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Reviews

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Contents

Demythologising Urban Landscapes in *Andreas*

Michael D. J. Bintley

Conceptions of the urban landscape changed dramatically over the course of the Anglo-Saxon period due to a number of socio-economic and socio-political factors, a fact which is mirrored to a certain extent by the changes in the way that these landscapes were depicted in Old English literature. By the close of the period, the towering 'work of giants' described in poems which appear to represent the state of urban foundations during the early Anglo-Saxon period had been supplanted by the sort of glorious cities, carved in wood and stone, that were central to late Anglo-Saxon ideas of power and governance. This ideological shift was necessitated in part by the Viking incursions that came, towards the end of the ninth century, to prompt the planned reoccupation and development of urban sites throughout Anglo-Saxon England. Successful mediation of this process required the guidance of steady hands, not only in surmounting many of the practical difficulties of urban regeneration and resettlement, but also in reimagining the city as a realm of virtue and good works. This paper argues that this process was accomplished, in part, by works like the Old English *Andreas*, which may have served a hitherto unrecognised role in helping urban landscapes to shed many of the negative connotations which pertained in earlier Anglo-Saxon culture, reclaiming urban landscapes for the good of God and man.

It is well known that urban life in Britain underwent significant decline following the end of the Roman period, and had probably been doing so for some time.[1] The life of Roman towns 'depended on the tax system', and once this had collapsed, their prior function as centres of trade and residence was removed.[2] Although it cannot seriously be maintained that urban sites in Britain served the same purpose in the sub-Roman period as they had during the Roman period proper, it has nevertheless been suggested that they may have continued to serve some function as administrative centres.[3] The frequent presence of so-called 'dark earth' in urban areas, identified as waste material probably related to agricultural practices, has led some to conclude that the construction of timber buildings in the sub-Roman period within the defensive embrace of Roman stone walls may imply a change in the nature of towns and cities

[1] Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 608; John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 247.

[2] Margaret Gelling, *The West Midlands in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), p. 21.

[3] C. J. Arnold, *Roman Britain to Saxon England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 24; Richard Reece, 'Town and Country: The End of Roman Britain', *World Archaeology*, 12 (1980), 77–92 (p. 88). K. R. Dark has similarly argued that Romano-British villas may have functioned as the centres of rural estates during this period: *Civitas to Kingdom: British Political Continuity 300–800* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994), pp. 25–39.

rather than their 'sudden abandonment'.[4] Our primary literary-historical source for the period following the withdrawal of the Roman legions and the so-called Anglo-Saxon *adventus*, the *De Excidio et Conquestu Brittaniae of Gildas*, is not wholly reflective of the subtleties exposed by the archaeological record.[5] This is entirely to be expected, given that *De Excidio* 'is a moral tract, not a work of history', and as such is largely uninterested in specific details.[6] Gildas placed a great deal of emphasis upon the destruction and desertion of cities and fortifications, writing that 'relictis civitatibus muroque celso iterum civibus fugae' ('our citizens fled the towns and the high wall').[7] Several chapters later he writes that:

> Ita ut cunctae coloniae crebris arietibus omnesque coloni cum praepositis ecclesiae, cum sacerdotibus ac populo, mucronibus undique micantibus ac flammis crepitatibus, simul solo sternerentur, et miserabili visu in medio platearum ima turrium edito cardine evulsarum murorumque celsorum saxa, sacra altaria, cadaverum frusta, crustis ac si gelantibus purpurei cruoris tecta, velut in quodam horrendo torculari mixta viderentur.
>
> All the major towns were laid low by the repeated battering of enemy rams; laid low, too, all the inhabitants — church leaders, priests and people alike, as the swords glinted all around and the flames crackled. It was a sad sight. In the middle of the squares the foundation-stones of high walls and towers that had been torn from their lofty base, holy altars, fragments of corpses, were covered as if with a purple crust of congealed blood, appearing as though they had been mixed up in some dreadful wine-press.[8]

Nicholas Howe suggested that for Gildas, who understood these depredations to have been undertaken by a 'migratory group of barbarians who spoke Germanic dialects rather than Latin', and 'typically built in timber rather than stone', the destruction of these masonry buildings represented 'a world turned upside-down'.[9] These are the same details Bede saw fit to include in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* perhaps two centuries later, drawing directly upon Gildas,[10] when he wrote that

> ignaui propugnatores miserrime de muris tracti solo adlidebantur. quid plura? relictis ciuitatibus ac muro fugiunt disperguntur.
>
> The cowardly defenders were wretchedly dragged from the walls and dashed to the ground. In short, they deserted their cities, fled from the wall, and were scattered.[11]

He similarly claimed that

[4] Richard MacPhail, 'Soil and Botanical Studies of the "Dark Earth" ', in *The Environment of Man: The Iron Age to the Anglo-Saxon Period*, ed. by Martin Jones and Geoffrey Dimbleby, BAR, British Series, 87 (Oxford: B. A. R., 1981), pp. 309–31 (esp. pp. 325–27). A prime example of this potential sequence provided by MacPhail is Roman London; see also Arnold, *Roman Britain to Saxon England*, pp. 30–31.

[5] For a discussion of the dating of the *De Excidio*, see Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, pp. 258–59. In response to Herren and Higham's argument for a late fifth- or early sixth-century date, and Dumville and Lapidge's suggestion of the mid-sixth century, Dark does not think (on the basis of chronological and archaeological evidence) that the *De Excidio* suits anything but an early to middle sixth century dating.

[6] Malcolm Todd, 'Famosa Pestis and Britain in the Fifth Century', *Brittania*, 8 (1977), 319–25 (p. 321).

