

HPEN5029/HPEN6029 - WRITING PLACE : MAPS & CONSCIOUSNESS

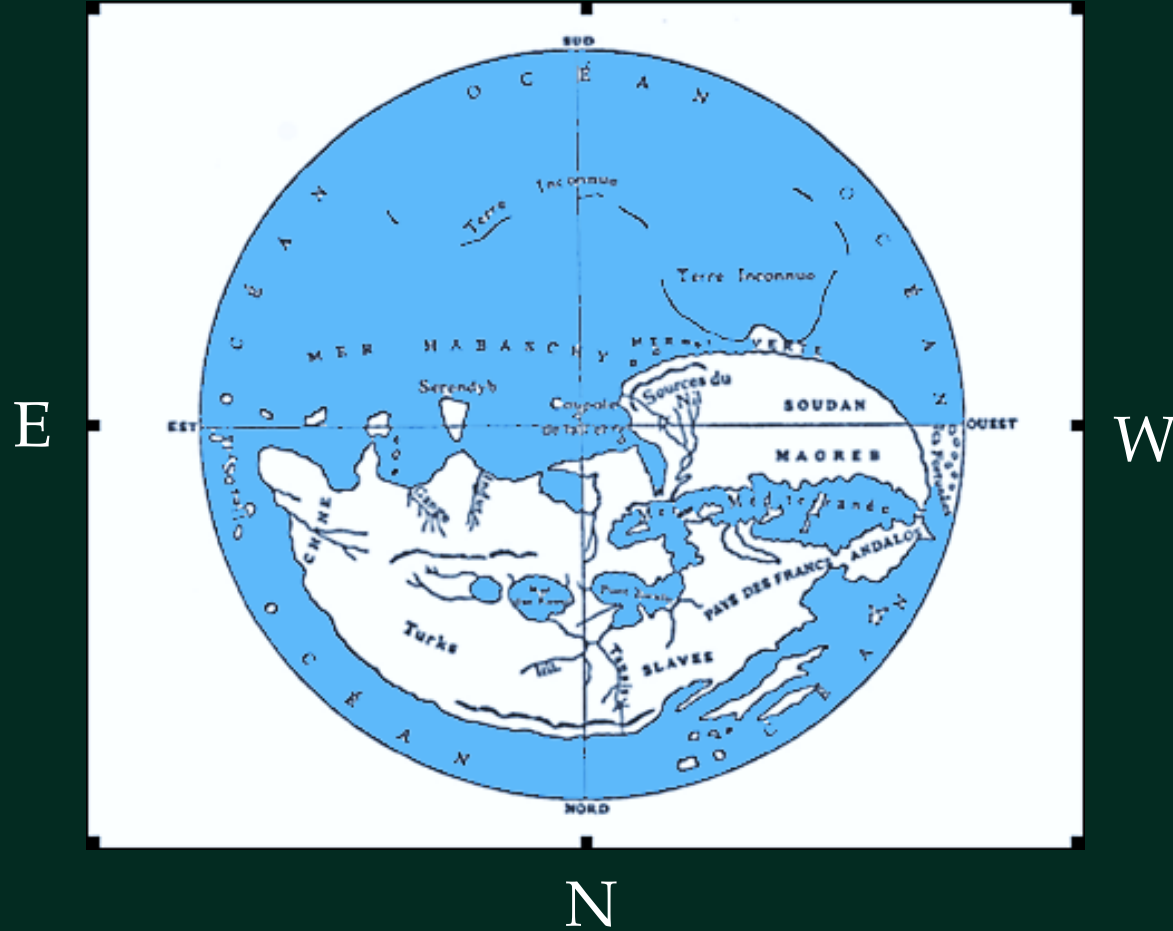


Jerry Brotton describes it as an egocentric map – placing the self at the centre

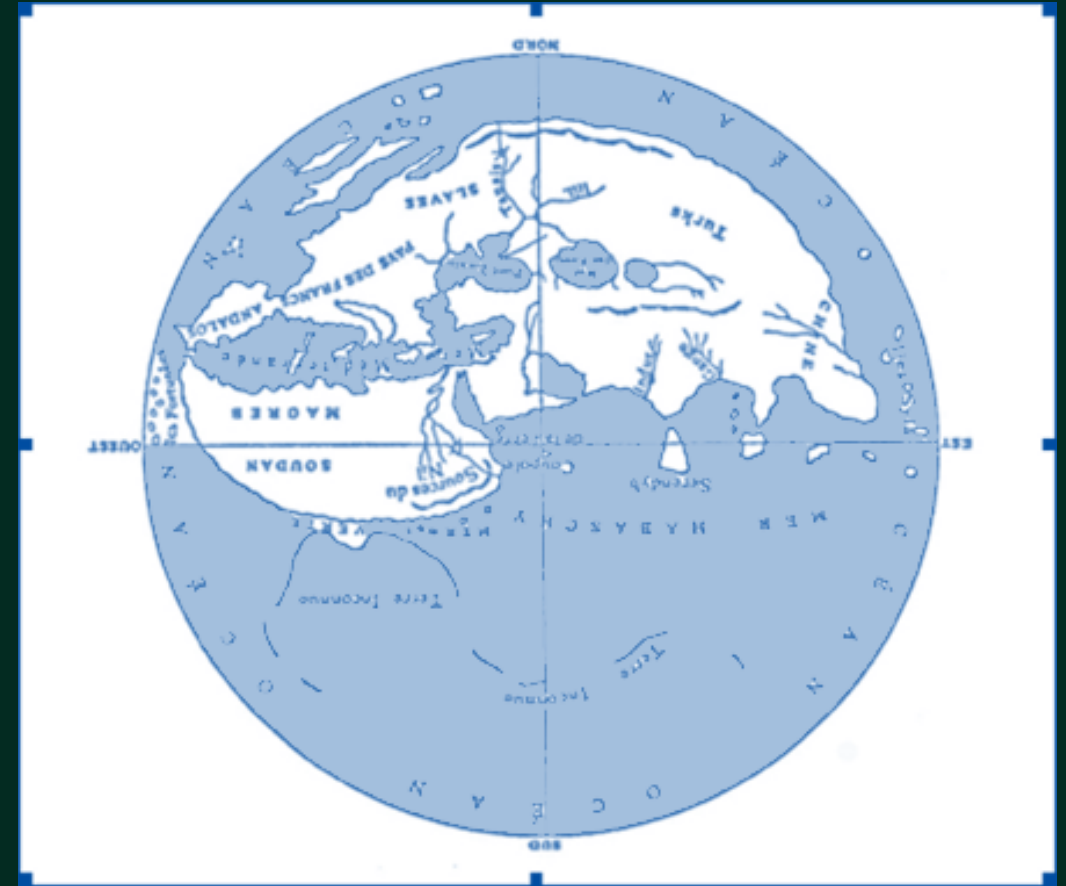
A close-up view of the Babylonian map of the World - the oldest *mappa mundi* in existence. This partially