Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture

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the bishops. In contrast to the static and frontal king directly above him, the monk lunges or strides to the left while twisting his head to the right to look at Edgar above. The Regularis frontispiece thus recapitulates in essence the relationship of Edgar and Christ in the New Minster Charter. This time, however, it is Christocentric Edgar who is the recipient of the reverence and the monk whose “dancing” posture indicates the attribute of humility fundamental to the monastic profession. 57

The frontispiece of the Regularis Concordia indicates that the New Minster Charter was not the only manuscript of the tenth-century Benedictine reform that supplemented its texts with images that manipulated formal and iconographic components to articulate important messages about the sacred nature of the reform. In both cases, the figure at the bottom of the composition twists his body to reveal not only his subservient position but also the specific attribute of humility. In the New Minster Charter, the fact that this figure is the king himself could have been potentially awkward, but by cloaking Edgar in the guise of King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, the composer of the picture, presumably Bishop Aethelwold, demonstrated at one and the same time the theological substitution of the ark by Christ and the divine sanction of the Anglo-Saxon king through his humility. 58

11 “In those days”: Giants and the Giant Moses in the Old English Illustrated Hexateuch

ASA SIMON MITTMAN

Introduction: Giants in Those Days

The eleventh-century Old English Illustrated Hexateuch, probably produced in the second quarter of the eleventh century, in or near St Augustine’s Abbey, Canterbury, 1 houses a wealth of imagery, including several images of giants that appear throughout the manuscript’s approximately 400 images and 156 folios. These giants form a primary point of contrast for both the Jewish protagonists within the narrative and for Anglo-Saxon readers/viewers, helping the latter in their process of identity formation. Images of Moses, the great Jewish prophet, as not only horned but also gigantic complicate what might otherwise have been a simplistic dichotomy of “us” and “them,” thereby creating a more fertile basis for contemplative viewing.

Anglo-Saxon readers, associating themselves with the ancient Israelites of the narrative, would be able to see themselves in the role of the giants-avers, and would perhaps in doing so have reflected on legends of more recent conquests of giants, including those believed to have been the autochthonous inhabitants of Britain. The figure of Moses, however, would have challenged the reader/viewer to reconsider his position with respect

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58 The association of the English monarch with the ark of the Lord continues into the present. The second verse of “God Save the Queen,” dating back at least into the eighteenth century, reads: “O Lord, our God, arise, Scatter her enemies, And make them fall,” which is a reference to Numbers 10:35. “And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, ‘Arise, O Lord, and let the enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.’” I thank Charles Heller for bringing this to my attention.

1 London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.iv. See most recently Withers, The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, chap. 2, esp. 85, for an extended discussion of the dating and provenance of the Hexateuch, as well as a CD-ROM of the full manuscript. He places it ca. 1020–1040. The manuscript has been digitized and is available freely at the British Library Digitized Manuscripts (no date) http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/ SetupFullDisplayHandler.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Claudius_B_IV (accessed February 2015). This essay is dedicated to my old friend Cliff, who is something of a giant.
Giants in Anglo-Saxon England

Giants enter the narrative near the very beginning of Genesis, a biblical book often reproduced and illustrated in Anglo-Saxon England. In the Old English paraphrase of the Hexateuch, as in the Vulgate, we read that “Entas wæren ec swylyc ofer eorðan on ðam dagum” (there also were giants on the earth in those days). This verse merited an illustration in the Hexateuch, to be discussed at length below (Figure 22). There are numerous other references to giants in the Bible, with Goliath providing the most familiar example. Perhaps modern readers would be tempted to assume that these references were always interpreted metaphorically, as surely was the giant with his arms outstretched at the far left of folio 10v of the contemporary Harley Psalter. However, Augustine – the influential bishop of Hippo in the fifth century – explicitly asserted the reality of giants, doubting not their existence but their humanity. Augustine also elaborated at length in The City of God on the presence of giants in the world, both before and after the flood. In his summation, he writes:

Igitur secundum scripturas canonicas Hebraeae atque Christianas multos gigantes ante diluvium fuisses non dubium est, et hos fuisses iones terrigenae societatis huminum; Dei autem filios, qui secundum carmen de Seth propagati sunt, in hanc societatem deserta iustitiae declinasse. Nec miranda est, quod etiam de ipsis gigantibus nasci potuerunt. Neque enim omnes gigantes, sed magis utique tunc haurunt, quam post diluvium temporibus ceteris.

(Therefore, following the canonical scripture, Jewish and Christian, there is no doubt many giants existed before the flood, and were citizens of the

6 OE Genesis 6:4, f. 12r. For a critical edition of this text, see Marsden, The Old English Heptateuch and Elfdisc’s “Libellus de veteri testamento et novo.” This and all other texts from the Hexateuch, which vary slightly from Marsden’s edition, are based on transcription from Claudius B.4. Translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own. Verses from the Old English paraphrase will be designated “OE.” This text is a translation of the Vulgate Genesis 6:4: “Gigantes erant super terram in diebus illis.” For the Vulgate text, I have relied on Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem, ed. Fisher, Gribomont, and Weber (designated “Vulgat”).


10 Ibid., 15:23, 112. For discussion of this passage, and Augustine’s role in establishing that “the sons of man” were the offspring of Seth, see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, 76.
earthly society of the men, while the sons of God, who are descended from the flesh of Seth, having deserted righteousness, declined into this society. Nor is it to be marvelled at that those (descended) from the same were able to be born giants. Nor indeed were they all giants, but rather, at that time there were more than at all other times after the flood.)