[7] *Gildas: 'The Ruin of Britain' and Other Works*, ed. and trans. by Michael Winterbottom, Arthurian Period Sources, 7 (London: Phillimore, 1978), p.95 (ch.19).

[8] *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain*, p. 98 (ch. 24).

[9] Nicholas Howe, 'Anglo-Saxon England and the Postcolonial Void', in *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages: Translating Cultures*, ed. by Ananya Jahanara Kabir and Deanne Williams, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 54 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 25–47 (pp. 27–28).

[10] M. Miller, 'Bede's use of Gildas', *English Historical Review*, 90 (1975), 241–61 (p. 242).

[11] *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, corr. repr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 44 (I.12). Subsequent references to Bede's *Historia* are to this edition.

> ruebant aedificia publica simul et priuata, passim sacerdotes inter altaria trucidabantur, praesules cum populis sine ullo respectu honoris ferro pariter et flammis absumebantur, nec erat qui crudeliter interemtos sepulturae traderet.
>
> Public and private buildings fell in ruins, priests were everywhere slain at their altars, prelate and people alike perished by sword and fire regardless of rank, and there was no one left to bury those who had died a cruel death.[12]

It is perhaps significant that the section of Gildas' text from which Bede derived these details may also have been the source of the 'three ships' motif, although the potential influence of other (lost) parallel sources should not be discounted.[13] This event is elevated to mythological status (if it was not entirely mythical in the first place) in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which describe the arrival of the first Angles and Saxons in three ships around 448, at the invitation of Vortigern, and under the command of Hengest and Horsa. As this particular myth appears to have exerted a strong hold over Anglo-Saxon ideas of origin,[14] it may be reasonable to suppose that other ideas connected with this passage in Bede's text may have proved similarly influential. The fact that Wulfstan similarly referred to the *De Excidio* as an accurate account of the 'state of the nation' at the time of the *adventus Saxonum* may therefore suggest — whatever the fact of the matter may have been — that the destruction and desertion of Roman towns and cities was held to be true throughout the period.[15] To at least some extent, this Anglo-Saxon origin mythology provides an accurate picture. Notwithstanding the degree to which archaeology has demonstrated that there was some continuity of occupation in Roman towns and villas, few claims are made that urban life was maintained in Britain in the way it seems to have been in continental Europe.[16] By contrast, early Anglo-Saxon settlements appear to have taken much the same form as those in first-century Germany that were described by Tacitus in his *Germania* of c. 98:

> nullas Germanorum populis urbes habitari satis notum est, ne pati quidem inter se iunctas sedes. colunt discreti ac diversi, ut fons, ut campus, ut nemus placuit. vicos locant non in nostrum morem conexis et cohaerentibus aedificiis: suam quisque domum spatio circumdat, sive adversus casus ignis remedium sive inscitia aedificandi. ne caementorum quidem apud illos aut tegularum usus: materia ad omnia utuntur informi et citra speciem aut delectationem.
>
> It is well known that none of the German tribes live in cities, that even individually they do not permit houses to touch each other; they live separated and scattered, as spring-water, meadow, or grove appeals to each man; they lay out their villages not, after our fashion, with buildings contiguous and connected; everyone keeps a clear space round his house, whether it be as a precaution against the chances of fire, or just through ignorance of building. They have not even learned to use quarry-stone or tiles; the timber they use for all purposes is unshaped, and stops short of all ornament or attraction.[17]

[12] *HE* I.15 (p. 52).

[13] See *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain*, p. 97; *HE* I.15 (p. 50); and *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition, Vol. 8, MS F*, ed. by Peter S. Baker (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 19–20. Whilst Thompson considered the three ships motif to be a potentially genuine historical detail, implying a warband of less than 180 men, this seems an overly-literal interpretation of a text which does not seem to have been intended as an historical record. See E. A. Thompson, 'Gildas and the History of Britain', *Britannia*, 10 (1979), 203–26 (p. 217).

[14] Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (London: Yale University Press, 1989).

[15] *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. by Dorothy Bethurum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 267–75 (ll. 176–84). Particular reference to Gildas is made in the version of the *Sermo Lupi* found in MS Bodleian, Hatton 113.

[16] MacPhail, 'Soil and Botanical Studies of the "Dark Earth"', p. 327.

[17] *Cornelii Taciti: De Origine et Situ Germanorum*, ed. by J. G. C. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), ch. 16.

As Hamerow writes, Germanic-speakers' settlements of the early medieval period were sometimes 'so dispersed that some archaeologists have hesitated to call them "villages" at all'.[18] Addyman suggests that the recurrent 'nucleated' form of these settlements, clustering around hall buildings, was a product of the orthodoxies of Anglo-Saxon society, those same orthodoxies which Earl thought to have motivated the 'stubborn preservation' of these central hall-buildings throughout the period.[19] Therefore, what has been seen by both modern and ancient eyes as an apparent formlessness, a lack of 'connection and coherency' as Tacitus put it, is probably best understood as a form which both defined and was defined by the organizing principles of Germanic society.[20]

