

Old English Ecotheology



Amsterdam
University
Press

Environmental Humanities in Pre-modern Cultures

This series in environmental humanities offers approaches to medieval, early modern, and global pre-industrial cultures from interdisciplinary environmental perspectives. We invite submissions (both monographs and edited collections) in the fields of ecocriticism, specifically ecofeminism and new ecocritical analyses of under-represented literatures; queer ecologies; posthumanism; waste studies; environmental history; environmental archaeology; animal studies and zooarchaeology; landscape studies; 'blue humanities', and studies of environmental/natural disasters and change and their effects on pre-modern cultures.

Series Editor

Heide Estes, University of Cambridge and Monmouth University

Editorial Board

Steven Mentz, St. John's University

Gillian Overing, Wake Forest University

Philip Slavin, University of Kent



Amsterdam
University
Press

Old English Ecotheology

The Exeter Book

Courtney Catherine Barajas

Amsterdam University Press



Amsterdam
University
Press

Cover illustration: "Riddle 26," Folio 107a of the Exeter Book (Exeter Cathedral MS 3501).
Image reproduced with permission of the University of Exeter Digital Humanities and the
Dean & Chapter, Exeter Cathedral.

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

ISBN 978 94 6372 382 4

e-ISBN 978 90 4855 038 8

DOI 10.5117/9789463723824

NUR 684

© C.C. Barajas / Amsterdam University Press B.V., Amsterdam 2021

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of
this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted,
in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise)
without the written permission of both the copyright owner and the author of the book.



Amsterdam
University
Press

For my family



Amsterdam
University
Press



Amsterdam
University
Press

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	9
Introduction: Early Medieval Earth Consciousness	11
Ælfric, Wulfstan, and the Exeter Book	21
Chapter Summaries	33
1. Old English Ecotheology	43
Medieval and Modern Ecotheology	49
Conclusions	68
2. The Web of Creation in Wisdom Poems	73
Gnome(ish) Wisdom in Old English Poetry	77
“The Web of Mysteries”: Poetic Entanglement in <i>The Order of the World</i>	81
Mapping Kinship Connections in <i>Maxims I</i>	88
Conclusions	97
3. Identity, Affirmation, and Resistance in the Exeter Riddle Collection	101
Ambiguous interpretation in the Exeter riddle collection	106
Birds'-Eye View: <i>Riddle 6</i> and <i>Riddle 7</i>	109
Heroic Horns and Wounded Wood: Riddles of Transformation	120
Conclusions	142
4. Trauma and Apocalypse in the Eco-elegies	145
Environmental Trauma & Natural Depression in <i>The Wanderer</i>	149
Apocalypse / Now: <i>The Ruin</i>	161
Conclusions	175
5. Mutual Custodianship in the Landscapes of <i>Guðlac A</i>	179
Home, Alone: <i>Guðlac</i> in the Wilderness	185
Lessons in Early Medieval English Environmentalism	197
Conclusions	205



Coda: Old English Ecotheology	209
Bibliography	219
Index	229
Index of Essential Old English Terms	231



Amsterdam
University
Press

Acknowledgments

This project owes so much to the hard work and patience of Erika Gaffney and the editorial board for the Environmental Humanities in Pre-Modern Cultures series. I could not have asked for a more thoughtful, generous, and engaging team to guide me through my first monograph. I also wish to thank the anonymous external reader for their work on the manuscript and valuable feedback. Thank you all for the attention and time you devoted to this project. Lastly, I'm grateful to Ilse Schweitzer VanDonkelaar, who originally acquired the book, and Heide Estes, who first introduced us at Kalamazoo many years ago.

Most of *Old English Ecotheology* was written in Spokane, Washington, and I am grateful to the faculty, staff, and students of Whitworth University for their support. In the summer of 2019, Whitworth's Reid Writing Retreat offered me the time, space, and resources to complete a first draft of this book. My colleagues in the Department of English offered invaluable encouragement and advice throughout the process: I am especially grateful to Casey Andrews, Kari Nixon, and Allie Shook-Shoup. In addition, I am grateful to the faculty and students of the Medieval and Early Modern Studies program, especially Bendi Benson Schrambach, Stacey Moo, Corliss Slack, and Rachel Klade for their feedback on an early version of Chapter II.

To my friends near and far: thank you for everything you have done to make my life easier over the past three years. I am especially grateful to Andy, Smokey, Elise, Kari, Daniel, Allie, and Will, who make Spokane feel like home; to Brice and Lindsey, for years of laughter; and to Macauley, my oldest and most patient friend.

Finally: this book is dedicated to my family because neither it nor I would be here without their support. I could not be more grateful for the love and encouragement of my parents, John and Barbara Barajas, my sister and brother-in-law, Kelsey and Marshall Dworkin, my brother, Jack, and my grandparents, James and Dorothy Cowan. The spirit and memory of my grandparents, Medardo "Buck" and Amy Barajas, was a comfort throughout this process. I love you all more than I can say. Thank you for everything.





Amsterdam
University
Press

Introduction: Early Medieval Earth Consciousness

Abstract

The existential threat of environmental collapse loomed large in the early medieval English imagination. In particular, the work of Wulfstan, Archbishop of York and Ælfric of Eynsham pointed to the imminence of the apocalypse. Wulfstan explicitly attributed environmental collapse to human sin, while Ælfric urged the faithful to look hopefully to the post-apocalyptic establishment of a new Earth. The broad audience and didactic intent of these prolific and well-connected theologians makes their work a useful representation of English theology at the turn of the millennium. Similarly, the 10th-century manuscript called the Exeter Book—the largest, most diverse extant collection of Old English poetry, including religious lyrics, obscene riddles, and elegies—may serve as a representative of the contemporaneous poetic corpus.

Keywords: environmental crisis, early English theology, manuscript studies, medieval manuscripts, Exeter Book

We live in a period of acute environmental crisis. When I began this project in the summer of 2017, large parts of my hometown of Houston, Texas were still underwater in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, a devastating storm that claimed over 100 lives in Texas and Louisiana and disrupted thousands more. Scientists studying Harvey's environmental impact have shown that human-caused "global warming made the precipitation about 15% (8%–19%) more intense," in that hurricane than in previous years, and that climate change patterns "made such an event three (1.5–5) times more likely."¹ The next summer, the state of California erupted in wildfires, the worst in state history; again, over 100 people were killed, including six firefighters. Smoke from the

1 van Oldenborgh, et. al., "Attribution of extreme rainfall from Hurricane Harvey," 1.

fires carried for thousands of miles across the Pacific Northwest, bringing muddy yellow skies to my new home of Spokane, Washington. A subsequent study in the journal *Earth's Future* identified strong links between human-caused climate change and the increasing violence of California's wildfires, once again in warning that these trends are "extremely likely to continue for decades to come."² In Texas and across the West, the environmental and financial devastation which followed these crises was a stark reminder of the precarious relationship between humans and our environs.

And yet the spectacular violence of these environmental crises cannot overshadow the subtler systemic violence of environmental inequality; as I write in the first months of 2021, the deadly results of this inequality are impossible to ignore. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp relief the reality that progress nearly always comes at the expense of environmental safety for the vulnerable communities that host our factories, transit systems, and infrastructure. In the United States, low-income communities are more likely than their wealthy counterparts to host "transportation networks, large highways [...] a lot of traffic, or industrial activity" and are thus more likely to be exposed to deadly air and water pollution.³ Research on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) shows that long-term exposure to this type of air pollution increases the likelihood of health conditions like asthma and heart disease, which in turn lead to "increased vulnerability" to the coronavirus.⁴ Ongoing research by the American Public Media Research Lab shows that Black and Indigenous Americans are dying at higher rates than their white counterparts, and that "Pacific Islanders, Latino, Black and Indigenous Americans all have a COVID-19 death rate of double or more than that of White and Asian Americans."⁵

Like all who live through such turbulent times, we in the twenty-first century are apt to imagine that this particular conflation of environmental and social crises is uniquely apocalyptic. But, of course, an understanding of human influence on—and vulnerability to—the natural world is hardly a modern phenomenon. Two decades ago, at the dawn of the second millennium, the Australian environmentalist and theologian Norman Habel wrote that "we are now aware, as never before, that to survive as human beings on this planet we require more than human ingenuity."⁶ The reason for this

2 Williams, et. al. "Observed Impacts of Anthropogenic Climate Change on Wildfire in California," 892.

3 Bagley, "Connecting the Dots Between Environmental Injustice and the Coronavirus."

4 Wu and Nethery, "Exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States."

5 See APM Research Lab, "The Color of Coronavirus"

6 Habel, "Introducing the Earth Bible," 26.



“new earth consciousness,” Habel suggested, was a growing awareness of the Earth as “a community of ecosystems that dazzle our comprehension in their delicacy, complexity and resilience.”⁷ Earlier still, environmentalist Rachel Carson’s foundational *Silent Spring*, published serially in *The New York Times* in 1962, argued that systemic pesticide use in American agriculture had resulted in a “chain of evil” in which human-made chemicals “through the alchemy of air and sunlight, combine into new forms that kill vegetation, [and] sicken cattle.”⁸ Moreover, Carson warned, these human-made chemicals could, in turn, “work unknown harm on those who drink from once pure wells.”⁹ In 1820, Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem “The Sensitive Plant,” which describes how an allegorical “garden, once fair, became cold and foul,” attributed widespread environmental collapse to human activity: “tis we, tis ours, are changed, not they.”¹⁰ As these examples and countless others suggest, an awareness of human influence on—and vulnerability to—other-than-human neighbors appears across the Anglophone literary tradition.

