

More Vinland maps and texts. Discovering the New World in Higden's *Polychronicon*

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Abstract

Over four decades have passed since an antiquarian bookseller brought a medieval map to Yale University Library and set into motion a series of events that would end in a controversy that continues to this day: is the so-called Vinland Map real and, if so, what is its significance? This present essay seeks to contribute to the debates over the early mapping of America by investigating the possibility that the Vinland Map (regardless of authenticity) is not the sole visual representation of Norse America, and certainly not the earliest. Rather, the earliest surviving maps of America appear to be a series of T–O derivative maps produced roughly 150 years before the voyages of Columbus as illustrations to Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*. Further, largely ignored descriptions of Vinland can be found not only in Higden's text, but in four additional texts as well, two of them in the vernacular. These various appearances of Vinland indicate the continuing remembrance or rumour of another land to the west, a record of the New World that demands additional study.

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1. Introduction

Identifying the earliest map of America is, in many ways, a matter of trivia: the first is not necessarily the most influential, or even the most interesting. Despite this fact, the search for the earliest surviving map of America has been, historically, a matter of great interest to both scholars and the public at large. It has also

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been a search riddled with much controversy—especially since the 1965 publication of the so-called Vinland Map, ostensibly dated to circa 1440.¹

Prior to the Vinland Map, Juan de la Cosa's *Mappamundi* of circa 1500 was long held to be the earliest map of America,² though the so-called 'maplets' of Christopher and Bartholomew Columbus also vied for that honour at one time.³ There have been other, more recent candidates for the title, too: Gunnar Thompson's continuing attempts to identify North and South America in the 1414 map of Albertin DeVirga⁴ and the earlier attempt by Armando Cortesão to do the same with a 1424 portolan chart being but two examples of what has devolved into a pre-Columbian treasure hunt.⁵ The purpose of this essay is not necessarily to debunk these previous theories once more, but simply to supercede them by tentatively identifying the earliest surviving maps of America as a series of T-O derivative maps produced in the latter half of the 14th century to illustrate various copies of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*. Each of these maps contains an island in the North Atlantic labelled as 'Vinland'. Indeed, largely ignored descriptions of Vinland, presumably the source for its appearance on the maps, occur in various orthographical guises not only within Higden's famous Latin text but also in Higden's source, the *Geographica universalis*, in another related chronicle entitled *Eulogium historiarum*, and in the two extant vernacular translations of

¹ *The Vinland Map and the Tartar relation*, ed. R. A. Skelton et al. (New Haven, 1965; 2nd ed. 1995). The authenticity of the Vinland Map has been under suspicion since its existence was first revealed to the world. For a brief overview of the arguments against its authenticity, see Lars Lönnroth's review of Skelton's second edition in *Alvissmál*, 7 (1997), 115–20. Academic opinion remains thoroughly divided, and scientific examinations have further clouded the matter. The most recent radiocarbon dating shows the parchment to date to 1434 (plus or minus 11 years), while recent spectroscopy has shown that the map's ink is probably modern (post-1923). See D. J. Donahue et al., 'Determination of the radiocarbon age of parchment of the Vinland Map', *Radiocarbon*, 44 (2002), 45–52; and Katherine L. Brown and Robin J. H. Clark, 'Analysis of pigmentary materials on the Vinland Map and Tartar relation by Raman microprobe spectroscopy', *Analytical Chemistry*, 74 (2002), 3652–61. For the many scholars that regard the map as a fake, the pertinent question is not whether it is authentic but who perpetrated such a brilliant hoax. One of the most interesting theories is that of Kirsten A. Seaver, who argues that it was made in Germany between 1933 and 1941 by a retired Jesuit priest playing a complicated joke on the Third Reich's Teutonic obsessions; see 'The "Vinland Map": who made it, and why? New light on an old problem', *The Map Collector*, 70 (1995), 32–40.

² For reproductions of some of the earliest maps of America, see *America: Early maps of the New World*, ed. Hans Wolff (Munich, 1992); and *The mapping of America*, ed. Seymour I. Schwartz and Ralph E. Ehrenberg (New York, 1980).

³ These sketch maps are now thought to be in the hand of Alessandro Zorzi and dating to circa 1520 at the earliest. See George E. Nunn, 'The three maplets attributed to Bartholomew Columbus', *Imago Mundi*, 9 (1952), 12–22.

⁴ Gunnar Thompson, *The Friar's map of ancient America* (Seattle, 1996). Thompson's identifications have been decisively rebutted as his 'North America' is clearly Lapland and is, indeed, labelled as 'Norvega' (Norway), and his 'South America' is Java (and labelled as such). For a reproduction and a discussion of the map, see Marcel Destombes, *Mappemondes, A.D. 1200–1500: Catalog préparé par la Commission des Cartes Anciennes de l'Union Géographique Internationale*, Monumenta cartographica vetustioris aevi, vol. 1, Suppl. 4 (Amsterdam, 1964), 206–7.

⁵ Armando Cortesão, *The nautical chart of 1424 and the early discovery and cartographical representation of America* (Coimbra, 1954).

Higden: John of Trevisa's 1385 translation and that of an anonymous scholar working in the early 15th century. These various Vínlands would indicate the continuing remembrance or rumour of another land to the west, on the other side of the ocean: a record of the New World that pre-dates the voyages of 1492 by roughly 150 years.⁶ Let us begin, however, with what is known with certainty about this place called Vínland.

2. Vínland

It is now generally accepted that the Norse reached Greenland around the year 985, led there by Eirik the Red (*Eiríkr rauði*), a Viking outlaw of sorts. Eirik called the place Greenland—more for the purposes of public relations than anything else—and went back to Iceland to recruit further settlers.⁷ According to the Norse sagas,⁸ Eirik's son, Leif Eiriksson, brought Christianity to Greenland from Norway sometime just prior to the year 1000,⁹ and by 1053 the Christian church was well enough established to warrant inclusion in the Archbishopric of Hamburg–Bremen since Pope Leo IX includes it in a bull dated 6 January 1053, the earliest known reference to Greenland by name.¹⁰ The earliest known map to include Greenland (*Gronlandia*) is the Claudius Clavus map of Scandinavia, which survives in a copy of Ptolemy's *Geography* that is housed in Nancy at the Bibliothèque Municipale; this map was drawn around 1427, just as the colony was beginning to be abandoned after surviving for nearly 500 years on the frozen edge of the known world. The very existence of the country steadily faded from public knowledge, and Greenland appears to have been entirely abandoned by

⁶ Controversial as these tentative identifications might be, it is not my intention to enter into a discourse for or against the accomplishments of Columbus. In addition to the moral questions surrounding the treatment of the native Americans in the wake of Columbus' arrival, much ink has been spilled concerning the legitimacy of his 'discovery'. Besides the fact that the native population was already here and the still unresolved issue of whether or not Columbus claimed a new discovery at any point or merely thought he was in India, a great number of individuals are said to have beat him to the punch in crossing the Atlantic from Europe. See, for example, Patrick Huyghe, *Columbus was last* (New York, 1992).