It is unsurprising, considering Tacitus' comments and the archaeology of the migration period, that Anglo-Saxon settlers found the ruins of Roman Britain to be somewhat alien; *enta geweorc* — the work of giants. Wood, the 'raw material of community', was central to their sign system, and timber was used to serve almost all architectural purposes.[21] Early use of the *enta geweorc* leitmotif is perhaps best understood through reference to the Exeter Book elegies *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer*, although the phrase is also used to denote man-made structures in *Andreas* (1235, 1495), *Elene* (31), *Maxims* II (2), and *Beowulf* (2717, 2774).[22] This is not to say that either of these poems is necessarily 'early', but rather that the common description of stone ruins as *enta geweorc* seems likely to have been an early invention. These early attitudes towards Roman architecture may be best reflected in the *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer*. This is not so say that either of these poems is necessarily 'early', but rather that the common description of stone ruins as *enta geweorc* may have been an early invention. The inhabitants of middle and late Saxon England are more likely to have been familiar with stone buildings that were in current use elsewhere in early medieval Europe than their predecessors, whether directly through international trade, pilgrimage, and other travel, or through the accounts of clerics, nobles, and other travelers. The dating of both works remains problematic, though a *terminus ad quem* is provided by the date of the Exeter Book, around 975. On the basis of archaeological details in the poem which match particular characteristics of sub-Roman Aquae Sulis, Cunliffe suggests that *The Ruin* is most likely to have been composed at some point during the eighth century by a monk associated with the ecclesiastical foundation in Bath, although Davenport notes that the late seventh is also a possibility.[23] It is also worth noting that it seems likely that there was a community capable of writing Latin-influenced religious poetry in Bath by this time: whilst the authenticity of the foundation charter for Bath

[18] Helena Hamerow, *Early Medieval Settlements: the Archaeology of Rural Communities in North-West Europe 400–900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 93–94. Fine examples Hamerow notes are the settlements at West Stow and Mucking, although the settlement at West Heslerton provides an important exception, where a 'single, planned relocation' took place to a site that had originally been a Romano-British farm, as is the case with some other Anglo-Saxon settlements (p. 121). Dominic Powlesland has suggested that this may have been part of an early attempt 'to establish some sort of urban centre': 'The Anglo-Saxon Settlement at West Heslerton, North Yorkshire', in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. by Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), pp. 55–65 (esp. 58–59).

[19] Stanford University Press

[20] Hamerow, *Early Medieval Settlements*, p. 12.

[21] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages*, Medieval Cultures, 17 (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 5.

[22] *Dictionary of Old English: A to G Online*, ed. by Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandall Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey, and others (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2007), s.v. *ent* §b. All references to *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer* from *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry; an Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501*, ed. by Bernard J. Muir, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), i pp. 357–58, and 215–19 respectively.

[23] Barry Cunliffe, *Roman Bath Discovered*, rev. edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 213; Peter Davenport, *Medieval Bath Uncovered* (Stroud: Tempus, 2002), pp. 11–13.

Abbey is questionable, surviving only in a twelfth-century copy, Sims-Williams' convincing comparison of the existing foundation charter with another seventh-century charter of 'undoubted authenticity (S 1167)', suggests that whilst the foundation charter of Bath Abbey is not entirely genuine, its details are broadly correct in so far as the grant of land to abbess Berta in 675 is concerned.[24] If there is a case to be made on the basis of this and other evidence for ascribing *The Ruin* to an earlier date in the Anglo-Saxon era, it is difficult to say the same of *The Wanderer*. If there are few features which definitively suggest an early date for this poem, 'there are many which suggest, however tenuously, a late date'.[25] Whilst Leslie had suggested a date as early as the eighth century, Dunning and Bliss concluded that many of the problems associated with the dating of *The Wanderer* might be solved if it were assigned to the 'first half of the tenth century'.[26] Although it seems unlikely that *The Wanderer* is a particularly early work, and certainly neither is in in its extant form, I would nevertheless argue that these poems preserve elements of an earlier tradition for the reasons outlined above, not the least of which being that Anglo-Saxons of the middle and late-Saxon were better acquainted with traditions of building in stone than their ancestors. I would suggest that the *enta geweorc* may be one such example of this. From the way in which buildings are presented in *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer*, it is clear that the sense of otherness they perpetuated was largely a result of their grand scale and stone construction. The dilapidated landscape of *The Ruin* in which they appear evokes mixed feelings of awe and dread:

> wrætlic is þes wealstan, wyrde gebræcon,
> burgstede burston, brosnað enta geweorc.
> Hrofas sind gehrorene, hreorge torras,
> hrungeat berofen, hrim on lime,
> scearde scurbeorge scorene, gedrorene,
> ældo undereotone.
>
> Splendid is this wallstone, fates broke [it], the city buildings burst apart, the works of giants crumble. The rooves have collapsed, the towers tumbled, the barred gate [is] broken, frost in the plaster, ceilings agape, torn, collapsed, and consumed with age. (*Ruin* 1–6)

It is evident from the beginning of the poem that its focus is a large settlement, rather than a villa or farm, and this has most commonly been identified as the Roman town of Aquae Sulis, modern Bath, due to the poem's reference to *burnsele* ('bathing halls', 21), the phrase 'hate on hreþre' ('hot at the heart', 41), and a description of 'hate streamas' ('hot streams', 43) passing over 'harne stan' ('grey stone', 43) and down to 'þær þa baþu wæron' ('there where the baths were', 46).[27] However, there is a sense in which the exact location of the poet when he composed this verse is not of particularly great importance. *The Ruin* reflects the fact that ruined Roman stone buildings and settlements remained a very prominent feature of the Anglo-Saxon landscape throughout the period.[28] In this respect it is immaterial whether the

[24] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Continental Influence at Bath Monastery in the Seventh Century', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 4 (1975), 1–10 (p. 2).

[25] *The Wanderer*, ed. by T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 102–3.

[26] *The Wanderer*, ed. by Roy F. Leslie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), p. 48; *The Wanderer*, p. 104.

[27] Barry Cunliffe, 'Earth's Grip Holds Them', in *Rome and Her Northern Provinces: Papers Presented to Sheppard Frere in Honour of his Retirement from the Chair of the Archaeology of the Roman Empire, University of Oxford, 1983*, ed. by Brian Hartley and John Wacher (Gloucester: Sutton, 1983), pp. 67–83 (esp. 76–80); Davenport, *Medieval Bath Uncovered*, p.11. Also see Barry Cunliffe, *English Heritage Book of Roman Bath* (London: Batsford, 1996), p. 118; Cunliffe, *Roman Bath Discovered*, p. 214.