Augustine therefore confirms the presence of giants in ancient times, both antediluvian and postdiluvian. He also confirms the continued presence of giants in the world, including a giant Goth woman living in Rome “al nitru paucos annus” (a few years ago). Augustine even verifies the reality of giants through personal experience, writing:

Vidi ipse non solus, sed aliquot mecum in Uticensi litore hominis dentem tam ingentem, ut, si in nostrorum dentum modulos minutatim considereret, centum nobis uidetur facere potuisse. Sed illum gigantis aliquis suiisse crediderim. Nam praeter quod errant omnium multo quam nostra maiora tunc corpora, gigantes longe ceteris anteabant; sicut alius deinde nostrique temporibus rara quidem, sed numquam ferme defuerunt, quae modum aliorum plurimum excederent.12

(I have seen, myself, not alone, but with several others with me, on the beach at Utica, the molar tooth of a man, so huge that, if it were cut up into small pieces, it could be seen to be able to make one hundred of our standard teeth. Indeed, I would believe it to have been from a giant, for, the giants of old exceeded by far the bodies of all the others back when others were bigger than we are.)

The apocryphal Book of Enoch, popular in Anglo-Saxon England, also verified the presence of giants, providing four accounts of their creation.13 As Elizabeth Coatsworth notes, “the influence of The Book of Enoch on Anglo-Saxon poetry ... has been strongly argued.”14 The Hexateuch (together with Junius 11) has an “otherwise unique” image of the translation or ascension of Enoch.15 The Book of Enoch repeatedly clarifies the somewhat ambiguous Biblical account of how giants came into being, presenting the generation of the giants as the result of the union of angels and human women. In chapter seven, we learn that the two hundred Watchers, or Angels, chose wives from among the “beautiful and comely daughters” of men.16 The women then “bore great giants of three thousand cubits,” bloodthirsty and rapacious.17 Relying on the authority of the Bible, Augustine, and the Book of Enoch, Anglo-Saxons Christians would have had no reason to doubt the existence of giants, whether they descended from Seth (according to Augustine) or from angels (according to the Book of Enoch). Indeed, following Augustine, Ælfric assumes the reality of giants but condemns their worship as gods.18

The Hexateuch’s description of the genesis of the giants is somewhat ambiguous. It reads:

Entas wæron eac swylce ofer eordan on ðam dagum, æfter dan ðæg godes bearn tymdon, wið manna dothra 7 hi cendon ða synd mihtige fram worulde. 7 hiis fulle weras. ða gehyr ðæt mihtige manna wæs ofer eordan. 7 eal gæðæc manna heortena wæs æwend on yfel on eallum timan. Gode ofhulte ðæt ðæt he munn geworhte ofer eordan. He wolde ðæt warnian on ær. 7 was gehrepod mid heortan sarnysse wið innan. 7 cwæd ðæt ðæg ælylgie ðone man de ið gesceop fram ðære eordan ansys fram ðam men odda nynsm fram ðam slincendum odda fugelas. me ofhulte oddlice ðæt ðæt he worthete.19

(Giants were over the earth in those days, after which the sons of God propagated with the daughters of men, and they conceived. They are the mighty ones from ancient times, and men of renown. Then God saw that great wickedness of man was over the earth, and all thought of men’s hearts was perverted toward evil at all times. God grieved then that he had made man over the earth. He wished then that he had taken caution beforehand and was touched with grief of the heart from within. And he said: I henceforth will obliterate that man whom I created from the surface of the earth, from that

12 Ibid., 15:9, 75. Stephens, Giants in Those Days: Folklore, Ancient History, and Nationalism, 91, explains Augustine’s reference to times when men were larger. See book 7 of Pliny’s Natural History and 7.155 and 7.211 of Homer’s Iliad, which claim that humans are decreasing in stature over time.
13 Black, ed. and trans., The Book of Enoch, or Enoch I, chapters 7, 9, 15 and 106.
15 Ibid., 139.
16 The Book of Enoch, chapter 6, page 27.
17 The Book of Enoch, chapter 7, page 28.
18 Ælfric, The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church, 1, ed. Thorpe, 366.
19 OE Genesis 6:4-7, f. 12v.
man to the animals, from the creeping [creatures] to the birds. I am truly grieved that I made them.)

In this passage, close to the Vulgate version, the biblical narrative switches from giants to men, and it is in the men that "God saw ... great wickedness." From this point on in the passage, God explicitly condemns "man," not giants. But the passage as a whole also allows for, even encourages, a conflation of men and giants. Giants are described in terms that must have rung with a positive tone in the ears of an Anglo-Saxon audience, particularly the lay audience that has been posited for this vernacular manuscript. "They are the mighty ones from ancient times, and men of renown." And yet, dominant exegetes such as Cassiodorus blamed the flood on the giants.

The Book of Enoch, more detailed than the Vulgate's account, informs us that "the giants, who have been produced from spirits and flesh, shall be called mighty spirits upon the earth." Here, it is the giants, not men, by whom "much blood was spilled upon the earth, and the whole earth was filled with wickedness," and who are therefore to blame for the Flood. In the Old English paraphrase of the Hexateuch, there is a further linguistic tie between giants and wicked men. Unlike the Vulgate, which positions the giants super terram and mankind in terra, the Old English locates both giants and man offer eordan. This is a subtle distinction, but one which serves in the Old English paraphrase to cement the ties between the giants and the wickedness of the men who follow them, gigantic or otherwise.