broken clay tablet contains both cuneiform inscriptions and a unique map of the Mesopotamian world. Probably from Sippar, Mesopotamia, Iraq.

MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE.

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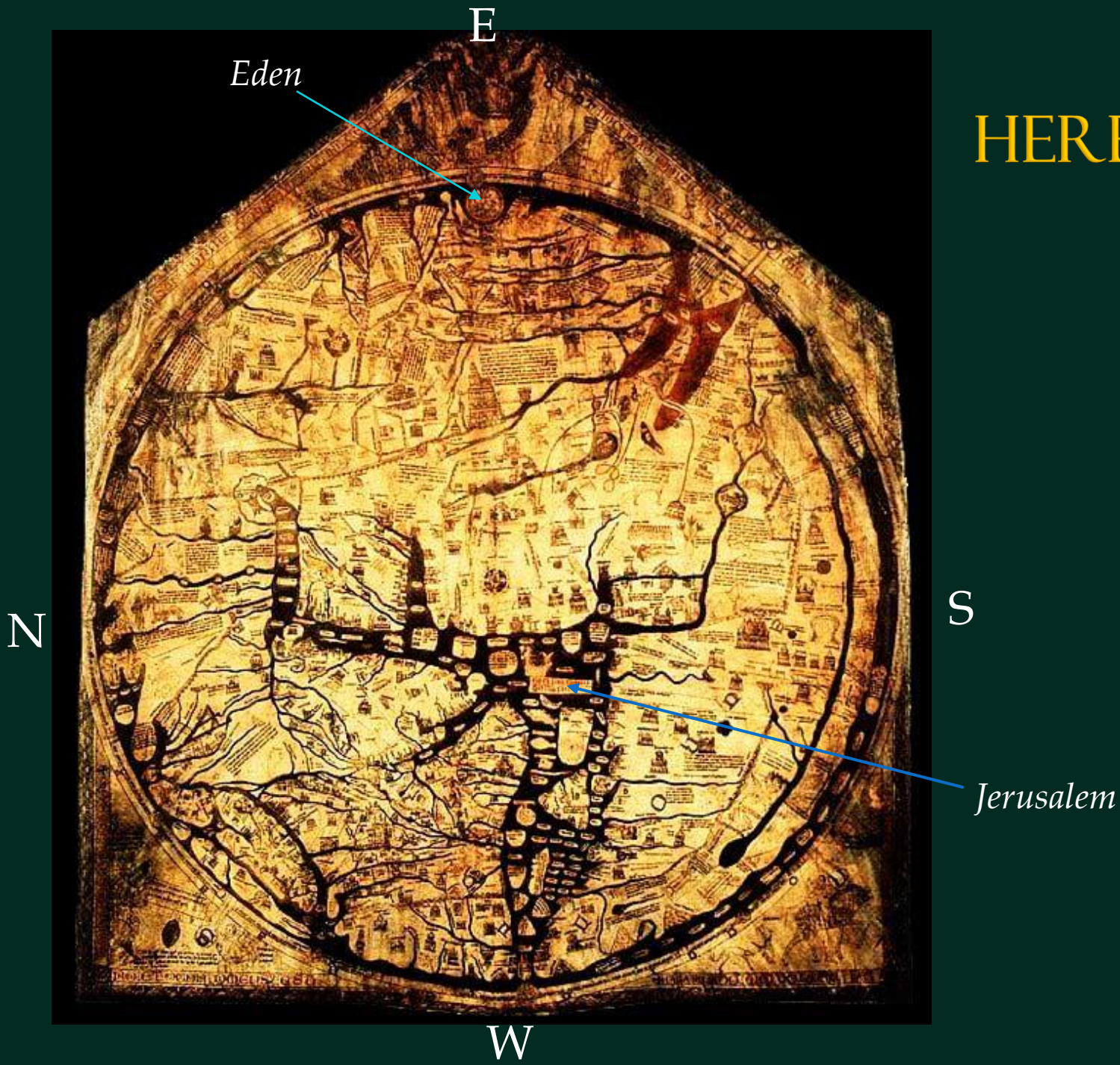
(Inverted to current orientation)