Vin Nardizzi has suggested that “the Middle Ages is the era where our ongoing ecological crisis first began.”¹¹ In an article arguing for the relevance of medieval studies to the field of ecocriticism, Nardizzi suggested that medieval interest in the creation, regeneration, and human integration of environmental elements “constitutes a foundational form of ecotheory.”¹² In the North Atlantic, the period c. 700–1100 BCE provides a particularly fruitful example: like their modern counterparts, the people of early medieval England experienced environmental change.¹³ Jennifer Neville notes that the years c. 400–800 saw “colder, stormier weather, rougher seas and more snow than that experienced previously, and worse weather than that experienced now” in the North Atlantic.¹⁴ The Old English poetic corpus

7 Ibid.

8 Carson, *Silent Spring*, 6.

9 Ibid.

10 l. 191, 370. See Woodcock, ed., *Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, 423–430.

11 Nardizzi, “Ecocriticism: Book Review Essay,” 113.

12 Ibid.

13 Throughout this book, I use the term “early medieval England” to describe the culture of what is now England from the time c. 700—1100 BCE, and “Old English” to describe their vernacular language. Historically, scholars of early medieval England have used “Anglo-Saxon” to describe both the society and the language. However, as the work of Mary Rambaran-Olm and others has shown, the term has, in recent years, been misappropriated by white nationalist groups seeking to identify “an imagined heritage based on indigeneity to Britain.” For that reason, I choose not to use the term in this book. See Rambaran-Olm, “Misnaming the Medieval: Rejecting ‘Anglo-Saxon’ Studies.”

14 Neville, *Representations of the Natural World*, 44.

attests to these difficult environmental conditions, perhaps most vividly in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, which describe the travels of *winter-cearig* (“winter-sorrowful,” *Wanderer* l. 24) exiles on the *is-cealdne sæ* (“ice-cold sea,” *Seafarer* l. 14b).¹⁵ The environmental reality of life in the first half of the early medieval English period was largely cold and wet, and Old English poetry reflects the keen influence of those conditions on the imagination.

In the latter half of the early medieval period (c. 900-1250), the North Atlantic saw a subtle but significant increase in temperatures, and this change, too, was keenly felt.¹⁶ Julian D. Richards has argued that rising sea levels in the North Atlantic, the result of glacial melt, led to a substantial loss of arable farmland in this period, and that the people of early medieval England actively adapted to meet this environmental challenge.¹⁷ Richards suggests that the environmental changes which transformed fields into non-arable fenland may be responsible for the popularity of infield-outfield agricultural techniques in early medieval Yorkshire.¹⁸ Kelly Marie Wickham-Crowley has similarly suggested that the agricultural adaptations required to combat the emergence of “vast fens, islands, and reshaped coastlines” in this time “shaped the [early medieval English] imagination and response to landscape” as a dynamic system, rather than a static background.¹⁹ These practical and social responses to climate change suggest that the people of early medieval England were keenly aware of the influence of the natural world in their daily lives, and that they sought actively to adapt to widespread environmental change.

Moreover, traumatic climate change is central to the foundation story of post-Roman Britain: research suggests that environmental change was “a likely factor in the arrival of the Angles, Saxons, and others in Britain after land loss on the continent.”²⁰ Archaeologist Sonia Chadwick Hawkes has described these early migrants as environmental refugees, “boat people” fleeing to Britain following the loss of arable farmland on the continent.²¹ Nicholas Howe has suggested that the people of early medieval England saw this ancestral migration as “the founding and defining event” of their

15 Bjork, ed. and trans., *Old English Shorter Poems*, 2, 28.

16 See Hoffman, “Homo et Natura, Homo in Natura,” 16.

17 Richards, “Defining Settlements: York and Its Hinterland AD 700-1000,” 71.

18 *Ibid.* Infield-outfield agriculture allowed early medieval farmers to tend one section of farmland, usually the closest to permanent structures, while allowing for natural tillage and revitalization of a second, more distant plot, which would frequently flood.

19 Wickham-Crowley, “Living on the *Ecg*,” 87.

20 Wickham-Crowley, “Living on the *Ecg*,” 86-87.

21 Hawkes, “Anglo-Saxon Kent,” 65.



culture and “turned to it so that they might identify their common nature as a people.”²² Of course, no medieval texts attribute the migration patterns of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes to environmental change; nevertheless, the people of early medieval England may have intimated the significance of environmental factors in their ancestors’ choices. As Richard Hoffman notes, “although climate and weather certainly do not determine history, they set important framework conditions within which human activities—economic, cultural, political—had to take place.”²³ If, as Howe suggests, the ancestral migration narrative is essential to understanding early medieval English culture, then so too are the environmental themes of collapse, adaptation, and restoration which attend that narrative.

The intimacy of the early medieval English with patterns of environmental collapse, adaptation, and restoration—what we might, borrowing from Norman Habel, call an early medieval earth consciousness—is perhaps most evident in the apocalyptic work of the two great Old English theologians Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 955—c. 1010) and Wulfstan, Archbishop of York (d. circa 1023).²⁴ In the introduction to *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change*, the editors argue that medieval historical records “[point] unambiguously to a heightened and tense apocalyptic climate in the half century or so on either side of the turn of the millennium.”²⁵ That both Ælfric and Wulfstan addressed the topic directly in multiple homilies suggests that the apocalyptic climate in early medieval England was particularly tense. Moreover, that both homilists identify environmental crises as evidence of the imminent apocalypse suggests that early medieval theology cannot be easily disentangled from early medieval earth consciousness. This book will argue for the existence of an Old English ecotheology, evident in the Old English poems of the Exeter Book, which anticipates by nearly a millennium Habel’s identification of a “new earth consciousness”. A brief review of the apocalyptic homilies of Wulfstan and Ælfric will demonstrate that, as in our own times, the existential threat of environmental collapse loomed large in the collective imagination of the early medieval English.

For Wulfstan (Archbishop of York from 1002 to 1023), the apocalypse was a favorite topic: nine of his 21 homilies explicitly address the eschaton and “evil days.” In a homily on the book of Luke (*Secundum Lucam*), Wulfstan explicitly attributes contemporaneous environmental crises

22 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*, ix.

23 Hoffman, “Homo et Natura, Homo in Natura,” 17.

24 For a full biography of Ælfric and Wulfstan, see pages 21–26 below.

25 Landes, Gow, and Van Meter, eds., *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, vi.



to the spiritual and social sins of the English people. The accusation is leveled in no uncertain terms: *leofan menn, clæne wæs þeos eorðe on hyre frumsceaft, ac we hi habbað syððan afylede swyðe 7 mid urum synnum þearle besmitene* (“beloved people, this Earth was clean at its first creation, but we have since befouled it greatly and defiled it through our sins”).²⁶ This startling image of human-caused environmental destruction is followed by an explanation of the consequences for the human perpetrators: *forðy us eac swencað 7 ongean winnað manege gesceafta* (“therefore the whole of creation vexes and strives against us”).²⁷ The homily suggests that humans have materially harmed the Earth through their sins, and, as a result of that harm, the other-than-human members of creation are led to resist and act against human interests. Significantly, though his reference text (Luke 21:5) describes apocalyptic signs in the sun, moon, and stars, Wulfstan’s depiction of environmental resistance is decidedly more local: *heofone us winð wið þonne heo us sendeð styrnlice stormas 7 orf 7 æceras swyðe amyrred; seo eorðe us winð wið þonne heo forwyrneð eorðlices wæstmas 7 us unweoda to fela asendeð* (“heaven strives against us when it sternly sends us storms and destroys cattle and land; the earth strives against us when it withholds the fruits of the earth, and sends us too many weeds.”).²⁸ Entries in the collection of historical chronicles known the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles attest to similar environmental crises—crop failure, mass mortality of livestock, and destructive storms—within living memory of Wulfstan’s audience. The invocation of contemporaneous environmental crises centers that audience in a crucial moment in ecological and sacred history: they are at once personally responsible for the environmental collapse preceding the apocalypse, and the unhappy generation doomed to suffer through the world’s end.

