural material in question, in relation to the culture doing the “writing.”³⁴ As mentioned, in the map Old English is not used simply as a translation of the Latin, where a place name may be given in Latin and glossed in Old English, as one might expect if it was copied from a Roman original—this never occurs in the text of the map. Rather, Old English has its own place in the map, being used not simply for translation but instead of Latin for some place

³³ Howe, *Writing the Map*, 176.

³⁴ Here, “text” and “writing” are in quotes to allow for the inclusion of the idea of the Map as a sort of text in its own right, albeit a visual text, written as much as drawn.

names, and overwhelmingly as the language of choice in the instances of a more detailed, almost narrative description of a particular location on the map. Perhaps the most noted of these narrative descriptions is that which accompanies a wonderfully detailed and surprisingly large image of a lion in the north east: “hic abundant leones.” A simple statement, but one made only in Old English, not in Latin; and as such, a clearly Anglo-Saxon editorial of the world. This description and the others like it serve to evoke a perspective of the world stemming from the culture, history, philosophy, and religion of this particular insular people.

The first thing one is likely to notice, upon viewing the map, is the color and the detail. Even the Vatican map, the earliest extant world map, seems alien and hyper-simple in its lines when compared to the sinuous undulations of the coastlines and waterways, and irregular shapes of the continents depicted on the Anglo-Saxon map—all serving to present a view of the land much more in line with a modern sense of mapping. A more truly modern approach to mapping, with the type of careful detail we expect combined with the intention of creating a tool for navigation and travel is not largely produced until the portolan charts of the late thirteenth century.³⁵ The Anglo-Saxon map is truly a work of art, appropriately placed in a manuscript which is highly illustrated and decorated. More than that, however, the Anglo-Saxon map is a work of philosophy, of religious belief, of social

³⁵ Norman Thrower, *Maps & Civilization: Cartography in Culture and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 51-56. As Thrower summarizes, portolan charts were intended specifically to “aid navigation” and therefore they emphasize coastlines and other waterways. It is believed that these more modern maps were developed in part as a result of the development of the magnetic compass, and originated in the Mediterranean, later transmitted to the Islamic world through a manuscript in 1461.

definition and context—a depiction of meaning and being in the world for the Anglo-Saxons.

In *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England*, Nicholas Howe discusses a connection between a sense of identity and place in an exploration of Anglo-Saxon literature and what that indicates about the Anglo-Saxon view of themselves and their relationship to the rest of the world, both geographically and chronologically. One aspect of his argument addresses the various texts in the Cotton Tiberius manuscript. He mounts a convincing argument for his belief that all these texts about other places and other times ultimately serve to indicate a sense of Anglo-Saxon identity and self awareness almost antithetically. By highlighting all those things which are outside of England and the Anglo-Saxon moment, the texts in the Cotton Tiberius manuscript hint at what the Anglo-Saxons, themselves, may be: something more than just a marginally known people on an island to the West where they speak this language called Anglo-Saxon.

Though his focus was on the literary mapping of the world, Howe could have made the same application of his argument to the Anglo-Saxon map. After a brief description of the map, acknowledging that it does tend to catch the eye, he dismisses it as an “impoverished...form of representation...when set beside written and illustrated maps like *Wonders of the East*.”³⁶ Yet the map is a visual reminder not simply of an artist’s copy of another map, but rather of the Anglo-Saxon mapmaker’s participatory creation of belonging, placement, and meaning of the Anglo-Saxon culture in the great realm of religious and secular history and

³⁶ Howe, *Writing the Map*, 176-177.

geography. The decision to depict England in such detail is itself worth noting. As has been mentioned previously, England is not always represented on world maps, as seen with the Vatican map, and often it is misplaced and practically outside of the realm of the known, Christian world, as seen in the later T-O map from Thorney Abbey. However, here England is depicted as decidedly separate, an island to the north-west of the rest of the known world, and yet drawn into the continuum of space and time with the rest of the world. Not only is England drawn alongside the European continent, but it is distinguished by several rivers, place names, two drawings of cities, a curious image which appears to depict two figures fighting, and all the while done so with a more accurate situation in relation to the rest of the world than it was afforded in any previous world map. Here the mapmaker depicts his land as not simply an island which is part of the known world, but one with a people capable of building cities worth noting and a history all its own.

By including the level of detail which he does in England, the mapmaker presents England as a place significant for its own sake, where a civilized people lead their lives. The curious figures illustrated somewhat abstractly in the south-west corner of the island contribute to this sense of history and significance of England itself. No other country on the map has an icon to denote their own, separate history, yet England has these two figures. It is believed that these figures “may perhaps refer to events of earlier centuries, immortalized in the Arthurian legends, when the ancient Britons briefly halted the Anglo-Saxon drive west.”³⁷ This interpretation is possible, although considering that the map is an Anglo-Saxon

³⁷ Barber, 5.

creation, I think it more plausible to consider that it may refer rather to the brief success of the Britons in halting the Picts and Irish. This occurs just prior to the point when the Britons lost control again and invited the Anglo-Saxons to help them in their fight, a moment which even Bede makes mention of in the first book of his *Historia ecclesiastica*, as he views it as the first point where the Anglo-Saxons are singled out as a chosen people, called by God to help the failing Britons.³⁸ Although it is impossible to definitively say what moment or battle these figures are meant to depict, what remains important is that they serve the larger purpose of asserting a distinct history and mythology of England, as being this now Anglo-Saxon place, which here takes its place in the expanse of world history. Through these inclusions the Anglo-Saxon map becomes not simply a map of the world, but a map of the world as viewed by an Anglo-Saxon artist to reflect an Anglo-Saxon identity, their own placement mediated by his understanding of the rest of the world and time “out there.”

Throughout the following three chapters, I will explore in turn the central themes of divine creation, secular history and mythology, and apocalypse. Each chapter will begin with an analysis of the Anglo-Saxon map in the context of each of these themes, respectively, and conclude with an analysis of the literature. Founded upon the analysis of the map, the exploration in the literature of these same three themes will serve to support the reading of the map as not simply a poor illustration in its manuscript, but as “text” in its own right alongside other texts in the Cotton Tiberius manuscript, and more broadly as a visual depiction of these important

³⁸ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), i.14.

themes which recur throughout so much of the literature of Anglo-Saxon England—
an elegy in image and word in a tradition of elegiac literature.

II

DIVINE ORIGIN: CREATION AND CHRISTIANITY

We begin with the medieval Christian concept of divine beginnings. This chapter will explore the theme of divine creation and other markers of Christian history, both events and places of significance, as they are represented in and engaged by both the Anglo-Saxon map and examples of elegiac Old English literature. From retellings and references to the story of creation in prose and poetry, to reminders of significant people, places, and events in Christian history, the Anglo-Saxon artist seems to have often reached out to this religiously accepted chronology as a way to tie into a shared story and acknowledged authority, all in an effort to place themselves and their society in that continuum as they establish purpose, foundation, and power in their place in the world.

The Anglo-Saxon World Map

Perhaps the most immediately noticeable theme which this map shares with the medieval geographic tradition and its literary contemporaries is the sense of a divine creation and Christian religious history. Because it is the only extant example of a detailed world map from the period, the Anglo-Saxon map is especially evocative to a modern audience who can at least relate to the format of the map, as it approximates cartography as we know it. Indeed, it is for this reason, too, that the inclusion of such a wealth of religious history and references seems somewhat

puzzling. Yet, collectively these religious references form the foundation, the back-story, which ties all the rest together for a proper reading not only of the map itself, but of what it depicts of how the Anglo-Saxons conceived of their identity.

In the context of the medieval map tradition, the Anglo-Saxon map is average in terms of how often it diverges and how often it stays in step with the tendencies of that tradition. As discussed somewhat in Chapter 1, it is the particular balance of similarity and difference which leads to a specifically Anglo-Saxon reading of the map and the world. Although the Anglo-Saxon map is “rightly” oriented with East at the top, as is most common in medieval world maps, for a map with so much biblical content it is almost surprising that Eden itself is not expressly depicted. Instead of the common tradition of depicting Eden in the extreme east, at the top of the map and the beginning of space and time, as it were, the map “begins” with an island at the top, in the easternmost position on the map, labeled *Tabrobanen*, an Old English spelling of Laperbana, or modern day Ceylon (Sri Lanka). This is similar to the Vatican map, discussed in Chapter 1, although in that case Eden is still depicted on the continent of Asia, directly west of Ceylon. Despite the omission of a labeled Eden in the Anglo-Saxon map, its orientation of East to West still serves as a reminder of the commonly held belief, stemming from the biblical account of the creation of Eden and man in a land in the East, that the East represents the beginning of time and the divine creation of mankind. It is this eastward starting point from which the rest of the world and time flows.

Read from east to west, or top to bottom, the map loosely mirrors the focus of the three themes of creation, in the east, secular and religious history throughout,

and apocalypse and the limits of civilization in the west. Though Eden itself is not depicted on the map, there are a number of Christian places and events included, which, moving from east to west down the map, move the viewer not only through space, but also through the continuum of Christian sacred history. Ultimately, by association with the accepted progress of divine creation and the rest of Christian history, these other biblical reference points serve, alongside the Eastern orientation, to remind the viewer of a divine creation at the beginning of the world. Among these biblical elements are both pictorial illustrations as well as named places. A detailed depiction of Noah's Ark is drawn, an elaborate four-storied vessel, caught up in the top of a mountain toward the north, labeled *Arca*. Then, perhaps in case the reference to an ark caught in the top of a mountain wouldn't be quite clear enough, there is a smaller inscription below *Arca* which reads *Noe*. In this small detail is carried the weight of the story of the flood, Noah's ark, and the beginnings of men upon the land again once the waters receded. Beyond that, further to the north, the land of *gog et magog*, mentioned both in religious history and myths surrounding Alexander the Great, is denoted by their names, pressed up against the sea on two sides. Back in the south, *Mont Sina* (Mount Sinai) is located west and south of Ceylon, on the Asian continent. Just to the south of this Mountain is the Red Sea, conspicuously split into two sections. Here the mapmaker depicts a path of dry land by a series of short, undulating strokes, as though to indicate the ephemeral nature of this temporary crossing point. It is across this break in the Red Sea that the Israelites escaped from their Egyptian captors, according to the biblical account in Exodus.

Not only are Old Testament references included in the map, those mentioned above and others including *hiericho* (Jericho) and nine of the twelve tribes of Israel, but of course New Testament references as well: *galilea*, Bethlehem, and *hierusale* (Jerusalem).¹ Surprisingly, the placement of Jerusalem varies from the absolute central point which is prevalent in almost all medieval maps both before and after the Anglo-Saxon map. Though off-center in this world map, placed roughly midway from east to west, but further to the south (right) than usual (a placement which is further discussed in Chapter 3), it is still denoted by a label and an illustration of a large city. The placement of Jerusalem may serve two purposes. On the one hand, its slightly off center position seems to be more geographically accurate than other medieval maps necessarily attempted in their treatment of this city. Yet to say that the map is striving for geographic accuracy over symbolic accuracy would be in error, if applied to the map as a whole. Although the Anglo-Saxon map attempts a more geographically accurate depiction of the world, as seen here and also in terms of the formation of rivers, mountains, and coastlines, that accuracy only continues in so far as it does not detract from the symbolism of the places and times represented. In the mapmaker's treatment of Jerusalem, with the elaborate illustration of a city and still roughly central location, Jerusalem here retains a sense of central importance to a Christian view of the world. Further to the west lies *Roma*, a city noteworthy for its dual importance to the Anglo-Saxon imagination as representative of both an ancient political empire and a present-day center of Roman Catholicism. Whatever their individual, relative importance when looked at

¹ Barber, "Medieval Maps of the World," 5.

in isolation, all these Christian references taken together serve to evoke an immediate sense of the entire breadth of religious history, from the initial, divine beginning in the east, projecting forward in time to a prophesied apocalypse. This chronology of religious history is likewise depicted in Anglo-Saxon literature, both in works that are more directly Christian, as well as works which are arguably not so didactic in their religious connections.