The Giants of the Hexateuch and their Placement in the Text

The depiction of giants illustrating Genesis 6:4, immediately preceding the coming of the flood, is the Hexateuch's earliest representation of giants

20 My thanks to Roy Liuza for his thoughts on a portion of this translation.
21 Withers, The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, 178--9, argues that the manuscript might have been for older laymen retiring to a monastery, visiting laymen or laymen visited out outside of a monastery, and that lay and monastic audiences, as well as male and female audiences, were not as separate as they are often made out to be.
22 Harris, Race and Ethnicity, 148; and Cohen, Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages, 19.
23 The Book of Enoch, chapter 15, page 34.
24 Ibid., chapter 9, page 30.
25 Vulgate, Genesis 6:4--5.
26 Dodwell and Henderson both note that, while the Byzantine Octateuchs contain images for this passage, there seems to be no connection between them and the Hexateuch. See Dodwell and Clemoes, The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch, 66; Henderson, "Late-Antique Influences in Some English Mediaeval Illustrations of Genesis," 175, and "The Joshua Cycle," 215.
27 Gameson, The Role of Art, 146--7, among others, notes the importance of representations of hands in Anglo-Saxon art.
these monsters survived by climbing the tallest mountains and thrusting their nostrils above sea level for forty days and forty nights, or that one of them, Og, had simply ridden atop the roof of the ark.28

Fabulous though this sounds, Mellinkoff cautions us that “we should not doubt the reality of that belief.”29 The giants of folio 118, for example, are the Sons of Anak, described by the spies of Israel. This passage is from Numbers, which may be significant since “less than a third of Numbers has been rendered by the Old English translators.”30 If the translators cut more than two-thirds of this book, they must have seen this passage as highly important to have retained it. Caroline Lousia White notes, “the principle of omission with Ælfric is here unmistakable. He wishes to furnish a practical, easily-understood rendering of the parts which are most important for the laity to know. All else he passes over.”31

This passage is a translation of Numbers 13:33–4; because the verses are reversed in the parable, though, it is far more ambiguous in its meaning than the Latin of the Vulgate. The passages from the Vulgate and Old English paraphrase are as follows:

Detraseruntque terrae quam inspexerant apud filios Israhel dicentes terram quam lustraverunt devorat habitatores suos populum quem aspeximus proceres staturest. Ibi vidimus monstra quaedam filiorum Enach de genere giganteo quibus comparati quasi lucustae videbamus.32

(And they have slandered the land they had examined, saying to the sons of the house of Israel, “The land which we have inspected devours its inhabitants. Its people, whom we have seen, are of great stature. There we have seen certain monsters who are the sons of Anak, of the race of Giants, by whom we were seen as if we were locusts.”)

33 The Old English is a paraphrase of Numbers 13:34–3, f. 117v.
34 Parkes, Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West, 171. The Hexateuch contains a variety of punctuation, including distinctions, but the puncti do not clarify the matter (Parkes, Pause and Effect, 27–8, 303–4).
36 Dodwell, The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch, 37, cites OE Numbers 13:24 and 29 in addition to 13:34, thereby accounting for the representation of the cutting of the grapes and the presence of the giant descendants of Anak inside a city with high walls: “7 of ðam winlēgum mid berium mid ealle 7 æppium 7 ðæt tume mid hemohtone” (And from that grape vine they brought back with them the grapes and all the fruit and food) and “Micle burgs hère synd 7 wællice gewealode.” (Their cities are great and splendidly walled.)
37 BL, Cotton Claudius Biv, fol. 117v, lines 19–20 of 38. There was ample room for the image below this line. David Johnson observes that “the final layout of Claudius Biv is highly regular,” and that “each picture must follow the text it illustrates,” but clearly they need not do so directly. See Johnson, “A Program of Illumination in the Old English Illustrated Hexateuch,” 169–99, at 175.
Numbers 14:32–4, in which God prophesizes doom for those among the Israelites who murmurate contra (murmur against) Moses:38

Eowre bearn beod waringende on þisum westene feowertig wintra 7 eower forligir beorð oð ðæt heora fædera hreaw beon fornunemene. Æfter ðæra feowertiga daga getæle þe ge ðæt land besceawodon. Ger bið for dæge getæald. 7 on feowertigum gearum. ge underfød eowre unriht wisnysa þæt ge witon mine wrace.39

(Your children will be wanderers in this wilderness for forty winters, and will bear your fornication, until the carcasses of their fathers will be consumed. After, you will bear this for forty days counting, with you having seen that land, each day for a year, and in the fortieth year you will accept your iniquity, and you will know my vengeance.)

The illustrations, as Withers points out, were the driving force behind the layout of the manuscript.40 The reordering of the text illustrated by the image—-which has the potential to cast the Sons of Anak not only as gigantic but also as slanderous—and the juxtaposition of the image with this later passage on punishment for iniquity combine to extend the condemnation of the giants well beyond the implications of the Vulgate,41 and therefore to shift it away from the Israelites.

The earlier image of the giants from Genesis 6:4 is likewise slightly distanced from the text it illustrates. The relevant verse appears on the facing folio, directly below the image of Noah discussed above (Figures 22 and 23). Here, reasons of layout might have been more germane, since there would not have been space below this image for another of larger size.

However, the placement of the second image of giants could imply that the placement of the first was more deliberate. Since sketches for the images were drawn before the text was added, their placement was certainly of great concern to the designer.42 The oversized image of the giants on folio 13 is nearly framed above and below by the text of Genesis 6:11 and 6:12. Here, the text of the Hexateuch reads: “Da wæs eall seo eordæ gewemmed atforan gode. 7 afyllde mid unriht wisnysse. Da geseah god ðæt seo eordæ was gewemmed. for dan ðæ he æc flecá gewemde his weg ofer eordæ. *” (“Then was all the earth defiled before God, and filled with iniquity. Then God saw that the earth was defiled, because all flesh defiled its way on the earth.”)43 Walter Stephens notes that this passage immediately precedes a passage “in which God repents of having created mankind, whose evil thoughts and deeds have polluted the earth ... and thus decides to destroy the world in a flood.”44 In both cases, the images illustrate texts explicitly referring to giants, but are directly juxtaposed with verses about the sinfulness of men and their resultant punishment. The designer’s page layout thus links the monstrous giants with the sins of man. The giants are thereby rendered inherently wicked, so that their bodily abnormality is linked to moral depravity. As beholders, we are therefore encouraged to read the “great wickedness of man” in Genesis 6:5 as a reference not to the Israelites, but to the giants they strive against.45