For, significantly, Wulfstan’s eschatological homilies do not suggest the possibility of averting the apocalypse: the repeated refrain *þeos woruld is fram dæge to dæge a swa leng swa wyrse* (“this world is, from day to day, always the longer, always the worse”) is representative of his pessimistic view of the future.²⁹ Rather than offering hope, Wulfstan’s homilies urge the faithful to change their behavior so that they can survive the collapse of their society and better prepare their souls for Judgment Day. Wulfstan

26 Bethurum, ed., *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 124.

27 See below for a full explanation of the term *gesceafta*, “creation.”

28 Bethurum, ed., *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 125.

29 This formula appears in three homilies: “De Antichristo,” “Secundum Lucam,” and “Secundum Marcum”; see Bethurum, ed., *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 117, 123, and 137, respectively.

begins his homily *De Anticristo* by urging the faithful to *healdan þæt eow mæst þearf is to gehealdenne, þæt is, rihtne cristendom* (“maintain that which it is most necessary for you to hold: that is faithful Christianity.”)³⁰ Sin, he warns, is contagious: a weak Christian *on synnum hine sylfne to swyðe befyleð oððon oðerne man on synna belædeð* (“being in sin himself, too strongly befouls another man, or leads him to sin.”)³¹ The imminence of the end times makes this a particularly dangerous moment for sinful behavior to spread, because *ælc þæra þe ongean þæt to swyðe deð oððon oðerne ongean þæt læreð þe his cristendome to gebyreð, ælc þæra bið antecrist genamod* (“each of those who acts too strongly against [faithful Christianity], or else teaches against what [their] Christianity approves, each of those is called Anti-Christ.”)³² As in his accusation that human activity has “befouled” the once-clean Earth, Wulfstan is unapologetic in placing both the burden of sin and the responsibility for change in the hands of the people.

Of course, as Bishop of London, Wulfstan had some institutional power, and he ends the homily with a call to action: *nu is mycel neod eac eallum godes bydelum þæt hy godes folc warnian gelome wið þone egesan þe mannum is towerd, þe læs þe hy unwære wurðan aredode* (“now there is also a great need for all of God’s priests to warn God’s people constantly against the horror that is coming to mankind, lest they be caught unawares.”)³³ Wulfstan urges individual priests to educate their local communities so that the early medieval English collectively are able to resist the Antichrist when *he his wodscinn widdast tobrædeð* (“he spreads his deceitful madness widely.”)³⁴ The stated purpose of this homily is to prepare early medieval English Christians for the imminent apocalypse. However, its effect is to restore *rihtne cristendom*: that is, to realign the behavior of the public in a way that corresponds with established Christian orthodoxy. For Wulfstan, the environmental and social collapse accompanying the apocalypse is unavoidable, but nevertheless necessitates a change in behavior so radical as to affect a restoration of “righteous” Christendom.

The apocalyptic rhetoric of collapse and restoration finds its fullest expression in the theology of Ælfric of Eynsham, who produced a substantial collection of vernacular homilies. Like Wulfstan, Ælfric is unequivocal about

30 Bethurum, ed., *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 116.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Bethurum, ed., *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 117.

34 Bethurum, ed., *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 118.

the imminence of the apocalypse: the *Preface* to his *Sermones Catholici* explains that he felt called to produce a collection of sermons in English because *menn behofiað godre lare swiðost on þisum timan, þe is geendung byssere worulde* (“men have the strongest need of godly instruction in this time, which is the end of the world.”)³⁵ However, unlike Wulfstan, Ælfric does not attribute the apocalypse to the sins of his contemporaries. Indeed, Ælfric’s homilies reveal little interest in assigning blame. Rather, he reframes the conversation to situate the coming apocalypse as a necessary (if painful) moment in salvation history, one which will ultimately lead to the creation of a new, better heaven and Earth after Judgment Day. While Wulfstan’s homilies exploit anxiety regarding contemporaneous environmental and social collapse as a way of urging change, Ælfric’s work seeks to assuage that anxiety by looking ahead to the restoration of peace in the creation of a new Earth.

In his homily for the second Sunday in Advent, Ælfric addresses the topic of the apocalypse directly through his exegesis of Luke 21, the same chapter used in Wulfstan’s *Secundum Lucam*, discussed above. Ælfric acknowledges contemporaneous environmental collapse—*oft eorðstyrung gehwær fela burhga ofhreas [...]* *mid cwealme ond mid hungre we sind gelome geswencte* (“often earthquakes in many places overwhelm many cities [...and] with pestilence and with hunger we are frequently afflicted”)—but ultimately suggests that these are not the *swutele tacna on sunnan, and on monan, and on steorrum* (“clear signs in the sun, and the moon, and the stars”) predicted as signs of the apocalypse in his reference text.³⁶ Nevertheless, he admits that these local incidents of environmental collapse are signs that the apocalypse is *swiðe gehende, and þearle swift* (“close at hand, and very swift”), and, like Wulfstan, manipulates contemporary apocalyptic anxieties in order to urge social change: *brucan þæs fyrstes ðe us God forgeaf, and geearnian þæt ece lîf mid him* (“make use of the time that God has given us, and earn that eternal life with Him”).³⁷ The reference to eternal life is significant, for, in a crucial departure from Wulfstan, Ælfric’s apocalyptic theology does not indulge despair. Indeed, the homily calls for exactly the opposite emotional response: *þa ðe God lufiað, hí sind gemánode þæt hí gladion on middangeardes geendunge, forðan þonne he gewit, ðe hí ne lufodon, ðonne witodlice hí gemetað þone ðe hí lufodon* (“those who love God, they are exhorted to be glad at the ending of the world, for when that passes away, which they loved not, then

35 Wilcox, ed., *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, 108.

36 Thorpe, ed., *Sermones Catholici*, 610.

37 Thorpe, ed., *Sermones Catholici*, 618.



certainly they will find that which they love”).³⁸ The homily suggests that the end of this world is both an opportunity for change and, ultimately, necessary for the restoration of *Godes rice* (“God’s kingdom”) on Earth.³⁹

Despite his exhortation for Christians to welcome the apocalypse, Ælfric could not have entirely ignored the anxiety about environmental collapse which Wulfstan invokes with such vigor; indeed, his dismissal of contemporaneous environmental crises as signs of the end times seems like a deliberate attempt to assuage those anxieties. In a similar vein, the homily ends with a reminder that, when the apocalypse comes, *ne awendað heofon and eorðe to nahte, ac hi beoð awende of ðam hiwe ðe hi nu on wuniað to beteran hiwe* (“Heaven and Earth will not turn to naught, but they will be changed from the form in which they now exist to a better form”).⁴⁰ Ælfric explains that *heofon and eorðe gewitað, and ðeah ðurhwuniað, forðan ðe hi beoð fram ðam hiwe ðe hi nu habbað þurh fyr geclænsode, and swa-ðeah symle on heora gecynde standað* (“Heaven and Earth will pass away, and yet will continue, for they will be cleansed from which they have now by fire, and will yet stand forever in their new nature.”)⁴¹ In this new Earth, the sun will be *seofonfealdum beorhtre þonne heo nu sy, and se móna hæfð þære sunnan leoht* (“sevenfold brighter than it is now, and the moon will have the light of the sun”).⁴² By insisting on not only the restoration, but also the improvement, of the Earth after apocalypse, the homily redirects anxiety about contemporaneous environmental collapse into anticipation for the restoration of a new, light-filled kingdom of God on Earth.

Though some of their eschatological writings were produced after the ominous year 1000, the urgency of Wulfstan and Ælfric’s messages is a reflection of the apocalyptic and environmental anxieties brewing among early medieval English Christians for 50 years on either side of the millennium.⁴³ In this brief examination of the apocalyptic theology of Wulfstan and Ælfric, I have highlighted the rhetoric of environmental collapse and restoration in order to suggest an early medieval earth consciousness. Wulfstan’s homilies describe intersecting cycles of collapse—social sins leading to environmental collapse, leading in turn to social collapse—to urge the restoration of *rightne cristendom* (“righteous Christianity”) before the coming of the Antichrist. Ælfric’s homily on the same text takes the

38 Thorpe, ed., *Sermones Catholici*, 612.

39 Thorpe, ed., *Sermones Catholici*, 614.

40 Thorpe, ed., *Sermones Catholici*, 618.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 See the Introduction to Landes, Gow, and Van Meter, eds., *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*.

long view of salvation history, redirecting apocalyptic anxiety into hopeful anticipation for the restoration of a new, better heaven and Earth after the destruction of Judgment Day. The work of both homilists reveals a keen interest in cycles of collapse and restoration, and suggests that social, ecological, and theological questions were inextricably bound in the early medieval English imagination.

Although, of course, the words “ecology” and “environment” did not exist in Old English, the early medieval earth consciousness reflected in the theology of Wulfstan and Ælfric intersects in interesting ways with the modern field of ecotology, which examines the relationship between religious worldviews and the degradation or restoration of the environment. Indeed, as the title of this book suggests, I believe it is possible to discern the existence of a distinct Old English ecotology in the poetry of the Exeter Book, a tenth-century manuscript which constitutes the largest extant collection of Old English verse.⁴⁴ As a microcosm of Old English poetry, the Exeter Book offers a unique perspective on early medieval earth consciousness which speaks directly to our modern environmental crises. My reading of the homilies and exegeses of Ælfric and Wulfstan will show that many of the principles of modern ecotology are reflected in their Old English theology. My reading of the poems of the Exeter Book will highlight reflections of these ecotological principles within the manuscript in order to suggest that early medieval English thinkers were not only conscious of contemporaneous environmental crises, but also sought actively to address them. Throughout this project, I rely on the feminist hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval.⁴⁵ Early medieval England was, undoubtedly, a patriarchal and anthropocentric society: the texts produced by such a society necessarily reflect those ideologies. Nevertheless, it is possible to retrieve from these texts “unnoticed, suppressed, or hidden” ways of knowing and being with the Earth.⁴⁶ These twin hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval allow for what Habel calls “countercoherent” readings: “alternative readings of the text that both make sense—cohere—and challenge the dominant reading” of the Exeter Book. Ultimately, it is my hope that this project will demonstrate the mutual relevance of Old English literature and modern ecotology and offer new (or, rather, very old) ways for modern Christians to think about their role in the environmental movement.