Old English Literature

Given how widespread Christianity was in England towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon era, it isn't surprising that the foundational origin story, the divine, Christian creation, should find a particularly important place in the writings of that people. It is a story which, in conjunction with their more recent cultural past as conquerors, the Anglo-Saxons "turned to...so that they might identify their common nature as a people and understand their religious history."² Either blatantly or subtly, in seemingly appropriate and sometimes inappropriate places, this story of creation finds a home in and adds context to many of the works of Anglo-Saxon literature. Retellings of the biblical account of the creation of the world, found in Genesis, and references to it are common in Anglo-Saxon literature, both prose and poetry, including examples in *Beowulf*, *Genesis A*, the Cotton Maxims and elegies.

As one of the most iconic works of Anglo-Saxon literature, it is fitting to explore the story of creation as it is contained in what might initially seem an unlikely source: *Beowulf*. Despite the surface subject matter of ancient heathen

² Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, ix.

nations, *Beowulf* is not so much about the ancient Danish past, but rather serves to define part of what makes up the Anglo-Saxon identity through a poem which connects the Anglo-Saxon present to a mythic, authoritative past. It is only with this recognition that the otherwise anachronistic Song of Creation (ll. 89b-98) can be properly understood. This retelling of the Christian creation story from Genesis is not just a narrative aside, a seemingly inappropriate entertainment in Hrothgar (a heathen's) hall, but rather this incident references a fundamental sense of origin in relation to which the reader is expected to situate not just the Danish characters, but the Anglo-Saxon author and audience.

In exploring the purpose behind the inclusion of the Song of Creation it is not my intent to further the belief by some scholars that *Beowulf* is a purely Christian poem,³ but rather, to illustrate that the Song of Creation, partly because of when and where it is performed, is in fact not limited to a Christian people, but is instead more generally a reference to an original divine creation of the world for all people, heathen and Christian alike, who work out their lives in this world. Given the foundational importance to the Anglo-Saxons, a Christian audience, of a sense of divine creation, it should not be so surprising that the Song of Creation occurs so early in the poem, lines 90-98. Unlike the Christian genealogy of monsters, which follows it in the poem as narrative back-story, outside of the action, the Song of Creation is integrated into the action of the story of Hrothgar and Heorot itself. It begs the question, why is this story sung in this hall of heathens? Hrothgar and his

³ For instance, in Margaret Goldsmith, "The Christian Perspective in *Beowulf*," *Comparative Literature* 14, No. 1, *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G Brodeur* (Winter, 1962), 71-90.

people are decidedly not Christian, we are constantly reminded that they are heathens as they react to Grendel's attacks by going to their "hærgtrafum" (heathen temples), for "swylce wæs þeah hyra, hæþenra hyht" (Such was their custom, hope of the heathens) and "Metod hie ne cuþon" (they knew not the Creator).⁴

So, why do these *hæþena* entertain themselves with a Song of Creation? As Osborn discusses, many suppose that the *scop* is paraphrasing Genesis, "but this observation misses the poet's point completely. For those listening in Heorot the song cannot be a paraphrase because they do not know Genesis. For us [and the Anglo-Saxon audience] it is a paraphrase because we do know Genesis."⁵ However, it would be inappropriate to then jump to the conclusion that its inclusion demonstrates a firmly Christian allegorical intent in the poem. For the Anglo-Saxons it is a paraphrase, but it is more than just that, set in Heorot, among the heathen, it loses some of its overtly Christian tones and takes on a more universal character. Mediated by a separation through time and space, between the original divine creation, the Denmark of *Beowulf*, and Anglo-Saxon England, the poet emphasizes the point that the Christian creation is an origin for all people and things—whether they know it or not.

As Grendel listens outside, the poet places the audience "in hælle" (in the hall) where we discover that,

þær wæs hearpan sweg,

⁴ Fr. Klaeber, ed. *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd edition (Lexington: DC Heath and Company, 1950), 7, ll 175b, 178b-179a, and 180b. All Old English and Latin translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

⁵ Marijane Osborn, "The Great Feud: Scriptural History and Strife in *Beowulf*," *PMLA* 93, No. 5 (1978), 975.

swutol sang scopes. Sægde se þe cupe
 frumsceaft fira feorran reccan,
 cwæð þæt se Ælmihtiga eorðan worh[te],
 wlitebeorhtne wang, swa wæter bebugeð,
 gesette sigehrepig sunnan ond monan
 leoman to leohte landbuendum,
 ond gefrætwaðe foldan sceatas
 leomum ond leafum; life ac gesceop
 cynna gehwylcum þara ðe cwide hwyrfaþ.

[There was the sound of the harp, the clear song of the bard. He told, who
 knew how to recount from long ago, the creation of men, said that the
 Almighty made the earth, a beautiful plain, surrounded by water, established
 the triumphant sun and moon, lights as illumination for the earth-dwellers,
 and adorned the regions of the earth with branches and with leaves; he also
 created life of each kind which moves about alive.]⁶

As the Anglo-Saxon poet sets the singing of the Song of Creation in Heorot, a pagan
 hall, he emphasizes a belief that the Christian creation isn't limited to Christianity,
 but rather an origin story which the Anglo-Saxons imagine for all humanity. The
 Song implies that this earth is divinely created not simply for the Danes, nor the
 Geats, nor even for the Anglo-Saxons, but rather for "landbuend" (earth-dwellers).

Yet, despite these more ambiguous elements, there remain the clear facts of
 the creation, that it was divinely done, and with seeming care. The Almighty not

⁶ Klaeber, *Beowulf*, ll. 89b-98.

only “eorðan worh[te]” (made the earth), but it was created as “wlitebeorhtne wang” (a beautiful plain) which is “gefrætwaðe” (adorned) with all the elements of the natural world. The very language itself implies a sense of beauty, of richness, of an almost maternal care in this, the universal creation of all the ages of men, situated by the poet in the action of the poem so as to be remembered among Hrothgar and the Danes, yet openly imagined by the Anglo-Saxon poet’s audience for all those who lived before then and will live after them as part of the history of the world.

For the Anglo-Saxon poet, it is the assurance that this original creation leads to the Anglo-Saxon people in an unbroken chain of people and history; that it was not just for the first pre-lapsarian people, that it provides a solid foundation from which the poet may view and contextualize his own society and world. His society may have purpose and valid authority because the creation had purpose and power. For a people who had been the conquering force and now faced with such uncertainty in their daily lives, from weather, disease, and particularly from invasion, this sense of connection to a thoughtful, divine purpose and origin could easily serve as a resource for context and validation in their rule.⁷

In terms of helping to establish their right to rule, the story of divine creation as told in *Genesis A* provides an interestingly Anglo-Saxon, militant take on the Christian creation story. More detailed than the song of the *scop* in *Beowulf*, *Genesis A*, found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11, is a more explicit retelling of much of the book of Genesis in the Bible, though with remarkable differences. The story of

⁷ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, i.1-16.

the creation of the world and men, comprising ll. 93-233, though it echoes its namesake story in the Bible, is unique, establishing a sense of the society who interpreted that original story within a context which they saw themselves in—as conquerors of a dark and dangerous land, now made bright and beautiful.

One of the most arresting changes in the story of creation, as contained here, is the characterization of God as a martial ruler. The war in Heaven has just ended with God throwing out all of the “herewosan” (warriors), the “gielspsceaþan” (boastful enemies) and God is left in an empty Heaven.⁸ The impetus to create the world and man is here presented as a way to populate Heaven again, but with a “selran werode” (better company) of beings.⁹ God now desires “woruldgesceafta on wraðra gield, / para þe forhealdene of hleo sende” (a world-creation in place of the wrathful, whom he cast from refuge in their rebellion).¹⁰ The Anglo-Saxon author here perpetuates a story which casts God as a martial ruler and links man to God as a chosen people.

More so than in any other Anglo-Saxon retelling of the creation story, God is here presented as not simply a loving King of Heaven, but rather as a militant leader, using his might and power to battle first his own angels, then the elements to wrestle the world into being as he would have it be. God looks down from heaven at

⁸ George Krapp, ed., “Genesis A,” in *The Junius Manuscript, ASPR 1* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), ll. 85a and 96a. This story, of the destruction and casting out of the rebellious angels by God as part of the War in Heaven, is not unique to *Genesis A*. The history of angels, their creation, destruction, and ultimate fall, as though foreshadowing what would happen with Adam and Eve and the generations of men, is put forward in the Anglo-Saxon period largely through the work of Ælfric, which he in turn had modeled off of several sources. Michael Fox has written on this topic, specifically the creation and fall of angels as seen through Ælfric’s writings, in his article, “Ælfric on the Creation and Fall of Angels,” *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. 31, 2002, 175-200.

⁹ Krapp, “Genesis A,” l. 95.

¹⁰ Ibid., ll. 101-102.

a teeming mass of darkness, a place “dreama lease” (void of joy).¹¹ Continuing the characterization of God as military hero, it is only “strangum mihtum” (with powerful might) that he establishes “þis ruma land” (this ample land).¹² As the creation continues, God, alone, wrestles the chaos into order, “gesundrode [...] / ofer laguflode leoht wið þeostrum, / sceade wið sciman” (sundered ... / light from darkness, / shadow from brilliance) seemingly caught up in an epic battle with forces far larger than himself.¹³ The references to darkness and chaos outside the realm of God's creation for man brings to mind the geographic tradition in which the world outside of the part given to man by God is populated by violent conditions and beasts. And yet ultimately those chaotic forces are unable to withstand his strength, might, and power, “the heahcininges hæð” (High King's command) as he ultimately maintains his status as the “sigora waldend” (King of Victory) and is “wel licode” (very pleased) by his creation.¹⁴ All of this militant language--the characterization of God as brilliant, powerful leader without a people, fighting to create a place for his future chosen people to prosper, and succeeding in those efforts--underscore the Anglo-Saxon experience in England as conquerors who also wish to unify their land and bring into being a people under their name, to be prosperous and powerful in a land made better by them. This description of God as a militant conqueror establishes a pattern for both their historical social structure and emphasis on warrior-heroes, like Beowulf, and their history as conquerors of England.

¹¹ Ibid, l 108a.

¹² Ibid, ll 114a-115.

¹³ Ibid, ll 126-128a.

¹⁴ Ibid, ll 124a-131.

In conjunction with the similarities between this very militant God and the military prowess of the Anglo-Saxons over the Britons, *Genesis A* evokes a sense of openness to the creation, just as *Beowulf* does. The world is created for all the sons of men, “under fæstenne folca hrofes” (under the firmament which roofs all people).¹⁵ The poet emphasizes the creation as one undertaken not only for Adam and Eve, but also for all of their progeny, which are also His progeny. Adam and Eve are blessed and instructed, but as the “monna cynnes / ða forman twa” (first two of the race of man).¹⁶ God is not just their god alone, but “metod alwihta” (the creator of all) and he surveys his work, man included, in one sweep as “þa sceawode scyppend ure / his weorca wlite and his wæstma blæd, / niwra gesceafta” (then our creator looked at the beauty of his labors and the glory of his abundance, of his new creations).¹⁷ The poets’ use of more general language in conjunction with *ure* highlights a perception of man as being part of the earth, the rest of creation, and situates the Anglo-Saxons, as the “our” in question, in the midst of that divine creation. The openness of the language in the creations stories in both *Beowulf* and *Genesis A* serves to emphasize a view that the rest of creation (history and the world around man) is integrally connected to the present situation of the Anglo-Saxons. Just as in the Anglo-Saxon map, the world and history are not merely a backdrop outside of the experience of the mapmaker, but rather he envisions his people as inherently connected to the rest of creation, the remnants of civilizations past in story, theme, and drawing all serving to mark the passage of time and experience, of

¹⁵ Ibid., l. 153.