Within the line at the end of the text of Genesis 6:12 is a cross (8) most likely drawn by a twelfth-century annotator who added a number of Latin comments in the margins.46 The cross is a signé de renvoi that directs the reader to a comment in the lower margin of both folios in this opening (see

38 The Vulgate passage, Numbers 14:27 ("Usquequo multitudo haec pessima murmurat contra me querellas filiorum Israhel sudvit"); in which the congregation is said to murmur against Moses, does not appear in the Old English paraphrase contained in the Hexateuch. Instead, it runs directly from Numbers 14:22 to 14:30.
39 OE Numbers 14:33–4, f. 118.
40 Withers, The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, 17, 86, 105.
41 Cohen, Of Giants, 18, notes a related phenomenon regarding Anglo-Saxon interpretations of The Book of Wisdom, not contained in the Hexateuch: “The Book of Wisdom unites the giants and the ‘despotic princes’ only by narrative proximity, but in early medieval England, the two episodes in salvation history (the destruction of the giant, the promulgation of idols) became conjoined into a newly hybrid foundational narrative that bridged classical, biblical, and northern traditions.”
42 Johnson, “Program of Illumination,” 175, 182.
43 OE Genesis 6:11–12, f. 13r.
44 Stephens, Giants in Those Days, 74.
45 OE Genesis 6:5. See n21.
46 Dodwell, The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch, 15. For a thorough edition and commentary on these annotations, see Doane and Stoneman, Parolized: The Twelfth Century Reception of the Anglo-Saxon Illustrated Hexateuch (British Library, Cotton Claudius B. iv). Doane and Stoneman discuss the script at length in chap. 4. They note that “[t]he style of script belongs to the late twelfth century; i.e., variations of it, appear on almost every page of the book on a massive scale—-the approximately 360 discrete annotations amounting to nearly half the bulk of the main Old English text itself.” Similar crosses are commonly found in many types of manuscripts from the period, including biblical and liturgical manuscripts. Also see Budry, Insular, Anglo-Saxon, and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art, lvii.
monstrous minds. This marginal comment therefore associates the antediluvian giants with the postdiluvian, ties them to sin, renders them of evil disposition, and constructs them as the ancestors of Goliath himself, the adversary not only of the Jews in general, but of David—a key ancestor of Christ and the purported author of the Psalms. Further, the references to the Titans and the Sons of Anak serve to damn these giants. Of course, in Greek mythology, the Titans strove against the Olympian gods. This reference casts the giants of Genesis as essentially opposed to divine order. The comment may have been inspired by Bede’s In Genesis, where he connects Genesis 6:4 with the same classical myths and biblical passages.

This commentary, and the location of the image in the Hexateuch, may also point towards the Book of Enoch, which links the giants not only to sin but directly to the great Flood. In chapter 106, we read:

Exalted ones of heaven transgressed the word of the Lord and violated the covenant of heaven. And behold, they committed sin and transgressed the law, and they had intercourse with women and committed sin with them and have married some of them, and from them begotten children, and they bore children on the earth, the giants, not beings like spirits, but like creatures of flesh. And there will be great destruction for one year … and the earth shall rest and be cleansed of great corruption.

This account may have influenced the marginal comment, and also the careful relocation of the Hexateuch’s illustration of the giants of Genesis 6:4. The wickedness of giants, implied in the original passage, is therefore stressed by the image placement and further pressed by this marginal commentary.

This comment serves in one further way to forge a connection between the giants and the destruction of sinful men. The cross serving as a signe de renvoi following Genesis 6:12 bears a minuscule “a” beneath it. The marginal comment bears the same mark, clarifying that this comment relates to this passage. However, on folio 12v, there is another cross with an “a”

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48 BL, Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 12v–13, lower margin. Transcription and translation from Doane and Stoneman, Parloined Letters, 36–7, with expanded abbreviations denoted with italics. Note that Doane and Stoneman do not indicate the signe de renvoi, and omit the pilcrows in their translation. My thanks to Thanks to Tiberriets for help with this heavily abbreviated transcription, and to Jim Tschen-Emmons for his thoughts on the translation, both of which were useful prior to the publication of Doane’s now-invaluable study. The commentator may be relying on Isidore’s Etymologies, XV.1.24.
49 Bulfinch, Bulfinch’s Mythology, 122.
50 Bede, Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Libri Quatuor in Principium Genesis, ed. Jones, 100: “Gigantes dicit homines immensis corporibus editos ac potestate nimia praeditos, quales etiam post diluuium, id est temporibus Moysi sed David multos suisse legimus … illos iuxta fabulas poetarum terra genuerit.”
51 The Book of Enoch, chapter 106, page 100.
beneath it. This mark is between the second and third words of Genesis 6:8, suggesting that perhaps the comment applies to both 6:12 and 6:8:

God of suhte da xet he man geworhte ofer eordan: he wold da warnian on aer 7 was gehreop mid heorton sarnisse wiiddinan. 7 ceaæ 5 ic adylgie done man de ic gesceop fram ðære eordan ansyne fram ðam men ðoda nytenu fram ðam slincendum ðoda fugelas. me ofðing ðodlice xet ic hi worhte.52

(God regretted that he made man on earth. He wished that he was on guard earlier, and was crying out with pain within his heart. And he said 5 I henceforth will obliterate that man whom I created from the surface of the earth, from that man to the animals, from the creeping [creatures] to the birds. I am truly grieved that I made them.)

Through this trio of signs, the commentator has linked the giants of Genesis 6:4 to two instances of mankind's sinfulness and God's resultant regret. In this way, the twelfth-century commentator reinforces the eleventh-century designer's choice to link these concepts through juxtaposition.