⁷ Geraldine Barnes, *Viking America: the first Millennium* (Cambridge, 2001), x.

⁸ I have largely relied on the translations of Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson for all Norse saga materials; see *The Vinland sagas: The Norse discovery of America* (London, 1965). Where relevant, I have checked this against the following editions: Ólafur Halldórsson's edition of *Eiríks saga rauða in Texti Skálholtsbókar AM 557 4to*, Íslensk fornrit suppl. 4 (Reykjavík, 1985); Matthías Þórðarson's edition of *Grænlandinga saga* in Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, eds, *Eyrbyggja saga, Grænlandinga sogur*, Íslensk fornrit 4 (Reykjavík, 1935). I will refer to these texts by their English titles: *Eirik the Red's saga and Saga of the Greenlanders*. Both of these sagas are deeply indebted to the Icelandic *Landnámabók*, or *The Book of Settlements*; see Hermann Pálsson and Paul Geoffrey Edwards, trans., *The Book of Settlements: Landnámabók* (Winnipeg, 1972), 109–17.

⁹ On the role of Christianity in Greenland, see Kirsten A. Seaver, *The frozen echo: Greenland and the exploration of North America, ca. A.D. 1000–1500* (Stanford, 1996), 61–90.

¹⁰ Seaver, *The frozen echo*, 45.

the Norse in 1500—quite possibly due to the discovery of the New World to the south and the direct shipping lanes to those lands from Europe.¹¹

Long before the Greenland colony collapsed, however, Viking ships from Greenland discovered America. According to the 12th-century *Saga of the Greenlanders*, Vinland was discovered around the year 1000 by none other than Leif Eiriksson, who landed on shores first spotted by Bjarni Herjólfsson. *Eirik the Red's saga* leaves Bjarni out of the picture and attributes the discovery to an accidental landing. Either way, Leif first reached a rocky, glaciated shore that he named Helluland, meaning 'Flagstone-land'. Continuing in their journey, they came to a second, heavily wooded land with long, white-sanded beaches; this country they named Markland, meaning 'Wood-land'. After a few more days of travel, Leif and his companions reached a hospitable country with grapes, salmon, and meadows; they named this Vinland, meaning 'Wine-land'.¹² Leif and his companions wintered over in Vinland, building houses before returning to Greenland with a wealth of grapes and other delights. According to the saga materials, a handful of other adventurers tried to follow in Leif's wake and begin colonisation of this new land to the west but climate and unwelcoming natives turned them back. No other attempts at permanent settlement are recorded.¹³

Excavations by Helge and Anne Ingstad at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland have conclusively proved the existence of at least one Viking colony in America, though—despite the Ingstads' claims to the contrary—it is impossible to know if L'Anse aux Meadows is Leif's settlement.¹⁴ The exact location of Vinland, given the few clues we have to go on, may forever elude us, though the dearth of hard facts has not allayed the formation of theories: Vinland has variously been alleged to occupy modern Newfoundland, Labrador, Maine, Massachusetts, the shores of Hudson Bay, and even Minnesota.¹⁵

In addition to *Eirik the Red's saga* and the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, the three lands—Helluland, Markland, and Vinland—are mentioned in a handful of geographical treatises: the 13th-century *Landafræði*, the 14th-century *Leidarvisir* of Abbot Nikulas Bergsson of Munkathvera, and *Gripla*, an encyclopedic work that only exists now in a 17th-century compilation of earlier texts. The *Islendingabok*,

¹¹ On this point, see Seaver, *The frozen echo*, *passim*. It was previously thought that the medieval Greenlanders were either massacred by the native population or simply starved to death. As Seaver illustrates, however, neither theory fits the data currently available about medieval Greenland.

¹² Some scholars have argued that the first syllable was short (*vin* instead of *vín*), thereby making the name 'grass-land'; this argument has met with substantial resistance from scholars who believe it to be linguistically and historically unlikely. See Erik Wahlgren, *The Vikings and America* (London, 1986), 139–46.

¹³ This summation is based on the events as described in the *Saga of the Greenlanders*. For another summary of Viking voyages to America, deftly comparing the saga accounts, see Tryggvi J. Oleson, *Early voyages and northern approaches 1000–1632* (Toronto, 1963), 18–28.

¹⁴ Anne Stine Ingstad, *The discovery of a Norse settlement in America: Excavations at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, 1961–1968*, I (Oslo, 1977), *passim*.

¹⁵ For an overview of the 'solid' facts we have to go by and one of the more likely scenarios that fits them, see Wahlgren, 153–67.

written by Ari Thorgilsson circa 1122, also contains a passing mention of Vínland. In an Icelandic chronicle, *Konungsannáll*, a one-line entry records the 1121 expedition of a bishop named Eirik in search of Vínland; whether or not he found Vínland or even returned is not mentioned. Another one-line entry in another Icelandic chronicle, *Skálholtsannáll*, this time for the year 1347, makes reference to a Greenland ship that had been to Markland on a timber-gathering expedition. The *Landnamabok* and *Kristnisaga* both mention Vínland, but provide little information beyond the fact that its existence was still known to writers. None of these sources appears to have been read outside of Iceland's borders, and all of them are in Icelandic.¹⁶

Vínland is mentioned, however, in at least one written source outside of Iceland: Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, a history of the See of Hamburg, written in 1075, that was relatively ignored until the beginning of the 17th century. Nevertheless, Bremen does report the existence of Vínland:

He [the king of the Danes, Sveinn Ulfsson] spoke also of yet another island of the many found in that ocean [where Greenland lies]. It is called Vinland because vines producing excellent wine grow wild there. That unsown crops also abound on that island we have ascertained not from fabulous reports but from the trustworthy relation of the Danes. Beyond that island, he said, no habitable land is found in that ocean, but every place beyond it is full of impenetrable ice and intense darkness.¹⁷

Beyond this one written source, which is not repeated in any extant text, it has been assumed that there is nothing but silence. Little wonder that Geraldine Barnes' recent book on the impact of Vikings in America can sum up the matter: 'By the 14th century Vínland and the other lands west of Greenland had been largely forgotten as parts of the Scandinavian world'.¹⁸ Even the Scandinavians, who were most closely connected with Greenland and Vínland, were apparently quick to forget about these early forays across the Atlantic. By most accounts, then, the Viking project in America appears to have been a failure: the foothold was lost within a few decades as the native population of Vínland—a people the Vikings called *Skrælings*¹⁹—began to attack the colonisers. The Greenlanders might have continued to cross the Davis Strait in order to forage Markland (the modern coast of Labrador?) for wood, but the Vikings are not known to have established any subsequent colony in the New World. Moreover, mainline history indicates that the whole episode subsequently receded from the collective memory of the Norse,

¹⁶ Many of these references can be found in Oleson, 28–30.

¹⁷ Adam of Bremen, *History of the archbishops of Hamburg–Bremen*, trans. Francis J. Tschan (New York, 1959), 219.

¹⁸ Barnes, xiii.