¹⁶ Ibid., ll. 193b-194a.

¹⁷ Ibid., ll. 193a, 206-208a.

which the Anglo-Saxons are a part. This universality of the creation helps lend authority to the Anglo-Saxons' own conquest of England, linking them to a divine origin and place in the progress of religious history and endowing them with the right to establish control, if they, like God, can wrestle the chaos before them.

Though not as lengthy or detailed in their treatment of the creation story, the Cotton Maxims also contain references to the Christian story of origin, as though taking for granted that the reader would already be aware of the tale in its entirety. Early on there is an assertion in the listing of the seasons of the year that the “geres wæstmas” (fruits of the year) are “þa þe him god sendeð” (those which God sends to them).¹⁸ Thereafter the Maxims move into an assertion of the proper place and order of the world and all things therein, from philosophical ideas like truth to physical beings like fish and bears. The order in the world, as created by God, is implicitly emphasized. To such a degree does everything have a purpose and place in creation that even God is located “on heofenum, dæda demend” (in heaven, judging our deeds); just as the other realities of life, the Creator is situated in relation to His creations and accordingly carries out His role in the text.¹⁹ Finally, towards the end of the verses there is a section on natural phenomena, from tempests and ocean waves to stars, which “sceal on heofenum beorhte scinan, swa him behead meotud” (must shine bright in the heavens, just as the Creator bade them).²⁰ The fact that God is explicitly referred to as Creator is not in itself

¹⁸ Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, ed, “Maxims II,” in *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ASPR 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), l. 9.

¹⁹ Ibid, ll. 35b-36a.

²⁰ Ibid, ll. 48b-49.

remarkable, as that is a title given to God in a number of Old English works. What is particularly appropriate to the Maxims is the implication here that God has a continuing power over the earth: the world and all that is part of the phenomenal world still act according to what the Creator *bebead*, and the order of his divine creation remains constant, despite difficulties like war.

Likewise, many of the Old English elegies refer to the Christian story of creation, though they too don't recount as much of the creation story as we see in either *Beowulf* or *Genesis A*. In *The Wanderer*, amid the litany of trials there are brief references to a divine creation as the poet mentions "metud" (the maker) in reference to God, and later on indirectly refers to the creation through a reference to the Fall.²¹ In this second reference, the narrator is lamenting the loss of his people and, taking a step back to view his peoples' experience in the context of a larger historic perspective, he then declares: "Swa þes middangeard / ealra dogra gehwam dreoseð ond fealleþ" (Thus this middle-earth / falls and decays each and every day).²² This follows the idea that after the Fall the earth and its inhabitants became fallen themselves, distanced from the grace they had known in their first divine creation, subject to the dominant forces of mortality—death, disease, and decay. Also, in the repetition of the idea of each or every day, in *ealra* and *gehwam*, there is a sense of the progress of time from a less fallen state to an increasingly fallen state, culminating, logically, in some end. This is echoed in a passage from *The Seafarer*, as

²¹ George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, eds., "The Wanderer," in *The Exeter Book, ASPR* 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), l. 2a. According to the Dictionary of Old English Corpus, this term, *meotod*, or a variant of it occurs 288 times in the corpus of Old English literature, and only 4 times in reference to God, as Creator or Maker, in the Exeter Book Elegies. The inclusion of this instance in *The Wanderer* is meant to serve merely as an example of the context in which the idea of God as creator occurs in these poems.

²² Ibid., ll. 62b-63.

it relates that “[b]læd is gehnæged, / eorþan indryhto ealdað ond searað, / swa nu monna gehwylc geond middangeard” (joy is laid low, / the nobility of the earth grows old and withers, / as every man throughout middle-earth).²³ In their reference to a post-lapsarian world, the language of both these elegies evokes the same sense of progress from origins to ends, an Anglo-Saxon teleology, which the map depicts visually.

It is to *The Seafarer* which we must turn for a look at the most comprehensive, though still quite short, retelling of the Christian origin story in any of the elegies. Referring to God the poet simply states, as though it were an aside, that “se gestapelade stipe grundas, / eorþan sceatas ond uprodor” (he established the sturdy foundations, / the solid surface of the earth and the upper heavens).²⁴ As this elegy is generally considered the most overtly Christian of the elegies, it is perhaps not surprising that we would find this level of detail on the creation story in such a relatively short work. Yet here, in two lines, we see a linguistic rendering of the story of creation which is perhaps most similar to the visual rendering we see in the Anglo-Saxon map. The brevity and lack of specific details and narrative to tie it all together do not work against an Anglo-Saxon audiences’ understanding of the entire story. Rather, it is in fact due to the broad knowledge of and sense of relationship to this creation story held by the Anglo-Saxon poet, mapmaker, and audience, that these foreshortened versions can still convey a deep sense of significance and meaning to the intended audience. It is through a sense of history

²³ George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, eds., “The Seafarer,” *The Exeter Book*, ASPR 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), ll 88b-90.

²⁴ Ibid, ll 104-105.

and their placement in the world that the Anglo-Saxons find context for their nation. Although the Christian creation story is a theme in much of the Old English corpus, in brief and longer accounts alike, even in these two lines from *The Seafarer* and the few sketches and place names on the Anglo-Saxon map relating to Christian history and origins, we can see a deeper understanding of the connection to the Christian creation story which the Anglo-Saxons felt for their own nation—a sense of the continuing progression of time and place in which they situated themselves, and by which they validated and contextualized their authority and purpose through their literature and art.

III

SECULAR ORIGINS: THE MYTH OF ROME

From the tangible ruins embedded within the Anglo-Saxon countryside to the mythic imaginings of origin, the Anglo-Saxons were closely connected to an idea of ancient Rome. Constituting the second theme this thesis will explore, the idea of secular, and most particularly Roman, origin is one which informed the Anglo-Saxon map and much of Old English literature. Sometimes treated historically, sometimes treated as the stuff of myth and legend, Anglo-Saxon artists repeatedly engaged Rome as an ancient empire, outside of the later Christian ties to Rome as the center of the Catholic Church. In doing so both the map and the literature present a story of how Anglo-Saxon society came to be on the heels of one of the greatest empires the world has ever known. Further, in this connection to an ancient Roman past, both the map and the literature begin to explore the implications for the fall of a great society, and how to possibly mitigate one's own social apocalypse.¹

The Anglo-Saxon World Map

Despite a belief in a divine creation and their place in that history, the Anglo-Saxons are still very much interested in establishing their worldly origins—realizing a connection to a classical, primarily Roman, past. The preoccupation with this question of origins is evident in the history of the map as well as the content of the

¹ Although the connection to social apocalypse will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, the connection to the fall of the Roman Empire is first explored here.

map itself, and in Anglo-Saxon literary interests in ordering the world, real and imagined genealogies, and the Anglo-Saxon fascination with Rome.²

The history of the Anglo-Saxon Map, in terms of its possible sources, has been discussed in greater detail already. It will therefore suffice to reiterate here that despite the likelihood of an ancient Roman source map, the Anglo-Saxon Map as it was created is something quite unlike a simple copy of a Roman original. In the process of viewing and depicting the world he knew and the times he'd only heard of in this single graphic representation, the Anglo-Saxon mapmaker orders the world in the context of his Anglo-Saxon location and experience in that world. Not merely glossing and copying a Latin-Roman map, but incorporating the source map into his own perception of the world and history.

World history largely receives a similarly chronological progression through the map from East to West (top to bottom) as Christian religious history does. As Barber remarks, the inclusion of "Babylon, Medea, Macedonia, and Rome are intended to recall the four empires which had characterized human history."³ Not only does their presence on the map evoke a memory of ages past and question the Anglo-Saxon relationship to those ages, but they too are placed on the map roughly along the east-west axis, from beginnings to ends, moving forward in time, from Media in the east to Rome in the west, and beyond.⁴ The inclusion on the map of each empire labeled by its Latin name would seem to suggest that despite having

² See Ch. 1 for a discussion of the possible source map for the Anglo-Saxon map.

³ Barber, "Medieval Maps of the World," 5.

⁴ This holds true, chronologically, from Media then westward to Babylon, Macedonia, Rome, and past these four to England in the extreme west. Though a modern mapping of these four ancient empires illustrates some overlapping of their boundaries and even the beginning and ending dates of these great empires may occasionally overlap, they are here placed on the map in such a way as to approximate not only their central location, but also a chronology of their beginnings.

passed out of existence, these ancient empires were still viewed as great by the Anglo-Saxons. But Babylon and Rome seem to have special significance, as they are both marked with a Latin label and a large, fairly intricate drawing of a city. Their particular treatment in the map suggests that they were empires of strength and lasting impact on the Anglo-Saxon imagination. The careful representation of these two cities is all the more remarkable because the mapmaker did not depict any German cities on the map—the real ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons. Thus we begin to see a connection being made to a mythical and cultural authoritative past, not necessarily a real past. This line of connection will continue to expand, throughout the analysis of the map and the literature.

As seen above, with the contrary treatments of Germany versus Rome and Babylon, the placement of locations and illustrations on the map bears significance as one reads the map. Contrary to what most medieval maps depict, Jerusalem, though present, is pushed to the side off of center in the Anglo-Saxon map, the center of the map instead given over to an exaggeratedly large Mediterranean Sea and details of its islands. A close look at this central section of the map is necessary to understand the mediation which the mapmaker conducts between worldly and divine origins. If anything helps to show that this isn't simply a copy of a Roman original, it is that Rome itself isn't even central on the map, being located slightly left of center, and far to the west, almost midway between the center-point and the bottom edge. The labeled locations closest to the center-point are *mont olimpus* and *troia* to the immediate left of center, and *hierusale* further to the right. The mapmaker preserves a sense of the Christian importance of Jerusalem while driving

home a connection not simply to Rome, but to a mythic Roman past and beyond, to a time of Greek mythos in power and authority as well. This relation to mythic origins is put forward in part through the depictions of Troy and Mount Olympus, far and away the tallest mountain on the map. Especially since many religious scholars view the importance of Rome in the medieval period as a connection to authority which shifted, with the fall of the Roman empire, from pagan empire to divine Christian empire, it is noteworthy that the mapmaker connects more directly to the mythic past than to the contemporary spiritual authority of Rome.⁵

Going back to the depiction of the Mediterranean Sea, the prominence of this area of the world as depicted in the Anglo-Saxon map serves to recall the importance of the ancient Roman empire, separate from medieval Rome, as a symbol of political authority and autonomy, order, and civilization for much of early Europe. Additionally, there is a visual similarity between the shape and clustering effect of the depiction of the islands in the Mediterranean Sea and those of the Orkney and Hebrides Islands, even Ireland, off the coast of England. This visual parallelism reinforces a sense of connection between England and ancient Rome, as though despite their separation in space and time, the Anglo-Saxon mapmaker is drawing his own society into a hereditary link with this great empire of the past and its mythic origins.

Beyond just the prominence of the Mediterranean Sea and its association with ancient Rome, the mapmaker also divides much of Asia and Europe, even parts

⁵ The distinction between Roman Christianity and the practice of Christianity in England is the topic of discussion for many, both in the Medieval period and now. However, this debate does not bear pertinence to the argument at hand and will therefore not be explored here.

of Africa, into their previous Roman provinces. Thus the world is categorized not only by the biblical references to areas given to the twelve tribes of Israel, as was already mentioned, but simultaneously by the place names given to it during the reign of the Roman Empire, the civilizing effects and relationships of the political power marked on the land itself, echoing through the ages.

At the very edge of the world, in the extreme west, are two prominent illustrations: the Pillars of Hercules. These are significant for two reasons: first, for their connection to a mythical Roman past, once again asserted here, and second, for their significance relative to the end of the known world and time. In their own place in Roman mythology, the Pillars of Hercules are said to have been created by Hercules, either as he opened or, conversely, narrowed the gap leading to the Atlantic Ocean. Either way, throughout the ancient and medieval periods, for ancient Rome and the Anglo-Saxons, these monoliths represented the end of the known and knowable world, an unambiguous reminder of a mythic Roman past and its conjunction with their own Anglo-Saxon future.