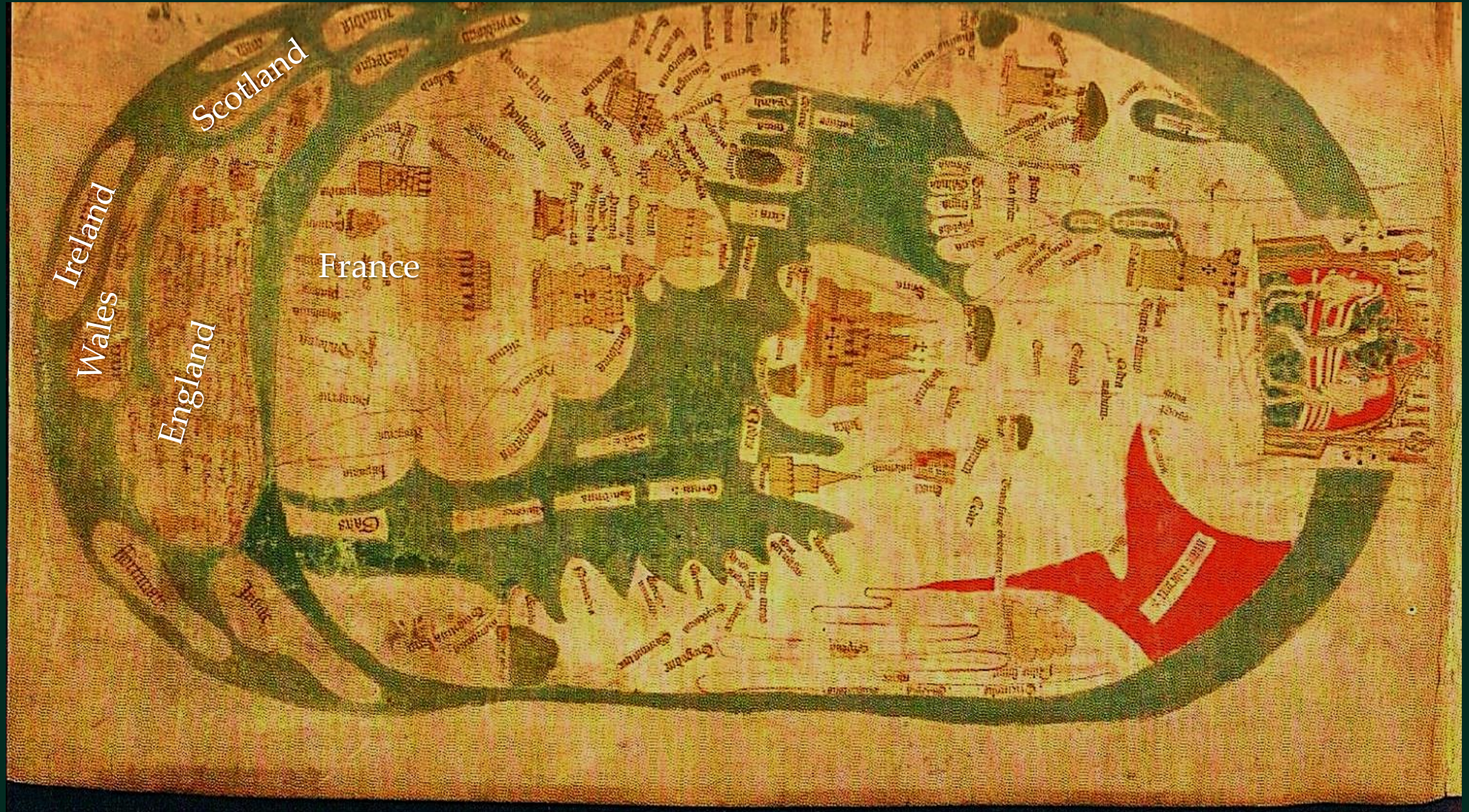
World Map of al-Mas'udi pre-956
– *trade routes plus orientation to look up to Mecca*

HEREFORD MAPPA MUNDI

Not about travel or trade but about the place of power at the centre and orientation towards Christ and 'fall' from Eden



