Leeds Studies in English

New Series XLVIII

2017

Architectural Representation in Medieval England

Edited by

Hannah Bailey, Karl Kinsella, and Daniel Thomas

Doorways as Liminal Structures in Anglo-Saxon Text and Image

Karl Kinsella

Introduction

In his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Bede tells the famous story of the conversion of King Edwin of Northumbria by the missionary Paulinus. While conversing with his men about the wisdom of this, one of the 'king's men' offered 'wise words'.[1] He says:

> This is how the present life of man on earth, King, appears to me in comparison with that time which is unknown to us. You are sitting feasting with your ealdormen and thegns in winter time; the fire is burning on the hearth in the middle of the hall and all inside is warm, while outside the wintry storms of rain and snow are raging; and a sparrow flies swiftly through the hall. It enters in at one door and quickly flies out through the other. For the few moments it is inside, the storm and wintry tempest cannot touch it, but after the briefest moment of calm, it flits from your sight, out of the wintry storm and into it again. So this life of man appears but for a moment; what follows or indeed what went before, we know not at all.[2]

The analogy is striking, not least because of Bede's use of tangible and recognisable architectural features to convey the transitions between certain spaces; that is, between the material and spiritual realms. By characterising architecture in this way, Bede implicitly assumed two things: that the reader will understand that the openings of the 'hall' mean something other than their literal appearance, and that these openings are a comprehensible way of signifying the transitions of birth and death. This article will argue that these assumptions, and the use of doorways in this way, were not particular to Bede, but a common method of signifying transitions between states or spaces in Anglo-Saxon texts and images.

---

[1]   Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), ii. XIII, p. 183. All references to the *Ecclesiastical History* are to this edition.

[2]   Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ii. XIII, pp. 182–85: '"Talis" inquiens "mihi uidetur, rex, uita hominum praesens in terris, ad conparationem eius quod nobis incertum est temporis, quale cum te residente ad caenam cum ducibus ac ministris tuis tempore brumali, accenso quidem foco in medio et calido effecto cenaculo, furentibus autem foris per omnia turbinibus hiemalium pluuiarum uel niuium, adueniens unus passerum domum citissime peruolauerit; qui cum per unum ostium ingrediens mox per aliud exierit, ipso quidem tempore quo intus est hiemis tempestate non tangitur, sed teman paruissimo spatio serenitatis ad momentum excurso, mox de hieme in hiemem regrediens tuis oculis elabitur. Ita haec uita hominum ad modicum apparet; quid autem sequatur, quidue praecesserit, prorsus ignoramus"'.

Doorways acted as symbolic expedients to relay parts of a narrative that included movements between earthly and spiritual realms. The capacity of gates and doorways to define the nature of the enclosed spaces is discussed elsewhere in this issue;[3] in this article, however, my focus is upon the invisible moment of transition implicit in the representation of a doorway.

My objective is to take Bede's particular instance and to inductively move through similar appearances of doorways in different texts and images. We will see that a fascination with the liminal property of doorways is not restricted to Anglo-Latin literature, but appears in at least one example of Old English literature as well. Having established the textual occurrences of doorways as a means of framing movements between types of spaces, I will move the investigation to images of doorways. By combining the study of textual and visual instances in a single study the broad nature of the phenomenon should become clear.

The premise of this argument requires us to understand that representations of doorways are more significant than their simple or literal appearance, and that Bede's analogy is transferable from text into image. Richard Krautheimer exposed the allegorical nature of architecture and its medieval representations, which began a long tradition of scholarship on the subject, including work on Anglo-Saxon examples.[4] Architectural iconography takes the simple forms of buildings, including doorways, and demonstrates that they have wider historical and symbolic value. One example of architectural iconography that Krautheimer focused on was the importance of the round shape of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, a shape that was copied in other examples around Europe. The round or sometimes polygonal form was recognised as being derived from and in some way intrinsically connected to the original building at Jerusalem. Similar to my approach, Krautheimer and others use both texts and images to argue for the particular significance of architecture: that buildings can refer to historical examples of other structures through their form and relative sizes. My paper builds on this earlier scholarship by following a similar selection of textual and visual sources to draw conclusions about the possible meaningful properties of a particular architectural element.

Before focusing on representations of openings and transitions, we must set the stage and state the linguistic basis for the relationship between doorways and spatial transitions, specifically in a Latin context.[5] One medieval definition of doorways emphasised their liminal nature. In his *Etymologiae*, Isidore of Seville (d. 636) provided a supposed source for the meaning and derivation of terms relating to doorways under the entry for 'entrances' (*De aditibus*). Isidore explained, 'a portico (*porticus*), [is named such] because it is a passageway

---

[3]   See Daniel Thomas' article below.
[4]   Richard Krautheimer,'Introduction to an "Iconography of Medieval Architecture"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942), 1–33. The potential problems of this iconographic approach were outlined in Paul Crossley, 'Architecture and Meaning: The Limits of Iconography', *The Burlington Magazine*, 130 (1988), 116–21. See also Richard Gem, 'Towards an Iconography of Anglo-Saxon Architecture', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 46 (1983), 1–18.
[5]   There are a number of modern works that consider liminality in its different contexts, both medieval and modern. See, for example, Subha Mukherji, *Thinking on Thresholds: the Poetics of Transitive Spaces* (London: Anthem Press, 2011). For architectural spaces, although for a later period see, Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth-Century English Cistercian Monasteries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001). *Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture: Liminal Spaces*, ed. by Elina Gertsman, Jill Stevenson, and Pamela Sheingorn (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012) is a collection of papers which considers liminality in its medieval art historical context. Doors and their relationship with sacred space are discussed in Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), p. 25. For a phenomonological interpretation of interior and exterior spaces in poetic representations, see Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), pp. 211–31.