Old English Literature

As the map visually depicts these connections to Roman order, Christianity, empire, and myth, so too do the literature of Cotton Tiberius and the Old English Elegies reflect on these connections in word. Though brief, even the Cotton Maxims, like the Anglo-Saxon map, also in the Cotton Tiberius manuscript, begin with a sense of the past, of origin as a foundation for the ordered view of the Anglo-Saxon world which they go on to describe. This can be seen in the simple reference to cities as

the “orðanc enta geweorc, þa þe on þysse eorðan syndon, wrætlic weallstanna geweorc” (skillful work of giants, which in this earth are, wondrous work of buildings of stone).⁶ Indeed, the ruins of Roman buildings and roads would have filled the Anglo-Saxon landscape, all the more set apart from the Anglo-Saxon present as the Romans primarily built out of stone while the Anglo-Saxons primarily built out of wood. The language recalls *The Ruin* and evokes a sense of ages past which have left their mark on the land to serve as a reminder of the greatness which existed before the Anglo-Saxons and still influences their land and how they wish to rule in it. In *The Ruin* it is the “enta geweorc” (work of giants), which falls into decay around them, reminding the viewer of the “rice æfter oþrum” (kingdom after another), which ruled the land of Britain. In these two works, then, we see the mythic reference to giants. As it is used, in the context of the history and references to ruins, it seems both a catchall phrase for mythic, sometimes monstrous creatures as well as a non-specific reference for the men of ages past. The reference to *rice* a few lines further on in *The Ruin* helps to further a reading of *ent* in that poem as less non-human monster and rather a reference to the greatness of the kingdoms past—a giant among men, as it were.

In the process of moving from those mythic beginnings of order we can follow a series of genealogies, real and imagined. The Cotton Tiberius manuscript itself is involved in this process of listing the generations, of linking from the most ancient past to the present day, and includes, as McGurk describes them, “lists,

⁶ Dobbie, “Maxims,” ll 2-3a.

episcopal, regnal and other, and the genealogies.”⁷ Though at times arguably less grounded in historical fact, and though they occasionally include a mythic character, these genealogies are nevertheless put forward as real and as such, provide an unbroken literary link between the asserted religious and political authority of Anglo-Saxon leaders and the recognized religious and political authority stretching back to Noah and beyond to the first creation.

But the lists of genealogies, whether of the history of a people or individual, connecting from the present to the deep past, is not limited to scholarly or religious works of the Anglo-Saxons; the genealogical preoccupation pervades the poetic works as well. *Beowulf* provides a good example. The origins of men and monsters in *Beowulf* has often been studied, although it is not the purpose of this paper to break new ground in that area. Suffice it to say that the apparent interest in the poem in where the characters come from, both geographically and ancestrally, is a literary parallel to the visual geography and genealogy of the Anglo-Saxon and other world maps. It is significant that the poem moves from the Song of Creation (ll. 89-98) to three lines which connect the men of the first creation with the people in Hrothgar’s hall, simply and succinctly. The poem moves from the Song of Creation, where the *Ælmihtiga* creates the earth, men and “*eac cynna gewhylcum*” (every kind that moved), to say that “*Swa ðe driht-guman dreamum lifdon, eadiglice, oððæt an ongan fyrene fremman feond on helle. Wæs se grimma gæst Grendel haten*” (Thus this lordly people lived in joy, blessedly, until one began to work his foul crimes, a

⁷ McGurk, *An Eleventh Century Miscellany*, 107.

fiend from Hell. This grim spirit was called Grendel).⁸ In these short lines the poet moves us forward from the creation of the world and men to the current action of the poem, linking the first men with the Danes and by extension also the audience for the poem, the Anglo-Saxons, as a lordly people living in joy. It is directly after this connection is made that Grendel is mentioned and his own history and genealogy is explained, as one of “Caines cynn” (Cain’s race) who is separated from the glory of the men of the first creation and left to dwell in the margins with “eotenas ond ylfe ond orcneas, swylce gigantas, þa wið Gode wunnon” (trolls and elves and the living dead, and also the giants who strove against God).⁹ Here there is a further distinction from the comprehensive universality of the “landbuendum” (earth-dwellers) of the Song of Creation (as discussed in Chapter 2) into the “driht-guman” (lordly people) and the progeny of “Caines cynne.”¹⁰ Each group has a history, a link to power and authority, good or evil, in the past.

The map separates the lands and men of authority from the monsters, Gog and Magog, and a variety of monstrous beasts depicted in Africa. So too does the text of *Beowulf* make a distinction between the Geats who have retained divine authority and power, and who strive to assert order due to their link with the glory of the first creation, from the monstrous Grendel and his Mother, who fight against them and seek to bring destruction and chaos. Just as the *Beowulf* poet makes this distinction, so too does Bede, in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, draw on the same tradition

⁸ Klaeber, *Beowulf*, ll 99-102.

⁹ Ibid., ll 106-113. Certainly Cain’s genealogy is not a creation of the *Beowulf* poet, but here he ties in the idea of Grendel with the character who perhaps most epitomizes a single man’s monstrous action against God: Cain. In this, the poet creates another link between the Anglo-Saxon imagination and Christian religious history and authority.

¹⁰ Ibid., ll 95, 99, and 107.

of religious authoritative origins, though his sense of the foundations of England inevitably include Rome.

Of course, with the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, despite the fall of the Roman Empire, Rome itself continued to hold a power over England, as the anchor of the new religion following landmark moments like Pope Gregory the Great's initiation of missions to Anglo-Saxon England, the conversion of Edwin and many of the Anglo-Saxons by Paulinus, in 627, and the Synod of Whitby in 664. Coming from this tradition of Anglo-Saxon England aligning itself with Rome, Bede, writing in Latin, engages Rome in his *Historia ecclesiastica*. In Book i. 1 he begins by describing the location and situation of England with regard to the rest of the world and extols the virtues and characteristics of the land and its people. In this process Bede describes the five languages currently spoken in England, noting that of them all, Latin "ceteris omnibus est facta communis" (was made common to all the rest).¹¹ Though simple, this anecdote about the prevalence of Latin, the language of not only the Church but also of Roman history and the Empire, sets up his view of the significance of the Roman influence, past and present, on England.

In Book i.12-16 Bede describes the state of England in the time between the withdrawal of the Roman troops and the conquest of the Anglo-Saxons.¹² It is, quite simply, described as a time of chaos and destruction, a decidedly dark time for a land of supposed abundance and its native people. He asserts that the withdrawal left the land of the Britons defenseless as they were "imnis bellici usus prorsus

¹¹ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, i.1.

¹² Roughly 410 AD and 449 AD, respectively.

ignara" (utterly ignorant of the practices of war).¹³ The Britons were not only beset by invasion and colonization "duabus gentibus transmarinis" (from two races across the sea), the Irish and Picts; but in addition, suffered famine. After twice dispatching a legion from Rome to help the now defenseless Britons, Rome had to refuse further aid so far afield. According to Bede, the native Britons suffered greatly, had some success, and eventually threw off the "leuis iugum Christi" (light yoke of Christ).¹⁴ Despite this religious and political fall from grace, ultimately it turned out well, as Bede views the Anglo-Saxons, though at first an ally and then a conquering force over the native Britons in their own right, as wielding a divinely sanctioned might and authority over darkness and chaos, conquering the Britons and establishing their nation. Bede editorializes his remarks about the calling of the Saxons to the aid of the Britons as an act "quod Domini nutu dispositum esse constat" (which was agreeably arranged by the will of God).¹⁵ Bede explains that "accensus manibus paganorum ignis iustas de sceleribus populi Dei ultiones expetiit" (the fire kindled by the hands of the pagans fell upon the wicked nation as the just punishment of God).¹⁶ The Anglo-Saxons were God's means of punishing the Britons. They used this divine purpose as they fought for control of Britain and strove to bring the indigenous peoples ultimately into order, much like the God of *Genesis A* when he created and ordered the world out of chaos.

The Anglo-Saxon assertion of authority through origin is not limited to a connection to the land or to God, it is also very much founded upon a connection to a

¹³ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, i.12.

¹⁴ Ibid, i.14.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid, i.15.

mythic view of ancient Rome. The influence of Roman mythology has already been discussed relative to the Anglo-Saxon map and the depiction of the Pillars of Hercules at the end of the world, and, briefly, with respect to the stories of monsters in Africa and Alexander the Great's triumph over Gog and Magog in the north. The literature of Anglo-Saxon England bears the marks of Roman literature and authors as well, peppered with references to Rome: including the place, the mythology, the literature, its forms and authors, the political authority, and the markers of the passing of the empire in the ruins left in England. The *Historia Brittonum*, an early history of England dating from c. 829, relates as fact a belief that England was founded by Brutus, the grandson of Aeneas, the iconic survivor of the Fall of Troy and founder of Rome.¹⁷ King Alfred's translation project included texts from the

¹⁷ J. A. Giles, *Historia Brittonum*, in *Old English Chronicles* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), 386-91, III. 7, 10, 11, 15 and 17 primarily. Although written in Latin, as was Bede's history, this work, though much maligned later on as too fanciful for the title of "history," still provides an interesting look at a roughly contemporary view of the founding of England. The story itself is mostly contained in III.10, though referenced in several other sections. The story, translated from the Latin by J.A. Giles, may best be summarized in the final lines of III.10: "it happened that the mother of the child [Silvius' wife] dying at its birth, he was named Brutus; and after a certain interval, agreeably to what the magician had foretold, whilst he was playing with some others he shot his father with an arrow, not intentionally but by accident. He was, for this cause, expelled from Italy... At length he came to this island, named for him Britannia, dwelt there, and filled it with his own descendants, and it has been inhabited from that time to the present period"

Here *Historia Brittonum* puts forward a mythical beginning for the island in a link to Brutus and Troy, seen as the source of true authority and lineage of greatness for Rome. In linking England with a Trojan origin, as Rome did for itself, the author suggests a similar link to valid greatness for Briton and thus the Anglo-Saxons. Empire and authority come not only from God, but from the history of empires past.

The extent to which Troy was viewed as a source of English origin in the early Medieval period is widely contested, some claiming that it was held to be such even from early on, and others certain that it wasn't until Geoffrey of Monmouth that the idea really took hold. Stephen Harris, in *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, devotes an entire chapter (the fifth) to this debate, coming in on the side of Geoffrey and a post-Norman conquest acceptance of a Troy origin story. His references from the Norman side are particularly extensive, relying heavily on Bede for the Anglo-Saxon perspective. It is neither my desire nor within the scope of this paper to extensively weigh in on this debate. Suffice it to say that the story of a Trojan origin for England certainly predates Geoffrey, as evidenced in Geoffrey's own references to earlier works and at a minimum also the account in *Historia Brittonum* and the significance of the placement of Troy and Mount Olympus on the center point of the Anglo-Saxon map. How wide spread it was at the time of the compilation of *Historia Brittonum* or

early church fathers as well as from Boethius; texts on philosophy, mythology, and history. Finally, works generated by Anglo-Saxons themselves bear the mark of an ancient, mythic Rome.

Several of the shorter poetic works, the Exeter Elegies among them, including *Widsith* and *Deor* make use of a recounting of historic and mythic heroes, villains, and nations of the past, placing the experience of the narrator in the context of the trials and successes of the great men and women who came before. Even this loose reference to mythic heroes and empires past serves to draw a connection, despite time and space, between the experiences of the narrator in each poem, and the deeds of greatness in an ancient past.