ENGLISH POLITICAL MAP: ENGLAND WALES & SCOTLAND



Power politics not route maps

Evesham map 1410

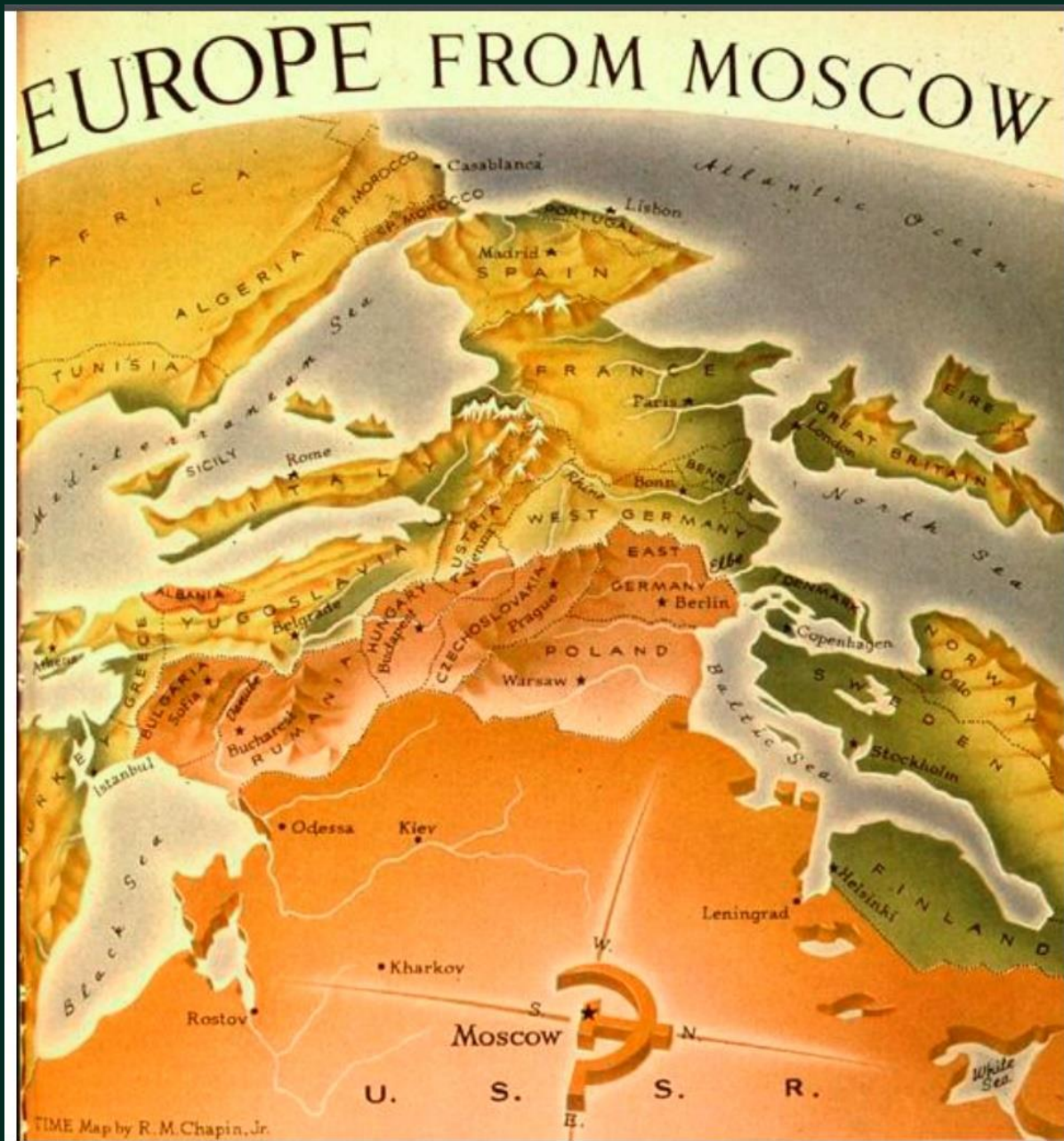
LANGUAGE, PLACE & IDENTITY

MICE and rats, as it is said, frequent neither churches nor poor men's homes. The story I have to tell you about Nanni the Nanni who was hustled on her way to prayer-meeting by the Bad Man, who saw the phantom mourners bearing away Twm Tybach's coffin, who saw the Spirit Hounds and heard their meanings two days before Isaac Penparc took wing the story I have to tell you contradicts that theory.

Nanni was religious ; and she was old. No one knew how old she was, for she said that she remembered the birth of each person that gathered in Capel Sion ; she was so old that her age had ceased to concern.

She lived in the mud-walled, straw- thatched cottage on the steep road which goes up from the Garden of Eden, and ends at the tramping way that takes you into Cardigan town ; if you happen to be travelling that way you may still see the roofless walls which were silent witnesses to Nanni's great sacrifice a sacrifice surely counted unto her for righteousness, though in her search for God she fell down and worshipped at the feet of a god.

CARADOC EVANS, 'BE THIS HER MEMORIAL' 1916



1950s /COLD WAR MAP

US military perspective seeking to
increase the military budget
(*National Geographic*)

THE NATION STATE

- limited [but with] finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations.
- [T]he concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the allomorphism [incongruence, divide] between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gauge and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.
- Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.