¹⁹ The etymology of this term is rather uncertain. E. V. Gordon notes possible connections to modern Norwegian *skræla* 'scream' and Icelandic *skælna* 'shrink', whereas modern Scandinavian languages use the term *skræling* to refer to a weakling or a churl. See E. V. Gordon, *An introduction to Old Norse*, ed. A. R. Taylor, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1956), 218.

and that news of their discoveries made only the most negligible of impacts on the non-Scandinavian world since only one monk in Germany appears to note its existence.

Even modern scholarship has regarded the Vikings' Vinland activities as little more than a quaint sidenote to history: Vinland only merits a passing mention in *The Oxford illustrated history of the Vikings*,²⁰ and is tossed aside as a place that 'came to be regarded as a semi-legendary land' by the *Encyclopedia of the Viking Age*.²¹ Strikingly, Vinland merits no mention from critics such as Mary Campbell and Stephen Greenblatt in their writings about the New World.²² Anthony Pagden appears to speak for the established perspective when he writes:

For all Europeans, the events of October 1492 constituted a 'discovery'. Something of which they had had no prior knowledge had suddenly presented itself to their gaze ... America was also different from all other 'other' worlds in that until Columbus's landfall its very existence had been unknown.²³

Even many 'pro-Viking' critics have themselves inadvertently agreed with a relative footnoting of the Norse presence in America.²⁴ Erik Wahlgren, who makes no secret of his political views in his book *The Vikings and America*, concludes his discussion of the Norse impact in America with the following summation:

What alone their [the Vikings'] slender numbers could not cope with was the challenge of a much greater native population. And so, not driven onward by tyranny, religious persecution, political ambition or the greed for wealth, they licked their wounds and quietly withdrew. To the geographers and mapmakers of a later world they bequeathed the Skraelings and the legacy of a pair of place names which were eagerly utilised by 16th-century European cartographers. These are Markland, the region of great forests, and Promontorium Winlandiae, this last an inexperienced but recognizable depiction of northern Newfoundland.²⁵

Aside from painting the Vikings in a rather innocent light—one wonders what they were doing in America if economics, politics, and proselytising were not possible goals—this depiction of Norse history also diminishes their accomplishments: the Norse 'quietly withdrew' and their efforts were forgotten for half a millennium. Crucial to this dismissive attitude has been the lack of evidence for anything to the contrary: since there was no indication that anyone remembered Vinland in the

²⁰ *The Oxford illustrated history of the Vikings*, ed. P. Sawyer (Oxford, 1997).

²¹ *Encyclopedia of the Viking Age*, ed. J. Hayward (London, 2000).

²² Mary Campbell, *The witness and the other world: Exotic European travel writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca, 1988); and Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous possessions: The wonder of the New World* (Chicago, 1991).

²³ Anthony Pagden, *European encounters with the New World: From renaissance to romanticism* (New Haven, 1993), 5, 11.

²⁴ An amusing collection of critical responses to the Viking presence in America is provided by Barnes, xvii–xix.

²⁵ Wahlgren, 172. Wahlgren's discussion about the location of Vinland is one of the most thorough available.

high or late Middle Ages, there has been no reason to worry about the affair. And, if such thinking must be defended, these scholars have had logic on their side: the Norse foothold in America was tenuous by all accounts, and little evidence has surfaced to contradict the theory that either nobody in Europe noticed the Viking activities or nobody in Europe cared about them.

As Wahlgren implies, even maps—a logical source for information in an investigation into a geographical and political matter such as Vinland—have traditionally been of little help in redeeming Vinland from obscurity since the Vikings do not appear to have ever, in their history, produced or used them.²⁶ In fact, the earliest known map to include the name Vinland—and the one to which Wahlgren appears to refer directly—is the Sköhlholt Map drafted by Sigardur Stefansson, of which we have a 1669 copy of a 1590 original.²⁷ And this map, along with its near-contemporary, the Resen Map of 1605, is clearly a political reaction to the discoveries of the Portuguese and Spanish in the New World. Northern Europeans, ‘scooped’ by their southern counterparts, combed their histories, presumably located the old saga stories, and produced maps staking their prior claim to the rich lands across the sea.²⁸

As we shall see, however, the tentative identification of Vinland on maps and in texts of the late 14th century strongly calls for a reinvestigation into this disregarded corner of history. If Vinland does indeed appear in at least three different Latin texts of 14th-century England and two vernacular translations of the Latin from the 14th and 15th centuries, as well as at least five related maps, then ignorance of Vinland’s existence on the part of late-medieval Europeans can no longer be casually assumed.²⁹

3. The texts

There are roughly 120 surviving manuscripts of Ranulf Higden’s *Polychronicon*, making it one of the most popular universal histories of the Middle Ages. Higden, a Benedictine monk from St. Werburgh’s Abbey in Chester, produced at least three versions of his history (probably in 1327, 1340, and 1360) before he died in March 1363. The book was immensely popular even in his own time, and Higden’s name was soon spread across England as his work became standard reading in

²⁶ Ibid. See also Douglas McNaughton, ‘A world in transition: early cartography of the North Atlantic’, in: *Vikings: The North Atlantic saga*, ed. William W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward (Washington, 2000), 258.

²⁷ Copenhagen, Royal Library MS G. K. S. 2881. A similar map, probably drawn from the same source, was produced by Icelandic bishop Hans Poulson Resen in 1605 and is now on display in the map room of Copenhagen’s Royal Library. See Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European discovery of America: The northern voyages* (Oxford, 1971), 72.

²⁸ McNaughton, 265–7.

²⁹ I do not mean to imply that these various appearances represent independent sources. Rather, they simply represent multiple witnesses, related or not, to the existence of knowledge about Vinland at a late stage in the history of medieval Europe; it is the dissemination of the idea of the New World that is of importance to my arguments here.

both monastic and secular circles. It is even possible that the one extensive trip in Higden's life, a 1352 visit to the court of Edward III, was due to growing respect for Higden as a historian.³⁰

Given his own lack of experience, Higden's history of the world is almost entirely reliant on sources at hand in a monastic library of the Middle Ages: Josephus, Pliny, Solinus, Isidore, Orosius, and Gerald of Wales are but a few of his authorities. Indeed, Higden follows classical precedent, namely Sallust, in opening his history with a description of the world.³¹ And Higden did not lack in thoroughness when it came to compiling his geography; as the cartographer Evelyn Edson notes,

Higden's description of the world runs to several hundred pages, beginning with the size of the earth, its division into three continents, the Mediterranean Sea, the Ocean, and moving on to the 'provinces of the earth, of which the first is Paradise'. For each place Higden weighs the various authorities, describing, like a modern geographer, customs as well as physical characteristics.³²

Toward the end of his first book, in the midst of his world geography, Higden provides a description of the 'Islands of the Ocean'.³³ He begins with the Fortunate Isles, which he identifies as the Canary Islands; next he describes Denmark, an 'island joined to northern Germany',³⁴ before moving on to describe an island called 'Wyntlandia'. Wyntland, Higden explains, is an island west of Denmark that is inhabited by barbarous idol-worshippers who sell wind to mariners by tying knots on thread: the more knots untied, the greater the wind released.³⁵ John of Trevisa, writing in 1385, translates the passage thus:

Wyntlandia, þat ilond, is by west Denmark, and is a barayne lond and of men mysbyleued; þei worschipeþ mawmetrie, and selleþ wynd to schipmen, þat seilleþ to hire hauenes, as it were i-closed vnder knottis of þrede; and as þe knottes beeþ vnknette, þe wynde wexeþ at her owne wille.³⁶

³⁰ Evelyn Edson, *Mapping time and space: How medieval mapmakers viewed their world*, The British Library studies in map history, vol. I (London, 1997), 126. On Higden in general, see John Taylor's still unsurpassed *The Universal Chronicle of Ranulf Higden* (Oxford, 1966) and the more recent work by Antonia Gransden, *Historical writing in England; vol. 2, c. 1307 to the early sixteenth century* (London, 1982), 43–57. As Taylor points out (96–102), the precise dating of the versions (and, indeed, the number of versions) of Higden's work are still subject to debate; see, for example, the discussion of the matter in Gransden, 44–5.

³¹ Edson, 100–1.

³² Edson, 127.

³³ Ranulf Higden, *Polychronicon*, 1.31, ed. Churchill Babington, Rolls series no. 41 (London, 1865), 320–9.

³⁴ Dacia est insula boreali parti Germaniae contigua. *Ibid.*, 320.

³⁵ Wyntlandia insula, ad occasum Daciae, terra sterilis est, gens barbara et idolatra, quae navigantibus ad eorum portum ventum vendere solent, quasi sub nodis fili inclusum; quorum enodatione ventus augebitur, ut voluerint. *Ibid.*, 322.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 323.

Another, anonymous translator, whose late 14th-century work is represented in MS Harley 2261, translates the passage in clearer terms:

Wyotlandia is an yle at the weste parte of Denmarke, a bareyn grownde, inhabite with peple of barbre worschippenge ydoles; whiche be wonte to selle wynde to men commenge to theire portes as includede vnder knottes of threde, causenge the wynde to be encreasede after theire pleasure thro that threde.³⁷

In all three instances—Higden's original Latin text and the texts of both Middle English translators—the next islands described are Iceland and Thule, followed by the country of Norway.

Churchill Babington, the Rolls editor for Higden, states in his introduction to the text that, by Wyntland, Higden means the northern part of Jutland, 'which is indeed not very far from being an island'.³⁸ Though he does not explain how a portion of northern Denmark can qualify as an island located west of Denmark, Babington bases this identification on the fact that Spruner's *Historical Atlas* (plate 57) labels this area of Denmark as 'Wendila'.³⁹

Higden's source, however, is not Spruner's *Atlas*. As Babington correctly notes, his source is the *Geographica universalis*, a text written by an anonymous monk at Malmesbury that has yet to be edited and that exists in only one manuscript: British Library MS Arundel 123.⁴⁰ This early 14th-century text also served as the source for the unknown contemporary of Higden who wrote the *Eulogium historiarum*; it is the author of this latter text who lifts the following description verbatim from the *Geographica*.⁴¹

Winlandia is a country close to the mountains of Norway in the direction of the Orient, along the shores of Ocean; very little grows there besides grasses and trees. The people of that place are barbarous, savage, fierce, and work the magical arts; they offer and sell wind to those who sail to their shores from other places or who draw near to them on account of a hindering lack of wind. They fashion a band of string and tie many knots into it; then, depending on whether they [i.e., the stranded mariners] want a strong or a weak wind they then remove many knots on the band or only a few. In accordance with their unbelief [i.e., pagan belief], they beg for these powers from aerial demons who stir up the major or the minor winds according to the loosening of the knots.

³⁷ Ibid., 323.

³⁸ Ibid., xxxv.

³⁹ Ibid., xxxv (note 3).

⁴⁰ On the *Eulogium* in general, see Gransden, 101–5 and 158.

⁴¹ *Eulogium historiarum*, 2.91, ed. Frank Scott Haydon, Rolls series no. 9 (London, 1860), 78–9.

And sometimes they so stir up the winds that the unfortunate ones [i.e., Christians?] are drowned.⁴²

Frank Scott Haydon, who edited the *Eulogium*, glosses this land as Finland, presumably on the basis of its close connection with the mountains of Norway.⁴³ Babington briefly discusses the matter in his introduction to Higden, and there vacillates in saying that Higden ‘ought to have meant Finland also, but in describing the island as lying west of Denmark, he seems to have confused Wendila with the Winlandia whose description he has taken from the *Geographica*’.⁴⁴ There is no explanation how Wendila, a part of northern Denmark, satisfies the description of an island west of Denmark, though Babington rightly notes that there is no textual, historical, or linguistic evidence that would tie Winlandia or Wyntlandia with Finland since ‘Finlandia, Finnia, and Finnonia are the only Latin renderings of Finland’.⁴⁵ If the island Win(t)land is not to be connected with Wendila or Finland, where is it?

The alternative possibility, that Win(t)land is the surviving witness to Norse Vínland, is the subject of the remainder of this essay.⁴⁶ Winland is the Latin form for Vínland used by Adam of Bremen, and Winlandiae is the Latin form for Vínland that appears on the Skölholt Map. Higden’s alternative form of the name, Wyntland, is clearly an emendation of the original form; Higden appears to have changed the name of the island due to an etymological association with the story about the isle and its wind-controlling inhabitants: to Higden’s thinking, the island should be called ‘wind-land’. This false etymology aside, Higden’s source is quite clear that the name of the island is Winland. On linguistic and orthographic grounds, therefore, we have every reason to identify Win(t)land as Vínland.

The descriptions of Winland found in the *Geographica* and Higden’s *Polychronicon* also go some way toward reinforcing the identification of Win(t)land as Vínland. As we have already seen, the *Geographica* provides the location of the island as ‘a country close to the mountains of Norway in the direction of the Orient, along the shores of Ocean’. Haydon felt this to be a reasonable description

⁴² Winlandia est patria iuxta montana Norwegiae versus Orientem sita, super litus Oceani; non multum fertilis nisi in graminibus et silvis. Gens illa barbara, agrestis, saeva, magicis artibus occupata; unde navigantibus per eorum litora vel apud eos propter venti defectum moram trahentibus ventum venalem offerunt et vendunt. Globum de filo faciunt et nodos multos in eo connectunt, secundum quod ventum volunt habere fortiolem vel leuiorem; quibus propter incredulitatem illorum illudentes daemones aerem quaesitant et ventum maiorem vel minorem excitant, secundum quod plures nodos de filo extrahunt vel pauciores; et quandoque ita ventum commovent ut illi miseri fidem adhibentes submerguntur.

⁴³ It is possible that Haydon is also relying on the interchangeability of *F* and *W* that can occur during portions of the middle ages. Such an argument, however, would be made on somewhat tenuous paleographic and linguistic grounds in this manuscript.