The illustration of Numbers 13:33–4 discussed above, depicting the giant Sons of Anak, merits careful attention, as it is one with little artistic precedent. It is one of the many unfinished illustrations in the Hexateuch.53 The faces of the crowd of Israelite onlookers have been filled in, fleshed out by a later hand. They look at the bountiful grape vines around them, and across the image at the giants who barely fit beneath their high yellow arch. The central figure, wearing blue robes, boldly gestures towards the giants, with his knees bent as if in motion towards their city. A second figure reaches around to caution or restrain him, pointing away from the giants as if to suggest a hasty retreat. The giants seem wholly unaware of or unconcerned with the Israelite gerstapan (grasshoppers) in the fields behind them.54 As if to emphasize their height, the giants are drawn within an archway that is not quite tall enough for them. Their heads scrape its lower edge, and the feet of the giant in the middle of the arch extend beyond the edge of the frame of the image.

52 OE Genesis 6:7–8, f. 12v.
53 Dodwell, "Techniques of Painting in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts," 652 and 657. The image bears several obvious, later additions. See also Dodwell, The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch, 61.
54 OE Numbers 13:34, f. 117v.
55 Numbers 13:24 and 27.
57 Vulgate Numbers 13:24: "Palitem cum uva."
Anglo-Saxon’s myths of origin filled Britain with giants in need of eradication before the land could be settled.59

In both of the images discussed here, the giants of the Hexateuch are connected with passages describing the destruction of sinful humans. In both cases, the biblical text seems to connect the sins and ensuing destruction with men, rather than with these giants. However, the proximity of text and image, conjured with exegesis and marginal commentaries creates meaning; in both cases rendering the giants as sinful, suspect, and, notably, on the verge of destruction. This rendering is in keeping with an Anglo-Saxon view of giants that, according to Cohen, “represent[s] the unassimilated remnant of [the] past,” as seen in The Ruin.60 Indeed, the commentator not only added a note connecting the Tower of Babel on folio 19 with the giant Nimrod, perhaps following commentaries by Bede, Isidore, and Petrus Comestor,61 but also restored a line omitted in the paraphrase on folio 125, describing “Og rex basan. Gigas. 7 potens” (King Og of Bashan, the giant, and powerful; Figures 25 and 26).62 Again and again, the translators, designer, illuminators, and commentator stress the vital role played by giants as figures against which the Israelites (and therefore the Anglo-Saxons) might struggle and thereby define themselves.

*The Crown of Horns*

In the image on folio 124v, above the commentator’s note about the giant Og, a hieratically enlarged, horned figure of Moses violently collides with the literal giants of Genesis (Figure 25). In the chaotic, unfinished image, the Israelites at last redeem themselves for their cowardice in the face of the Sons of Anak. Here, “Israel ofslohe og bone cyninge. 7 his suna 7 his folc call to forwyrd” (Israel slew King Og and his sons and all his people to death).63 In this image, however, an interesting inversion occurs. While Og is the giant, according to the Vulgate and the marginal comment on folio 124v, the combatants in the image all seem roughly the same size and can be distinguished only by their headgear. Meanwhile, Moses stands at the far left edge of the image, erect and oversized, filling the frame from top to bottom. He appears somewhat estranged from his followers, horned and majestic. Moses is very similarly posed and placed on the facing folio (Figure 25). In both images, violent chaos rages before him, and on both folios a figure at the exact centre of the image—perhaps the giant King Og, himself—is beheaded.64 The corpses of the Ogites already litter the base of the image so thickly that the troops must stand upon them to battle onward. And while this occurs, Moses, otherworldly in his stature, wearing his prodigious horns, converses calmly with God, whose immense hand emerges from a bloody red cloud above the image’s frame to deliver the promise of victory.65 Below, the disparity in size is even more apparent, as Moses leads his followers towards Moab. Here, the mighty warriors who have just annihilated Og and his army seem like schoolchildren, like “grasshoppers" behind their leader’s towering presence.

While horns are an emblem of monstrosity, Moses’s horns seem to be removable, thereby marking Moses as different without rendering him inhuman. Thus, Mellinkoff and others have shown that the horns of Moses, represented “as horns on a hat or headdress, not as organic growths,” were viewed as a positive symbol when first represented, rather than as the symbol of ignominy they have since become.66 His hieratic scale is likewise surely honorific. On folio 105v, Moses ascends the mountain as a normal man, but returns altered after his direct, “face to face” contact with God (Figure 28). This is the first appearance of the horned headdress in the manuscript.67 He is also larger. If placed side by side, the first figure of Moses would reach only to the shoulder of his own later self, suggesting

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59 See, for example, Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The Historia regum britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, I, ed. Wright, 13: “Erat tunc nomen insule Albion que a nemine exceptis paucis hominibus gigantes inhabitabant.”


61 Dean, “The World Grown Old and Genesis in Middle English Historical Writings,” 548–68, at 566.

62 BL, Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 124, lower margin.

63 OE Numbers 21:35, f. 124r.

64 Cohen, *Of Giants*, 64, discusses this image.

65 OE Numbers 21:34, f. 124v.

66 Mellinkoff, *Horned Moses*, 17. Mellinkoff, *Horned Moses*, 13, called the Hexateuch “the earliest artistic representation thus far found of horns on Moses” in 1970, and held to this belief in 1986 (see “More about Horned Moses,” 184). The image of Moses with a single horn in the Uta Codex is also dated to the middle of the eleventh century, and Uta may predate the Hexateuch by a few decades. Regardless, as Adam Cohen notes, “whether the horned Moses in the Uta Codex precedes or follows the Old English Hexateuch, the two depictions have nothing to do with one another.” See Cohen, *The Uta Codex*, 126.