Benedict Andersons: *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 1991

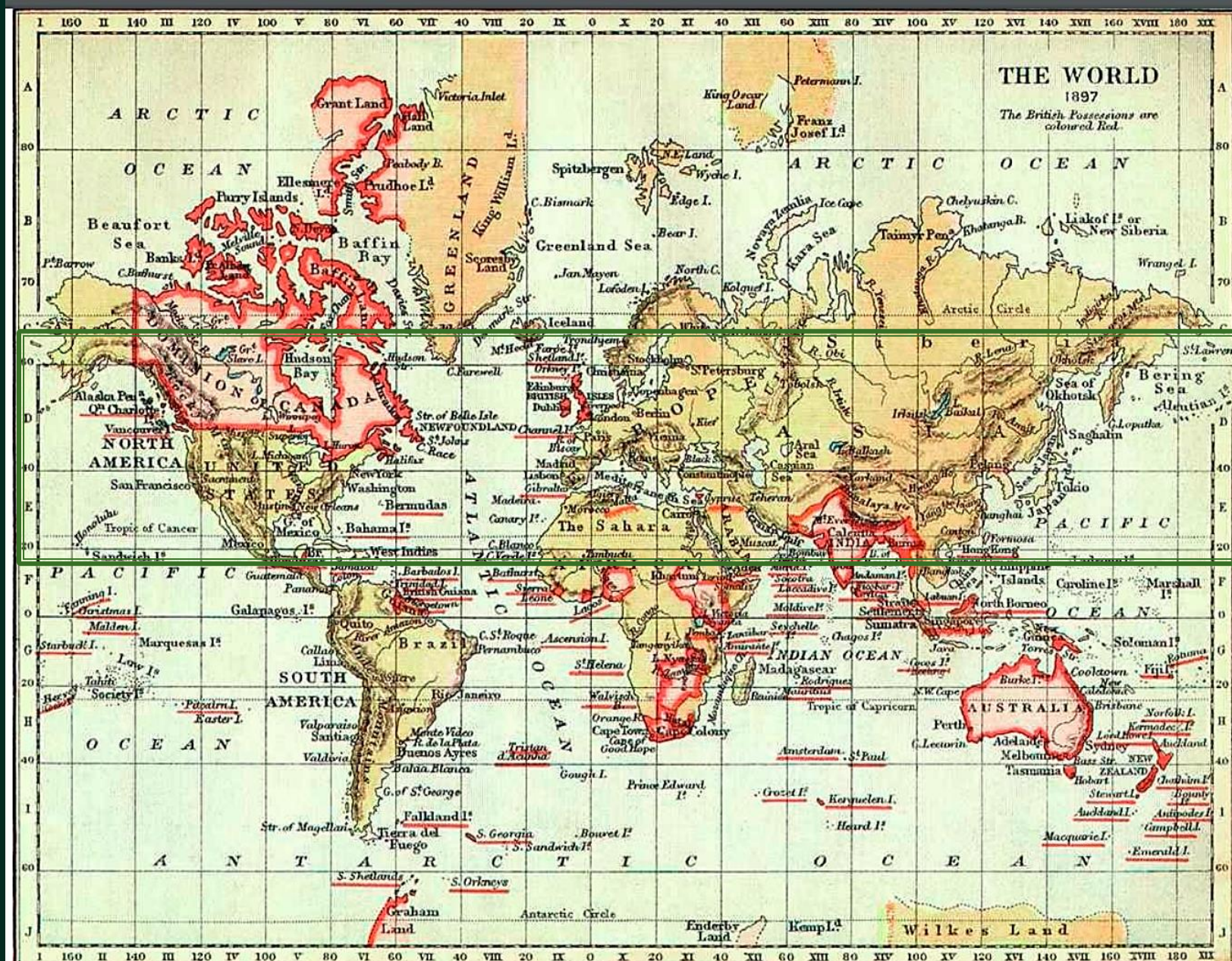
Where do you come from? originally?

It required a longer time, however, than Mrs. Norris was inclined to allow, to reconcile Fanny to the novelty of Mansfield Park, and the separation from everybody she had been used to. Her feelings were very acute, and too little understood to be properly attended to.

[...]

Fanny, **whether near or from her cousins, whether in the schoolroom, the drawing-room, or the shrubbery, was equally forlorn, finding something to fear in every person and place.** She was disheartened by Lady Bertram's silence, awed by Sir Thomas's grave looks, and quite overcome by Mrs. Norris's admonitions. Her elder cousins mortified her by reflections on her size, and abashed her by noticing her shyness: Miss Lee wondered at her ignorance, and the maid-servants sneered at her clothes; and when to these sorrows was added the idea of the brothers and sisters among whom she had always been important as playfellow, instructress, and nurse, the despondence that sunk her little heart was severe.