[28] Christine Fell, 'Perceptions of Transience', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 172–89 (pp. 179–80).

poem accurately depicts the ruins of a fort on Hadrian's wall, Aquae Sulis, or Babylon; here, to borrow Eliot's words, 'the intersection of the timeless moment is England and nowhere, never and always'.[29] The poet balances his landscape at a still point, frozen in time, with 'hrim on lime' ('frost in the plaster', 4), after the passing away of a 'hund cnea' ('hundred generations', 8) of men, a phrase which must, to the Anglo-Saxon mind, have suggested the whole history of mankind — King Alfred the Great, for one, having counted fewer than fifty generations between himself and Adam.[30] The ruined city, without human life, the 'living energy of meaning', appears as the skeleton of social order, still haunted by the ghosts of 'meaning and culture', its stones encapsulating 'both the possibility and the fragility of its existence'.[31] It serves only, in this respect, as a reminder of the absent joys of Anglo-Saxon communal life: the dispensing of treasure to warriors 'glædmod and goldbeorht' ('glad in mind and gold-bright', 33), 'wlonc and wingal' ('proud and wine-flushed', 34) in halls filled with 'mondreama' ('the joys of people', 23).

It is the loss of these seledreamas ('hall-joys', *Wan* 93) that also provides much of the focus of *The Wanderer*, a loss that is felt all the more keenly due to the endurance of ruined stone buildings:

> ongietan sceal gleaw hæle hu gæstlic bið
> þonne ealre þisse worulde wela weste stondeð,
> swa nu missenlice geond þisne middangeard
> winde biwaune weallas stondaþ,
> hrime bihrorene, hryðge þa ederas.
> Woniað þa winsalo, waldend licgað
> dreame bidrorene, duguð eal gecrong,
> wlonc bi wealle.
>
> The wise man will perceive how terrible it shall be when all this world stands in waste, as now in various places throughout this middle earth, wind-blown, walls stand, frost-covered, ruined buildings. The wine halls crumble, leaders lie lifeless, deprived of joys, the troop all fallen, proud by the wall. (*Wan* 73–80)

In contrast with *The Ruin*, however, the destruction of the earthly foundation here is more clearly the work of God:

> yþde swa þisne eardgeard ælda Scyppend
> oþ þæt burgwara breahtma lease
> eald enta geweorc idlu stodon.
>
> The creator of man thus laid waste this earth, so that, lacking the joyful sounds of city-dwellers, the ancient works of giants stood idle. (*Wan* 85–87)

The presentation of ruined stone buildings in these Exeter Book elegies implies the existence of a shared tradition at the time of their composition that was reaffirmed by their inclusion in the manuscript around 975.

Similar associations between Roman buildings and the dead are equally apparent in the early medieval archaeological record. There are numerous instances in which Anglo-Saxon

[29] *Four Quartets: Little Gidding*: T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems: 1909–1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp. 214–23 (p. 215).

[30] *Asser's Life of King Alfred, Together with the Annals of Saint Neots Erroneously Ascribed to Asser*, ed. by W. H. Stevenson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 1–4.

[31] Jacques Derrida, 'Force and Signification', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), pp. 3–30 (pp. 5–6).

inhumation burials appear to have been made with particular deference to Roman structures. This tendency is reminiscent of the occasional inhumation of execution victims in close proximity to prehistoric burial mounds, landscape features which seem to have been used as both hundred meeting places and sites at which capital punishment may have taken place.[32] Tyler Bell's recent survey of Roman structures reused for religious purposes in early medieval England suggests that a similar mythology may have been extended to abandoned Roman buildings, where a great number of burials have been excavated that were not, however, execution burials. Although, as Bell notes, the 'available body of evidence allows few firm conclusions' to be made about the motives of those who interred their dead in these places, this feature of the archaeological record suggests that Roman ruins had similarly morbid associations to burial mounds.[33] Whilst burials focused on Roman structures are generally lacking in grave goods and phasing therefore remains problematic, radiocarbon evidence seems to indicate dates clustering around the 'late sixth and seventh centuries'.[34] This may suggest that this practice was more characteristic of migration- and conversion-period Anglo-Saxon society than it became following the efforts of the various parties ultimately responsible for the Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon England. In a fashion seemingly distinct from the reuse of barrow sites, burials of this kind seem to demonstrate an awareness of Roman structures 'as architecture', rather than clusters of stones, a characteristic which is evident from the particular alignment of burials with reference to walls and doorways, such as those at Norton Disney (Lincolnshire) and the great palace at Fishbourne (Sussex).[35] Despite this, burials do not seem to have been made with any particular recognition of the original function of these buildings (save for a predominance of reused temples in the south-west), where twenty-two burial sites (26%) 'are on or adjacent to a hypocausted structure or bathhouse'.[36]

There is probably a meaningful distinction to be made between these sorts of burials and those which reused purpose-built Roman mausolea, of which there are comparatively few, mostly associated with churches.[37] Roman mausolea with 'overlying churches probably form some of the earliest examples of reuse in Britain'.[38] One excellent example of this is the chapel at Stone-by-Faversham, some 16km from Canterbury, 'unequivocally an early rebuild' that occurred as a direct consequence of Gregory the Great's Augustinian mission in 597.[39] This site is particularly significant because it displays evidence of burials made during the settlement period, before the proposed construction of the Anglo-Saxon church, although it

[32] See Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) for a complete survey; also Andrew Reynolds, 'The Definition and Ideology of Anglo-Saxon Execution Sites and Cemeteries', in *Death and Burial in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Guy de Boe and Frans Verhaeghe, I. A. P. rapporten/Paper of the 'Medieval Europe Brugge 1997' Conference, 2 (Zellik: Instituut voor het Archeologisch Patrimonium, 1997), pp. 33–41 (esp. 35–37); and Sarah Semple, 'A Fear of the Past: The Place of the Prehistoric Burial Mound in the Ideology of Middle and Later Anglo-Saxon England', *World Archaeology*, 30 (1998), 109–26.