67 Mellinkoff, *Horned Moses*, 17, notes that this is the first original occurrence, though previous images have horns added by a later hand.
that he has suddenly grown in importance at this moment.\textsuperscript{68} Because direct contact with God could be disfiguring or even deadly, the image must contain a visual representation of such change.\textsuperscript{69} The emphasis on images of a giant, horned Moses by both the designer and commentator emerge out of the context of medieval English cultural interests. Throughout the Hexateuch, the texts and the images with which they are conjoined make clear that the giants are evil, sinful creatures in need of eradication. The horned Moses stands in stark contrast to these monstrous representations. To align him directly with these beings would be a misunderstanding of the illuminators' intent. And yet, he is unquestionably presented on a grand scale, larger than any other figures save the antediluvian giants of Genesis 6:4, larger even than the figures of God in the Creation cycle at the beginning of the manuscript. In the images of folios 124v and 125, Moses’s violent conquest of the giants allows his own form of grandeur to supplant theirs. Perhaps this was analogous in the minds of Anglo-Saxon readers to the conquest of the gigantic aboriginal inhabitants of Britain.

The Grandeur of Moses

Returning to the image on folio 139v with which I began my discussion (see Figure 21), we see Moses, at the lower left, blessing the Israelites with his right hand, shortly before his death (depicted at the top of the image).\textsuperscript{70} Because of the Anglo-Saxon identification with the “Old Testament” Israelites, Moses is here also, in a sense, blessing the intended readers/viewers. As Withers notes regarding an image of Moses reading to the Israelites on folio 100v, the Old English text of the Hexateuch informs us that Moses is said to speak to the folc, and in doing so “joins the reader and the hearer into a community based on the reading and public display of text.”\textsuperscript{71} Behind him, slipping in from the left edge of the image’s frame is the right hand of God, likewise in a traditional, two-fingered gesture of blessing. Moses’s extended hand is tremendous, but larger still is the hand of God, which reaches down to the gigantic Moses just as his hand in turn reaches out to the huddled crowd before him. The hands are different in scale and orientation, but nearly identical in form. The implication is clear: In the most basic terms, Moses is greater than ordinary men, but God is greater still. In more metaphorical terms, this image is no doubt a reference to the role of Moses, alluded to above, as God’s special representative to the people of Israel. The Vulgate prefaces the blessing given here as follows: “Haec est benedictio qua benedixit Moses homo Dei filius Israel ante mortem suam” (This is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the sons of Israel before his death).\textsuperscript{72} The paraphrase omits the remainder of chapter 33, so that while the Vulgate provides individual blessings for each of the tribes, the paraphrase simply informs us that “Moyses à gebletsode ær his deade israela bearn. Ær twelf æce mid synnigre blestunge” (Moses then blessed his death the children of Israel, then the twelve tribes, each separately with blessings).\textsuperscript{73} Here, the specificity of the individual blessings is lost in favour of one group blessing, though perhaps the dative singular mid synnigre blestunge echoes the original Vulgate formulation.\textsuperscript{74} The tribes are huddled together as a tightly bound mass, awed before the figure of Moses who towers over them. His figure has steadily (if not quite consistently) increased in size throughout the manuscript so that now, just before his death, the Israelites reach only to his waist. He appears more massive now than even the Anakim. Moses is positioned so that his left arm, extended in a gesture of blessing, stretches forward to overshadow the head of the foremost of the Israelites in a pose that emphasizes his height.

At the upper right of the image, we see Moses walking with a youthful, cross-nimbed figure labelled Dfomfnjuf (Lord) by the commentator.\textsuperscript{75} The two figures gaze across the opening of the manuscript at the facing

\textsuperscript{68} In other simultaneous narrations in the Hexateuch, such as the sacrifice of Isaac in fol. 38, the main figure (Abraham) remains consistent throughout his three appearances, suggesting that the enlargement of Moses was a conscious choice.

\textsuperscript{69} Proop, “The Skin of Moses’ Face – Transfigured or Disfigured?” 375–86, at 384, notes that “the Bible is replete with tales of men killed by contact with the divine sphere. Accordingly, we might suppose that the unusual condition of Moses’ skin after meeting Yahweh was in fact an injury or disfigurement.” Proop, 384, continues to assert, following Eerdmans, that “the function of the maswew [the veil he holds before his face, depicted on folio 105v] was to spare the people the gruesome sight.” See Eerdmans, The Covenant at Mount Sinai Viewed in Light of Antique Thought, 20–2.

\textsuperscript{70} The relevant texts are Vulgate Deuteronomy 33:1 and 34:7.

\textsuperscript{71} Withers, The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, 162.

\textsuperscript{72} Vulgate Deuteronomy 33:1. While this image also recalls the image of Moses as the manus robustam (mighty hand) (Vulgate Deuteronomy 34:12), this phrase is also omitted from the paraphrase. Nonetheless, this may have informed the production of this image. My thanks to George Hardin Brown for bringing this to my attention.

\textsuperscript{73} OE Deuteronomy, 33:1, f. 139.

\textsuperscript{74} My thanks to an anonymous peer reviewer for this grammatical insight.