⁴⁴ Higden, xxxvi.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ James Robert Enterline makes brief comment on the possible connections between the *Geographica* and Vínland in his recent book *Erikson, Eskimos and Columbus: Medieval European knowledge of America* (Baltimore, 2002), 114–5. Fridtjof Nansen also notes the possibility, though he is reluctant to acknowledge the Vínland tales as anything more than a set of primarily mythological texts. See: *In northern mists*, 2 vols. (New York, 1911), 1.192, 2.31–32, 2.189–91.

of Finland: Finland is close to Norway on the map, Finland is east of Norway in the common-sense direction of the orient, and—if one follows the coastline far enough around the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Bothnia or crosses the icy threshold between the Norwegian and Barents Seas and counts these waters as ocean—Finland is certainly on the same ‘shore’ as Norway. Haydon’s linguistics might not fit, but the geography does. Yet cannot the same be said of Vinland? Knowledge of northern European geography is notoriously suspect during the Middle Ages, with the lines between political and geographical relations often blurring; thus Iceland is often noted for its close geographical location to Norway, despite the long leagues of cold water between them, because of its close political and social relationship with Trondheim. The same might well be said for Vinland, especially when the primary, if not sole, visitors to the New World had been Scandinavians. The *Geographica*’s location of Winland ‘in the direction of the orient’ was naturally assumed by Haydon to be east of Norway, but it could also be (counter-intuitively) west, across the ocean. Few educated individuals in the Middle Ages actually thought the Earth was flat; like Christopher Columbus, the early explorers of Vinland might well have thought that America was an outlying portion of the orient, only a brief voyage to Cipangu and the riches of the Indies. Indeed, we know that John Cabot still suspected that the New World was nothing but the east end of the Old World when he began his voyages to North America in pursuit of the northwest passage in 1497.⁴⁷ An examination of Scandinavian geography, as represented in the Sköhlholt and Resen maps, for example, reveals that Vikings believed a great shoreline extended north across the top of the world, stretching out from Norway to connect Greenland and possibly even Vinland itself, so a description of Win(t)land as an island ‘along the shores of Ocean’ might well apply to Vinland, too.⁴⁸ The *Geographica* describes a land of grasses and forests, something that could be made to fit either Finland or Vinland: both are heavily treed, and grasses grew wild and tall in North America. The fact that Leif Eiriksson named Markland for its trees, and that Greenlanders appear to have made a number of forays to Markland in order to take advantage of its timber, cannot go unnoted here. The *Geographica* next speaks of a native population of barbarous pagans (*gens illa barbara*) that might well be construed as an inflated description of the Skrælings encountered by the Vikings in America; it would be more difficult to lay such a blanket accusation of paganism and barbarism at the feet of medieval Finland. The fabulous story about the selling of wind in knotted cord is problematic wherever one locates Winland,⁴⁹ but Vinland

⁴⁷ For a brief overview of Cabot’s voyages, see Morison, 157–209.

⁴⁸ It is possible, though unlikely, that this description could also be translated as ‘beyond the shores of Ocean’, in which case Finland would not fit at all—only Vinland would make sense. On the perspective of Scandinavian geography in both the Sköhlholt and Resen Maps; see above and note 27.

⁴⁹ George Woods reports a similar story that may go back to Holinshed’s *Chronicles* about witches living on a hill near Peel on the Isle of Man. See *An account of the past and present state of the Isle of Man* (London, 1911) (Chapter 12). Sir James George Frazer records instances of the legend appearing not only on the Isle of Man, but also in Lerwick, in Lapland, on Shetland, and on the Isle of Lewis. See *Golden bough: A study in magic and religion* (New York, 1922) (Chapter 5.4).

has the advantage of a western location, the ‘origin’ of the steady winds and currents that move across the ocean in the form of the Gulf Stream, Westerlies, and North Atlantic current. Knotted cords are, of course, common to all cultures, but we know that they had particular religious and social significance to many early American cultures, including the Eskimos. James Robert Enferline has noted that some of the earliest anthropological surveys among the Eskimos of the Canadian arctic report a native superstition ‘connecting string figures with a magical quality affecting the wind’.⁵⁰

Higden takes the description of mere grasses and timber as a sign of desolation in his *Polychronicon* and makes Winland, in Trevisa’s translation, ‘a barayne lond’. Though Finland has never boasted of a large population or a rich agricultural yield, it seems more difficult to place such a general categorisation on Finland, a country assuredly known to many travellers, than it would be to place it upon far away, half-legendary Vinland. Higden also modifies the *Geographica*’s description of Winland in other ways. Wyntland is not a country for Higden, it is very clearly an island in the midst of the ocean. And he abandons the geographical relationship to Norway, taking care instead to locate his Wyntland to the west of Denmark. This may well indicate that Higden, for one, understood ‘the direction of the orient’ to be west as well as east; it certainly goes far to ruling out Finland as the location in Higden’s mind. The island’s natives are still described as barbarous idol-worshippers, and the selling of wind is still emphasised; as we have already noted, it appears that Higden has fixated on the wind-selling to such a degree as to change his source’s spelling from *Winlandia* to *Wyntlandia* in order to emphasise its importance in an etymological fashion. Interestingly, it is during the centuries following the appearance of Higden’s popular text that many cartographers place an Island of Wind opposite Spain in the western Atlantic. So, for example, an *Insulla de Ventura* appears on Bartolomeo Pareto’s 1455 map, Petrus Roselli’s 1466 portolan chart, and Albino de Canepa’s 1489 portolan chart.⁵¹ *Ixola de Ventura* also appears on an anonymous 1424 portolan chart.⁵² These islands often appear alongside the Isles of St. Brendan or other ‘mythological’ islands, but an Island of Wind does not appear in the tales of Brendan or in any extant medieval text beyond those already discussed. It is possible, of course, that the source of these later isles is Homeric (the Island of Aeolus), or otherwise classically located, but one would then need to question their complete absence from surviving maps until after the dissemination of Higden’s Latin text.

Higden received his information from the *Geographica*, but where the earlier text received its information is not known, and we can only postulate about possible sources. It might seem easy to point to the Norse sagas—the sources apparently used by later mapmakers in the 16th century—but Adam of Bremen’s *Gesta* would

⁵⁰ See Enferline, 115, who notes Diamond Jenness, ‘Eskimo string figures’, *Report of the Canadian arctic expedition* (Ottawa, 1924), 13 (B), 181.

⁵¹ A good reproduction of one of these maps can be found in Morison, 21.

⁵² See Cortesão, *passim*.

seem more likely. Though we have no record that Adam's work circulated in any of the major source libraries of England, it is quite possible that at least one copy was circulating in England and simply has not survived. Adam's text, cited earlier, makes no mention of either Helluland or Markland, Vínland's sibling lands in the sagas. Quite to the contrary, Adam speaks only of Vínland. In addition, Adam's text was written in Latin, rendering it a more accessible text since linguists believe that Norse had disappeared as a separate language in Yorkshire by the middle of the 11th century, and was gone from the whole of the former Danelaw by the early 12th century.⁵³ Any mapmaker working in England during the latter half of the 14th century would have therefore consulted a Latin text as a written source. It is equally possible, of course, that the source for these texts was nothing more than an extended oral history, something quite common during the Middle Ages; such a scenario would certainly account for the fact that the *Geographica* makes no mention of the 'vines producing excellent wine' and the 'unsown crops' that can be found on the island according to Adam. Though we cannot discount this latter possibility, such oral tales are less likely to have made a strong impact within the circles of elite Latin intellectuals and writers than a legitimate written source.