[33] Tyler Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures in Early Medieval England*, BAR, British Series, 390 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005), pp. 38–68 (esp. p. 67).

[34] Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures*, p. 38.

[35] Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures*, pp. 39–43, 52. The complete corpus of 'Burials Associated with Roman Structures' excavated to date is to be found in the same text, pp. 156–89.

[36] Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures*, pp. 61, 68.

[37] Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures*, p. 57.

[38] See Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures*, pp. 78–83, for a full discussion of churches constructed overlying Roman mausolea.

[39] Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures*, p. 125.

is also possible that these remains may have been sub-Roman.[40] If these burials are indeed Anglo-Saxon, a potential sequence at Stone-by-Faversham presents a Roman building that became unoccupied in the late Roman period, fell into disrepair during the sub-Roman period, and was used as a site of heathen burial during the migration era, before being appropriated by Christian builders under the impetus of the Gregorian mission. Accordingly, a significant distinction may be drawn between the attitudes of heathen and Christian Anglo-Saxons towards Roman ruins that is evident from the surviving archaeological record and, arguably, features in Old English literature dating to the same period. The re-establishment of ecclesiastical centres at sites that had been significant Christian foundations during the Roman occupation was arguably a consequence of the concerted efforts of Gregory's mission to regain spiritual control of the former province of Britannia. There are over 160 churches in Britain associated with Roman structures.[41] As Bell argues, the placing of 'primary bishoprics at London and York, with twelve sees', seems to have been a decision made with the 'political and geographical layout of the former province' in mind, rather than the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms at that time, although it is possible that Gregory was only doing the best he could with the information available to him.[42] Nevertheless, as this process continued until well into the seventh and perhaps eighth centuries, it seems as if the same approach was still considered reasonable by local representatives of the Roman Church for some time to come. Bell suggests that in an architectural sense, at least, the Roman may perhaps be considered synonymous with the Christian from the seventh century onwards.[43]

Vernacular poetry may suggest that Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards walled settlements and building in stone underwent significant changes between the fifth and eleventh centuries. The cities and buildings that we encounter in *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer* are strikingly different from those found in the early twelfth century *Durham*, the only extant example in Old English of the *encomium urbis*, a literary form of rhetoric dating to ancient times in which various aspects of a city were catalogued.[44] The first eight lines of this poem are of particular relevance:

[40] Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures*, p. 125; see also H. M. Taylor and D. D. Yonge, 'The Ruined Church at Stone-by-Faversham, a Reassessment', *Archaeological Journal*, 138 (1981), 118–45; Eric Fletcher and G. W. Meates, 'The Ruined Church of Stone-by-Faversham', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 49 (1969), 273–94; E. Fletcher and G. W. Meates, 'The Ruined Church of Stone-by-Faversham, Second Report', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 57 (1977), 67–72.

[41] Tyler Bell, 'Churches on Roman Buildings: Christian Associations and Roman Masonry in Anglo-Saxon England', *Medieval Archaeology*, 42 (1998), 1–18 (p. 1).

[42] Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures*, p. 27. Wood argues that this desire on Gregory's part probably says as much about the 'imperial background' of his intentions as it does the 'lack of realism' behind some of his expectations. See Ian Wood, 'The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English', *Speculum*, 69 (1994), 1–17 (p. 16); also Nicholas Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984), p. 10.

[43] Bell, 'Churches on Roman Buildings', pp. 6–7.

[44] Margaret Schlauch, 'An Old English *encomium urbis*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 40 (1941), 14–28; noted in *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Elliot van Kirk Dobbie, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), p. xlv. Dobbie also notes the existence of a long Latin poem by Alcuin, written c. 780×82, 'in praise of the city and church of York' (p. xlv). However, as Wickham notes, this Latin poem spends 'most of its space on the qualities of local bishops, and very little on the urban fabric', and perhaps more likely to have catered to ecclesiastical tastes than *Durham*, which through its use of the vernacular and its broader description of the city may have appealed to both an ecclesiastical and lay audience: *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, p. 655. For further discussion of the potential Latin and Anglo-Latin contexts of *The Ruin*, see Christopher Abram, 'In Search of Lost Time: Aldhelm and *The Ruin*', *Quaestio*, 1 (2000), 23–44.

Is ðeos burch breome geond Breotenrice,
steppa gestaðolad, stanas ymbutan
wundrum gewæxen. Weor ymbeornad,
ea yðum stronge, and ðer inne wunað
feola fisca kyn on floda gemonge.
And ðær gewexen is wudafæstern micel;
wuniad in ðem wycum wilda deor monige,
in deope dalum deora ungerim.[45]

This city is famous throughout Britain, established on steep slopes and wondrously constructed with stones all about. The Wear runs past it, a strong-flowing river, and there dwell therein many kinds of fish in that teeming flood; also there has grown up a great enclosing wood.[46] In that place dwell many wild beasts in the deep dales, countless creatures. (*Dur* 1–8)

Steep slopes, water, stones, and woodland, are all united here in defence of the city. As Baker has noted, the word *fæsten*, found here in conjunction with *wuda*, is a term that seems to have been used in 'an almost metaphorical way' to describe places which, amongst other things, 'could serve as strongholds of a sort'.[47] *Durham* is clearly a far cry from the wreckage of Aquae Sulis described in *The Ruin* centuries before; it is a city at peace with the world outside its walls, rather than an *opus contra naturam*.