rather than a place where one remains standing, as if it were a gateway (*porta*)'.[6] Isidore placed emphasis on the movement a *porta* facilitates; it is not a place for 'standing'.[7] Elsewhere we can see that meanings for the terms *porticus*, *porta*, and *limina* ('threshold') elided to form a comprehensive structural idea referring to the point of entry between two spaces. For example, early medieval descriptions of St Peter's old basilica in Rome offer a wealth of evidence for the study of Latin architectural terminology. Many of the Roman bishops were buried at the western entrance to the basilica, an area referred to as *ad limina Sancti Petri* ('at the threshold of St Peter's'), but also as the *porticus*.[8] So at the meeting point between one of the holiest spaces in Christianity — St Peter's — and the more profane space of the atrium in front of the cathedral, there was a threshold and a *porticus* at the point of transition. Other evidence suggests that the association of the threshold with movement between sacred and profane spaces was paralleled in other contemporary sources, which referred to the threshold as the *superlimens*.[9]

In an Anglo-Saxon context we can see a similar concern for the threshold as a place of transition. The western porch at St Peter's Monkwearmouth provides a useful example of how an Anglo-Saxon porch marked the transition between material and spiritual realms. The western tower at St Peter's contains five stages and was added to the west side of the nave in the tenth or eleventh century; however, the decoration on the west side of the porch indicates that it was present during the late seventh or eighth century.[10] The porch was associated with the *porticus ingressus* described by Bede as where the bones of Abbot Eosterwine were first buried before being removed to somewhere within the church.[11] The significance of the bones' placement, in this instance, implies an association between burials and the inherently liminal nature of boundaries.[12] The importance of the porch at St Peter's is underlined by the decoration on it, which is 'significant' in some way.[13] The inner side of the north entrance

[6]   Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), XV.vii.1–4, p. 311. 'Aditus ab eundo dictus, per quem ingredimur et admittimur. Vestibulum est vel aditus domus privatae, vel spatium adiacens aedibus publicis. Et vestibulum dictum eo quod eo vestiuntur fores, aut quod aditum tecto vestiat, aut ab stando. Porticus, quod transitus sit magis quam ubi standum sit, quasi porta; et porticus, eo quod sit apertus.' *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi, Etymologiarum sive origenum, libri xx*, ed. by W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), II, XV.vii.1–4.

[7]   The relationship between the two terms *porticus* and *porta* is complicated because of their different usage in Anglo-Saxon England and contemporary French and Italian sources, but Ó Carragáin takes a wider view and argues that there is a spectrum of meanings associated with *porticus* that many would have understood. See Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'The Term *Porticus* and *Imitatio Romae* in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in *Text and Gloss: Studies in Insular Learning and Literature Presented to Joseph Donovan Pheifer*, ed. by Helen Conrad O'Briain and others (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), pp. 13–34 (p. 20). For further discussion on the problems of translating this architectural term see *Bede: On the Temple*, trans. by Sean Connolly (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), pp. xiii–xvi.

[8]   Ó Carragáin, 'The Term *Porticus*', p. 20.

[9]   For example, in the early eleventh-century description of the reconstruction of the abbey church at Saint Benigne in Dijon the chronicler makes references to the 'western threshold' (*superliminare occidentalium*). *Recueil de textes relatifs a L'histoire de L'architecture et a la condition des architects en France au moyen age*, ed. by Victor Mortet (Paris: Alfonse Picard et fils, 1911), p. 30. Similar references can be found at pp. 402–03.

[10] Rosemary Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow Monastic Sites*, 2 vols (London: English Heritage, 2005), I, p. 43.

[11] Bede, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, trans. by Christopher Grocock and I. N. Wood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013), pp. 178–79.

[12] Helena Hamerow, '"Special Deposits" in Anglo-Saxon Settlements', *Medieval Archaeology*, 50 (2006), pp. 1–30, p. 9.

[13] Richard Bailey, 'Sutton Hoo and Seventh-Century Art', in *Sutton Hoo: Fifty Years After*, ed. by Robert Farrell and Carol Neuman de Vegvar (Oxford: Oxbow, 1992), pp. 31–41 (p. 33).

jamb is carved with intertwining beasts whose combined tails form the shape of a tau-cross.[14] Jane Hawkes draws attention to the importance of the snakes' placement on the inner side of the portal, so that 'they would not be seen until the threshold was actually being crossed'.[15] Having passed the threshold, the cross made by the intertwining of snakes' tails seems to act as a marker that a new space has been entered into, whether it be from the sacred to the mundane or vice-versa.[16] Our awareness of the importance placed on crossing the threshold in this specific example can help us recognize the wider cultural value given to such liminal space.