In *Widsith*, among the listing of various European heroes and empires the narrator claims that “mid Rugum ic wæs ond mid Glommum and mid Rumwalum. / Swylce is wæs on Eatule” (I was with the Rugians and with the Glomms and with the Romans. I was also in Italy).¹⁸ In the course of his wide wanderings, the fictional bard who is the narrator seems to mention almost every nation of the known world. Even more than that, he seems to have not been limited by the passage of time, as he later claims to have been with the Greeks, Caesar, the Israelites, Assyrians, Hebrews, Egyptians, Medes and Persians.¹⁹ In this single poem, the narrator is placed among all the great empires of the past, contextualizing the writer’s own perspective and experience in light of these others. Despite generally being welcomed, the poet still

the map later on isn’t important to the argument here that the origin story existed and was significant enough to the mapmaker to merit such central inclusion in the story depicted on the map itself.

¹⁸ George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, eds., “Widsith,” in *The Exeter Book*, ASPR 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), ll. 69-70.

¹⁹ Ibid., ll. 76-84.

says of his travels that “þær ic cunnade cnosle bidæled, / freo mægum feor folgade wide” (I suffered there, separated from kinsman, far from free kinsman, wandering widely.²⁰ Here asserting a sense that despite the greatness of the world and of ages past, the narrator, or poet, favors his own land.

Of course, the references to Rome are perhaps most direct in *The Ruin*. Indeed, as they are described, the ruins which are the focus of this poem, the lens through which the poet views his own experience, recall nothing so much as the Roman ruins still visible across the English landscape, similar to those at Bath.

Beorht wæron burgræced, burnesle monige,

Heah horngestreon, heresweg micel,...

... Forþon þas hofu dreorgiað,

ond þæs teaforgaepa tigelum sceadeð

brostbeages hrof. ...

...Stanhofu stoda, stream hate wearp

wida wylme; weal eal befeng

beorhtan bosme, þær þa baþu wæron,

hat on hrepre. þæt wæs hyðelic.

Leton þonne geotan [.....]

ofer harne stan hate streamas

un[.....]

.]þæt hringmere hate [.....]

.....] þær þa baþu wæron.

²⁰ Ibid, ll. 52-53.

[Bright were the buildings with many bath-houses, high noble gables and a great noise of armies ... Forthwith the building is ruined and the roof sheds its ruined crown of vermillion tiles. ...Stone building stood, the hot stream a thread flowing wide; a wall held all in its bright bosom where the baths were, hot in its breast. That was convenient. They let them flow forth ... hot streams over the old stones un- ... the hot circular pool ... where the baths were.]²¹

It is a beautiful, lengthy description of a set of artifacts which seem clearly to be Roman. Indeed, in lines 23-28 the poem describes the tragic fall of the empire which created the ruins it discusses, akin to the Fall of Rome. *The Ruin* is not interested in lamenting the ending of an empire, as much as it is interested in preserving some of the memory of that empire, in claiming the history of that nation as part of its own. In this elegy we see the Anglo-Saxon imagination involved with Rome in an intimate way as it lays bare the best and worst of an ancient Roman empire, completely separate from any sense of Christian divine authority which may come from that city. The poet engages a Roman past, acknowledges the successes, the might, and the fall of that empire, and situates its remnants firmly in English soil, as part of the Anglo-Saxon story.

The conquerors who became the Anglo-Saxons certainly had their own Germanic history prior to coming to England, but once they arrived as a nation, as it were, their sense of their own place in history was viewed in a new context. As seen in the Anglo-Saxon map and in the literature, the true genealogy and history of

²¹ George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, eds., "The Ruin," in *The Exeter Book, ASPR 3* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), ll 21-22, 29b-31a, and 38-46.

where they come from isn't necessary, but they instead focus on a relational history viewed in the context of the beginnings and ends of empires, both secular and religious, through time, placing their own nation in line with the great empires of ages past. In light of this relational sense of origin, it then becomes easier to understand the apparent strength of an Anglo-Saxon connection to a mythic and historic Roman past.

In this careful engagement with a lost Roman empire which still exerts a power in the world, the Anglo-Saxon artists also present an image of what their society may become, even in its passing away. Although ancient Rome is not saved from a social apocalypse, it remains a figure in the real and imagined landscape of the Anglo-Saxon artist. Additionally, Rome itself transforms, even in its fall, into another great empire, albeit a religious, Christian empire. It is with this view of an empire which can be great both in its own time and beyond its fall that the Anglo-Saxon artist begins to envision a future for Anglo-Saxon society beyond its own impending, inevitable apocalypse and social collapse. If they can but present the rest of the known world with something of inherent significance, particular to Anglo-Saxon society, perhaps they too can perpetuate their memory beyond the lives of their people.

IV

APOCALYPSE: SOCIAL AND OTHERWISE

The third theme to be addressed is that of an impending apocalypse. In both the medieval map tradition and Old English literature, the theme of death and apocalypse is pervasive. It is that quality of lament which so often catches the imagination of a modern audience, perhaps because it is the most universally accessible of the three in a post-modern world; no matter your religion or ancestry, death will take us all. The elegies themselves have come to us still retaining their dark beauty; with little of the strangeness such a distance of time might otherwise imply, they remain, as Charles Kennedy expresses, “familiar to all who have felt deeply the moving pathos of human fate.”¹ This same universality of human fate, of death and apocalypse, is depicted graphically in the Anglo-Saxon map. This chapter will explore the way in which the Anglo-Saxon map engages the narrative idea of social apocalypse so eloquently evoked in the elegiac literature of Anglo-Saxon England, and analyze examples of the treatment of apocalypse in the literature itself.

The Anglo-Saxon World Map

In the Anglo-Saxon map, as in so much of the Old English corpus, whether in the form of the end of an empire, society, or the entire world, there is an ever present sense of the transitory nature of all things in *middangeard*. This, coupled

¹ Charles Kennedy, trans., *Old English Elegies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), 41.

with the progression of secular and religious history from the origins of the world, marching westward, to the bottom of the map and the evocative depiction of the end of the world at the Pillars of Hercules, serves to collectively illustrate an Anglo-Saxon view of their own place in this continuum of space and history as the Anglo-Saxon mapmaker envisions his own society as indeed placed at the very edge of all that has been.

In her work on the role of Anglo-Saxon literature in defining and asserting a sense of Anglo-Saxon identity, Michelet briefly takes up the Anglo-Saxon map and argues that the visual depiction of the shape and placement of England in relation to the rest of northern Europe serves to define an Anglo-Saxonness in relation to the rest of the world which does not involve a belief that England is perched at the end of the world.² She suggests that because the mapmaker makes use of the extra space allowed by the rectangular shape of the map to depict more ocean and islands than most other early medieval maps depict, that this serves to take away the sense that England is set aside at the edge of the world.³ Michelet is right to note that the placement and depiction of England help to explore a sense of Anglo-Saxon identity, but a comprehensive reading of the map doesn't support her claim that England sees itself as safe from an impending apocalypse.

The product of an insular people it should be little wonder that so much of the space around the continents of the Anglo-Saxon map is reserved for an expansive depiction of the world's oceans, a natural feature which bears particular significance to the Anglo-Saxons. Even more so, the placement of England in

² Michelet, *Creation, Migration and Conquest*, 156-157.

³ Ibid.

relation to the European continent and the surrounding ocean, as it is depicted as being part of the known world yet distinct and separate from it, serves to graphically depict a theme also encountered in the elegies: that of an exile adrift on the sea. The expanse of ocean is almost overwhelming, and despite the islands clustered to the north and northwest of it, England is the largest of the islands, surrounded by an ocean which grows in magnitude as one moves further away from the continent. England is solidly represented as a final, lone exile on the edge of the world, perhaps even sheltering the rest of the world from the impact of the coming end.

Though not at the very edge of the ocean, England is here depicted as the most westerly of the landmasses; and the end of the world (in time and place) is to the west, along the East-West axis from the first creation of Eden in the East, through time and space, to the Finisterre Peninsula in Spain and the Pillars of Hercules in the west: symbols that “civilization had reached its western limits and that the end was near.”⁴

Medieval maps traditionally referenced a belief that the end of the world, the Day of Judgment, would occur any day, and this belief is illustrated in maps throughout the medieval tradition.⁵ As is most easily seen in zonal maps, but can also be understood in the depiction of the world in other medieval maps, like the Anglo-Saxon map, there is a limit to the known world: namely it consists of Europe, Asia, and Africa. As such, the limits of the known world are the limits of the knowable world, and the end of the land marks the end of the world in time and

⁴ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 115, 163; Barber, “Medieval Maps of the World,” 5.

⁵ Barber, “Medieval Maps of the World,” 5.

space. This culminates in a belief that once the limits of man's creation are reached, and time and space have wound down to their geographical limits, so too will the world end.

The geographic end of the world comes at the aptly named Finisterre Peninsula in Spain.⁶ Not just a product of Christian belief and pilgrimage, this peninsula was held in similar regard long before the Christian expansion, as the end of the mortal world, by the Celtiberians. The Celtiberian tradition held that the Finisterre Peninsula was the place at which the souls of all the dead throughout the world gathered to take "the road to the isles of the blessed which all souls must take at death."⁷ Spain is designated on the Anglo-Saxon map as *Ispania* while the Finisterre Peninsula itself, in the extreme north-west of Spain and the westernmost point of continental Europe is labeled *Brigantia*, a placename of Celtiberian origin. Named for the Celtic goddess Brigantia, this rocky finger of land, pushing out into the immensity of the sea, embodies dual meaning for the Anglo-Saxon audience: as an end of the world, an end to the land, and a marker of the end of all life, by pagans and Christians alike.⁸ In this single peninsula is again exemplified what we have seen throughout: the constant apposition between seemingly contradictory meanings expressed in both the literature and map as the Anglo-Saxons express a world view that mediates among religious and secular history as well as Christian and Pagan mythos.

⁶ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 115.

⁷ Ean Begg and Deike Rich, *On the Trail of Merlin: A Guide to the Celtic Mystery Tradition* (London: Aquarian Press, 1991), 190; Louis Charpentier, *Les Jacques et le Mystère de Compostelle* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 1971), 97-120.

⁸ Begg and Rich, *On the Trail of Merlin*, 189-191.

With these ancient associations it is interesting that the maker of the Anglo-Saxon map chooses to place England as he does, in direct line with *Brigantia*, the particular Spanish peninsula which traditionally denoted the end of the world. Following the progress of time and space to its very limits, England reaches down to join the end of the world as at the edge of the map, in the extreme west, the viewer comes to two prominent illustrations: the Pillars of Hercules. Located at the extreme western edge of the known and knowable world, in the map they are depicted on the absolute edge of the world without even any ocean on the other side—an unusual occurrence in this world map which seems so full of ocean. They here represent the end of the world, in every regard—that place and time beyond which nothing more will be as we have known it. The pillars constitute the second largest single illustration on the map, outside of land mass.⁹ The prominence given these icons of Greco-Roman myth make it impossible to ignore the affinity with which the mapmaker viewed these symbols of end. They ominously mark the apocalyptic end if not of the world, then of England, and once again draw Anglo-Saxon England in line with the Roman empire both in its glory and fall; they become the sextant through which the Anglo-Saxons navigate a definition of their society and purpose.

It is also through the mythic past, which the Pillars of Hercules represent, that the Anglo-Saxons find a model for how they too may outlive their own, inevitable social apocalypse. As the Anglo-Saxon map repeatedly represents chronology in space, moving from east to west, there are constant reminders of the

⁹ Only the sketch of the lion in the northeast is larger.

empires which began, thrived, and ultimately fell. Yet in the very act of remembering the fall of such societies, the mapmaker participates in what could be his own society's saving grace.

Rome is represented as one of these great empires of the past. Its influence on the rest of the map, in terms of language, mythology, and places, illustrates the potential that even through a social apocalypse, as Rome fell, there is the possibility for continued influence on the world that will come after. Rome marked the landscape, literally and figuratively, of much of the known world, England included. In that lingering affect on the world after them lies the potential for the Anglo-Saxons to do likewise, and thereby avoid slipping under the shades of night entirely. In this, as the Anglo-Saxon mapmaker aligns his society with Rome's mythic past, he likewise builds the bridge for a potential escape, albeit an artistic escape, from the utter destruction of his society and its history and influence.

