

**John Wyatt Greenlee**  
**Cornell University**

### **The Bridge to Scotland: Matthew Paris and the Politics of Mapping Imagined Bridges in 13th Century Britain**

Century Britain” In the 1250s, the St. Albans monk Matthew Paris penned a series of maps of Britain, which he appended to various of his chronicles. Of these, the most developed, and likely the last, was the Cotton Claudius map (BL Cotton MS Claudius D. VII, f. 12v). Among the Cotton Claudius map’s multiple points of geographic curiosity, one of stands out most readily: Paris mapped northern Scottish as a separate island, labeled *Scocia Ultramarina*. The monk connected this island to the rest of Britain only at Stirling Bridge, which he drew as an actual bridge – the only bridge represented graphically on the map. Scholars have tended to pay little heed to Paris’s geography, and almost none to the bridge at Stirling. Work on the map has generally taken it as an expanded version of one of Paris’s itinerary maps, and so a primarily religious artifact. This is, however, a mistake. The map is thoroughly political, and through it Paris made cogent arguments for English rights to territory in both Wales and Scotland. The monk’s decision to break Scotland apart – to depart from the accurate geographical descriptions found in many of his primary sources – allowed Paris to compress the kingdom of Scotland into a small, contested zone along the border, while simultaneously casting *Scocia Ultramarina* as space that belonged, by right, to England. The bridge, with its explicitly manmade nature, was critical to this claim. It allowed the monk to connect the Highlands to the rest of Britain while still arguing for natural, God-given, boundaries which delimited the territory of the Scottish king. For Paris, the usual connective elements of the bridge were secondary to the structure’s role as a marker of division. In replacing natural territory with a constructed crossing, Paris set the stage for claims to an English North.