The grandeur of the house astonished, but could not console her. **The rooms were too large for her to move in with ease: whatever she touched she expected to injure, and she crept about in constant terror of something or other; often retreating towards her own chamber to cry; and the little girl who was spoken of in the drawing-room when she left it at night as seeming so desirably sensible of her peculiar good fortune, ended every day's sorrows by sobbing herself to sleep.** A week had passed in this way, and no suspicion of it conveyed by her quiet passive manner, when she was found one morning by her cousin Edmund, the youngest of the sons, sitting **crying on the attic stairs.**



MERCATOR MAPPING POWER

Spatial allocation for trade routes Trade in the central band (compare the size of the British Isles to Australia)

IMPERIAL MAPPING 1

Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, 'When I grow up I will go there.' The North Pole was one of these places, I remember. Well, I haven't been there yet, and shall not try now. The glamour's off. Other places were scattered about the hemispheres. I have been in some of them, and... well, we won't talk about that. But there was one yet—the biggest, the most blank, so to speak—that I had a hankering after.

“True, by this time it was not a blank space any more. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness. But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land.

IMPERIAL MAPPING 2

Her dress was as plain as an umbrella-cover, and she turned round without a word and preceded me into a waiting-room. I gave my name, and looked about. Deal table in the middle, plain chairs all round the walls, on one end a large shining map, marked with all the colours of a rainbow. There was a vast amount of red—good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there, a deuce of a lot of blue, a little green, smears of orange, and, on the East Coast, a purple patch, to show where the jolly pioneers of progress drink the jolly lager-beer. However, I wasn't going into any of these. I was going into the yellow. Dead in the centre. And the river was there—fascinating—deadly—like a snake. Ough! A door opened, a white-haired secretarial head, but wearing a compassionate expression, appeared, and a skinny forefinger beckoned me into the sanctuary. Its light was dim, and a heavy writing-desk squatted in the middle. From behind that structure came out an impression of pale plumpness in a frock-coat. The great man himself. He was five feet six, I should judge, and had his grip on the handle-end of ever so many millions. He shook hands, I fancy, murmured vaguely, was satisfied with my French. *Bon Voyage.*

BREAK

10. *Theoretical interlude II. Geography of plot*

Maps; spatial patterns: granted. But are we sure that they are indeed conveyed to readers, and that readers find them significant? Character X lives in Dorset, Y and Z in Kent, they all meet at Bath, fine: but can't one simply forget all these references, given how inconspicuous they often are? Shouldn't we extend Bakhtin's skepticism about Greek romances to all narrative geography?

The nature of a given place does not figure as a component of the event; the place figures solely as a naked, abstract expanse of space. All adventures in the Greek romance are thus governed by an interchangeability of space; what happens in Babylon could just as well happen in Egypt or Byzantium and viceversa.³⁴

Readers will judge, of course, but I hope to have shown that what happens in the Highlands could *not* 'just as well happen' in the Home Counties or viceversa; and that, by the same token, 'the nature of a given place' (Lesage's road, Pushkin's border, or Conrad's river) is indeed 'a component of the event': in the sense that *each space determines, or at least encourages, its own kind of story*. There is no picaresque of the border, or *Bildungsroman* of the European in Africa: *this* specific form needs *that* specific space

Franco
Moretti,
*Atlas of the
novel*
1993

What happens depends on where it happens . . .

[I read American and British children's books.] I wrote exactly the kind of stories I was reading. All my characters were white and blue eyed. They played in the snow, they ate apples, And they talked a lot about the weather - how lovely it was that the sun had come out. Now this, despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria, I had never been out of Nigeria. We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, And we never talked about the weather because there was no need to. My characters also drank a lot of ginger beer because the children in the British books I read drank ginger beer . Never mind that I had no idea what ginger beer was. What this demonstrates I think is how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a story , particularly as children. Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign ,I had become convinced that books by their very nature had to have foreigners in them And had to be about things which I could not personally identify

[I loved those children's books but] the unintended consequences was that I believed that people like me could not exist in literature . So what the discovery of African writers did for me was that it saved me from having a single story of what books are.

[influence of a single story about Africa: her professor told her her novel lacked African authenticity] ... My characters were too much like him, an educated and middle-class man. My characters drove cars. They were not starving . Therefore they were not authentically African.

That is how to create single story, show a people as one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. *The Danger of a Single Story'* (TED talk 2009)

WRITING NIGERIAN STORIES

After Ugwu watched Master drive out of the compound, he went and stood beside the radiogram and looked at it carefully, without touching it. Then he walked around the house, up and down, touching books and curtains and furniture and plates, and when it got dark he turned the light on and marveled at how bright the bulb that dangled from the ceiling was, how it did not cast long shadows on the wall like the palm oil lamps back home. His mother would be preparing the evening meal now, pounding akpu in the mortar, the pestle grasped tight with both hands. Chioke, the junior wife, would be tending the pot of watery soup balanced on three stones over the fire. The children would have come back from the stream and would be taunting and chasing one another under the breadfruit tree. Perhaps Anulika would be watching them. She was the oldest child in the household now, and as they all sat around the fire to eat, she would break up the fights when the younger ones struggled over the strips of dried fish in the soup. She would wait until all the akpu was eaten and then divide the fish so that each child had a piece, and she would keep the biggest for herself, as he had always done.