\textsuperscript{75} BL, Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 19, Comment in upper margin.
foolio where they see the Promised Land and Gilead. At the left, the same divinity receives Moses’s corpse, wrapped in a winding sheet. In the centre of the image, the Israelites mourn the death of Moses. The chronology of these scenes is somewhat confusing. Like the image of the sacrifice of Isaac on folio 38, we begin at the lower left and move upward, but if we are to follow the order of the narrative, we must move from lower left to upper right, then back to upper left and finally down to the central mourners. Although chronological, this pattern is rather complex, and in late Anglo-Saxon art, chronology does not always indicate the intended viewing order.66

In this image, rather than following the chronological conundrum outlined above, the eye flows in accordance with the visual pattern created by the layout of the image, moving in a zigzag up from Moses, through the Israelites, to the mourners, to the death scene, and finally ends with the walking pair, whose gazes in turn lead us towards the vision on the facing folio. As Withers writes, “Unlike the mourning Israelites, the readers and viewers of Claudius B.iv have been permitted to clamber up to the summit of Mount Nebo, where [Moses] is granted a view of the cities of the Land of Milk and Honey.”77 Enhanced by the presence of the cross-nimbed figure – Christ in the place of God the Father78 – this pattern results in a vision of a resurrected Moses, a Moses so great that he has even triumphed over death; he appears to exceed the normal bounds of humanity. Cohen writes of “the body of the giant, the monstrous being that is undeniably both human and something Other (prehuman, posthuman).”79 The giants of Genesis 6:4 are explicitly prehuman. Moses, following his direct contact with God atop Mount Sinai, has become posthuman, something beyond and above his followers, and his body is marked with the signs of his difference.80

This image has been compared several times with a somewhat similar composition in the Bible of San Paolo fuori le mura, which also shows the Blessing of the Tribes and the Death of Moses in three tiers (Figure 27).81 Though not directly related to the Hexateuch, the San Paolo Bible provides an excellent point of comparison.82 At the most basic level, the figure of Moses in the San Paolo image is neither horned nor gigantic.83 He is of normal human scale, but haloed to indicate his sacred status. While the halo does set him apart from the majority of humanity, it does not denote Moses’s intimate relationship with God, as the one man to view even a portion of his radiance. Further, the role of Moses as mediator between God and man – a prime focus of the Hexateuch image – is not nearly as prominent in the San Paolo image, as he speaks from the centre of the image, without the authoritative hand of God in blessing over him. He neither strolls with God, nor is his corpse personally received by him. Finally, while the compositions appear quite similar, the position of the Israelites alter the visual flow, so that in the San Paolo image, the vision of the Promised Land arrives before the death of Moses, rather than after it, as in the Hexateuch. This arrangement is more logical, surely, but does not visualize as directly or powerfully the greatness, the grandeur, of Moses.

Conclusion

The original audience for such manuscripts was expected to look beyond their outer appearance to their inner meaning. On one level, the hieratic representation of Moses is simply intended to convey his importance. Mellinkoff argues against a metaphorical reading of the horns, asserting that the illuminators were “probably unaware of the symbolical and

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66 For example, see S. Lewis, The Rhetoric of Power in the Bayeux Tapestry, 63-4. See also Mittman and Kim, “Looking the Devil ‘Her’ in MS Junius 11.”

77 See Withers, The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, 266, for discussion of this image.

78 This substitution is also noticed and commented on by Withers, The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, 266.

79 Cohen, Of Giants, 11.

80 For discussion of the posthuman monstrous, see MacCormack, “Post-Human Teratology.”

81 Gaede and Mütherich, Intro., Carolingian Painting, 37, places this manuscript at Heide ca. 870. It was made for Charles the Bald by Ingobertus, scriba fidelis.

82 Swarzenski, Monuments of Romanesque Art, 21; Mellinkoff, Horned Moses, 14-15; and Withers, The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, 269. Withers provides an excellent discussion of the image throughout his final chapter and, at 269–77, provides an extended and useful comparison of the two images, with points of overlap with my current discussion, though his focus is largely on the image of the Land of Milk and Honey on the facing folio.

83 Later: English manuscripts, such as the Lambeth Bible (also most likely from St Augustine’s, Canterbury, ca. 1140–50) contain giant images of Moses. For the Lambeth Bible, London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 3 (vol 1) and Maidstone Museum (vol 2), see Kaufman, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, 99, vol. 70.
metaphorical aspects of biblical language. Thus they translated *gebyrned* into a literal image, a horned Moses. This conjecture assumes a lack of oversight by a learned cleric, though other images in the manuscript would clearly have required exegetical input. Nonetheless, a literal image need not be devoid of further meaning. The designer of the image could have understood the presumed metaphorical intent of “horned” and still chosen to represent him as such. At a similar level of comprehension, Moses’s scale may be both literal and symbolic at the same time. I believe that an Anglo-Saxon audience would have read in these images some of the qualities that are associated with giants—tremendous power ("They are the mighty ones from ancient times, and men of renown"), but also an ontological complexity, a status as not quite human. Unlike some biblical characters, Moses possesses great ambiguities. He alone converses directly with God, and is marked by the experience (explicitly, here) with features that set him apart. Indeed, he even requires a curtain to separate himself from his followers at certain moments, as on folio 105v (Figure 28).

The figure of Moses in the Old English Hexateuch complicates the notion that giants are pure representations of sinfulness. Such an analysis would have been too simplistic, and would also not have accounted for the human-like appearance of some of the giants in this manuscript. Indeed, further into his commentary on Genesis, Bede states that “gigans’ aliquando in bono, ut est istud de Domino, *Exultavit ut gigas ad currendum quium*” (the “giant” at times is in accordance with good, when they descend from God, *like a giant rejoicing to run the course*). He therefore ties Genesis 6:4 to Psalm 18:6, where the racing giant is generally interpreted as a symbol of Christ. This is the passage illustrated in the Harley Psalter, mentioned above. Bede provides an analogy to help his readers, pointing out that symbols can stand for two diametrically opposed concepts. In relation to the giants, he writes, “sicut etiam ‘leo’ aliquando Dominum, aliquando diabolum designat. Sed diabolum propter superbiam et ferociatem, Dominum propter potentiam” (just so, “the lion” sometimes symbolizes

the Lord and sometimes the devil. But the devil on account of pride and savageness, [and] the Lord on account of power). Bede is, as usual, subtle and sophisticated. He is willing to accept the possibility of giants that are “in accordance with good,” so long as “they descend from God.” Surely this language could be applied to Moses as he appears in the Hexateuch.