44 See Chapter I.

45 My understanding of this twin hermeneutics is indebted to the work of Scott-Baumann, *Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*, especially 153-169.

46 Earth Bible Team, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” 39.



Ælfric, Wulfstan, and the Exeter Book

A comprehensive theory of “the natural world” in early medieval English literature and theology is beyond the scope of this project. Rather than considering the entire Old English corpus, this book will instead compare the poetry of the Exeter Book, which I will argue acts as a microcosm of the whole, to the theology of Ælfric and Wulfstan, who best articulate the unique theological concerns of the manuscript’s late tenth century context. These distillations of the corpora may seem unnecessarily simplistic: of course, Ælfric and Wulfstan could not claim ultimate orthodoxy, and the Exeter Book is not the whole of Old English literature. However, in what follows, I will suggest that the theological prominence of Ælfric and Wulfstan in the years on either side of the millennium and the significant weight of the Exeter Book in early medieval English studies justifies my reliance on these key figures and manuscript. As essential voices in the development of the English church, Ælfric and Wulfstan produced a body of work which offers unique insight into Old English theology in the decades on either side of the first the millennium. Similarly, as a microcosm of Old English verse and a material reminder of the interconnectedness of human and other-than-human lives in medieval literary production, the Exeter Book demonstrates the profound influence of that theology in the early medieval English imagination.

Virtually nothing is known about Ælfric’s early life: we have no information about his family, and can only guess at a birthdate between 955 and 957.⁴⁷ We do know that he was educated in the Old Minster at Winchester under the supervision of Bishop Æthelwold, for throughout his career, Ælfric refers to himself as *alumnus Æthelwoldi* or *Wintoniensis alumnus* (“pupil of Æthelwold” or “pupil of Winchester”).⁴⁸ It is perhaps unsurprising that Ælfric would seek to attach his name to this particular Bishop and his center of learning: along with Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury and Oswald, Archbishop of York, Æthelwold was a key figure in the English Benedictine reform, the late tenth-century transformation of religious and intellectual life inspired by earlier monastic reforms on the continent.⁴⁹ While Bishop of Winchester, Æthelwold authored the first English translation of the Rule of St. Benedict and drafted the key document of the English reform movement,

47 The most recent and thorough biography is Hill, “Ælfric: His Life and Works,” 35-65.

48 Wilcox, ed., *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, 7.

49 For a concise overview of the Benedictine reform and Æthelwold’s particular role, see Barrow, “The Ideology of the Tenth-Century English Benedictine ‘Reform,’” 141-154.



the *Regularis Concordia*, which described and prescribed monastic life in England. The atmosphere of reform in Winchester had a dramatic impact on the young Ælfric: indeed, as Jonathan Wilcox has argued, “Ælfric can be seen [...] as the most important literary and scholarly product of the English Benedictine monastic reform.”⁵⁰ In 987, Ælfric took this revolutionary spirit with him to the monastery at Cerne Abbas, where, in addition to serving as *munuc and mæssepreost* (“monk and mass-priest”), he likely taught grammar to young monks.⁵¹ His years at Cerne Abbas seem to have been the most productive of Ælfric’s life: during this time, he wrote, among much else, two series of homilies known as the *Sermones Catholici*, three Latin textbooks, another series of homilies on *The Lives of Saints*, a treatise on the six days of creation called *The Hexameron*, and a vernacular translation of the first six books of the Bible.⁵² It is perhaps this remarkable productivity that led to his elevation, in 1005, to the abbacy of the new Benedictine monastery at Eynsham. As Abbot of Eynsham, Ælfric continued to write, most notably a Latin life of his old master Æthelwold and a translation of Bede’s *De Temporibus*, an introduction to Easter computation. Ælfric remained in his position as Abbot of Eynsham until his death in 1010.

As this brief review of his biography suggests, Ælfric was a prolific scholar. For the purposes of this book, I’ll be focusing on just two of his foundational writings: the first series of the *Sermones Catholici* (finished c. 989) and *The Hexameron* (likely written c.991-1002). Together, these texts offer a unique insight into Ælfric’s theology and the earth consciousness which I have suggested permeated the early medieval English imagination. The remarkable number of extant manuscripts of the *Sermones Catholici*—according to Jonathan Wilcox, well over 30—is a testament to the popularity and prominence of these homilies in the early medieval English church.⁵³ Evidence suggests that these homilies were first delivered to a mixed audience including laypeople and secular clerics in addition to Ælfric’s fellow monks: they therefore necessarily strike a unique balance between orthodoxy and popular expressions of faith. As Wilcox notes, throughout the *Sermones Catholici* Ælfric “pays close attention to received tradition to ensure that his writings are orthodox, yet explains issues in ways which his audience will most readily understand.”⁵⁴ This first series “seems to be

50 Wilcox, ed. *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, 3-4.

51 Ælfric refers to himself as *munuc and mæssepreost* in a number of his prefaces: see Wilcox, ed. *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, 108. For Ælfric as a teacher, see Wilcox, ed. *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, 11-12.

52 Wilcox, ed., *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, 15.

53 Wilcox, ed. *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, 34.

54 Wilcox ed. *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, 20.



addressed directly to the laity,” and it is not unreasonable to imagine other early medieval English priests reading these homilies over the course of a year in exactly the order Ælfric offers them. The first series of the *Sermones Catholici*, then, offers a direct perspective into the teachings of the English church in the late 10th century from one of its chief authorities.

Similarly, Ælfric’s *Hexameron*, a treatise on the six days of creation, offers an authoritative overview of salvation history, detailing the fall of the rebel angels, the creation of Earth, and the temptation and expulsion from Eden, before finally ending with Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. Five extant manuscripts of the *Hexameron* exist, suggesting that, while probably less popular than the *Sermones Catholici*, this text, too, may have circulated widely in early medieval England.⁵⁵ Although the text purports to be a translation of an ancient text by St. Basil, internal evidence suggests that it “is by no means a literal translation [...] but is partly original, partly compiled from that work, and from the commentaries of the Venerable Bede upon Genesis.”⁵⁶ As this collection of sources indicates, Ælfric’s particular talent was in amalgamating a wide variety of authorities into his homilies in order to make theological truths accessible to his particular audience. Because the introduction to the *Hexameron* refers directly to homilies from the first series of *Sermones Catholici*, we can assume that his imagined audience includes the same mixture of laypeople, secular clerics, and fellow monks as that text.⁵⁷ Again, the diverse nature of this audience makes the *Hexameron* a useful text for examining early medieval English theology in its popular and orthodox forms, directly from the mind of a leading figure in the Benedictine reform. As Jonathan Wilcox neatly summarizes, Ælfric’s homiletic work provides “the most substantial and clearest body of doctrine in Old English. He explains a whole range of aspects of the faith and also many other matters of the world around him.”⁵⁸

In the last years of his life, Ælfric was in correspondence with the second major theologian on whom this book will rely: Wulfstan, Archbishop of York, one of the most influential political figures in early medieval England. Again, we know little about Wulfstan’s early life: like Ælfric, he was certainly a product of the Benedictine reform, though there is no evidence as to where he was trained. Our earliest extant record is of his ordination as Bishop of London in 996; unlike Ælfric, Wulfstan was deeply involved in local

55 White, *Ælfric*, 117.

56 Norman, ed. and trans., *Hexameron*, v.

57 White, *Ælfric*, 116.

58 Wilcox, ed. *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, 20.



politics. As Bishop of London, Wulfstan was witness to “a large number” of charters at meetings of the Witan, the political assembly which advised and formally elected early medieval English kings.⁵⁹ Indeed, evidence suggests that some of the eschatological homilies Wulfstan wrote during this time may have been written for meetings of the Witan.⁶⁰ His proximity to the Witan and presence as a witness to charters indicates that Wulfstan had a prominent place in early medieval London, as does an anonymous letter attesting to his reputation as one of the city’s most eloquent speakers.⁶¹ It is perhaps because of this reputation that, in 1002, Wulfstan was elevated to Archbishop of Worcester and York. As Archbishop, Wulfstan continued to write homilies, including two more thematic blocks on the tenets of Christian faith and archiepiscopal responsibilities.⁶² He also continued his political activities: evidence suggests that Wulfstan was “the trusted friend and advisor” of King Æthelred, to the extent that, starting in 1009, he authored a series of edicts in the king’s name.⁶³ Wulfstan worked closely with Æthelred until the king’s death in April 1016.