Texts with Doorways

This relationship between doorways, liminality, and space is not restricted to Isidore's wide-ranging work, but carries over into an Anglo-Latin text that included architectural descriptions. As we will see, the significance of liminality in the textual tradition seems to align well with the visual examples, which are discussed below. The ninth-century work *De abbatibus* used doorways as frames to illustrate transitions between the spiritual and material realms. *De abbatibus* is a poem by the monk Aethelwulf. It provides a list, and rich discussion, of six abbots of a monastic cell associated with Lindisfarne that was founded at the beginning of the eighth century.[17] The poem has been dated to some point between 803 and 821, during the bishopric of Ecgberht of Lindisfarne.[18] Aethelwulf described the buildings and liturgical vessels commissioned and paid for by each abbot in some detail, and was most likely influenced by Alcuin's poetical history of the church of York.[19] H. M. Taylor recognised that the relatively lengthy architectural descriptions could be useful for determining details about the internal composition of smaller Anglo-Saxon minsters.[20] Despite this scholarship on the importance of *De abbatibus*' Latin architectural vocabulary and descriptions, there has been little written about Aethelwulf's use of architecture to frame the different narratives he included. Frequently, these narratives take the abbots from the earthly realm into an indefinable spiritual realm.

Two examples illustrate Aethelwulf's use of doorways as a liminal space. The first contrasts movement within a space with the assumption of the Virgin Mary's bodily remains into heaven; the second frames the movement of a heavenly host's entrance into the visible realm.

Chapter 14 is titled 'Concerning Abbot Sigbald, a worthy priest', and provides an account of the building constructed under the fourth abbot, Sigbald (pp. 35–39). The poet describes

[14] For a diagram see, H. M. Taylor and Joan Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), I, p. 437 (fig. 206).

[15] Jane Hawkes, 'Symbolic Lives: The Visual Evidence', in *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. by John Hines (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), pp. 311–47 (p. 325).

[16] Hawkes, 'Symbolic Lives', p. 325. Hawkes also notes the snakes' significance as symbols of birth and death, reinforcing their identity as suitable marker for thresholds.

[17] Aethelwulf, *De Abbatibus*, ed. and trans. by A. Campbell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. xxiii. Text and translation are cited from this edition.

[18] *De Abbatiubus*, ed. and trans by Campbell, p. xxiii.

[19] *De Abbatibus*, ed. and trans. by Campbell, pp. xxx–xxxi. For links between Aethelwulf and York poets see, Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), pp. 381–98.

[20] H. M. Taylor, 'The Architectural Interest of Aethelwulf's *De Abbatibus*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3 (1974), 163–73 and 'The Position of the Altar in Early Anglo-Saxon Churches', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 53 (1973), 52–58.

the chancel and choir of the church as well as a golden chalice that is 'covered in gems' (p. 36). When the church was completed:

> Hoc templum ingrediens dum pura mente sacerdos
> iam missas celebrans Sigbald visitare parabat
> fontibus e calidis salse daecurrere gutte
> incipiunt, Christi magnus quas excitat ardor
> pectore de puro, trepidant nec guttura cantum.
> sanctam cumque diem sacravit virgo Maria,
> qua volitans caelos meruit penetrare per altos,
> vel qua presenti generata redditur orbi.
> vel qua prepulchrae susceptat gaudia vitae,
> vel qua celsithronum meruit generare tonantem[21]

> Sigbald was for the first time entering (*ingrediens*) this church in purity of mind, and was about to celebrate mass, salt tears began to flow from warm fountains, and these [the tears] his great zeal for Christ called forth from his pure heart, and his throat held not back from song. And when the Virgin Mary blessed the sacred day on which she had it granted to her to rise up and penetrate the lofty skies, or that upon which she was born and given to the present world, or that on which she received the joys of life which was very lovely, or that on which she had it granted to her to bear the thunderer high-enthroned.

While Aethelwulf does not explicitly refer to a doorway in this passage, he does describe Sigbald as entering (*ingrediens*) into the church for the first time, so we must assume that the abbot moves into the church, occupying neither one place nor another. Aethelwulf uses the present tense to describe Sigbald's actions in the remainder of the chapter, as if holding the transition in the reader's mind. Aethelwulf then juxtaposes Sigbald's reaction to this new church and the mass with a series of feast days associated with the Virgin Mary. First, he refers to the Assumption of Mary's bodily remains; next to the birth of Mary; following this, Aethelwulf refers to the Incarnation. These three feast days allude to transitions made between the heavenly realm and the earthly one: the Incarnation celebrates Christ's entrance into the world, and the Assumption celebrates Mary's bodily entrance into Heaven.