The giants and the giant Moses demarcate opposing poles, bounding humanity between them. They show the power of the enemies of God’s “chosen people” (Israelite or Anglo-Saxon), but also the means to overcome them. The key images in the sequence of the life of Moses—his transformation upon direct contact with God, his death, marked by the receipt of his corpse by God, as well as over a dozen images between these two—depict Moses conversing with God, who appears as a hand emerging from the clouds; these images stress time and again that Moses’s power does not come from within. The otherworldliness of Moses’s power source is reinforced in the image of the battle with Pharaoh’s magicians on folio 81v where, through God’s power, Aaron’s staff turns into a snake to swallow those created by the magicians.

The depiction of Moses’s death on folio 139v follows a series of folios in which nineteen out of twenty-two contain no image (Figure 21). This is the by far the longest sequence of text-only folios in the manuscript, and it consequently focuses increased attention on the full-page, boldly coloured image of the blessing, vision, and death of Moses. Furthermore, there are only six other full-page images out of the 400 in this manuscript, another indicator of the great importance of the scene. This image, then, was central to the designer’s understanding of the story of the Hexateuch.

On this folio, we confront one of the most impressive images of Moses in the manuscript, horned and gigantic. Moses’s horns are clearly part of a headdress, indicating that they are not organic parts of his body, but there is no way to separate the figure’s size from the presentation of the great Jewish prophet. Above Moses’s giant form, though, is the indication of a being far greater. The hand of God looms over him, blessing him with precisely the same gesture he blesses his followers. This correspondence is further emphasized by the nearly identical poses of the figures of Moses and Christ at the upper right of this image. They both stand with their bodies pointed to the right, their knees bent, their left feet raised higher than their right, their hands up and open. Even the hems of their drapery
are nearly identical. Through this visual echo, the image stresses the continuity of God’s presence from “Old Testament” to “New,” in accordance with the notion of the Anglo-Saxons that they were a new “chosen people,” like the Jews of antiquity. The most notable differences between the figures are the substitution of horns for halo, suggesting the honorific intent of the horns, and the position of the heads. Instead of facing out to the Promised Land, Christ turns back to look at Moses. Here, in this final scene, Moses returns to normal stature. While in previous images he towered over all the earthly figures around him, even including the giant Og, in the presence of Christ he is brought down to size.

The presence of the giant hand of God behind him, at the left edge of the image here, and hovering over him throughout the Hexateuch, clarifies that Moses is being conceived of as an instrument of the greatest of powers. He mirrors God’s gesture, below, and his pose, above, and in so doing, demonstrates his accord with God. In this way, the designer of the Hexateuch recasts the Jewish Bible as a prefiguration of the Christian concept of fortissimus Christi. For the monastic creators of this manuscript, Moses could have been seen as following the imperative of Saint Benedict, in the second sentence of his Rule, under which they lived: “In Domino Christo vero regi militaturus, oboedientiae fortissimo atque praecipue arma sumis” (Take up the most strong and bright weapons of obedience, to fight for the Lord Christ, the true king). Moses is continually shown as obedient to the directives of the hand of God, and also as a fighter for him, and his gigantic size makes him the visual equal of the giants he must oppose.

The giants of the Hexateuch are neither biblical nor medieval, in their entirety. They are hybrid monsters, a fusion of biblical text and Anglo-Saxon interpretation. As a result, it is difficult to summarily dismiss them all as monstrous Others. A reader identifying with the Israelites would see himself both violently overcoming giants, and led by one as well. Unlike other monsters, like dragons or griffons, giants look more or less like we do. The massive figures of Genesis 6:4, for example, are only subtly distinguished in appearance from the family of Noah on the facing folio (see Figures 22 and 23). They are greater and more terrible, and yet not wholly Other. Such monsters were a vital component of the worldviews of their creators and, as such, were pointedly included in the Hexateuch by its original eleventh-century translators, designer, and illuminators, and emphasized again by the twelfth-century commentator. Where, then, do viewers sit in the world presented by the Hexateuch? Neither evil giant nor prophetic giant, Anglo-Saxon viewers become like the Israelites depicted in the manuscript: fascinated, fearful spectators, watching the mightiest members of creation battling for dominance. In doing so, they would be reminded of their own modest scale, their own small place in what the Anglo-Saxons saw as the universe’s divine order.

91 Butler, S. Benedicti Regula, 1.
Figure 20. King Edgar Flanked by Archbishop Dunstan and Bishop Aethelwold, Monastic Miscellany containing Regularis Concordia. London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii, fol. 2v. © The British Library Board.

Figure 21. Moses Blesses the Tribes of Israel, Sees the Promised Land, Dies, and Is Mourned (Deuteronomy 33–4). London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 139v. © The British Library Board.
Figure 22. "there also were giants on the earth in those days" (Genesis 6). London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 13. © The British Library Board.

Figure 23. Noah and his Family (Genesis 5–6). London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 12v. © The British Library Board.
Figure 24. The Spies of Israel See the Sons of Anak (Numbers 13). London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 118. © The British Library Board.

Figure 25. Moses, Horned and Majestic, Receives Promise from God and the Israelites Defeat Amorrites (Numbers 21). London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 124v. © The British Library Board.
Figure 26. Moses and the Israelites Defeat Og of Bashan (Numbers 21). London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 125. © The British Library Board.

Figure 27. Blessing of the Tribes and the Death of Moses. Rome, Abbazia di San Paolo fuori le Mura, fol. 50v. By permission of Herbert L. Kessler.
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Primary Texts, Translations, Databases, Facsimiles


Figure 28. Moses Speaks Face to Face with God, and Returns to Israelites as a Horned Giant, with a Curtain to Separate Himself from his Followers (Exodus 34). London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 105v. © The British Library Board.