In November of that year, following the brief and tumultuous reign of the late king’s son Edmund, the Danish prince Cnut took the throne; at the same time, Wulfstan resigned the See of Worcester, transitioning permanently to York. Dorothy Bethurum has suggested that Wulfstan may have made this move in order “to act as counsellor to the brilliant young barbarian, now King of England.”⁶⁴ Regardless of Wulfstan’s intentions, it is certainly true that he “left the very stronghold of learning and monasticism, Worcester, to work in a Danish city among a population imperfectly Christianized” at the height of his career.⁶⁵ Equally certain is his success in his new role: Wulfstan worked closely with Cnut almost from the beginning of his reign, codifying the new king’s laws just as he had with Æthelred.⁶⁶ Despite this close working relationship, it was during this period that Wulfstan wrote a series of homilies on “evil days,” including his most famous work, *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos*, which deliberately references Danish invasions. Wulfstan remained Archbishop of York until his death in 1023.

59 See Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 59.

60 Gatch, *Preaching and Theology*, especially Chapter 3.

61 Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 58, n. 3 and 374.

62 For the division of Wulfstan’s homilies into thematic blocks, see Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 29-36.

63 Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 62.

64 Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 63.

65 Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 62-63.

66 *Ibid.*

Although he authored a substantial number of legal texts, Wulfstan, like Ælfric, is best known for his homilies, and this book will focus on his theology as it appears in that body of work. There are eighteen extant manuscripts containing 21 homilies and a handful of letters written by Wulfstan; significantly, half of these manuscripts also contain theological texts written by Ælfric.⁶⁷ Dorothy Bethurum's authoritative edition of *The Homilies of Wulfstan* divides the corpus into four categories based on their primary theme: eschatology, the Christian life, and, archiepiscopal functions, and "evil days." Each of these four categories of homily was produced for a specific purpose and audience; however, Milton McC Gatch suggests that the majority of these homilies "cannot be associated with liturgical occasions," but were delivered in social contexts, such as meetings of the Witan or gatherings of clergy.⁶⁸ This suggests that the primary function of Wulfstan's homilies was not to encourage change in individual parishioners, but rather to affect systemic change across the whole of the English church. Indeed, the homilies demonstrate Wulfstan's keen attention to "the problem of controlling a large element in the population that was very imperfectly assimilated into Christian institutions."⁶⁹ They therefore offer a unique perspective into the formation of early medieval English orthodoxy, as Wulfstan attempts to balance the Benedictine reform with the increasing influence of the Danes. Moreover, because most of Wulfstan's eschatological homilies were written before the ominous year 1000, they provide a direct view into early medieval English apocalyptic thought.

The collected homilies of Ælfric and Wulfstan—a body of work produced c. 989–1014—thus offers a comprehensive perspective on English theology in the decades on either side of the first millennium. A number of qualities unite these two great theologians. Both Ælfric and Wulfstan wrote homilies on a wide variety of topics which, given the extant manuscript evidence, clearly circulated widely in early medieval England. In addition, both men also wrote a substantial amount of non-homiletic work, demonstrating the interconnectedness of theology with legal theory, grammar, pedagogy, and science. Finally, as products of the Benedictine reform, both Ælfric and Wulfstan belong to a long tradition of church reformers, and this tradition dramatically impacted their own calls for systemic change. Significantly, the differences between Ælfric and Wulfstan mean that, when taken together, their work covers nearly every aspect of early medieval English life. As I

67 For a complete review of the extant manuscripts, see Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 1–24.

68 Gatch, *Preaching and Theology*, 19

69 Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan*, 72.



suggested above, Ælfric's homilies were designed for a mixed audience including the laity: by offering religious instruction in the vernacular, these homilies make the Church accessible to the individual who receives them regardless of social status. Wulfstan's homilies, on the other hand, were likely delivered in political (rather than liturgical) contexts; their purpose was to urge the political figures who received them to enforce orthodoxy and strengthen the Church's power in the face of imperfect assimilation. Together, then, the theology of Ælfric and Wulfstan could have reached all ranges of early medieval English society, from laypeople attending church on Sunday to meetings of the Witan in London. Indeed, it is precisely their broad audience and didactic intent that makes this body of work such a useful representation of English theology in the years immediately preceding and following the millennium: these homilies reveal the folk-traditions and social practices the Church sought to reform, the orthodoxy it sought to institute, and the ways in which these ideologies intermingled.

In the previous pages, I have suggested that, although no single figure can claim absolute orthodoxy, the homiletic work of Ælfric and Wulfstan serves as a comprehensive representation of English theology in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries; the first chapter of this book will compare these homilies to the work of modern ecotheologians, arguing for the existence a specific Old English ecotheology. Subsequent chapters will demonstrate the influence of this Old English ecotheology on the poetry of the Exeter Book, a tenth-century manuscript which I similarly take as representative of the larger corpus of Old English poetry. To produce a comprehensive theory of "the natural world" in early medieval English literature and theology is beyond the scope of this project; however, as a microcosm of the myriad genres and thematic concerns which constitute Old English poetry, the Exeter Book can serve as a useful case study demonstrating the existence and prevalence of a specific Old English ecotheology. A brief review of the manuscript's contents and history will demonstrate its usefulness to this project.

Sometime before he died in the year 1072, Leofric, Bishop of Exeter commissioned a list of the manuscripts he planned to donate to the new library at Exeter Cathedral: among the many volumes listed is a *mycel englisc boc be gehwilcum þingum on leoðwisan geworht*: "a great English book about various things, written in verse."⁷⁰ Modern consensus holds that this listing

70 Bishop Leofric's donation list and various documents related to his bishopric now comprise folios 1-7 of the manuscript. For a complete list of contents and facsimile, see Chambers and Flowers, "The Preliminary Matter of the Exeter Book," 44-54 and Lapidge, "Surviving Booklists from Anglo-Saxon England," 33-89.

can only refer to Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501, the manuscript now known as the Exeter Book. The manuscript has remained in the care of Exeter Cathedral since Bishop Leofric's death; in the centuries since its critical rediscovery in the early nineteenth century it has become one of the most important artifacts of early medieval England: the poems of the Exeter Book constitute approximately one-sixth of the Old English poetic corpus. However, for all the research and attention the Exeter Book has enjoyed, no modern description seems as apt as the original: a great book about various things written in English verse. Bishop Leofric's eleventh-century description emphasizes the manuscript's most important feature: the number, diversity, and scope of its contents, unparalleled among the extant early medieval English codices. The Exeter Book is the largest and most diverse extant collection of Old English poetry: the manuscript contains a fairly even mix of secular and sacred poetry, representing a wide variety of generic forms and thematic concerns. While the classification of individual poems is fiercely debated, certain broad groups can be identified. The explicitly religious texts can be divided into three groups of doctrinal, personal, and ceremonial religious poetry.⁷¹ Each of these groups has a different function, as indicated by their titles: doctrinal religious poetry (including the poems *Christ II [The Ascension]*, *Christ II [Christ in Judgment]*, *The Panther*, *The Whale*, *The Partridge*, *Almsgiving*, *Judgment Day I* and *Homiletic Fragment II*) is an inherently didactic category, explaining and authorizing religious dogma through an amalgamation of scripture and the popular and patristic traditions.⁷² The personal religious texts (*Guðlac A* and *B*, *Vainglory*, and *Juliana*) provide exempla for Christian ways of living; these verse hagiographies are an essential part of the Old English literary tradition, as we shall see with *Guðlac A*. Finally, the ceremonial religious texts (*Christ I [Advent Lyrics]*, *The Descent into Hell*, and *Azarius*) are drawn from liturgical practice, and use conventional Biblical imagery to "express the ineffable in accessible language."⁷³ The explicitly sacred poetry of the Exeter Book, then, performs a number of different functions; the diversity of this collection thus offers a wide variety of perspectives on Old English

71 The division of religious Old English poetry into doctrinal, ceremonial, and personal modes is proposed in Conner, "Religious Poetry," 258-266. Conner, 266 also describes a fourth mode: the social, comprised of "not only the Old English elegies, but *Widsith*, *Deor*, often the riddles and, of course, *Beowulf*," though he admits that these poems do not "necessarily even look like religious poetry." Since convincing arguments have been made assigning each of these texts different (or multiple) generic forms, I've chosen not to include the category here.

72 Conner, "Religious Poetry," 259-260.

73 Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, 385.



theology and will provide a similarly wide variety of perspectives on the other-than-human members of the Earth community.

Though Christian doctrine and the popular religious tradition inform most Old English texts, a number of poems in the Exeter Book are not explicitly religious in topic or theme, and these secular texts, too, represent a wide variety of generic forms. Among the oldest of these are the catalogue poems, including the texts now known as *The Gifts of Men*, *Precepts*, *Widsith*, *The Fortunes of Men*, and *Maxims I*.⁷⁴ Muir notes that “it seems likely that the catalogues that are embedded [in these poems] contain some of the earliest surviving [Old English] poetry.”⁷⁵ The addition of the poems *Soul and Body II* and *The Order of the World* might usefully expand this group to the somewhat looser category of wisdom poetry.⁷⁶ The two most famous categories of secular poetry in the Exeter Book are the elegies—*The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *Deor*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife’s Lament*, *The Husband’s Message*, *Resignation* and *The Ruin*—and the riddles.⁷⁷ The emotional power of the elegies and the surprising modernity of the riddles has inspired a wealth of scholarship and criticism on both: indeed, much of modern Exeter Book scholarship has focused on texts from these two groups, and they are among the most frequently anthologized Old English poems.⁷⁸ All told, the secular poetry of the Exeter Book is as diverse in form and content as the sacred poetry, and offers a similarly diverse perspective on the place of the other-than-human in the early medieval English imagination.