At any rate, a good case can be made that the Win(t)land of Higden, the *Eulogium*, and the *Geographica*, as well as the English translations of Higden by John of Trevisa and an anonymous 15th-century scribe, represents Norse Vínland, a land whose evidence of existence was previously thought to have existed only in one little-read Latin text and a few scant references from Norse literature. With this possibility in mind, let us turn to the maps that accompany many of Higden's texts in order to determine if more support for the identification of Win(t)land as Vínland can be found.

4. The Higden maps

As Evelyn Edson has noted, it was not until Higden began to expand his text that he decided to include a map illustrating his depiction of the world.⁵⁴ Such maps were uncommon in English chronicles of the Middle Ages, and it is thus somewhat remarkable that at least 21 Higden maps survive.⁵⁵ Though the maps vary in the detail that they show and the intricacy with which they were produced, they share a number of common features: most important being that all of these maps are tied quite directly to Higden's text. As a result, they can be used to illustrate the *Polychronicon* directly. To place the terminology in its proper medieval

⁵³ David N. Parsons, 'How long did the Scandinavian language survive in England? Again', in: *Vikings and the Danelaw*, ed. James Graham Campbell, et al. (Oxford, 2001), 299–312.

⁵⁴ Edson, 128.

⁵⁵ For a full catalogue of the Higden maps, see *The history of cartography*, vol. 1, ed. J. B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago, 1987), 364–5; a stemma of these maps appears on 313; a catalogue is also provided by A. S. G. Edwards in 'Geography and illustration in the *Polychronicon*' in: *Art into life: Selected papers from the Kresge Symposia*, ed. Kathleen Scott and Carol Fisher (East Lansing, 1995), 95–113.

setting, the maps gloss the text, providing a commentary that helps to illuminate the reading of the words on the page. We are only now beginning to see that such tight textual control over related visual mediums, truly making such images a pictorial illustration of the accompanying text, is common to even the largest and most famous of medieval maps such as the Hereford *Mappamundi*.⁵⁶

Each of the Higden maps derives, distantly, from a T-O model of the world, but in the Higden maps the simplicity of the basic T-O map is greatly modified, an innovation that moves the map from the simple stylisation of the symbolic to a more realistic accounting of geographical relationships. Five of the Higden maps are circular, but mandorla and truncated-mandorla shapes occur in almost half of the maps, while the earliest maps—one of which is possibly Higden's own copy—are oval in shape. In these maps, the Red Sea has shifted to the southeast of the world, greatly warping any sense of a 'T' in these T-O maps. J. B. Harley and David Woodward, in their *History of cartography*, even go so far as to remove such maps from the T-O tradition and simply label them 'Nonschematic Tripartite', thus emphasising the innovative notion of geographical relativism to be found within them.⁵⁷ John Taylor, one of the few critics to write extensively concerning the *Polychronicon*, has noted that the Higden maps were 'a combination of classical and Christian influence' providing 'a guide to Biblical history'.⁵⁸ Thus Paradise is marked on the map in the farthest reaches of the East, where the sun rises, where it was furthest from the known world, where it is at the top of the map. Jerusalem is typically placed at or near the centre of the map, and, by extension, the world. Other important Biblical locations or events also tend to make appearances on the maps, such as Mount Sinai and the crossing of the Red Sea. To these theological concerns, the Higden maps add places and legends corresponding to the text of the *Polychronicon*; it is for this reason, apparently, that *Vínland* appears on most of the Higden maps.⁵⁹

Two of the Higden maps can be found in a manuscript produced at Ramsey Abbey circa 1342, where they appear back-to-back on the first two folios of British Library MS Royal 14 C.ix.⁶⁰ The first of these maps, found on folios 1v–2r, is widely considered the most elaborate, best preserved, and most famous of the

⁵⁶ On the discovery of the textual sources for the Hereford Map, see Scott D. Westrem's *The Hereford Map: A transcription and translation of the legends with commentary* (Turnhout, 2001).

⁵⁷ Harley and Woodward, 347.

⁵⁸ Taylor, 64.

⁵⁹ I have been able to access six quality reproductions of Higden maps: British Library MS Royal 14.C.ix, fols. 1v–2r; British Library MS Royal 14.C.ix, fol. 2v; British Library MS Royal 14.C.xii, fol. 9v; British Library MS Harley 3673, fol. 84r; Huntington Library MS HM 132, fol. 4v; and Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Lat. 4126, fol. 1v. Of these MSS, only the simple sketch map in Harley 3673 does not include *Vínland*—of Europe it includes only Paris, Rome, Naples, Constantinople, Germany, Norway, Spain, and Ireland. Even without the Harley sketch map, the remaining five reproductions represent every branch of the Higden map stemma (see Harley and Woodward, 313). For reproductions of most of these maps, see Destombes.

⁶⁰ Very fine reproductions of both maps can be found in Edson. Ironically, the best of these reproductions is of the map on 2v, which is the cover illustration.

Higden maps.⁶¹ Even further, Harley and Woodward believe that this map is closest to Higden's original, and now lost, map.⁶² Though the map has generated great interest among cartographers for the more than two hundred geographical names that it includes and the great care with which it has been produced, the fact that Vínland appears in the lower left corner of the map has for the most part gone unnoted.⁶³

Labelled boxes on the map rudimentarily represent a number of lands within the encircling ocean north and west of England (*Anglia*). Here, we find Wales (*Wallia*), Ireland (*Ybernía*), the Isle of Man (*Insule man*), Scotland (*Scotia*), Norway (*Norwegia*), Iceland (*Yslandia*), Greenland (*Tile insula*)⁶⁴, and Vínland (*Witland*). Attached to many of these labels are short inscriptions that describe either the land's characteristics or its population. Vínland is labelled simply as *gens ydolatra*.

The manuscript's second Higden map, on folio 2v, is less elaborate than its sibling. Only 100 names appear on the map, and inscriptions accompany none of them. Almost every item on this smaller map is a repeat of an item on the first, and the map is almost identical in its layout. We should not be surprised, then, to find the same series of lands in the North Atlantic: England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Man, Norway, Iceland, Thule, and Vínland (here *Wineland* or, possibly, *Wintland*).

A Higden map produced circa 1350 also appears in Huntington Library MS HM 132, folio 4v; this map was at one time claimed to be in Higden's own hand, though Harley and Woodward date it somewhat later than those already discussed.⁶⁵ The map is severely faded, especially along its northern edge, but one can

⁶¹ Taylor, 64 and Edson, 128.