Chapter twenty-one relates the extraordinary scene of a troop of angels moving into the church to sing, while two brothers look on in awe. Aethelwulf sets the scene by describing the time at which the events happened: 'This house once in the time of dark night, the brothers, following their usual custom, were at pains to enter after their hymns, to complete their solemnities of spirit'.[22] He continues by highlighting the specific time at which the events occurred: 'They [the brothers] desired to hurry thence to their beds, but I left the church after them all with its doors shut, and approached another brother, whom I accompanied'.[23] The events occur at a liminal moment in the monastic day, between the end of the *opus dei* and going to bed — not during the high point of the mass, but in the moments between the daily hours. This sense of a liminal time is then reinforced by a spatial analogue. The poet makes a particular point of writing that the doors were shut. The two brothers then hear the heavenly music, and see 'a great troop' making the music. The poet continues: 'The spirits entered the

---

[21] pp. 36–39.
[22] 'Hunc dudum nigre sub tempore noctis | moribus ex solitis post ymnos visere certant | fratres, atque sue complent sollempnia mentis' (pp. 52–53).
[23] 'ocius inde suos cupiunt adcurrere lectos | ast ego post omnes conclusis postibus aulum | deseruique alium fratrem comitatus adiui' (pp. 52–53).

church, which was shining with a starry light'.[24] In order to enter the church, the spirits must have first opened the doors and moved through them. The host continues to sing in the church before they vanish and the witnesses proceed to the dormitory, shaken by the experience. At one level the scene is like Bede's analogy of the swallow: it portrays a shift from the outside to inside, and the transition between spaces framed by doors.

The poet's ekphrastic approach to architectural description at times takes advantage of doorways as a narrative expedient, using them to signify movement not just between spaces but between material and spiritual realms.[25] In this sense, *De abbatibus* echoes Bede's analogy of the swallow, perhaps not directly, but certainly by acknowledging that doorways can mean something other than their literal appearance or representation.

Points of transition between two spaces, and a 'porch' used to facilitate that movement, appear in an Old English, as well as a Latin, context. The Old English *Visions of Leofric*, which has a single late eleventh-century manuscript witness in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 367, offers one such example.[26] The titular Leofric was a contemporary of Edward the Confessor, and died in 1057.[27] The significance of the architectural descriptions in this text has been noted elsewhere, and this paper seeks only to draw out the parallels between it and the liminal properties of doorways discussed above.[28] Leofric was a powerful man who supported Edward in his rise to power during the middle of the eleventh century. In this short text, Leofric is portrayed as a particularly holy layman, who received three visions of divine origin. In the first vision, a miraculous event occurs when Leofric visits the abbey cathedral of Christ Church, Canterbury with the king. Leofric arranges with the sacristan so as to be admitted into the church later at night to pray; however, the sacristan is drunk and so he is not able to hear Leofric knocking to get into the church.[29] As a result, Leofric begins to pray and 'then during his prayers the door was suddenly opened, and he at once went in, and prayed to his Lord with uplifted arms'.[30] The sight of the door opening shocks Leofric's companion so much that he faints.

There are two important elements here. First, the text specifically mentions the presence of a porch ('an forehus'). While there is some debate over to what this actually refers, it would

---

[24] 'intrant sidereo candentem luce delubrum | spiritus' (pp. 52–53).

[25] For a discussion of the wider implication of architectural description in ekphrastic works, see Ruth Webb, 'The Aesthetics of Sacred Space: Narrative, Metaphor, and Motion in *Ekphraseis* of Church Buildings', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 53 (1999), 59–74.

[26] On the date of the manuscript, see N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), no. 64.

[27] A. S. Napier, 'An Old English Vision of Leofric, Earl of Mercia', *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 26 (1908), 182–86 (p. 183). The text is cited by line number from this edition.

[28] Milton McC. Gatch, 'Miracles in Architectural Settings: Christ Church, Canterbury and St Clement's, Sandwich in the Old English *Vision of Leofric*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 22 (1993), 227–52.

[29] Napier, 'Leofric', ll. 26–33: 'þa spræc he on æfen wið þone cyrcward & hine georne bæd þæt he hine inn lete þænne he þa dura cnylde; ac he þæt forgymde for his druncennysse. Ða þa he to þære dura com & þær langsumlice swyðe cnucede & georne cunnode, hwæðer he hi on ænige wisan undon mihte, ne mihte na. Ða he þæne cyrcward gehyrde ofer eall hrutan, þa ne wænde he him nanes incymes, ac feng þa on his gebedo, swa his gewuna wæs, forþær wæs an forehus æt þære cyrcan duru' ('then in the evening he spoke with the churchwarden and eagerly bade him that he let him in when he struck at the door; but he neglected that for his drunkenness. Then he came to the door and knocked there for a very long time and eagerly tried whether he could in any way unlock them, but could not at all. When over everything else he heard the churchwarden snoring, then he expected no entrance for himself, but took then to his prayers, as was his custom, because there was a porch at the church door').

[30] Napier, 'Leofric', ll. 34–35: 'Ða on þam gebede wearð seo duru færincga geopenad, & he þa sona in eode, & hine to his Drihtene gebæd up ahafenum earmum'.

seem that there was a covered space of some sort which emphasized the entrance into the church.[31] The porch acted as a liminal space through which one walks from the everyday world into the church. The church is the most important sacred space within any monastery, and to walk into it is to step closer to the divine presence. The architecture of the church is a pale imitation of the pleasures that await the saved souls at the end of time, of the celestial Jerusalem with its high roofs and ornament, and is representative of a divine habitation.[32] In this context, the walls of the cathedral acted as a boundary wall demarcating the sacred space, and the porch is the only location one may pierce that boundary.