The Exeter Book, then, is *mycel* (“great”) not only in the number of texts it contains, but also in the wide variety of generic forms and thematic concerns those texts engage, from devotional verse and hagiography to enigmatic wisdom poetry, elegies, and riddles. Though this variety makes the Exeter Book a useful tool for the exploration of any number of topics in the early medieval imagination, the manuscript reveals a particular interest in the patterns and forces of the natural world. As we shall see, the Exeter Book contains some of the most striking depictions of nature

74 Howe’s useful study of *Old English Catalogue Poems* includes in-depth analysis of each of these texts.

75 Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, 543.

76 These seven texts are among the wisdom poetry included in Bjork, ed., *Old English Shorter Poems*. As we shall see in Chapter II, these collections of gnomic thought are representative of the early medieval proclivity for mystery and ambiguity in verse.

77 Essential to the study of Old English elegiac verse is Klinck, *Old English Elegies*. The major edition of the riddles is Williamson, *Old English Riddles*.

78 For the riddles, see Chapter III; for the elegies, see Chapter IV



in the Old English corpus, such as the notorious seascapes central to the emotional impact of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*. The former poem's description of *hresan hrim on snaw, hagle gemenged* ("falling frost on snow falling, mingled with hail," l. 48) can be read as a reflection of both the speaker's emotional turmoil and the reality of winter in the stormy North Atlantic.⁷⁹ In addition, roughly a third of the riddles engage some element of the natural world, giving voice to animals such as the badger (*Riddle 15*) and the cuckoo (*Riddle 9*), and explaining environmental topics such as severe weather (*Riddle 1*) and the phases of the moon (*Riddle 29*) in vivid detail. The vocal presence of the other-than-human in these riddles suggests an awareness of both the symbolic importance and lived experience of the rest of the Earth community. Depictions of the other-than-human in these texts and elsewhere in the Exeter Book are more than a mere backdrop to human activity; they often constitute the emotional foundation of the text, and provide unique insight into attitudes towards the other-than-human in the early medieval English imagination. While it would be anachronistic to describe the Exeter Book as medieval "nature writing," it is not an oversimplification to suggest that the manuscript as a whole reveals a latent desire on the part of multiple Old English poets to engage and give voice to the non-human as a result of early medieval earth consciousness. The Exeter Book is therefore a particularly useful place to begin an exploration of the impact of Old English ecotheology on early medieval English literature.

In addition to serving as a microcosm of the corpus as a whole, the Exeter Book is also a material reminder of the interconnectedness of human and other-than-human life in early medieval England. The manuscript is, in many ways, an essential part of the Exeter Cathedral community. Assuming Leofric's *mycel englisc boc* is, in fact, the Exeter Book as we now know it, the manuscript has been in Exeter since the late eleventh century. That the manuscript has remained in the care of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral for almost a millennium speaks to its profound importance to that community. The physical influence of that community on the manuscript is equally impossible to deny. Knife scoring on the manuscript's original first folio (now fol. 8 recto) suggests that "at one time in its history the book was used as a cutting board."⁸⁰ A large ring-shaped stain on this same folio and extensive liquid damage to folios 8 recto to 12 recto may be the result of an accidentally spilt mug of beer, though other possible culprits, such

79 See Chapter IV below.

80 Krapp and Dobbie, eds., *Exeter Book*, xiv.



as a glue- or ink-pot, have been proposed.⁸¹ The final fourteen folios of the manuscript (117 recto to 130) have suffered the most extensive damage: they were burnt through when a hot poker or some other fiery object came into contact with the manuscript's exposed final folio. From a single small burn mark on fol. 117 recto, the damage expands exponentially, so that on fol. 126 and following the burned section stretches across the entire page, rendering much of these final poems unintelligible. In addition to this damage, significant gaps in the text of *Christ A (The Advent Lyrics)*, *Guðlac A, Juliana, The Partridge*, and *Riddles 20 and 40* suggest the loss of one or more folios in gatherings I, V, IX, XII, and XIV of the manuscript.⁸² It would be a mistake to read these losses as representative of a lack of care; rather, the intimate nature of much of this damage suggests that the manuscript was an important part of the monastic community at Exeter Cathedral. The very fact of the manuscript's proximity to beer, ink- or glue-pots, fiery pokers, and knives speaks to its intimacy to human activity.

Significantly, the Exeter Book speaks to its own importance within the Exeter Cathedral community in another important description of the manuscript. The text commonly called *Riddle 26* gives voice to both the object of the manuscript and the animal sacrificed for its production. As an autobiography of the Exeter Book, *Riddle 26* provides a record of the ways in which medieval manuscripts interacted with their communities. Indeed, *Riddle 26* positions the manuscript as an essential part of a community comprising human and other-than-human spheres of activity. The first eleven lines of *Riddle 26* describe in explicit detail the animal sacrifice required for manuscript production in the early middle ages:

Mec feonda sum
 woruldstrenga binom;
 dyfde on wætre,
 sette on sunnan,
 herum þam þe ic hæfde.
 snað seaxses ecg,
 Fingras feoldan,
 geondsprengde speddropum
 ofer brunne brerd

feore besnyþede
 wætte siþþan,
 dyde eft þonan,
 þær ic swiþe beleas
 Heard mec siþþan
 sindrum begrunden.
 ond mec fugles wyn
 spyrede geneahhe
 beamtelge swealg

81 Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, xiv-xv and Förster, "General Description of the Manuscript," 56 both suggest a beer mug as the source of the damage; Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, 2 suggests a glue pot.

82 For complete foliation, see Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, 7-11.

streames dæle stop eft on mec
 siþade sweartlast.
 (1-11a)⁸³

A certain enemy took away my life,
 stole my strength in the world; after that he wet me,
 dunked me in water, took me out again,
 set me in the sun, where I lost all
 the hair that I had. After that the hard
 edge of the knife cut me, ground down with cinders.⁸⁴
 Fingers folded me, and the birds' joy
 sprinkled worthy drops on me, often made tracks
 over the brown page, swallowed the tree-dye
 and a portion of the stream, stepped on me again,
 leaving dark tracks.

These lines make clear the complex series of physical and chemical processes which transform living beings into the vellum, ink, and quill necessary for manuscript production. In three half-lines animal is reduced to hide; the simplicity of the phrase *feore besnyþede* ("took away my life," 1b) elides the violence of the act, as does the smooth transition from speaking animal to speaking hide in the caesura of line 2. The process of soaking, drying, shaving, scrubbing, and folding the hide (lines 2-5) requires a number of physical and chemical reactions which result in another transformation: hide into vellum, the first of many "raw materials" necessary for the production of this manuscript. The references to *fugles wyn* ("birds' joy," 8b, indicating a feather quill) and *beamtelge* ("tree-dye," 9b, indicating ink made with oak galls) are a further reminder of this material animal sacrifice. Though we cannot know exactly how many calves, birds, and gall wasp larvae were necessary for the construction of this manuscript, the animal sacrifice would certainly have been immense: the Exeter Book is the largest of the four extant early medieval English poetic codices, measuring approximately 31.5 cm by 22 cm.⁸⁵ Regardless of the exact numbers, it seems likely that, for an early medieval English audience, the description in *Riddle 26* of the process of transforming hide into vellum would have brought into sharp

83 Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, 303-304. The translation is my own.

84 Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, 627-628 suggests that the phrase *sindrum begrunden* likely refers "to the use of powdered pumice in treating the surface of parchment."

85 Förster, "General Description of the Manuscript," 56.

relief the material cost of the manuscript at hand. Bruce Holsinger has suggested that these lines would likely encourage medieval readers to “step back from the manuscript qua manuscript—a handwritten book produced by and for humans—and think instead about the manuscript qua animal, a stack of dead animal parts produced from and at the expense of animals.”⁸⁶ The poem is an explicit reminder that human activity, such as manuscript production and the development of literature, cannot be separated from basic natural processes, and is in fact dependent on other-than-human beings for its very existence.

Whereas the first half of Riddle 26 explores the ways in which human activity transforms animal into hide, hide into vellum, and vellum into book, the second half of the riddle inverts these roles, focusing instead on the ways in which humans are transformed by their encounters with the manuscript:

<p>Gif min bearn werā hy beoð þy gesundran heortum þy hwætran ferpe þy frodran. swæsra ond gesibbra, tilra ond getreowra, estum ycað lissum bilecgāð fæste clyppað. (19-26b)</p>	<p>brucan willað, ond þy sigefæstran, ond þy hygebliþran, Habbap freonda þy ma, soþra ond godra, þa hyra tyr ond ead ond hy arstafum ond hi lufan fæþmum</p>
--	--

If the children of men wish to enjoy me,
then they will be the more sound and sure of victory,
bolder in heart and blither in mind,
wiser in spirit. They will have more friends,
dear ones and kinsmen, faithful and good,
upright and true, who will increase
their honor and favor lay upon them
goodwill and kindness, and in the grasp of love
clasp them firmly.