Old English Literature

That the Anglo-Saxons frequently treat the theme of death in their art and literature is no new realization. Death is perhaps the most common theme among all world literature; and really, how could it not be? As the Anglo-Saxons exemplify: for a people intimately concerned with a sense of origin, authority, and purpose, where you are going is equally if not more important than where you have come from. But, as illustrated in the Anglo-Saxon map, the literary theme of death is not as simple as the question of how to deal with the death of an individual. In the poetry of *Beowulf* and the Exeter Book Elegies death is not just an individual theme,

but is more importantly a way to access the theme of an elegiac sense of an impending societal apocalypse. Apocalypse may seem a strong word in this context, but the literature, just as the map does visually, does not support a vision of an easy falling away into oblivion, but rather a devastating, often violent destruction, an almost complete erasure of all their society has achieved.

In light of the Anglo-Saxon view of origins and ends, *Beowulf* becomes a very appropriate poem of reference. Among other possible meanings, Beowulf's death has been read as the tragic fall of a flawed hero,¹⁰ as a conveniently parallel way to end a poem which began with a death and funeral and is concerned with chiasm throughout,¹¹ and as the final, fitting end to a poem which Tolkien held as "essentially a balance, an opposition of ends and beginnings. ...[A] contrasted description of two moments in a great life, rising and setting; an elaboration of the ancient and intensely moving contrast between youth and age, first achievement and final death."¹² So it is that in light of the Anglo-Saxon interest in creation, origins, and apocalypse, the treatment in the rest of the poem of the first two of these three themes, and the interest in the coming feud with the Swedes (comprising fits 40 and 41 almost entirely) that Beowulf's death, although perhaps less overt than the Song of Creation's connection to Christian origins, may be read as more than the death of an individual, but as symbolic of the eventual end of a society—the Geats, in the poem, but the Anglo-Saxons in their interpretation and

¹⁰ Margaret Goldsmith, "The Christian Perspective in *Beowulf*," *Comparative Literature*, vol. 14, no. 1, *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G Brodeur* (1962), 73-74. (71-90)

¹¹ John Niles, "Ring Composition and the Structure of *Beowulf*," *PMLA* 94, no. 5 (October 1979): 930.

¹² Tolkien, *Beowulf, The Monsters and The Critics*, 27.

experience of the poem. The poet prepares his audience for this type of social apocalypse in the death of Beowulf and the awareness of the tragic effects of the coming feud with the Swedes, namely through the words of Wiglaf and the lamenting Geatish woman.

Upon Beowulf's death Wiglaf makes a series of speeches. As part of this the poet is careful to include comments which refer to the end of the Geat's society as they knew it. Wiglaf says,

þæt ys sio fæhðo ond se feondscipe,
 wælnið wera, ðæs ðe ic [wen] hafo,
 þe us seceað to Sweona leoda
 syððan hie gefricgeað frean userne
 ealdorleasne.

[that is the feud and the enmity, the deadly hostility of men, as I have expected, for which the people of the Swedes will seek us too after they have learned that our lord is lifeless.]¹³

Here he references a "fæðo" (feud) with the Swedes which the Geats will now be unable to protect themselves from. Beowulf's death does not only deprive his people of a "hlaford leofne" (beloved lord), but of the means for their societal survival. That Beowulf's death represents this to the Geats is not ambiguous, for in speaking of the feud and the "wælnið" (deadly hostility) that will come by it, Wiglaf says, "ic wen hafo" (I have expected) it. Just as the fact of mortality is no surprise to any individual, the reality of the mortality of their society is very present to the

¹³ Klaeber, *Beowulf*, ll 2999-3003a.

Anglo-Saxons, as evidenced by the awareness within the action and characters of the poem which the poet applies to the Geats.

Another example of this realization of the end of the Geat's society in the poem is seen in the brief description of the "[G]eat[isc] meowle" (Geatish woman) who sings a song of mourning in which she

Sæ[d]e geneahhe

þæt hio hyre [here]g[a]ngas hearde ond[r]ede,

wælfylla worn, werudes egesan,

hy[n]ðo ond hæf[t]nyd.

[Said repeatedly that she sorely dreaded their invasion by an army, an abundance of slaughters, the terror of the company of men, as humiliation and captivity.]¹⁴

Her lament is not even explicitly for the death of her lord, but rather quite specifically for the destruction of her society. She looks forward, sorely dreading the inevitable end of the society she knows, seeing a future of "worn wælfylla, ...hynðo ond hæftnyd" (an abundance of slaughters, ...humiliation and captivity). Once again, the end is not unknown or unexpected, but is a consciously appreciated reality. The Geats "fearfully anticipate not only the absence of the joys of society but also the reverse of them, misery and danger."¹⁵ The passing away of Beowulf, even

¹⁴ Ibid, ll. 3152b-3155a. It should be noted that this part of the manuscript has sustained severe damage and this rendering, though relatively well accepted, is not without some uncertainty.

¹⁵ Jennifer Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry*, in *Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England* 27, ed. Simon Keynes and Andy Orchard (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 85.

as the Geatish woman mourns his death, is a marker of the passing away of an entire society.

Though it occurs near the opening of the poem, even the iconic image of Hrothgar and his hall, as the hall is first described in the poem, reinforces this balance which the poet maintains between an equally important awareness of the origins and the inevitable ends of things in this temporal earth. Hrothgar builds it with the intention of creating “medoærn micel men gewyrcean, / þone ylde bearn æfre gefrunon” (a great meadhall built by men which the children of men should hear of forever).¹⁶ Described as one of the greatest creations of men, Hrothgar’s hall is still condemned to an inevitable, destructive end even as it is being hailed as a wonderful achievement. No sooner is construction completed and Hrothgar begins to share out his wealth, than the poet quickly informs his audience that this beautiful hall “heaðowylma bad, / laðan liges” (awaited hostile surges, / hateful fires), a foreshadowing of the destruction to come through a family feud outside the action of the poem.¹⁷ Here again is the cycle of creation and inevitable, acknowledged destruction. Just as the Geats celebrate in Heorot despite the eventual destruction of the hall, so too do the Anglo-Saxons live between creation and destruction as best they can..

This same elegiac sense of societal end is also evidenced in the so-called *Lay of the Last Survivor* in *Beowulf*, comprising lines 2236b-2270a. This section of the poem recounts the story of the society of warriors who accumulated the horde in

¹⁶ Klaeber, *Beowulf*, ll. 69-70.

¹⁷ Ibid, ll. 82b-83a. The reference to the family feud occurs later, as a prediction by Beowulf in lines 2024-29.

the first place, gone long before the dragon found it. They each suffered “death in battle” until only one of them remained. The sorrow of this elegy is not simply that great warriors have died, for that is part of an Anglo-Saxon and even earlier Germanic sensibility which holds that in esteem, assuming they first fought the good fight.¹⁸ Instead, the sorrow comes in the passing of an entire society, this former band of warriors, who will now be forgotten, no one left to remember them still.

The Last Survivor recalls not just the “gode” (good men) and “æþelan cynnes” (noble race) he has lost, but also their sense of community; he laments the loss of companionship and social activity.¹⁹ They used to all enjoy the “seledream” (joy of the hall), but that has passed away with them.²⁰ The Last Survivor even laments that there is no one left to “forð bere fæted wæge, / druncfæt deore” (bear forth the plated cup, the precious drinking vessel).²¹ These lines evoke an echo of Hrothgar’s role as lord of the Danes, seated in Heorot with his thanes as he “beagas dælde” (shared out rings) and “byrelas sealdon / win of wunderfatum” (cupbearers gave wine from wondrous vessels) to the worthy thanes.²² As the lay comes to a close the Last Survivor sadly recalls what might be considered more mundane elements of a civilized society:

Næs hearpan wyn,
gomen gleobeames, ne god hafoc
geond sæl swingeð, ne se swifta mearh

¹⁸ Craig R. Davis, *Beowulf and the Demise of Germanic Legend in England* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), xii-xiv and 159-161.

¹⁹ Klaeber, *Beowulf*, l. 2249a, and l. 2234b.

²⁰ Ibid., l. 2252a.

²¹ Ibid., ll. 2253-2254a.

²² Ibid., ll. 1161b-1162a.

burhstede beateð.

[There is by no means joy from the harp, delight in musical instruments, no good hawk flies through the hall, nor does the swift steed stamp in the courtyard].²³

A memory of past entertainment and moments of daily life in his society are evoked here. Taken in conjunction with the earlier recollections of the thanes and hall, we see in these few lines a reference to an entire social structure: that of the lord in his hall, surrounded by his thanes, governing a society.

As Beowulf's death and the *Lay of the Last Survivor* serve to describe the passing away of a way of life, of the society the narrator has known, this same theme is the basis for several of the Exeter Book Elegies. These relatively short poems are significant because they lament not just an individual's suffering, but rather the suffering of individuals as they bespeak the downfall of nations, of empires, of societies. Similarly to the Anglo-Saxon map, in the context of creation, origin, and apocalypse, the Elegies can be read as succinct depictions of the most deeply held beliefs expressed by their creators.

The Anglo-Saxon map situates England on the edge of the world, an island surrounded by an abnormally vast expanse of ocean and poised on the verge of apocalypse.²⁴ In similar fashion, both *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* begin with a lone exile, separated from the rest of the human world, both having been in the grip of the "hrimcealde" (frost-cold) and "iscealdne" (ice-cold) sea, having witnessed the

²³ Ibid, ll. 2262b-2265a.

²⁴ When compared to the amount of ocean depicted in most other medieval maps, as discussed in conjunction with Michelet's view of the Anglo-Saxon map earlier in this chapter.

end of their own societies and awaiting their own end, the final consummation of their social apocalypse.²⁵ These poems use language to illustrate the same themes of impending social apocalypse and memory which *Beowulf* engages, and which the symbolic images of the Anglo-Saxon map invoke.

For the Wanderer, his greatest sorrow is not in the difficulty of his current circumstance, not merely that he is cold, but rather more specifically that he has lost the world he knew. He remembers “winemæga hryre” (the destruction of dear kinsmen) and how he hid his “goldwine... / hrusan heolstre biwrah” (gold-giving friend in the darkness of earth).²⁶ The Wanderer laments that as the last survivor, he has lost not just warrior-friends, but his entire society and all the social customs that it entailed. For him, the “wyn” (joy) of his place and participation in his former society “eal gedreas” (has all perished).²⁷ So too does the Seafarer view his own experiences in the world, now that he is “winemægum bidroren” (deprived of dear kinsmen).²⁸ For although the Seafarer travels in his exile to other lands and nations, he has no joy in that and finds that the “woruld onetteð” (world hastens on) despite his sorrow.²⁹

From similar positions of lament for their societies, both poems contextualize the passing away of his own society within the larger context of the passing away of all societies which came before. The poet of *The Wanderer* explains that “ongietan sceal gleaw hæle hu gæstlic bið, / þonne ealre þisse worulde wela weste stondeð”

²⁵ Krapp and Dobbie, “*The Wanderer*,” l. 4b; *Ibid.*, “*The Seafarer*,” l. 14b.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, “*The Wanderer*,” ll. 7B, 22b-23a.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, l. 36.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, “*The Seafarer*,” l. 16.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 49b.

(the wise man must realize how ghastly it will be when all the wealth of this world stands waste) and that in this phenomenal world not only do the lives of men and women end, but, indeed, “eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð” (all the frame work of this earth will stand empty).³⁰ Similarly, the poet of *The Seafarer* perceives the inevitability of the end of life and nation as he states that “eorþan indryhto ealdað ond searað, / swa nu monna gehwylc geond middangeard” (the glory of the earth grows old and withers, just as every man throughout middle-earth).³¹ These brief lines evoke a sense of the individual in *monna* and all the rest of God's and man's creations in *eorþan indryhto*. In these lines in both poems is an exploration of the mortality of any society within the context of world history. Just as the Anglo-Saxon map illustrates the limits of the known and knowable world, implying that at its furthest reaches in space and time mankind will pass away, so too do the poets of *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer* imagine a similar end of time, understood first through their concept of history.