The second element concerns who actually controls entry into this sacred space. While Leofric asked the sacristan to let him in, human sin obstructed him. As emphasized by the second element in the Old English *cyrcward* ('church-guardian'), the sacristan acted as God's guard, but did not carry out his duty appropriately. Leofric's only option was to appeal directly to God, who grants access to his space quickly — the true power in the church opens the door. The authoritative grant of free movement between the profane and sacred space underlies the sense of power relationships at Canterbury. The narrative underlines this hierarchy of power by mentioning the presence of the king at Canterbury at the same time. There is only one true king in the monastery, whose power is manifest by the opening of a door and admittance into the sacred space, his space.

The author of the *Visions* specifically states that Leofric gained access to the southern porch of Christ Church, a location of possibly significant affective power. The Romanesque arrangement of Canterbury as a monastic cathedral was, and is, relatively unusual because the cloister is situated to the north of the basilica.[33] The south door was then accessible by lay people who may have been excluded from the cloister side of the church. Burials at the nearby abbey church of SS Peter and Paul were clearly demarcated between those placed in the north and south chapels, dedicated to St Gregory and St Martin of Tours respectively.[34] The St Gregory chapel was intended for the burial of significant members of the community of Christ Church, including the archbishops until the eighth century.[35] The side dedicated to St Martin — that is the southern *porticus* — was intended to be used for royal burials, and 'provided an image of the continuity of the kingdom'.[36] This distinction between burials in the northern and the southern parts of the church appears in other churches, where the north holds the bodies of the community, and the south, people of royal power.[37] Thus, while Leofric is

---

[31] Gatch, 'Miracles in Architectural Settings', p. 230. For further discussion of the southern porch see, Nicholas Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 to 1066* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984), pp. 39–40.

[32] For the later period, see Laurence Hull Stookey, 'The Gothic Cathedral as the Heavenly Jerusalem: Liturgical and Theological Sources', *Gesta*, 8 (1969), 35–41. For a wider view see Joseph Sauer, *Symbolik Des Kirchengebäudes Und Seiner Ausstattung in Der Auffassung Des Mittelalters: Mit Berücksichtigung Von Honorius Augustodunesis Sicardus Und Durandus* (Münster: Mehren u. Hobbeling, 1964). On the complex symbolism of ecclesiastical space, see also the article by Meg Boulton above.

[33] In most cases the cloister is placed south of the nave. Roger Stalley, *Early Medieval Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 182.

[34] A reconstructed plan is provided in Eric Fernie, *The Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), pp. 36–37.

[35] Ó Carragáin, 'The Term *Porticus*', p. 29.

[36] Ó Carragáin, 'The Term *Porticus*', p. 29.

[37] In a survey of Anglo-Saxon churches, Martin Biddle concluded that 'there seems to have been an early preference to use the north porticus for those members of the community […] who were later sainted' ('Archaeology, Architecture, and the Cult of Saints in Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Anglo-Saxon Church: Papers on History, Architecture, and Archaeology in Honour of H.M. Taylor*, ed. by L. A. S. Butler and R. K. Morris (London:

at Christ Church, Canterbury and not SS Peter and Paul's there is still a suggestion that the particular doorway through which he entered was one associated with regnal power — an arrangement that echoes the power structure discussed above, whereby only the true king is able to grant access the divine space.

Anglo-Latin and Old English descriptions of doorways, as well as their appearance in certain narratives from the Anglo-Saxon period, seem to point to a particular way in which architectural representations relate to transitions between types of spaces. In *De abbatibus* the doors frame movement between different types of spaces, especially between material and spiritual realms. Unusual events, such as angels swooping into a church after their appearance in the night sky, make sense in the light of this convention. The singing host enters into the material realm through the door the brother had recently shut, passing through from their heavenly home to the realm of the brothers by means of the door. This same association of doorways with movement between the mundane and spiritual is at work in Leofric's problematic entry into the church at Canterbury. However, Leofric's story is perhaps more explicit about the role doorways can play in supernatural narratives. Entrance into the spiritual realm is gained via the authority of God, who bars and grants entry according to his own will. While these two examples cannot be taken as a universal principle of doorways and their facility to shift between spaces, the two textual examples do indicate a possibility of that facility. It remains to be seen how such architectural representations can be mapped on to visual examples, so we can gain a fuller picture of possible wider trends.

Images with Doorways

The relationship between doorways, liminality, and space described above extends into the realm of Anglo-Saxon visual culture, where it presents an opportunity to imply movement in an inherently static medium. By comparing a theme — doorways as indicators of material to spiritual transitions, or vice-versa — across text and image, the iconographical significance of the doorway in Anglo-Saxon architectural representations becomes clearer. Text and image can combine to form a coherent narrative of particular events, but the individual parts of the image, including the architectural representations, take on particular significance in that narrative.[38] One strategy in Anglo-Saxon images correlates to textual examples described above, where doors provide a sense of movement between different types of spaces. In this context, the doorways continue to provide stages for transitions between different types of spaces, and simultaneously convey a dynamic sense of movement between those two spaces, despite the tableau-like nature of the image. In a sense, doorways create movement in the mind of the viewer, even though it is impossible to perfectly represent that movement on a two-dimensional surface.

In comparison to other Anglo-Saxon image sequences, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11 contains a relatively large number of architectural representations, and doorways in

---

Council for British Archaeology, 1986), pp. 1–31 (p. 11)). The importance of the southern *porticus* for royal burials in a number of Anglo-Saxon churches is discussed in Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, 'Church Burial in Anglo-Saxon England: The Prerogative of Kings', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 29 (1995), 96–119 (p. 102).