Ugwu opened the fridge and ate some more bread and chicken, quickly stuffing the food in his mouth while his heart beat as if he were running; then he dug out extra chunks of meat and pulled out the wings. He slipped the pieces into his shorts pockets before going to the bedroom

Master got up quickly and went into the study. Ugwu's confused fear made his eyelids quiver. Would Master send him home because he did not speak English well, kept chicken in his pocket overnight, did not know the strange places Master named? Master came back with a wide piece of paper that he unfolded and laid out on the dining table, pushing aside books and magazines. He pointed with his pen.

"This is our world, although the people who drew this map decided to put their own land on top of ours. There is no top or bottom, you see."

Master picked up the paper and folded it, so that one edge touched the other, leaving a hollow between. "Our world is round, it never ends. *Nee anya*, this is all water, the seas and oceans, and here's Europe and here's our own continent, Africa, and the Congo is in the middle. Farther up here is Nigeria, and Nsukka is here, in the southeast; this is where we are."

He tapped with his pen.

"Yes, sah."

"Did you go to school?"

"Standard two, sah. But I learn everything fast."

"Standard two? How long ago?"

"Many years now, sah. But I learn everything very fast!"

"Why did you stop school?"

"My father's crops failed, sah."

MAPS



2005 BBC tilted angle (4,000 complaints in days)

THE CENTRE & THE OTHER PERSPECTIVE: LOCAL MAPS



ESTUARY POEMS

I

Under the stars they come ashore all night,
wading chest-high through the lights of Weston.
In the dark the current scoops and sleeks;
acres of scored mud plipping quietly.
See them flounder, waist-deep, long skirts dragging,
sick with the bilge-stink and hunger;
the river mocks them with its dangerous croeso,
the sucking pools, the children handed up,
lethal tidewash, wet caress,
fingers clutched in the soil and stones,
till the bank is firm and the land forms,
and they sit on the saltmarsh and slither into their shoes.

Cheaper than ballast, dumped in the dark.
Never uprooted from the memory's mud.

Catherine Fisher

It is a truism to say that names are important to us. They are not just signpost to our present identity; They also contain clues to our past. One of the characters in ...*Translations* says]... we call that crossroads Tobair Vree. And why do we call it Tobair Vree. ? I'll tell you why, Tobair means a well. But what does Vree mean ? It's a corruption of Brian (Gaelic pronunciation). Brian - an erosion of Tobair Bhriain. Because 150 years ago they used to be a well there, not at the crossroads, mind you - that would be too simple - but in a field close to the crossroads.' When such a name is translated from the Gaelic of the West of Ireland into modern English, what is gained? What is lost? In *Translations* a play set in colonial Ireland of the 1830s, two British Army cartographers are making a new map of Ireland in which all the Gaelic place names are anglicised to their nearest equivalent. Such a task poses dilemmas: 'What do we do with a name like that? Do we scrap Tobair Vree all together and call it – What? - the Cross? Crossroads? Or do we keep piety with a man long dead, long forgotten, his name 'eroded' beyond recognition, whose trivial little story nobody in the parish remembers?' Brian Friel's play explores the psychological and moral implications of the kind of translation that colonial occupation renders inevitable. The names which are given language and culture confer on the landscape both denominate and describ. They set up familiar terms of reference and cannot be disturbed without causing the local people to suffer a sense of loss of identity and continuity with the past. The British soldiers intent on efficiently mapping the region of Donegal and renaming its landmarks are vandals uprooting ancient tradition.

The primitive village world portrayed by Friel is an Arcadia rooted in the ancient world. These are the last years of rural peace and comparative prosperity before the onset of the potato famine in the 1840s which drove half the population into exile and death by starvation.

The villagers are not ignorant peasants. They have set up an illegal hedge-school where they study Latin and Greek. They move easily in the classical Mediterranean world of ancient gods and myths to which their own archaic culture provides access and continuity. ...

The centre of *Translations* is a story of love between Yolland, the younger of the two British map makers and a Gaelic-speaking girl, Maire. [he is murdered- sexual jealousy or political resistance?] By the end of the play, the British army has begun to take reprisals, burning farms and killing farm animals; the familiar cycle of resistance and repression has begun. ... Friel implies the original violence is linguistic as the map makers tamper with even the humblest of local place names ...

Freegle reminds us that when a national language yields to the language of an invader a door closes on the past and the cultural tradition is inevitably lost.

(Review)

Manus: What sort of translation is that, Owen?

Owen: Did I make a mess of it?

Manus: You weren't saying what Lancey was saying!

Owen: "Uncertainty in meaning is incipient poetry" - who said that?

Manus: There was nothing uncertain about what Lancey said: It's a bloody military operation! ... what's "incorrect" about the place-names we have here?

Owen: Nothing at all. They're just going to be standardised'. Manus: You mean changed into English?

Owen: Where there's ambiguity, they'll be Anglicised.(p.32.)

Hugh: We must learn those new names [...] We must learn where we live. We must learn to make them our own. We must make them our new home. (p.66.)

Lancey: [W]e will embark on a series of evictions and leveling of every abode in the following selected areas - ... Swinefort Burnfoot ... Dromduff.

Brian Friel, *Translations*

To open *A Swansea Love Song* is to feel, initially at least, baffled. What on earth does this mean?