This mediation of history has been explored in the map and literature throughout this paper. In both *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer* the idea of negotiating a distant past with an inevitable future is linguistically expressed in the frequent use of the ambiguous term *forþon*.³² In its own right, *forþon* is a term with a range of interpretations, most interesting in this application are the dual possibilities of implying a sense of looking forward or backward, of meaning either

³⁰ Ibid, “The Wanderer,” ll 73-74 and 110.

³¹ Ibid, “The Seafarer,” ll 89-90.

³² According to the Dictionary of Old English Corpus, *forþon* occurs a total of 11 times in these two poems collectively.

“therefore,” “because,” “forthwith,” or “thus.”³³ A particularly effective passage comes from *The Seafarer*, lines 27-43, where *forþon* occurs 3 times in only 17 lines, introducing recollections from the narrator’s experiences since his isolation on the sea. Although this nuanced ambiguity of meaning can prove difficult for translators, in light of the content of each poem, of the pointed mediation between past and future, this ambiguity of meaning sets off the intellectual work of the poem nicely. As the Anglo-Saxon map overlays mythic, religious, and secular histories with an Anglo-Saxon present and an inevitable sense of the future (though a dark one), so too do these elegies place themselves in the midst of forces from a past falling out of memory and a future closing in not only for the narrators, but envisioned for the sake of the rest of civilization.

When the Wanderer imagines one “wise gepohte” (with wise thoughts) who considers the pattern of human mortality as applied to whole civilizations it brings about a further understanding of what it really means to a society to contemplate their own, inevitable and impending apocalypse.

‘Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago? Hwær cwom mabþungyfa?

Hwær cwom symbla gesetu? Hwær sindon seledreamas?

Eala beorht bune! Eala byrnwiga!

Eala þeodnes þrym! Hu seo þrag gewat,

genap under nihthelm, swa heo no wære’

[‘Where is the horse? Where is the rider? Where is the giver of treasure?

Where is the seat at the feast? Where are the joys of the hall? Oh the bright

³³ J R Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 133 and 134.

cup! Oh the corsleted warrior! Oh the glory of princes! How the time passed away, obscured beneath shades of night as if it had never been.']³⁴

The Latin convention of the *ubi-sunt* question is here applied to the passage of social history. In this there is a recognition of the placement of Anglo-Saxon England in this inevitable progress through history. There is also a frightening addition: a realization that their end might lead to oblivion, to a passing out of memory—that they too might slip “beneath shades of night as if [they] had never been.” The fear is not founded in their awareness of an impending societal apocalypse, for that is just the nature of history, but rather in not being remembered, not leaving their own mark upon the landscape of both the phenomenal world, which will go on, and the landscape of future thought, which will at least go on after them for a time.

Unlike *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, *The Ruin* does not arrive at this sense of societal end by the juxtaposition of a single survivor pitted against the rest of a foreign world, his society dead before him, his memory of their deeds their only mark remaining in this world. Rather, *The Ruin* is perhaps most notable for its all but lack of human characters, evoking a sense of societal end by imagining shadows of those that have gone out of the range of human memory, now really only recalled in the mystery of the crumbling cities they left behind.

Hrofas sing gehrorene, hreorge torras,
 hrungeat berofen, hrim on lime,
 scearde scurbeorge scorene, gedrorene,
 ældo undereotone. Eorðgrap hafað

³⁴ Krapp and Dobbie, “The Wanderer,” ll 92-96.

waldend wurhtan forweorone, geleorene,
 heardgripe hrusan, oþ hund cnea
 werþeoda gewitan. Oft þæs wag begad
 ræghar ond readfah rice æfter oþrum,
 ofstonden under stormum; steap geap gedreas.
 Wonað giet se [...]num geheapen,
 fel on [...]
 grimme gegrunden [...]

[The roofs are ruined, the tower fallen down, the cross-barred gate
 despoiled, frost in the mortar, the roof cut to shards, fallen, eaten underneath
 by age. The earth's embrace holds the work of the rulers decayed, vanished,
 the hard grip of the ground, until a hundred generations of nations pass
 away. Often this wall, moss covered and red of hue, has seen one kingdom
 after another, stood in the storm; steep and lofty, it fell. Even now it fails ...
 carried off in a heap, it fell upon ... cruelly ground up ...]³⁵

As in this opening passage, *The Ruin* is populated throughout with anthropomorphic weather, time, and buildings which tell the story of the people who built them, and of the destruction which befell them. The builders themselves have essentially passed out of all real memory, “forweorone, geleorene” (decayed, vanished) in the embrace of the earth.³⁶ However, it is not as simple as saying that the ruin carries the memory of the people who built it. This is true, and yet the ruin is more than just a repository of the memory of its own builders. As the ruin itself has stood

³⁵ Krapp and Dobbie, “The Ruin,” ll 3-14.

³⁶ Ibid, l 7b.

through time, quietly crumbling and watching “oþ hund cnea / werþeoda gewitan” (until a hundred generations of nations pass away), it carries the additional memory of the societies which followed its own and which have likewise passed away.³⁷ The ruin becomes a literal landmark, a part of the land itself, as the natural forces bring it down into the embrace of the earth again, it already joins the land itself in marking the passage of human history and awaiting its own, inevitable end.³⁸

This awareness of the literal end of their own society is practically ubiquitous, permeating the maps, the poetry, and even more non-fiction literature. Bede addresses the topic of societal apocalypse early on in the Anglo-Saxon period, perhaps most notably in his metaphor of a sparrow flying through the king’s hall. Told as part of the retelling of the conversion to Christianity of King Edwin in *Historia Ecclesiastica III*, the metaphor of the sparrow is a brief, Anglo-Saxon vision of life and end. One of the king’s “chief men,” in advising him to indeed convert to Christianity, tells the story, saying:

Talis’ inquires ‘mihi uidetur, rex, uita hominum praesens in terris, ad
comparationem eius quod nobis incertum est temporis, quale cum te
residente ad caenam cum ducibus ac ministris tuis tempore brumali,

³⁷ Ibid, ll 8b-9a.

³⁸ Lines 78-87 in *The Wanderer* express a similar idea, evoking an image of the ruins of empire past, though in this case the *winsalo* seems more akin to a meadhall than a Roman creation: “Woriað þa winsalo, waldend licgað / dreame bidrorene, duguþ eal gecrong, / wlanc bi wealle. Sume wig fornom, / ferede in forðwege, sumne fugel oþbær / ofer heanne holm, sumne se hara wulf / deaðe gedælde, sumne dreorigheor / in eorðscræfe eorl gehydde. / Yþe swa þisne eardgeard ælda scyppend / oþbæt burgwara breahtma lease / eald enta geweorc idlu stodon” (The wine halls crumble to pieces, the rulers lie deprived of joy, the noble retainers all fell, proud by the wall. War took away some, away towards the company, one a bird carried off over the high seas, one the grey wolf shared with death, one a sad countenanced man buried in a cave. Thus the Creator of men destroyed this world until, bereft of the revelry of citizens, the old work of giants stood empty). As in the passage in *The Ruin*, this section of *The Wanderer* also evokes a lament for both the nations who are now gone, as well as the memory of those nations; for they have no Last Survivor to tell their tale.

accenso quidem foco in medio et calido effecto cenaculo, furentibus autem foris per omnis turbinibus hiemalium pluuiarum uel niuium, adueniens unus passerum domum citissime peruolauerit; qui cum per unum ostium ingrediens mox per aliud exierit, ipso quidem tempore quo intus est hiemis tempestate non tangitur, sed tamen paruissimo spatio serenitatis ad momentum excurso, mox de hieme in hiemem regrediens tuis oculis elabatur.

[This is how the present life of man on earth seems to me, King, in comparison with that time which is unknown to us: as if you are sitting feasting with your ealdormen and thanes in wintertime, indeed a fire is burning in the middle of the hall and all is warm, while outside the winter storms of rain and snow are raging and a sparrow flies swiftly through the hall; it enters in at one door and presently goes out at another. Indeed for the time that it is within the winter storms cannot touch it; but after the briefest moment of calm it immediately disappears from your sight, soon out of the winter storm and back into it again.]³⁹

This is more than just the recognition of mortality, which any individual holds, this is, by extension, the inevitable mortality of their whole society. The Anglo-Saxons are like the sparrow. They come in from the chaos and storm of their own battle for the conquest of England, asserting order, seen in the social paradigm presented in the metaphor by the iconic image of the king in his hall with his loyal thanes. But

³⁹ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ii.13.

the time in the hall, the safety it affords, can be nothing but brief, for outside the forces of winter and chaos do not stop their howling.

Though told by an Anglo-Saxon narrator, the story is still situated in the middle of the harshness and chaos of winter. Even as the mapmaker could have chosen to depict England as further from the end of the world on the Anglo-Saxon map, so too could Bede's metaphor of the sparrow been effective if timed during spring or summer. And yet, the choice of the particular placement of the sparrow and England on the continuum of time when all is just about lost is another mark of their sense of impending end. Just as the sparrow must fly back out of the hall, into that storm, so too the Anglo-Saxons must leave the safety of their established social order. The hall will be destroyed, left as a ruin like those they see populating their ever-present landscape, and they will be lost in the chaos of the storm of time. The only question is, will they too slip beneath the shades of night, or will they be remembered?

CONCLUSION

Last Survivors—Memory in Map and Manuscript

Grounding their culture on their beliefs in a divine creation, a secular origin, and an inevitable and impending apocalypse, the Anglo-Saxons begin to establish what it is to be Anglo-Saxon: what their purpose and place in the world is and how that shapes their actions. My focus on these themes is not, in itself, groundbreaking; they have been studied in the literature for decades to a variety of ends. Even the Anglo-Saxon map itself has been studied, though not in this explicit context. Yet the map and the literature are here explored in conjunction, along these similar lines, in order to continue the process begun by others of teasing out what it meant to be Anglo-Saxon to the Anglo-Saxons.

As illustrated above, in both the Anglo-Saxon map and the study of the literature, the themes of creation, secular origin, and social apocalypse were all understood in conjunction with one another. Because the world was divinely created for all the *landbuendas* (earth-dwellers), the Anglo-Saxons envision themselves as a chosen people, blessed by God to rule England, though they were first an invading, heathen army prior to their conversion to Christianity. As illustrated in the Anglo-Saxon map's inclusion of Roman place names, mythology, and history, the connection to Rome is not only religious, but also political and mythical. From a mythic-history conveyed in the map and literature which includes tales of Mount Olympus, Troy and the Pillars of Hercules, to the ruined physical

remnants of the Roman Empire in England, the Anglo-Saxon's draw on authority from a Roman past to rule their new empire. Finally, although they depict themselves as more closely a part of the rest of the known world, they still view themselves as distinct and place their society and land at the end of the world, both in the Anglo-Saxon map and verbally in their literature. As they recognize that all civilizations end, a reality they are unavoidably reminded of by the ruins dotting their landscape, so too do they recognize that they will end as well.

Despite that understanding of their fate, they still wonder if they can combat, or at least defer, that end in some small way. Can they keep from passing swiftly under the shade of night? As seen in the elegies and the map the question of almost complete oblivion, a return to the darkness and chaos like that depicted in *Genesis A* prior to the creation of the world, does not paralyze the Anglo-Saxon artist. Aware of their social mortality, the Anglo-Saxons create art and literature as a cultural ruin to outlive their society. The art and literature which has survived from Anglo-Saxon England is due in large part to a belief that, just as the ruins of ages past, from the Roman Empire and earlier, still mark their landscape and take up space in their libraries, so too can they create something of lasting worth, of continued Anglo-Saxonness, which can survive beyond them, a testament that they did, in fact, exist, an elegy in image and word.