[38] For a discussion of the relationship between text and image in eleventh-century England, see Richard Brilliant, 'The Bayeux Tapestry: A Stripped Narrative for their Eyes and Ears', *Word & Image*, 7 (1991), 98–126. See also Catherine E. Karkov, *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England: Narrative Strategies in the Junius 11 Manuscript* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

particular.[39] Furthermore, there are a number of instances of transitions between material and spiritual spaces, similar to the examples in *De abbatibus* and the *Visions of Leofric*. Junius 11 is a well known late tenth- or eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon manuscript containing several Old English poems, including two (*Genesis A* and *Genesis B*), which together relate the fall of the rebel angels and the story of the book of Genesis up to chapter 22, where Abraham shows his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac.[40] A single scribe is responsible for pp. 1–212, which contain *Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel*, while pp. 213–29, containing the poem *Christ and Satan*, were carried out by a further two or three scribes.[41] There are a large number of contemporary illustrations accompanying the text as well. Spaces were left for illustrations throughout the first scribe's work (pp. 1–212), but only those on pp. 1–88 are filled, with an additional image on p. 96, and sketches laid down on p. 99.[42] Two artists did the work for pp. 1–88, while a third was responsible for p. 96, as well as for the drawing of a lion on p. 31. The manuscript was most likely completed in St Augustine's, Canterbury, although this is not known for certain. The manuscript was, Barbara Raw argues, 'intended for the use of educated laymen'.[43]

The relationship between text and image in the manuscript is not always clear, giving the impression that at times they are at variance.[44] In fact, some of the images of Junius 11 may not have been created for the Old English text, but might instead have been copied from a Carolingian model: Raw identifies similar forms and compositions in a group of ninth-century Bibles from the Tours school and argues that the evidence indicates that some of the images in Junius 11 drew on Carolingian exemplars. In contrast, Catherine Karkov argues that the images follow the text of the poems rather carefully, providing a parallel commentary or visual exegesis.[45] Either way, the text and images as they are known to us were produced in Canterbury at the end of the tenth century. Despite the problems regarding the exact relationship between them and their possible models, it is clear that the architectural representations in the manuscript were an important part of the narrative.[46]

The architectural representations on page 3 demonstrate the role architecture, broadly speaking, plays in the construction of narrative in the images of Junius 11. There are three tiers, with the sequence of the rebel angels' fall placed in each, chronologically moving from top to bottom. The top register contains a two-tiered building on the left, with impressive

---

[39] Images of the manuscript can be accessed via http://image.ox.ac.uk.

[40] There is some disagreement regarding the date of the manuscript. For dating from the middle of the tenth century, see Michael Lapidge and Helmet Gneuss, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), no. 640. For a relatively wide-ranging discussion on the subject, see Benjamin C. Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Claudius B.iv: The Frontier of Seeing and Reading in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 59–61. Also, see Leslie Lockett, 'An Integrated Re-examination of the Dating of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 31 (2002), 141–173 (p. 173).

[41] Barbara Raw, 'The Probable Derivation of Most of the Illustrations in Junius 11 from an Illustrated Old Saxon *Genesis*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 5 (1976), 133–48 (p. 134).

[42] Thomas H. Ohlgren, 'Five New Drawings in the MS Junius 11: Their Iconography and Thematic Significance', *Speculum*, 47 (1972), 227–33 (p. 233).

[43] Raw, 'The Probable Derivation', p. 135.

[44] For an overview of the scholarship that considers the problems of the relationship between text and image in Junius 11, see Karkov, *Text and Picture*, pp. 3–7.

[45] Karkov, *Text and Picture*, p. 8.

[46] Raw only briefly discusses some of the architectural forms, and suggests that they reinforce her wider point that the Junius 11 images derive from a number of different sources ('Probable Derivation', p. 137).

towers, columns and gables. To the right are a host of angels bringing crowns as gifts towards a building placed on the left. In the middle of the composition the artist has set Lucifer (before his fall), who ushers in the angels. This display of orderly and impressive architectural elements is contrasted with the scene on the bottom register. Here, the host of the rebel angels falls into the mouth of the leviathan, with a roof, tower, and Lucifer's broken throne accompanying them. The entire page is framed by a series of pilasters, capitals, and columns placed around the edges of the page.[47] This marginal architecture acts as a boundary encompassing the entire page, and the walls of Junius 11, including those on the borders, are important because they delimit particular types of spaces.

Previous research has tended to stress the use of architecture as a framing device in medieval manuscripts and to emphasize its lack of narrative function; it does nothing but act as a method for softening the edges of the manuscript, adding ornament but not meaning.[48] Jean Fournée likened marginal images of architecture to the early medieval canon tables, well known in an Insular context from examples such as the Book of Kells or the Lindisfarne Gospels. Oleg Grabar grouped architectural frames under the title of 'codicological' ornament, defining these architectural representations as being 'structural but non-illustrative part of the decoration of manuscripts'.[49] While Grabar and others do not consider the case of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in particular, for Grabar especially, the use of architecture in this way is necessarily part of its presence on the manuscript page. It mediates the structure of the manuscript page with little or no relation to the narrative: it is all form and no content. However, the examples of architecture in Junius 11 demonstrate that walls can act as boundaries, delimiting a particular type of space, similarly to how the church walls acted in Leofric's attempt to enter the church at Canterbury.