These lines suggest that sustained engagement with the manuscript has profound and tangible effects on the human members of its community, such

86 Holsinger, “Of Pigs and Parchment,” 619.

as increased happiness, spiritual growth, and deeper and more profitable relationships. Though Holsinger dismisses these lines as the manuscript “boast[ing] of its salvational utility,” the fact that this other-than-human being has the potential to materially and spiritually transform the humans around it suggests that, at each stage of its existence, the speaker is an important part of the spiritual community it describes.⁸⁷

The Exeter Book then, is not only a microcosm of the vast potential of Old English poetry; it is an animal-object which quite literally cries out for ecotheological consideration. Because this project centers the poetry of the Exeter Book, my scope is necessarily limited, and I will not attempt to make universalizing arguments about the place of the Earth community in Old English literature generally. Similarly, because my arguments about the existence of an Old English ecotheology are limited to the work of Ælfric and Wulfstan in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, they may not be applicable to earlier or later medieval ideologies. Nevertheless, it is my hope that these arguments may be usefully applied to readings of other early medieval texts, and that the mutual relevance of ecotheology and early medieval English studies may be further explored. The Exeter Book is a material reminder of the intimacy of human and other-than-human lives in early medieval England; this book will use the theology of Ælfric and Wulfstan and the poems of the Exeter Book to demonstrate that society’s awareness of their complicity in the “Earth crisis” and their desire to affect meaningful change.

Chapter Summaries

The first chapter of this book will argue for the existence of an Old English ecotheology, exemplified by Ælfric and Wulfstan, which in many ways anticipates the tenets of modern ecotheology. In particular, I will suggest that work of Ælfric and Wulfstan affirms the “ecojustice principles” developed in the early 2000s by a collective of ecotheologians called the Earth Bible Team. Reading the homilies of Ælfric and Wulfstan alongside the work of modern ecotheologians, I will demonstrate the existence of a distinct Old English ecotheology which anticipates by nearly a millennium the concerns raised by modern environmental crises. I will show that, like their modern counterparts, these early medieval theologians affirmed the intrinsic worth of the other-than-human elements of the Earth community

87 Holsinger, “Of Pigs and Parchment,” 621.



as members of God's creation. Like modern ecologists, they also affirmed the interconnectedness of human and other-than-human beings by suggesting kinship based on patterns of behavior. I will further show that early medieval English thinkers affirmed the ability of the other-than-human to cry out in praise and against injustice, and that their homilies warned that seemingly passive landscapes could actively resist human domination. My reading of these Old English homilies will suggest that the people of early medieval England believed that each element of the Earth community was created for a specific, divine purpose, though they also believed that purpose was unknowable. Old English homilies affirmed the mutual interdependence of human-and-other-than-human lives by condemning humanity's failure to be faithful custodians of creation. Finally, I will suggest that the homilies of Wulfstan and Ælfric acknowledged the ability of the Earth community to not only resist but also survive the destructive effects of human activity. Nearly a millennium before the Earth Bible Team first articulated their eco-justice principles, the theology of Ælfric and Wulfstan reflected thoughtful consideration of the relationship between the other-than-human members of the Earth community and the Creator. Indeed, it is possible to discern in their work a distinct Old English ecotheology which, I will argue, is reflected throughout the Exeter Book.

The second chapter of this book will suggest that active engagement with the mysteries of creation was an important goal of Old English wisdom poetry, and that these poems depend on an audience understanding of the interconnectedness of human and other-than-human beings. My reading of *The Order of the World* and *Maxims I* suggests that Old English wisdom poems anticipate modern ideas about the importance of diversity and exchange within ecosystems, and actively affirm the principle of interconnectedness by identifying kinship between human and other-than-human beings. Central to these poems is the image of the *gesceaft* ("creation") as a divine and unknowable ecosystem, or, as the *Order*-poet calls it, the *searo-runa gespon* ("web of mysteries," l. 15b). This second chapter shows that it is possible to read the wisdom poems of the Exeter Book as attempts to map out the web of mysteries and explore the messiness of the *gesceaft* in daily life. I argue that *The Order of the World* encourages active engagement with the other-than-human, demonstrating that the *Order*-poet suggests that sustained poetic adoration of creation is an appropriate method of praising the Creator. Similarly, I show that, by highlighting kinship connections between human and other-than-human members of the Earth community, the author of *Maxims I* affirms the interconnectedness of life on Earth. If *The Order of the World* encourages poetic engagement with that web as a



way of understanding and praising the Creator, then *Maxims I* serves as an example of one such poetic attempt, writing a world in which non-human forces act in familiar, rather than entirely threatening, ways. As a genre intended for the collection, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge, wisdom poetry provides a unique glimpse into Old English ecotheology; my reading of *The Order of the World* and *Maxims I* suggests that early medieval English thinkers understood and affirmed the interconnectedness of the Earth community.

The third chapter of this book turns to the Exeter riddle collection, which gives active and imaginative voice the non-human members of creation. I show that the riddles made space for active intellectual and spiritual engagement with the non-human natural world, and that, as such, they represent a crucial chapter in the history of environmental writing. My analysis of three thematic clusters of bird riddles (*Riddle 6* and *Riddle 7*), horn riddles (*Riddle 12* and *Riddle 76*) and wood-weapon riddles (*Riddles 3, 51, and 71*) demonstrates the flexibility of the genre for exploration of non-human identities and experiences. I show that the bird riddles exploit similarities between human and avian behaviors to encourage audience identification with the speaking birds and affirm the intrinsic worth of the non-human even when their actions make humans uncomfortable. This desire to assimilate human and non-human activity finds its fullest expression in the riddles of transformation describing horns: these riddles give voice to non-human beings celebrating their participation in the rituals which guide heroic culture. I argue that these riddles imagine a world in which non-human beings, like the humans who surround them, find pleasure and purpose in their work, despite removal from their natural state. However, I show that the final thematic cluster of riddles, those describing wood-weapons, reveals an uncomfortable awareness that conscription into human service is not always in the best interest of the non-human. As they detail the violence enacted on non-human beings in warfare, these riddles force the reader to confront their own complicity in the violence of heroic culture. In their insistence on the independent subjectivity, inherent worth, active voice, and purpose of the non-human natural world, the Exeter riddle collection anticipates many of the beliefs affirmed by modern ecotheologians and activists. Far from merely anthropomorphizing human concerns, the noisy animals, plants, and transformative objects of the Exeter riddle collection give voice to an active resistance to human exploitation of the natural world.

The fourth chapter of this book offers a new take on the Exeter elegies, perhaps the most famous of all the texts in the Exeter Book. I argue that, like the wisdom poems, Old English elegies depict human activity as

existing within a larger community of human and other-than-human beings, and identify a sub-category of Old English eco-elegies: lyrical attempts to describe the evolution of relationships within the Earth community across time. I suggest that these eco-elegies offered their early medieval English audiences a space to explore the ways in which relationships between individual elements of the Earth community have changed (and continue to change) across time. I begin the chapter with a discussion of the relationship between trauma, emotion, and the Earth community in *The Wanderer*. I argue that the poem offers its audience an exemplary portrait of natural depression, a pattern of exile, emotional trauma, and acceptance which relies on identification with the Earth community as a way of releasing earthly desires and fears. In examining the causes, effects, and proposed solutions to this natural depression in *The Wanderer*, this chapter demonstrates the emotional impact of other-than-human beings on the Old English elegies. My analysis of the pattern of natural depression in *The Wanderer* suggests that the poem affirms the modern ecotheological principle of mutual custodianship, anticipating the Earth Bible Team's assertion that, in addition to food and shelter, "Earth has provided [...] many other riches to sustain the body and the spirit of humanity."⁸⁸ The second part of this chapter removes humans from the picture entirely to consider *The Ruin*, a poem which is often dismissed as a "simple juxtaposition of a ruined city in the present with its time of vibrancy in the past."⁸⁹ Reading the poem within the apocalyptic mode, I show that *The Ruin* describes three discrete moments in the history of this unnamed city: presenting it alternately as a stable ecosystem, a community in crisis, and the site of a new creation. I argue that, as it juxtaposes three moments in the history of this community, *The Ruin* may attempt to alleviate apocalyptic anxieties by imagining a future in which the Earth responds to, but ultimately outlasts, the destruction of human societies described in elegies like *The Wanderer*. In this, it echoes the modern ecotheological principle of resistance, which suggests that although other-than-human beings can "suffer in sympathy with humans," the Earth community as a whole is ultimately "a subject with the power to revive and regenerate."⁹⁰ Ultimately, I argue that these eco-elegies may have served to pacify audience anxieties about human relationships with the natural world by removing the audience from their social and temporal realities to consider the long view of Christian history.