To some extent, the shift in Anglo-Saxon attitudes implied by the vernacular poetic tradition can be understood in purely practical terms. The transformation of the rural Anglo-Saxon settlement landscape to one that was dominated by urban centres of power occurred as a result of a number of complex factors that fall outside the scope of this discussion. The causes of this shift might be summarised as population growth, economic development, and the Viking activity, with the latter both leading to the introduction of the programme of urban fortifications known as the burghal system and promoting the development of trading centres like York and Dublin.[48] The burghal system, and other institutions like it, were intended by both ecclesiastical and secular authorities to centralise power for the benefit of both the general

[45] *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, p. 27.

[46] As Anderson notes, *wudafæstern* is emended to *wudufæsten* [n] in J. Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1898), p. 1278, which seems sensible given the poem's subsequent references to the wild beasts which dwell therein. Baker's discussion of *fæsten* in Old English place names suggests that this term had a 'more figurative use' in denoting strongholds than *burh*, and may have referred to sites that were in some way secure due to their natural inaccessibility, as seems to be the case in *Durham*. See Earl R. Anderson, 'The Uncarpentered World of Old English Poetry', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 20 (1991), 65–80 (p. 76); John Baker, 'Old English *fæsten*', in *A Commodity of Good Names*, ed. by O. J. Padel and David N. Parsons (Donington: Tyas, 2008), pp. 333–44 (esp. 334–35, 341).

[47] John Baker, 'Old English *fæsten*', in *A Commodity of Good Names: Essays in Honour of Margaret Gelling*, ed. by O. J. Padel and David N. Parsons (Donington: Tyas, 2008), pp. 333–44 (esp. p. 314).

[48] Richard Hodges, *Dark Age Economics: The Origins of Towns and Trade, AD 600–1000* (London: Duckworth, 1982), pp. 130, 150. Although, as Jones notes, Hodges's approach has been 'roundly criticised' for its detachment from historical and material evidence, as well as current economic market scholarship, a number of his conclusions (many of which are in fact supported by Jones) remain valuable. Jones places far less emphasis than Hodges upon the manipulation of markets by monarchs, arguing that the 'main impetus to trade [...] was provided by the Viking invaders' and the burden their attacks placed upon the Anglo-Saxon economy to 'generate and monetise surpluses', in order to fund armies or gather protection money. S. R. H. Jones, 'Transaction Costs, Institutional Change, and the Emergence of a Market Economy in Later Anglo-Saxon England', *Economic History Review*, 46 (1993), 658–78, (pp. 659, 665, 675).

populace and their rulers.[49] This conceptual resettlement required a significant reimagining of the sorts of derelict urban landscapes found in *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer*, a task that appears to have been particularly well accomplished by the literature of the Church. Discussing prehistoric and Roman monuments, Blair writes that:

> The ritual cleansing of any such places, as both a necessary and a sufficient condition for re-use, will have made sense to the English as well as to their ecclesiastical mentors.[50]

Thus, when Roman towns were 're-born as bishoprics or minsters', they would have similarly 'embodied a transfer of meaning from old (abandoned) cities to new (revitalized and holy) ones'.[51] Perhaps the finest example of one of the ways in which this process was achieved through literary encouragement is to be found in the *Andreas* of the Vercelli Book. This poem provides an account of the apocryphal journey of St. Andrew to rescue St Matthew from the clutches of a cannibalistic heathen people known as the Mermedonians, who inhabit the ruined city of Mermedonia. After freeing Matthew and other victims of the Mermedonians, Andrew — having revealed his identity — is tortured and imprisoned. When Andrew subsequently appeals to the grace of God from the confines of his jail cell, a torrent of water breaks forth from a pillar, cleansing Mermedonia and 'baptising' its inhabitants. The narrative framework of *Andreas* is established firmly by its close adherence to the particulars of its source, which Boenig considers most likely to have been a Latin version of the Greek *Praxeis*, an apocryphal life of St Andrew closely related to the *Casanatensis* and an Old English translation in the Blickling Homilies.[52] The *Andreas* poet has also long been thought to have drawn upon a text of *Beowulf* in various ways. Summarising recent scholarship on this subject, Orchard notes that the 'sheer number of parallels', as well as their 'extensive nature', strongly suggests that more is at work in the relationship between the two poems than a simple reliance upon

[49] Richard Abels notes Asser's assertion that this task was undertaken by all (perhaps not entirely willingly) 'pro communi regni necessitate' ('for the common needs of the kingdom'): *Asser's Life of King Alfred, Together with the Annals of Saint Neots*, ed, by William H. Stevenson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959), p. 77 (ch. 91); Richard Abels, *Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Harlow: Pearson, 1998), p. 206. Abels writes that the towns of the burghal system were 'designed to be permanent urban settlements rather than temporary refuges', and 'designed as centres of trade and royal administration, islands of royal power through which the king and his agents [...] were able to dominate the countryside': Abels, *Alfred the Great*, p. 199 (also pp. 194–207). Campbell similarly describes this 'vast system of fortifications' and the 'elaborate means of serving them' as as evidence that by West Saxon kings were 'capable of a feat of government on the largest scale' by 'the beginning of the tenth century', in James Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London: Hambledon, 1986), p. 155. See further discussion of the purposes and function of the burghal system in Alfred P. Smyth, *King Alfred the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) pp. 135–42; David Hill, 'The Origin of Alfred's Urban Policies', in *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. by Timothy Reuter (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), pp. 219–33 (esp. 229–33); Nicholas Brooks, 'Alfredian Government: the West Saxon Inheritance', in the same volume, pp. 153–73 (pp. 160–62).