On page 11, God the father stands on what appear to be steps while set within a crenulated city wall. Adam and Eve stand at the bottom looking upward and surrounded by the foliage and animals of Paradise. Catherine Karkov detailed the significance of the walls and boundaries in Junius 11, and by extension the openings set within those walls.[50] In this context, the walls act as a boundary that defines God's separation from Adam and Eve, imposing a strict hierarchy on the arrangement. In this instance, the artist defined two types of spaces to reflect that hierarchy: the space of God, who stands in the centre of the city of heaven, and the space of creation where Adam and Eve look on. Adam is shown on the left of Eve where he stands gazing into the city through an opening cut into the wall, with the boundary only hinted at by a continuous line which completes the circuit. As a result, he has a mostly unobscured view of God. This is in contrast to Eve's position to the right of Adam, from whom she is separated by foliage; Eve's vision of God is completely obscured from her position. Her spatial separation from both Adam and God hints at her spiritual isolation and subsequent blame for the fall of Adam and mankind. According to Karkov's analysis, the wall serves two purposes: first, it frames

---

[47] Asa Simon Mittman and Susan M. Kim, 'Locating the Devil "*Her*" in MS Junius 11', *Gesta*, 54 (2015), 3–25. Similar architectural frames appear in other parts of the manuscript — see, for example, pp. ii and 41.

[48] Jean Fournée, 'Architectures symboliques dans le thème iconographique de l'Annonciation', in *Synthronon. Art et Archéologie de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age*, ed. by A. Grabar (Paris: Bibliothèque des cahiers archéologiques, 1968), pp. 225–35 (p. 225); Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 160–66.

[49] Grabar, *Mediation of Ornament*, p. 166.

[50] Catherine E. Karkov, 'Margins and Marginalization: Representations of Eve in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11', in *Signs on the Edge: Space, Text and Margin in Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. by S. L. Keefer and R. Bremmer (Leuvain: Peeters, 2007), pp. 57–84 (pp. 60–61). The subject of the image is unclear.

the image of God, marking him as a distinct and important entity who even the pre-lapsarian Adam and Eve cannot approach; second, the wall functions as a narrative device by excluding Eve from direct contact with God, placing her at the bottom of a hierarchical order.[51] In a sense, the lack of access to the divine realm is illustrated by a portal that is inaccessible to Eve.

Karkov's analysis aligns well with Anglo-Saxon and early medieval conceptualization of city walls and boundaries, and their role in delimiting an urban border that stands against the wilderness, marking the threshold between two spatial identities: urban and suburban.[52] Magennis noted that 'cities appear primarily in Old English biblical poetry […] as images of society and of success and achievement'.[53] The walls that surrounded them provided a physical division between town and country and were 'the most frequent symbol of a town or city' in medieval representations.[54] Walls, and their points of access, provided a 'corporate identity' to those who lived within the boundaries of the early medieval city. In the Anglo-Saxon period specifically, walled towns indicated 'royal allegiance,' where the leader of the community was the king.[55] The walls did not necessarily imply political independence, but it would have been clear to travellers crossing the thresholds of gateways that a new type of space was being entered, possibly echoing the significance of the porch at St. Peter's, discussed above.[56] A similar relationship appears in a twelfth-century manuscript that depicts King David sitting in the centre of rectangular city walls with gates placed at the cardinal directions.[57] Musicians play at his feet as soldiers line the battlements and the doors of the city are closed. David is much larger than the other figures and it is clear that he controls the urban space implied by the presence of the walls. The walls on page 11 of the Junius 11 manuscript parallel this arrangement, illustrating the royal nature of God by portraying a representation of his kingdom in the form of city walls.

Movement through a clearly defined city-wall was regulated and in the later Middle Ages city gates included 'complex iconographic elements, proclaiming wealth, status, identity, and independence of urban communities to travellers and traders'.[58] In this description of the medieval city, walls and gates as access points become vehicles of meaning, conveying markers of the community's identity to those travelling through them. Indeed, in rare cases, 'there is good evidence for gateways but no enclosing wall'.[59] The lack of any defensive qualities in these cases would imply that another possible purpose lies behind city gates, in addition to

---

[51] The image must attempt to convey an impression of these sorts of relationships and not an actual view of Adam and Eve's proximity to God because the couple and God are shown closer and conversing on p. 10.

[52] For a definition of what constitutes an urban space, see Keith D. Lilley, *Urban Life in the Middle Ages, 1000–1450* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 3–4.

[53] Hugh Magennis, *Images of Community in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 156.

[54] *The Comparative History of Urban Origins in Non-Roman Europe: Ireland, Wales, Denmark, Germany, Poland and Russia from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Century*, ed. by H. B. Clarke and Anngret Simms, BAR International Series, 265, 2 vols (Oxford: BAR, 1985), II 440. See Daniel Thomas' paper below for further discussion of hell envisioned as a 'stronghold', and 'bound space'.

[55] Oliver Creighton and Robert Higham, *Medieval Town Walls: An Archaeology and Social History of Urban Defence* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), p. 61.

[56] Creighton and Higham, *Medieval Town Walls*, pp. 22, 36.