Up air gnat bared rooms wear
Risebawn – ah f’well-Shah-foß –
tree-Anon
my mother sighed
– brawler grah s’outFronters gone
neigh Pa KinnayKa z’air now
Dun oh! Warriss
lie kin sighed

Up there in that bedroom is where
I was born – half Welsh, half Aus-
trian on
my mother’s side –
but all the grass out front has gone,
no parking of cars there now,
don’t know what it’s
like inside.

Once the meaning is understood, this poem, ‘Swansea (Google Street View),’ becomes an interesting and moving poem, an eccentric take on the subject of growing up, as Knight sits at a computer, revisiting the places in which he spent his childhood. Nostalgia and hiraeth are both at play as Knight thinks about childhood play as ‘spy Dumb Ann,’ or Spiderman, then heads on up the hill:

The problem, of course, is the impenetrability of the verse on the page. The only reason I’m able to access the meaning of this poem is that I saw Knight give a brilliant reading from it, at the Ledbury Poetry Festival recently. He did something I’ve never seen a poet do before, offering the audience photocopies of the poems so they could follow as he read. The result was a brilliantly entertaining reading, but a lot of the comedy was coming from the disparity between the words on the page and what Knight was saying.

What's it going to be then, eh?

There was me, that is Alex, and my three droogs, that is Pete, Georgie, and Dim, Dim being really dim, and we sat in the Korova Milkbar making up our rassoodocks what to do with the evening, a flip dark chill winter bastard though dry. The Korova Milkbar was a milk-plus mesto, and you may, O my brothers, have forgotten what these mestos were like, things changing so skorry these days and everybody very quick to forget, newspapers not being read much neither. Well, what they sold there was milk plus something else. They had no licence for selling liquor, but there was no law yet against prodding some of the new veshches which they used to put into the old moloko, so you could peet it with vellocet or synthemesc or drenchrom or one or two other veshches which would give you a nice quiet horrorshow fifteen minutes admiring Bog And All His Holy Angels and Saints in your left shoe with lights bursting all over your mozg. Or you could peet milk with knives in it, as we used to say, and this would sharpen you up and make you ready for a bit of dirty twenty-to-one, and that was what we were peeting this evening I'm starting off the story with.

Our pockets were full of deng, so there was no real need from the point of view of crasting any more pretty polly to tolchock some old veck in an alley and viddy him swim in his blood while we counted the takings and divided by four, nor to do the ultra-violent on some shivering starry grey-haired ptitsa in a shop and go smecking off with the till's guts. But, as they say, money isn't everything.

The four of us were dressed in the height of fashion, which in those days was a pair of black very tight tights with the old jelly mould, as we called it, fitting on the crotch underneath the tights, this being to protect and also a sort of a design you could viddy clear enough in a certain light, so that I had one in the shape of a spider. Pete had a rooker (a hand, that is), Georgie had a very fancy one of a flower, and poor old Dim had a very hound-and-horny one of a clown's litso (face, that is). Dim not ever having much of an idea of things and being, beyond all shadow of a doubting thomas, the dimmest of we four. ...

So we scatted out into the big winter nochy and walked down Marghanita Boulevard and then turned into Boothby Avenue, and there we found what we were pretty well looking for, a malenky jest to start off the evening with. There was a doddery starry schoolmaster type veck, glasses on and his rot open to the cold nochy air. He had books under his arm and a crappy umbrella and was coming round the corner from the Public Biblio, which not many lewdies used those days. You never really saw many of the older bourgeois type out after nightfall those days, what with the shortage of police and we fine young malchickiwicks about, and this prof type chelloveck was the only one walking in the whole of the street. So we goolied up to him, very polite, and I said: 'Pardon me, brother.'

He looked a malenky bit poogly when he viddied the four of us like that, coming up so quiet and polite and smiling, but he said: 'Yes? What is it?' in a very loud teacher-type goloss, as if he was trying to show us he wasn't poogly. I said:

'I see you have books under your arm, brother. It is indeed a rare pleasure these days to come across somebody that still reads, brother.'

'Oh,' he said, all shaky. 'Is it? Oh, I see.' And he kept looking from one to the other of we four, finding himself now like in the middle of a very smiling and polite square.

'Yes,' I said. 'It would interest me greatly, brother, if you would kindly allow me to see what books those are that you have under your arm. I like nothing better in this world than a good clean book, brother.'

'Clean,' he said. 'Clean, eh?' And then Pete skvatted these three books from him and handed them round real skorry. Being three, we all had one each to viddy at except for Dim. The one I had was called Elementary Crystallography, so I opened it up and said: 'Excellent, really first-class,' keeping turning the pages. Then I said in a very shocked type goloss: 'But what is this here? What is this filthy slovo, I blush to look at this word. You disappoint me, brother, you do really.'

DISCUSSION

THINKING ABOUT A SELF CREATED BY MAPS –
CONSIDER THE KINDS OF MAPS THAT HAVE
MADE YOU
WHAT LANGUAGE AND WHAT RESOURCES DO
YOU HAVE?

WRITE 500 WORDS USING ONE OF THE MAPS
AS AN STARTING POINT.