[50] Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 184.

[51] Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 249.

[52] *The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals*, ed. and trans. by Robert Boenig, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, 70.B (New York: Garland, 1991), pp. v–ix; *The Vercelli Book*, ed. by George P. Krapp, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), p. xxxvi; Hugh Magennis, *Images of Community in Old English Poetry*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 173. David Hamilton seems to agree, but like Whitelock advises caution: 'The Diet and Digestion of Allegory in *Andreas*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 1 (1972), 147–58 (p. 147); Dorothy Whitelock, 'Anglo-Saxon Poetry and the Historian', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th series, 31 (1949), 75–94 (p. 82).

a common poetic stock.[53] Accordingly, Magennis notes that one significant element of the *Andreas* poet's adaptation of his source material is the 'development of place and setting' achieved through free exploitation of 'features derived from the vernacular poetic traditions'. This serves to contribute an 'emotive dimension' to places like Mermedonia, the city of the cannibals, that is altogether absent from the poet's source material.[54] Consider, for example, the first description of Mermedonia in the poem, outside whose walls Andrew is left by his companions after the sea voyage:

> Onwoc þa wiges heard, wang sceawode
> fore burggeatum; beorgas steape,
> hleoðu hlifodon, ymbe harne stan
> tigelfagan trafu, torras stodon,
> windige weallas.
>
> Then that one hardened by battle awoke, and surveyed the plain before the city gate, where steep slopes and cliffs towered, and all over that grey stone stood towers, roofed buildings, and windy walls. (And 839–43)[55]

Most, if not all, of the urban features described, including city gates, stone ramparts, tiled rooves, towers, and wind-blown walls, are shared with the descriptions found in *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer* of Roman ruins. The phrase *windige weallas* has been taken to echo the shore-cliffs (*Beo* 572) seen by Beowulf in the first light of morning after his swimming match with Breca, since it describes Andrew's view of Mermedonia upon his awakening outside its gates.[56] Dawning light is implied at this moment in both *Beowulf* (569) and *Andreas* (836–38). It may be that the poet is alluding to the *enta geweorc* tradition in order to stir a sense of foreboding in his audience. Whilst he may be relying on oral formulaic motifs such as *harne stan* (*Ruin* 43; *Beo* 887, 1415, 2553, 2744), both here and elsewhere, this is in part because they were established pillars of an effective discourse between the poet and his listeners.[57] The poet similarly develops the scene of Andrew's 'special punishment', during which he is dragged through the streets of Mermedonia, after liberating the prisoners of the cannibals and then daring to return to the city:[58]

> Drogon deormode æfter dunscræfum,
> ymb stanhleoðo stærcedferþþe,
> efne swa wide swa wegas tolagon,
> enta ærgeweorc, innan burgum,
> stræte stanfage. Storm upp aras
> æfter ceasterhofum, cirm unlytel
> hæðnes heriges.

[53] Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to 'Beowulf'* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2003), pp. 164–66. For further discussion see also Anita R. Reidinger, 'The Formulaic Relationship Between *Beowulf* and *Andreas*', in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger Jr.*, ed. by Helen Damico and John Leyerle, Studies in Medieval Culture, 32 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1993), pp. 283–312.

[54] Magennis, *Images of Community*, p. 173.

[55] All references to the text of the Old English *Andreas* from *Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles*, ed. by Kenneth R. Brooks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

[56] All references to *Beowulf* are from *Klaeber's 'Beowulf' and the 'Fight at Finnsburg'*, ed. by R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, 4th edn, Toronto Old English Series, 21 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

[57] Edward B. Irving Jr., 'A reading of *Andreas*: the Poem as Poem', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 12 (1983), 215–37 (p. 231).

[58] Irving, 'A reading of *Andreas*', p. 231.

> They hauled the stubborn-spirited man [reading *deormodne*] through mountain gorges and round rocky screes as widely as the roads stretched, stone-paved highways, the former works of giants, within the cities. The commotion, the immense hubbub of the heathen horde, mounted up through the fortress dwellings. (And 1232–38)

Once again terms are encountered that we would wholly expect to find in *Beowulf* and other poems, such as the *strǽte stanfage*, similarly referred to in *Beowulf* (320), yet which Irving did not think likely to have been borrowed from the earlier work largely on the grounds that the street would have to have been stone-paved to injure Andrew in the way it does.[59] It does not seem improbable, given the alliterative properties of *strǽte stanfage*, that it may have been an oral formula, much like *harne stan*, that was perhaps drawn from *Beowulf* but may equally have belonged to the same ruin-vocabulary encountered elsewhere.

One further instance of this sort of reference to an older tradition marks an important turning point in *Andreas*. This is the scene in which Andrew, imprisoned by the Mermedonians, looks upon the pillars in the walls of his cell:

> He be wealle geseah wundrum fæste
> under sælwage sweras unlytle,
> stapulas standan storme bedrifene,
> eald enta geweorc.
>
> He observed against a wall under the side of the building, fixed remarkably firmly, some great pillars standing, weather-beaten columns, the ancient work of giants. (*And* 1492–95)