[57] Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 14, fol. 13ᵛ. While the manuscript is not strictly an insular one, the similarity to p. 11 of MS Junius 11 is striking. Yolanta Zaluska, *L'enluminure et le scriptorium de Citeaux au XIIe siècle* (Citeaux: Commentarii Cistercienses, 1989), p. 193.

[58] Creighton and Higham, *Medieval Town Walls*, p. 36.

[59] Creighton and Higham, *Medieval Town Walls*, p. 8. For an example from the early Middle Ages, the major

their defensive properties, a purpose focused on identifying the moment of transition between spaces. Chiara Frugoni has identified these types of experiences in medieval sources.[60] The city walls create a group identity in those who live within the city walls, a place implicitly identified by its inhabitants as a protected space, separated from the chaos of the wilderness that lies beyond the city limits.[61] In such instances, the portal or gate becomes an architectural element of transition that embodies the liminality of these two spatial identities: the broken ground of the hinterland, and the ordered urban environment. As we can see, the city walls on page 11 of Junius 11 perform two jobs: first, they identify the openings of structures as having some sort of narrative significance; second, they relate architectural structures, such as walls and gateways, to a hierarchy of control which placed Eve at the bottom and God at the top. Thus, doorways are not only markers of transitions but indicators of who actually controls movement through them, as in Leofric's experience at Canterbury.

The importance of doorways and openings in Junius 11 as points of transition is not limited to page 11. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden is illustrated on page 46. An impressive doorway appears on the left of the image with steps leading up to the opening where an angel stands brandishing a sword and blocking entry. To the right we see Adam and Eve standing on rough earth with a variety of fauna below their feet. The couple are fully clothed and Adam holds a spade, as an indication of man's difficult future. There is no structure attached to the doorway; it is a gateway standing on its own as if in the middle of a field. Neither the text of *Genesis A* nor the description of the scene in Genesis 3.24 makes reference to a structure of any sort and therefore the gateway in which the angel stands is an addition by the artist. The addition may not be Anglo-Saxon in origin, with Raw suggesting that the scene may be derived from a Carolingian exemplar, an explanation that partly accounts for the divergence between text and image. The presence of the doorways helps the reader to understand the narrative. Adam and Eve have been expelled from one type of space to another type of space — that is, from Paradise to the mundane and recognisable world. The artist has marked this transition by including the door, beyond which we see depicted the undulating ground of Paradise, remarkably similar to the ground on which Adam and Eve stand. The artist may have wished to distinguish between the two different spaces and instead of representing them as physically different marked the transition between the two instead. The narrative of the scene implies movement from Paradise to the area outside of Eden, a transition given emphasis by the presence of the doorway.

Conclusions

Umberto Eco stated that 'if boundaries are not recognized, then there can be no *civitas*'.[62] *Civitas*, in this context, means more than an urban setting, and even more than an area enclosed by city walls. Instead, it simultaneously corresponds to more abstract notions of civility and modes of behaviour according to particular areas.[63] The boundary between civility

ecclesiastical settlement of Kildare in Ireland had no boundary wall, but there were areas designated as 'urban' and 'suburban'. Clarke and Simms, *Comparative History*, p. 57.

[60] Chiara Frugoni, *A Distant City: Images of Urban Experience in the Medieval World*, trans. by William McCuaig (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 5.

[61] Frugoni, *A Distant City*, p. 5.

[62] Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 27.

[63] C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilising Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210*

and incivility must necessarily exist, but the actual line of that boundary is difficult to identify. In the case of cities or towns, there is a point of transition between an urban area and a suburban one, and gateways are a convenient way of marking that in both text and image. Doorways are inherently liminal architectural objects, and their presence and representation in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts demonstrates a receptiveness to this property. The relationship between story, text, and image in Anglo-Saxon examples of doorways is necessarily indirect. The way in which the artist or author takes advantage of the transitional expedient doorways provide depends on the medium itself: the author of the *Visions of Leofric* demonstrates God's power over who enters his house, and the artist of MS Junius 11 uses doorways to convey transitions in a static medium.

In some texts from the period, doorways frame certain events and act as a platform for movements between material and spiritual realms. Thresholds act as boundaries that allow the narrative to shift the nature of the space in which events take place, doing so in an expedient manner. In *De abbatibus* there is a mixture of spaces with people experiencing supernatural events, such as a host of angels singing, or a dream-vision in a heavenly church. In order to express a sense of movement, the author creates a sense of ambiguity when representing the particularities of the architecture. Leofric's attempt to gain access to the church at Canterbury is hindered by the door and the drunken sacristan. Only God can grant him access, demonstrating that the movement between realms is not as free as Bede's swallow, but is controlled and mediated by God. Doorways, of course, do no not mark all such transitions, but their presence in descriptions of visions can perhaps be explained as markers of liminality.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in visual representations of doorways, such as those of the Junius 11 manuscript. Far from architectural representations being simply 'codicological' or mere ornament, they take part in the narrative, and doorways in particular act as areas of controlled transitions. God limits Eve's access to himself, as demonstrated by her obscured view of him. Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise is represented as a movement out of an unattached gateway guarded by the angel. The presence of doorways as markers of movement is perhaps even more important in images, because they imply Adam and Eve walking out of Paradise without having to represent every single step. Doorways are liminal objects both linguistically and visually.

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 136.