⁶² Harley and Woodward, 312. This conclusion stands against that of V. H. Galbraith, who argued that the entire Higden manuscript currently housed in the Huntington Library (HM 132, fol. 4v), including the map, is an autograph copy; see V. H. Galbraith, 'An autograph MS of Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 34 (1959), 1–18. Nevertheless, the opinion that the map in HM 132 is in Higden's own hand is still maintained by the Huntington Library, as conveyed in a recent personal correspondence with curators William Frank and Mary Robertson. For a proposed stemma in addition to that of Harley and Woodward, that includes a recently discovered map related to Higden's but found apart from the text, see Peter Barber, 'The Evesham world map: a late medieval English view of God and the world', *Imago Mundi*, 47, (1995), 13–33.

⁶³ Previous descriptions of the map in general can be found in Edson, 128–9; Taylor, 64–6; Konrad Miller, *Mappaemundi: die ältesten Weltkarten*, III (Stuttgart, 1898), 94–109; and Youssouf Kamal, *Monumenta cartographica Africae et Aegypti* (Leiden, 1935). Fridtjof Nansen briefly discusses the connection of Higden with Vínland, but he regards both the textual and cartographic evidence as geographically confused. We have already seen that there is no necessary confusion in the texts, and the Higden maps, as illustrations of those texts, are no different. See Nansen 2.188–92.

⁶⁴ My identification of Thule as Greenland is subject to question. Thule, a northern land where the sun never sets, was first reported by Pytheas of Massilia around 325 BCE and is cited in almost every text of medieval geography, including Higden. Various locations seem to have held the name during the Middle Ages, but the 14th century appears to have favoured Greenland. But given that two of the other most prominent 'Thule' candidates (Iceland and Norway), also appear on the map, and that Greenland's bishopric would almost surely warrant inclusion on such a map, the identification seems quite likely. See Roger T. Macfarlane, 'Thule', in: *Trade, travel, and exploration in the Middle Ages: An encyclopedia*, ed. John Block Friedman and Kristen Mossler Figg (New York, 2000).

⁶⁵ See note 62, above.

still perceive the same sequence of North Atlantic lands as appears in the two maps of British Library MS Royal 14 C.ix. Here again, in one of the more readable portions of the northern portion of the map, we find that Vinland appears as *Wintland*.

Another, related map of the late 14th century that includes Vinland is Bibliothèque Nationale MS Lat. 4126.⁶⁶ This relatively neglected codex contains a number of excerpted works of English, Scottish, and world history, one of which is the *Polychronicon* of Ranulf Higden.⁶⁷ Probably copied out around 1375 in York,⁶⁸ the codex contains nine attributions of compilation to Robert de Popilton, then prior of the small Carmelite house at Hulne in Northumberland.⁶⁹ Popilton's Higden map appears on the flyleaf of the codex, folio 1v, and is labelled in both English and Latin. The map is laid out in the same derivative T-O (or Nonschematic Tripartite) fashion as the Higden maps already discussed, and Popilton's map is indeed a copy of one or two of these maps. The line between Asia and Europe is delineated by the Meotican Lakes (*Paludes Meotides*, the modern-day Gulf of Azov) and the phrase *finis Asie*, and the Danube (*Retius Flumine*) makes an appearance in the middle of Europe just as it does in previous Higden maps. A rough, amoeba-like outline of the Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Black Seas stretches across much of the centre of the map.⁷⁰ With only one exception—the Canary Islands (*Insule Fortunate*),⁷¹ which are depicted beyond Gibraltar in the Atlantic Ocean—the labelled countries of the Popilton map are in north and west Europe. Beginning in the southwest and moving northward along the continent, the mapmaker lists Spain (*Hyspanya*), Gascony (*Vasconia*), the Poitou (*Pictavya*), Brittany (*Britannia*), Normandy (*Normani*), Piccardy (*Picardia*), Flanders (*Flandria*), Belgium (*Brabantia*), Zeeland (*Selandia*), Frisia (*Frisia*), and Germany (*Franconia*). In addition, a number of countries—almost exclusively islands—are extended out into the North

⁶⁶ See the map stemma in Harley and Woodward, 313.

⁶⁷ John Pinkerton provides almost a complete catalogue of the manuscript's contents in *An enquiry into the history of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1814), 1.471–76. John Block Friedman includes a more descriptive discussion of both the manuscript and much of its contents in *Northern English books, owners and makers in the late middle ages* (Syracuse, 1995), 40–52. As Friedman notes, the excerpt of Higden's *Polychronicon* is the 26th item in the codex, appearing on folios 120v–133r. I am very much indebted to Friedman's scholarship for much of my palaeographical information about this manuscript.

⁶⁸ Friedman, *Northern English books*, 41. A copy of Higden's text is known to have been in the Austin Friars' Library at York in the 14th century. See *The Friars' Libraries*, ed. K. W. Humphreys, Corpus of British medieval library catalogues (London, 1990), 11–154.

⁶⁹ For more information on Popilton's career, see the information provided by John Block Friedman in 'Cultural conflicts in medieval maps', in: *Implicit understandings*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Cambridge, 1994), 87–90 and in: *Northern English books*, 41–3.

⁷⁰ Friedman views this shape, which extends across half of the map, as an enormous, ethnocentric depiction of England. While this theory is interesting, the shape and position clearly dictate otherwise, as does the labelling on Popilton's exemplar maps. One might point to extremely similar shapes for the water dividers in many other medieval maps, as well: the Cottoniana *Mappamundi*, an Anglo-Saxon world map of circa 995, is one very good example. See Friedman, 'Cultural conflicts', 93.

⁷¹ For an overview of the discovery of the Canary Islands and the attribution of the name 'Fortunate Isles', see Joseph P. Byrne, 'Canary Islands', in: *Trade, travel, and exploration*, ed. Friedman, et al. The first Higden map labels them *Insule Fortunate*, the second labels them *Fortunata Insula*.

Atlantic: England (*Anglia*), Scotland (*Scotia*), Wales (*Wallia*), Ireland (*Hyvernya*), Man (*Man*), the Orkney Isles (*Orcades*), Norway (*Norwegia*), Iceland (*Islandia*), Greenland (*Tyle*), and Vinland (*Wyinelandia* or, possibly, *Wyintlandia*).⁷² Of these locations, only the Orkneys do not regularly appear on the earlier Higden maps.⁷³

The Orkneys do appear, however, along with Vinland (*Wyntlandia*) on a Higden map produced a few years after Popilton's: British Library MS Royal 14.C.xii, folio 9v.⁷⁴ This mandorla-shaped map—probably representing the aureole surrounding Christ in Christian iconography—lacks the elaborate geographic representations of the other British Library maps. Even the crude outline of the Mediterranean, seen in Popilton's map, is absent. Instead, the map presents the reader with mere names laid out according to their geographic relationships within the blank space of the mandorla. There are no lakes, no rivers, and no coastal outlines on the map: only names. Along the outer rim of the map—the location for those places thought to be at the very borders of the world—we find the now-expected sequence of northwestern European locations including Denmark, Thule, Vinland, Iceland, and Norway.