88 Earth Bible Team, "Guiding Ecojustice Principles," 51.

89 Bjork, *Wisdom and Lyric*, xxii. See the Introduction above.

90 Earth Bible Team, "Guiding Ecojustice Principles," 52-53.

As they looked back to the story of Creation and forward the imminent eschaton, early medieval English writers and thinkers nevertheless sought aspirational examples of holy living in the present: the popularity of the saint's life as a literary genre in this time speaks to this profoundly felt need for practical guidance. The fifth and final chapter of this book explores the verse hagiography *Guðlac A*, which describes the eponymous saints' attempts to build and maintain a hermitage in the East Anglian fenlands. Reading *Guðlac A* against its Anglo-Latin counterpart, Felix's *Vita Sancti Guðlaci*, my analysis of the poem shows that its primary concern is Guðlac's relationships with the holy landscape on which he builds his hermitage and its other-than-human inhabitants. I argue that, despite the presence of demons on Guðlac's arrival, the landscape in *Guðlac A* is presented as an inherently holy space deserving of the saint's devotion, even as those forces challenge him for power and resources. The poem suggests that the work of Guðlac's sainthood—and, perhaps, the work of any Christian in a time of environmental collapse—is sustained devotion to the Earth community without expectation of anything more or less than eternal life in heaven. Indeed, the poem suggests that the benefits of environmental sustainability extend beyond harmony on Earth to eternal salvation. Ultimately, I argue that, as an exemplum of Old English ecotheological living, Guðlac's legend positions sustained devotion to God's creation as both a viable path to salvation and the only possible hope for significant environmental restoration. I suggest that his hagiography imparts two important lessons to its early medieval English audiences. First, it offers a challenge to the concept of environmental "stewardship" of the Earth community in favor of a model of mutual custodianship calls for sustained and deliberate devotion to the created world for its own sake and as a manifestation of the Creator's love and glory. Secondly, Guðlac's lesson suggests that sustained engagement with the natural world even in the face of environmental crisis or collapse will be rewarded, in this life or the next. Guðlac's insistence on the inherently holy nature of his hermitage—even as he faces down its demonic inhabitants—challenges us to rethink the dangerous modern environmental rhetoric of "the fight against climate change" or "the war on environmental collapse."

The multigeneric nature of this exploration of Old English ecotheology in the Exeter Book—including wisdom poetry (*Maxims I* and *The Order of the World*), riddles, elegies (*The Wanderer* and *The Ruin*) and hagiography (*Guðlac A*)—demonstrates the prevalence and power of the natural world in the early medieval imagination. In my reading of these poems, and indeed the manuscript as a whole, I hope to highlight ways in which Old

English literature was shaped by the daily engagement with the non-human natural world. These earliest examples of the English literary tradition reveal conscious engagement with the natural world and a desire to map out the relationships between humanity and the rest of the Earth community. Indeed, I will show that the poetry of the Exeter Book rejects a strictly hierarchical theology, revealing instead an ecotheology which attempts to collapse the distance between human and natural spheres of activity by figuring humanity as an important and unique—but by no means dominant—part of the created world. Far from a mere backdrop to human experience and desire, the natural world is active participant in the drama and the emotional valence of these texts. The poems of the Exeter Book suggest an understanding of the intrinsic value of nature as an extension and representation of God's glory, anticipating by over a millennium the work of deep ecologists such as Arne Naess, who argues for an environmentalism which does not consider "the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes."⁹¹

The corpus of Old English poetry will prove useful for exploring many of the questions posed by modern ecocritical theory: what is the place of humanity among the rest of creation? How do we impact the natural world, and what is its impact on us? How do we respond to environmental catastrophe? How have our responsibilities changed across time? In the century preceding the new millennium, as they grappled with apocalyptic fears and looked hopefully for the establishment of a new heaven and Earth, the people of early medieval England produced a corpus of poetry which, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, reflects the latent environmental anxiety of the 21st century. The poems of the Exeter Book reveal thoughtful and deeply personal engagement with the natural world, and may provide a model for shaping and responding to modern environmental rhetoric, guided as it so often is by emotional and personal appeals. I will show that the corpus of Old English literature—and the poetry of the Exeter Book in particular—relies heavily on environmental imagery and narratives, and reveals an interest in articulating the intricacies of the relationship between human societies and the natural world; it is therefore a significant potential source of study for ecocritical theorists. My study of the Old English ecotheory visible in these earliest examples of the English tradition establishes a baseline for analysis of later texts and provides a model for integration of cultural difference in shaping modern environmental rhetoric. In a political system which increasingly relies on the power of narrative and

91 Naess, "The Deep Ecological Movement," 68.



emotion—rather than the dissemination of scientific fact—in shaping public opinion, an exploration of these earliest environmental narratives may prove useful. Indeed, it is my hope that a clearer understanding of the history of man’s relationship with his environment may help illuminate the steps necessary to protect our shared future.

Bibliography

- APM Research Lab. “The Color of Coronavirus: Covid-19 Deaths by Race and Ethnicity in the U.S.” January 7, 2021. Accessed February 25, 2021. <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race>.
- Bagley, Kathryn. “Interview: Connecting the Dots Between Environmental Injustice and the Coronavirus.” *Yale Environment* 360, May 7, 2020. Accessed February 25, 2021. <https://e360.yale.edu/features/connecting-the-dots-between-environmental-injustice-and-the-coronavirus>.
- Barrow, Julia. “The Ideology of the Tenth-Century English Benedictine ‘Reform.’” In *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History: The Legacy of Timothy Reuter*, edited by Patricia Skinner, 141-154. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009.
- Bethurum, Dorothy, editor. *Homilies of Wulfstan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957.
- Bjork, Robert E., editor and translator. *Old English Shorter Poems, Volume II: Wisdom and Lyric*. *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* 32. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1962; reprinted Boston: Mariner, 2002.
- Chambers, Raymond W. and Robin Flowers. “The Preliminary Matter of the Exeter Book.” In *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, edited by Raymond W. Chambers, Max Förster and Robin Flowers, 44-54. London: Percy Lund, 1933.
- Conner, Patrick W. “Religious Poetry.” In *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, edited by Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne, 258-266. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
- Earth Bible Team. “Guiding Ecojustice Principles.” In *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, edited by Norman C. Habel, 42-53. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- Förster, Max. “General Description of the Manuscript.” In *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, edited by Raymond W. Chambers, Max Förster and Robin Flowers. London: Percy Lund, 1933.
- Habel, Norman C. editor. *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*. Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 2000.



- Hawkes, Sonia Chadwick. "Anglo-Saxon Kent, c. 425-725." In *Archaeology in Kent to AD 1500*, edited by Peter E. Leach, 64-78. London: CBA Research, 1982.
- Hill, Joyce. "Ælfric: His Life and Works." In *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan, 35-65. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Hoffman, Richard C. "Homo et Natura, Homo in Natura: Ecological Perspectives on the European Middle Ages." In *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, edited by Barbara A. Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser, 11-38. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Holsinger, Bruce. "Of Pigs and Parchment: Medieval Studies and the Coming of the Animal." *Proceedings of the Modern Literature Association* 124 (2009): 616-623.
- Howe, Nicholas. *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- . *Old English Catalogue Poems*. Anglistica 23. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1985.
- Klinck, Anne. *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992.
- Krapp, George Phillip and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie. *The Exeter Book*. Anglo-Saxon Poetic Record III. Morningside Heights: Columbia University Press, 1936.
- Landes, Richard, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meter, editors. *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Lapidge, Michael. "Surviving Booklists from Anglo-Saxon England." In *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, edited by Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss, 33-89. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Muir, Bernard. *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, 2 vols. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000.
- Nardizzi, Vin. "Ecocriticism: Book Review Essay." *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 4 (2013): 112-123.
- Neville, Jennifer. *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Norman, Henry W. editor, *The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Hexameron of St. Basil*. London: J.R. Smith, 1849.
- Rambaran-Olm, Mary. "Misnaming the Medieval: Rejecting 'Anglo-Saxon' Studies." *History Workshop*, November 4, 2019. Accessed February 25, 2021. <https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/misnaming-the-medieval-rejecting-anglo-saxon-studies/>
- Richards, Julian D. "Defining Settlements: York and Its Hinterland AD 700-1000." In *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe*, edited by Sarah Rees Jones, Richard Marks, and A.J. Minnis, 45-74. York: York Medieval Press, 2000.

- Roberts, Jane, Christian Kay, and Lynne Grundy, editors. *A Thesaurus of Old English*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000.
- Thorpe, Benjamin Thorpe, editor. *Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Ælfric*. London: The Ælfric Society, 1884.
- van Oldenborgh, Geert Jan et. al. "Attribution of extreme rainfall from Hurricane Harvey, August 2017." *Environmental Research Letters* 12.12 (2017): <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/aa9ef2>
- White, Caroline Louisa. *Ælfric: A Study of his Life and Writings*. Boston: Lamson, Wolfe, and Company: 1898.
- Wickham-Crowley, Kelly Marie. "Living on the *Ecg*: The Mutable Boundaries of Land and Water in Anglo-Saxon Contexts." In *A Place to Believe In: Locating Medieval Landscapes*, edited by Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, 85-110. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006.
- Wilcox, Jonathan, editor. *Ælfric's Prefaces*. Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994.
- Williams, A. Park, John T. Abatzoglou, Alexander Gershunov, Janin Guzman-Morales, Daniel A. Bishop, Jennifer K. Balch, and Dennis P. Lettenmaier. "Observed Impacts of Anthropogenic Climate Change on Wildfire in California." *Earth's Future* 7.8 (Aug 2019): 892-910.
- Williamson, Craig. *The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977.
- Woodcock, Bruce, editor. *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1994.
- Wu, Xiao and Rachel C. Nethery. "Exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States: A nationwide cross-sectional study." *medRxiv: the preprint server for health sciences*, April 27, 2020. Accessed February 25, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.04.05.20054502>