Andrew appeals to these columns, 'mihtig on modrof' ('mighty and bold in spirit', 1496), telling them that God has bidden them to burst apart and let stream forth a great torrent 'to wera cwealme' ('to the destruction of men', 1507). This is an unexpected invention. Although this section of the narrative is anchored securely in the poet's source material, his mention of 'eald enta geweorc', and 'stapulas' standing 'storme bedrifene' (a motif which seems to have been borrowed from *Beowulf*) draws directly upon the vernacular poetic tradition.[60] In effect, by calling forth the waters from beneath these pillars, Andrew makes himself master of the city through the power of God, and when the waters swell forth to encompass Mermedonia, he takes possession of the forbidding landscape and all the terms that had been associated with it, with all their associated mythologies of death and desolation. In this light, to describe the flooding of Mermedonia as a symbolic baptism of the city and its inhabitants is to state the obvious. One of the Mermedonians, a 'feasceaft hæleð' ('poor man', 1556), recognises their perilous predicament and appeals to the rest of his kinsmen, calling upon them to look to Andrew, and saying that 'us bið gearu sona | sybb æfter sorge, gif we secað to him' ('peace after sorrow will be ours immediately, if we seek it from him', 1567–68). At this, Andrew 'het streamfare stillan, stormas restan | ymbe stanhleoðu' ('commanded the running stream to be still, the storms to be at rest about the stone-piles' 1575–77). As he walked over the earth, it dried as his feet touched the surface:

> Þa se beorg tohlad,
> eorðscræf egeslic, ond þær in forlet
> flod fæðmian, fealewe wægas;
> geotende gegrind grund eall forswealg.

[59] Irving, 'A reading of *Andreas*', p. 231.

[60] See *Beowulf* (2542–49). Here, as we look down into the barrow, it is not a stream of water than bursts forth from beneath the pillars, but dragon's fire. Irving notes that in the source, it is a statue rather than a pillar to which Andrew speaks: 'A Reading of Andreas', p. 234.

> Then that mound opened, an awesome earth-grave, and therein washed the flood, the fallow waves; inward swirled that surging mass of water, the ground swallowed it whole. (*And* 1587–90)

As Irving notes, some elements of the flood's final moments are particularly interesting, as they eliminate certain unnecessary details from the sources through the addition of the *beorg* which swallows the water and fourteen of the 'worst' Mermedonians. In particular Irving questions whether the *beorg* should perhaps be considered a 'pagan grave-mound', without suggesting the potential significance of this feature.[61]

This much is clear: Mermedonia is a very different place after the flood. The negative terms used to refer to the antediluvian city are plain enough, as it is referred to once as a 'hæðnan burg' ('heathen stronghold', 111), and twice (by the sailors and by God), as a 'mæran byrig' ('infamous city', 287, 973). Following the conversion of its inhabitants after their symbolic baptism, Mermedonia becomes a place 'of admirable community'.[62] Importantly, we are shown that a 'ciricean' ('church', 1633), 'Godes tempel' ('God's temple', 1634), is built on the very spot from whence the 'flod onsprang' ('flood sprang forth', 1635), in order to help encourage the Mermedonians to give up their 'diofolgild' ('offerings to devils', 1641), and 'ealde ealhstedas' ('ancient pagan temples', 1642). It becomes a 'beorhtan byrig' ('bright city', 1649), a 'goldburg' ('golden city', 1655), and a 'winbyrig' ('wine city', 1672), in which its inhabitants may now enjoy 'secga seledream ond sincgestreon' ('the joys of men and treasure-giving', 1656). The only place that now seems to retain any negative connotations must therefore surely be the *beorg* into which the purifying waters are washed, bearing the fourteen most sinful Mermedonians beneath the earth, and presumably to hell. Barrows, as places of execution and execution burial, seem to have been a focal point for negative superstitions throughout much of the period, as is well attested in Anglo-Saxon literature, art, and archaeology, being topographical features that were particularly associated with 'supernatural entities, either singly or as collective groups'.[63] As noted above, they were sites at which the bodies of execution victims were often buried. Semple suggests that the interment of criminals in these places during the later Saxon period was deliberately undertaken in order to 'heighten the punishment of wrongdoers and extend it after death',[64] as well as serving as a 'physical sign of the alienation of these people from society'.[65] In this sense, therefore, the presence of the Church in Mermedonia serves to symbolically cleanse it of the evil that had once inhabited its walls, actively transferring negative mythologies which had been connected with stone buildings to an appropriately heathen landscape feature.[66] Thus, once more, the city becomes a sanctified space appropriate for the habitation of men in both literary and physical realms.

Those centres of godliness and good works like Durham that came into Norman hands in

[61] Irving, 'A reading of *Andreas*', p. 236.

[62] Magennis, *Images of Community*, p.174; Hugh Magennis, *Anglo-Saxon Appetites: Food and Drink and their Consumption in Old English and Related Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), p. 25.

[63] Semple, 'A Fear of the Past', p. 113.

[64] Semple, 'A Fear of the Past', p. 123.

[65] Sarah Semple, 'Illustrations of Damnation in Late Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 32 (2003), 231–45 (p. 241).

[66] As Ellis-Davidson noted, there are examples in the archaeological record where early Christian Anglo-Saxon churches were 'sometimes built beside or even over a burial mound'; the Taplow burial, for instance, stands within the old churchyard. Hilda R. Ellis-Davidson, 'The Hill of the Dragon: Anglo-Saxon Burial Mounds in Literature and Archaeology', *Folklore*, 61 (1950), 165–85 (p. 175).

the eleventh century were clearly thought of in a rather different light to those ruined urban foundations encountered during the settlement period that are reflected in *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer*. The reoccupation, establishment, and development of urban foundations that occurred in response to a variety of factors over the course of the Anglo-Saxon period did not do so without leaving its mark on Old English literature. Successful mediation of this 'move into towns' by the Church and Crown relied as much upon modifying conceptions of urban landscapes in the Anglo-Saxon cultural imagination as it did the way in which people were to inhabit them. This is nowhere more evident than in the Old English *Andreas*, a poem which seems to illustrate a point of change in Anglo-Saxon attitudes, when urban landscapes were liberated from the negative mythologies they had acquired during the settlement period, in order to ensure the reclamation of urban space and urban ruin for the good of God and man.