Even from this brief overview of the Higden maps, we can see that categorisation via the labelling of countries was an important feature of the maps; even in the barest of sketch maps, as represented by British Library MS Harley 3673, the names are the important things. Even further, the places labelled are almost universally identifiable locations whose existence was not in question. That is to say, the places on these maps were places that one would have little trouble—if one had the time, the money, and the inclination—getting to via land or sea; all that was needed was a good set of directions. There is no Avalon, Atlantis, or other legendary location on the maps. On the contrary, the countries seem very clearly to be real locations in the minds of the writers and illuminators. That Vinland was included in the maps only implies that it, too, was regarded as a very real place that a person could get to with the proper directions.

As directions go, the maps are universal in placing Vinland in the north Atlantic. In most of the maps, its closest companion is Iceland, though Thule is a close second. Denmark and Norway are inevitably not far away, but whether this is due to a concept of geographic proximity or the constraints of the map's structure itself cannot be determined with certainty. That Win(t)land is visually represented in association with Iceland and Thule, however, is clear. This clustering is odd, given that Higden's descriptions of the islands do not emphasise such connections: Wyntland is located in reference to Denmark, Iceland to Norway, and Thule to Britain. Why the three islands should be so clearly grouped with one another in the

⁷² Friedman produces a similar list of the countries in which Vinland is mentioned, but he does not seem to have realised the full import of that identification. He also misreads 'Arani', meaning the Aran Isles, for 'Man'. See 'Cultural conflicts', 92.

⁷³ It is possible that Huntington Library MS HM 132, fol. 2v includes the Orkneys, but the map is badly faded.

⁷⁴ This mandorla map is not in the same line in Harley and Woodward's stemma. See Harley and Woodward, 313.

maps, floating out in the midst of the north Atlantic, is surely odd if we are to think of Win(t)land as Finland or Wendila. If, on the other hand, Win(t)land is the persisting memory of Norse Vínland, then the association with Iceland and Thule, Vínland's companions at the edge of the Viking world, makes complete sense. Like the descriptions of Vínland found in Higden, the *Eulogium*, and the *Geographica*, as well as the English translations of Higden by John of Trevisa and an anonymous 15th-century scribe, the Higden maps appear to support the conclusion that Win(t)land is the New World.

5. Conclusion

The case presented here cannot lead to secure conclusions. On the contrary, the evidence of these maps and texts only compels us to delve more deeply into the historical record in search of further information. One might hope that, in determining the efficacy of the identification presented here, further overlooked information might be found and accommodated in the dialogue of academia. Still, the mounting evidence makes it likely that the Win(t)land recorded in these texts is Vínland and that the Higden maps are therefore the earliest maps of America, predating Columbus by at least 100 years. Yet, at the same time, one cannot deny that Win(t)land might be nothing but an elusive legend that by mere chance has grown to have strong resemblances to the New World as it was discovered by Leif Eiriksson and the Vikings over 1000 years ago. Only further investigation will help us to understand the full import of these matters.

Even if my identification is conceded—that Win(t)land is the descendant of Norse Vínland—there are many important questions still left unanswered. Who could have seen these maps? What would readers have thought about them? And last, but I think not least, how does the presence of Vínland on these maps change our current understanding about the discovery of the New World? I will spend the remainder of this essay providing partial answers to these questions or, at least, attempting to provide avenues for answering these questions.

Determining the audience for any medieval work, be it a text or a map, is often a daunting if not impossible task. All of these maps are closely related to associated texts, and their intended audience must surely have been the highly literate, well-educated individuals connected to the monasteries of their production. There is no strong evidence that the relevant Higden manuscripts left their houses during the Middle Ages, nor is there extant evidence of large numbers of individuals using the volumes. To cite just one example, British Library MS Royal 14.c.ix was composed at Ramsey Abbey around 1350 and was probably still there as late as 1519, when Abbot John Warboys wrote his name on the first folio.⁷⁵ We must assume, then, that the practical medieval audience for these maps was relatively small. The audi-

⁷⁵ The post-medieval history of this manuscript is a bit more interesting, as it is thought to have found its way into the hands of Henry VIII (1509–1547), who had 'a cheap unillustrated edition of Higden close to hand in his study, and an illustrated deluxe edition with a map with his "fine" books' (Edson, 128). It is generally accepted that the king's deluxe edition was none other than BL MS Royal 14.c.ix.

ence of the texts, however, was certainly much larger given the sheer numbers involved: there are over 120 extant copies of Higden alone, plus the vernacular translations and whatever copies of the *Eulogium* and *Geographica* happened to be in existence. Whether the many readers of these texts noticed the presence of *Vinland*, and whether it surprised them if they did, will never be known. Likewise, the texts' impact on later writers and mapmakers—like the portolan chartmakers of the 14th century discussed above—must also remain subject to conjecture at this time.

There are many other unanswerable questions that these sources must impose on us. Were the maps ever used as anything more than illustrations to the texts they accompanied? Did readers rely on the authority of these texts as representative depictions of reality? And what impact, if any, did these sources have on those great mariners of the age of exploration?

This last question must give us final pause since it is believed that Christopher Columbus himself spent some time sailing in the North Atlantic. His son, Fernando, quotes a note of his father stating:

I sailed in the year 1477, in the month of February, a hundred leagues beyond the island of Tile, whose northern part is in latitude 73 degrees north and not 63 degrees as some would have it ... the season when I was there the sea was not frozen.⁷⁶

The great maritime historian Samuel Eliot Morison has spoken for many historians in dismissing any attempts to 'hook up' Columbus with Eiriksson through this voyage, arguing by turns that (1) no one in Europe knew about *Vinland* anymore, (2) the only place anyone could possibly know about *Vinland* would be in Iceland and there was no reason for Columbus to put in there, (3) someone would need to translate the sagas for the *Vinland* information to be of use anyway, and (4) there is no reason that the *Vinland* episode would even interest him.⁷⁷

It is my opinion that the maps and texts discussed in this article, showing a knowledge, in one form or another, of *Vinland* in late 14th-century England, go some way to demanding a corrective to Morison's viewpoint.⁷⁸ Whether or not Columbus knew of *Vinland* cannot, of course, be proven from the evidence at hand. But the existence of these sources certainly increases the possibility that he could. Most assuredly, these maps and texts seem to speak to us across the centuries, calling for further study not only into the Viking presence in America but also into the transmission of that knowledge into Europe. We can no longer assume, as many have, that the Viking voyages to North America left no impression on the minds of later Europeans. To take but one example, Robert de

⁷⁶ Quoted by Huyghe, 207.

⁷⁷ Morison, 1–157.

⁷⁸ Additionally, Morison assumed 'Tile' to be Iceland. As the preceding discussion has shown, however, Thule is more likely to be identified as Greenland in this context since both Thule and Iceland appear on most maps of the period. If Fernando is to be believed, we are left with the rather intriguing, though remote, possibility that Columbus sailed beyond Greenland and perhaps predated his own 'discovery' of America by 15 years; see note 64 above.

Popilton, a seemingly unimportant Prior of a small Carmelite house in Hulne, apparently knew about Vínland in 1368. And if he knew, who else did?

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