The model for this concept of a material last survivor is seen in the poetry already explored here. In the *Lay of the Last Survivor* in *Beowulf*, as finally “*deaðes wylm / hran æt heortan*” (the surging of death touched at his heart), the Last

Survivor finally joins his band of fellow warriors in death.¹ It is significant that before his physical death, with the loss of his community, this last survivor removes himself from the rest of the world. He lives out the rest of his days and nights in the barrow by the sea among the treasures of his people, those artifacts that will outlast his entire society. They hold the memory of what once was even as the disrepair that they are falling into evokes a sadness for the loss of that past. The armor, particularly, is personified, as “brosnað æfter beorne” (it decays after the warrior), falling apart as the bodies of the fallen warriors have surely decayed.² In addition to being remembered for their own sake, for their value as objects, these pieces of armor and weaponry become a repository of the community that held them in esteem. After always performing their just duty where they “æt hilde gebad / ofer borda gebræc bite irena” (endured in battle over the clash of the shield, the bite of the sword), they now decay because “feormynd swefað, / þa ðe beadogriman bywan sceoldon” (the burnishers sleep in death, they who should polish the helmets.)³ The men, and their armor, fall out of memory because there is no one left to remember, to keep their history alive and clear. As the bodies have gone back to dust and the armor and treasure becomes tarnished and brittle, the clarity of the memories associated with each artifact is lost, what remains is only an echo, a hint at the greatness of what once was.

This layering of human progress and destruction evoked in the treatment of the armor and treasure in *The Lay of the Last Survivor* is similar to the treatment in

¹ Klaeber, *Beowulf*, ll. 2269b-70a.

² Ibid., l. 2260a.

³ Ibid., ll. 2258b-59

The Ruin of the lingering ruins of the architectural achievements from empires past. In both pieces of literature the monuments which remain continue to tell a story of all that they witnessed, even as they too fall into dust as their builders before them. *The Ruin* itself, the manuscript artifact, is becoming the thing of which it speaks. As the vellum crumbles and the ink fades, the page on which the poem is transcribed is falling out of existence, and yet evokes an even stronger sense of the past, of the passage of human history and events since its composition, infusing the memories it houses with a poignancy more precious the closer to oblivion it slips. This same elegy of memory and place is seen in the Anglo-Saxon map.

Evoking the moments and places of Christian and secular history, the echoes of empires past, the Anglo-Saxon map serves to preserve a memory of the past as it is carried in the places and place-names which are recorded and remain legible. Embedded in the language and art of the map as a whole is a vision of the world confronted by the inevitable temporariness of life. From the Roman place names, Christian images, and especially the more detailed illustration and labeling of the British Isles, the Anglo-Saxon mapmaker establishes his own country's place in relation to the people and places which have come before; as England stands as a Last Survivor, isolated in a world which has reached its limits. Through the participatory act of reading the Anglo-Saxon map, the mapmaker likewise provides a means for those societies which may come after his to imagine a shadow of the world he himself knows. He situates Anglo-Saxon England alongside Spain, reaching towards the west, just on the verge of slipping into oblivion, creating it as a ruin

already, infused with the vision of the places he inhabits, created to be ready to carry that memory into ages to come.

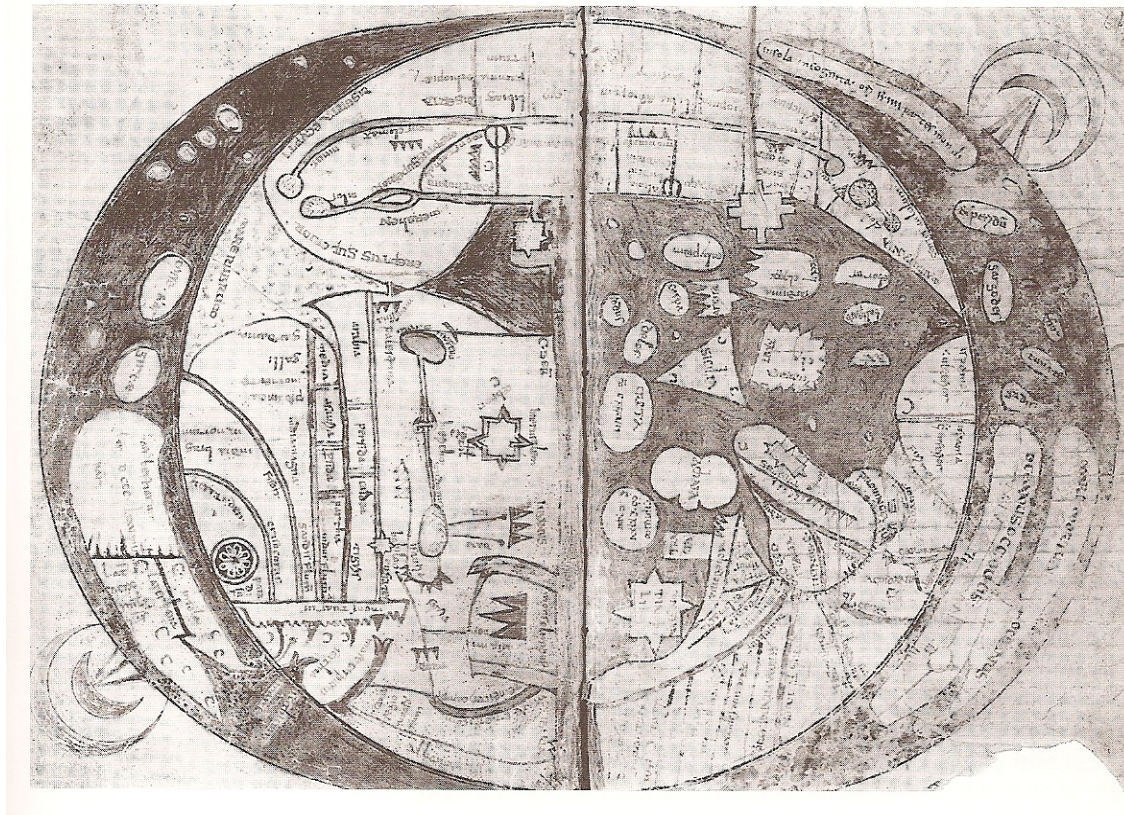
Read in conjunction with Old English elegiac literature, the Anglo-Saxon map can be understood as an artifact into which the Anglo-Saxon mapmaker infused his sense of social identity and history. The map is created as a means of survival, albeit in the form of an intellectual and artistic survivor. Out of a sense of their place in the world found between a past out of mind and a future beyond sight, this example of Anglo-Saxon art evokes the sense of a sole-survivor, created to outlive even the longest lived Anglo-Saxon, to carry the memory of this people to another people and time. There is a need to remember which figures into the importance placed on the creation of the works of Anglo-Saxon art and literature which we have. The vellum may be decaying, the ink fading, the artifacts themselves becoming, as *The Ruin*, the very thing it describes, and yet, in that evolution of even a long-lived artistic life, lies a greater power to move us even now. The Anglo-Saxon map becomes a memory of Anglo-Saxon society, and in that they may perpetuate what it was to be Anglo-Saxon: ever mediating between creation, origin, and apocalypse.

APPENDIX

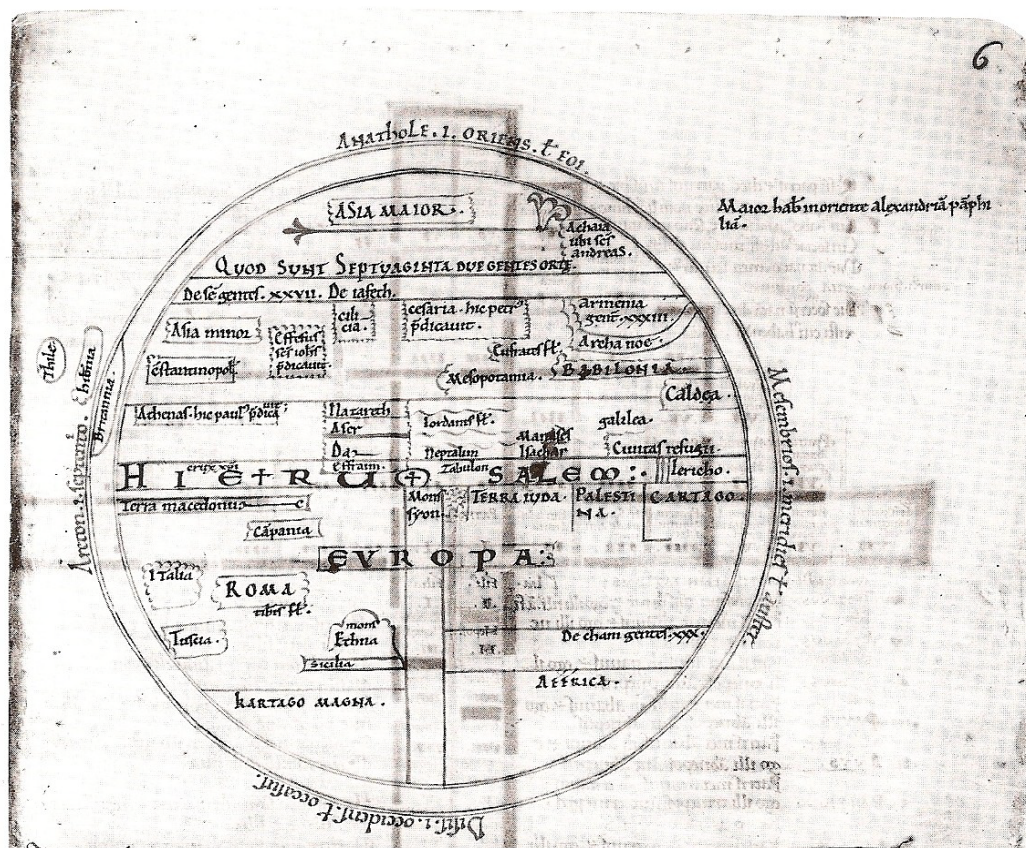
SELECT MEDIEVAL MAP IMAGES



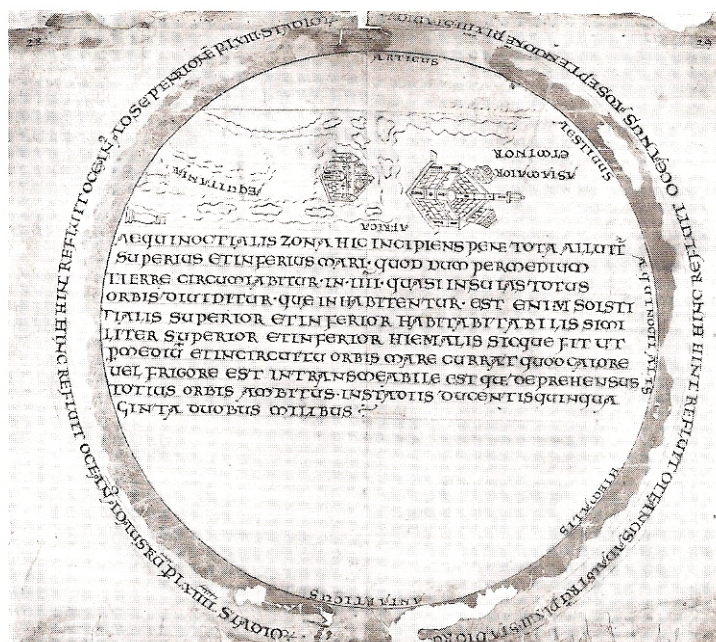
The Anglo-Saxon World Map, British Library, Cotton MS. Tiberius B.V., fol. 56v



Vatican World Map, MS Vat. Lat. 6018, fols. 63v-64r



Thorney Abbey World Map, Oxford, St. John's College, MS 17, fol. 6r.



Zonal Map, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius, B.V. 1, fol. 29r

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